

Seven countries working
together to stop illegal fishing
in the Western Indian Ocean



The FISH-i Africa

TASK FORCE

**Geofrey Nanyaro, Chairperson
Stop Illegal Fishing**

FISH-i Africa – I would say from my experience in the field of 39 years – is the cheapest but the most effective method I ever saw, anywhere. You know exactly where the illegal operator is, you know his next move. Before, it was hunting, and you hunted without knowing where you were going to end, with meagre resources, millions of dollars were used without any results. But now we are getting results almost cost free.

**Peter Sinon, Minister of Natural Resources,
Seychelles**

The new element about FISH-i Africa is that before, we were 'talking the talk', acting individually, but shooting in the dark, we were not seeing the whole picture. The illegal fishers would play us one against the other, be clean in one port and illegal in another. This is not any more possible or acceptable – as we have acted against it.

**Victor Borges, Minister of Fisheries,
Mozambique**

If politicians like me, all over the world, would enforce those in the frontline combatting IUU fishing so that they feel they've got strong political support, they are much more committed than if they don't get that support.



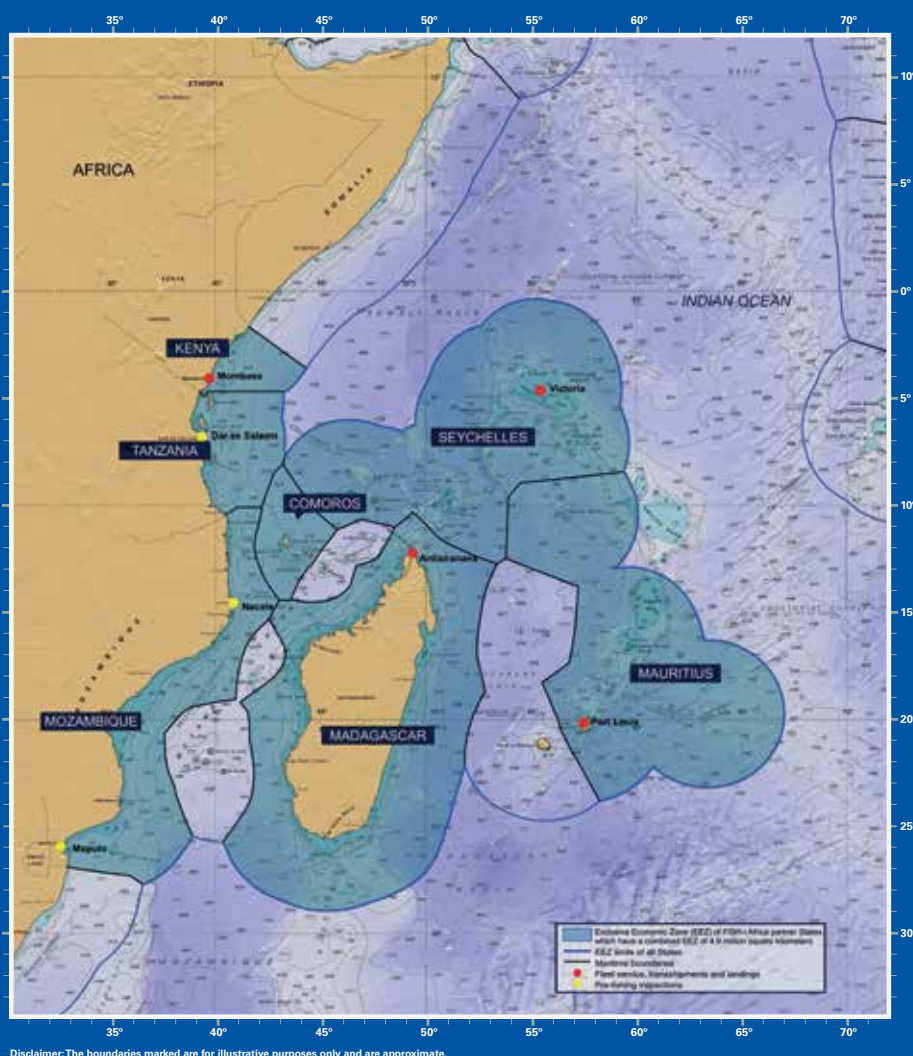
Why does FISH-i Africa exist?

The Western Indian Ocean is home to abundant fish resources that sustain a thriving fishing industry, which in turn supports local economies and provides food and jobs in the region and abroad. These resources also fuel one of the world's illegal fishing hot-spots – destroying the marine environment, robbing national economies, stealing food and livelihoods from local people, and undermining the legitimate industry.

In response, seven countries – **Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and Tanzania** – have joined forces to tackle this problem through an innovative approach known as FISH-i Africa. These countries had already pledged to take actions against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, but in reality, with combined waters of nearly five million square kilometres and limited assets and capacity, overcoming the complex web of large-scale illegal fishing was a challenge that they could not take on individually.

So, in late 2012 they banded together to form the FISH-i Africa Task Force, with the aim to improve cooperation, information and intelligence sharing in order to take enforcement actions against illegal fishing operators. After little more than one year of operation the FISH-i Africa Task Force members have taken action against several notorious illegal fishing operators resulting in nearly three million dollars collected in fines. Licenses and port access have also been denied and IUU fishing vessels de-flagged.

This alliance is demonstrating that regional cooperation, information and intelligence sharing, coupled with dedicated data analysis, technical advice and strong political motivation, can slowly but surely turn illegal fishing into a high risk/low reward business instead of the low risk/high reward business that it has been for so long.



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How does FISH-i Africa work?

The structure and players

- The seven **Task Force** countries form the core of **FISH-i Africa**, working principally through national fisheries enforcement officers who collect and share information, cooperate towards shared ends, and take action against those identified as illegal fishing operators.
- The Task Force is facilitated by the **Coordinating Team** led by Stop Illegal Fishing (a Working Group of the pan-African inter-governmental NEPAD Agency), supported by Pew Charitable Trusts, and technically advised by two international consultancy services, Nordenfjeldske Development Services (NFDS) and Fisheries Analytical Capacity Tank (FACT).
- A **Technical Advisory Team** provides routine and systematic technical support and advice through the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) as well as regional and international experts.
- **Partners** including, other governments, NGOs, organisations and experts may also provide ad-hoc inputs to support the Task Force as required.
- FISH-i Africa's **Political Champions** rally support for the Task Force both at home and abroad.

The tools and mechanisms

- FISH-i countries have **routine information sharing mechanisms** to share information on their flagged and licensed fishing vessels and those active in their fishing zones and ports. Importantly, these vessel lists are continuously updated and vessels are checked against risk criteria and archives. Via FACT, Task Force countries can access intelligence and information which can help to identify and track down illegal operators in their EEZs, e.g. on the identity of fishing vessels and reefers, their flags and owners, their movements, catch and landing information from flag and port States as well as trade data.
- FISH-i Africa players have met at **face-to-face dedicated meetings** and also in the side-lines of other fora's. These have provided an opportunity for discussions, analysis, and strategy building and planning, whilst also building relationships and establishing trust.
- FISH-i Africa uses an innovative and easy-to-use **web-based interactive communications platform**, which enables FISH-i players to communicate and exchange information related to illegal fishing incidents and operators in real-time. Through this platform, sharing information and documents, accessing satellite tracking expertise, sharing data on vessels, posting requests for information, and discussing incidents of illegal fishing and suspected illegal fishing operators is more systematic and straightforward.
- FISH-i Africa uses, and is continually improving, innovative **risk assessment** tools to support prioritisation and decision making, including processes for regionally and internationally linked due-diligence in respect to flagging and licencing of vessels as well as access to port services, while also systematically analysing the patterns in emerging cases.
- FISH-i Africa provides **case-specific direct assistance** to Task Force members in the form of legal opinions, investigative support, operational advice, historic analysis of vessels and companies, as well as advice on options for taking action forward.
- FISH-i Africa uses several different tools to **raise awareness** about the FISH-i initiative and to **communicate** its findings and achievements. In addition to its own website www.fish-i-africa.org, information about FISH-i cases and lessons learned are also communicated through the Stop Illegal Fishing website, press releases, case studies, fliers, a film and presentations by FISH-i Africa players at various international fora.



What has it achieved?

The following examples outline some of the cases that FISH-i Africa has engaged in:

Unanimously denying access to an illegal fishing vessel and forcing the operator to pay

In late 2012, the fishing vessel Premier, a South Korean purse seine vessel moved from West Africa to the Indian Ocean in an attempt to escape from its infamous illegal fishing past. Although the owners were unaware, FISH-i Africa knew about this illegal past and the Task Force united to make the vessel unwelcome in their waters by denying the vessel access to fishing licences and ports. This greatly increased the operational costs for the owner, while the associated negative media tainted their image and reduced the selling price of their company's fish. Ultimately this pressure led to the owner paying a two million U.S. dollar settlement to the Liberian government for illegal fishing charges.

The uncovering of fraudulent licences resulting in improved government revenue

In mid-2012, two tuna longliners were discovered fishing without licenses in Tanzanian waters. Further investigations disclosed a much larger network of distribution of fraudulent Tanzanian fishing licenses. Since this discovery, work to uncover further information is underway and relevant authorities are preparing to take enforcement action against the IUU fishing operators. As a result, some of the vessels that had been fishing with fraudulent fishing licenses have now obtained legal fishing licenses, resulting in increased government revenue both in Tanzania and Kenya.

Global sharing of information results in IUU fishing vessels being de-registered

Based on an initial lead from the Australian government and following various communications and cross-checks it was discovered that three vessels that are listed on an IUU fishing vessel list outside of the FISH-i Africa region had been unwittingly flagged to one of the FISH-i countries. In response, the three IUU fishing listed vessels were de-registered in September 2013.

False vessel identity uncovered by FISH-i Africa intelligence sharing

In October 2013, a tuna long liner was arrested and confiscated by South Africa for illegally fishing in its waters. FISH-i Africa investigations showed irregularities between how the vessel looked and earlier photos of the legitimate vessel under the same name, suggesting that it may have been stolen and names switched to cover-up its illegal past. Links were also uncovered between the vessel owner and a vessel that had been arrested by Tanzania in 2009 for illegal fishing, casting yet more suspicion into the case.

Escaped illegal vessels located by FISH-i Africa

In December 2013 two out of ten vessels that were being held in South Africa for fishing illegally fled the port of Cape Town in contravention of an arrest order. To escalate the search for the two missing vessels to an international level, in January 2014, Interpol issued a Purple Notice. FISH-i Africa was actively searching for the vessels when it located them heading for Mombasa, Kenya, in February 2014.



What did we learn?

From the Task Force operations:

- **FISH-i Africa meetings are an invaluable tool** – Providing an opportunity for discussion and analysis while also building relationships and trust and creating positive peer-pressure to achieve results.
- **The web-based communication platform established a systematic approach for information and intelligence sharing that went beyond bilateral and incident-specific interactions** – Building collective knowledge and a sense of collective action by sharing information on issues, experiences, and actions being taken by the Task Force, including the understanding that by acting together the Task Force is stronger than any of its individual members acting alone.
- **Communication of incidents of illegal fishing and related actions taken by the Task Force members is key** – Encouraging collective action, providing motivation, and building momentum around FISH-i Africa, while helping to build the profile of FISH-i Africa regionally and internationally.
- **The Coordinating and Technical Advisory Teams have provided essential information to catalyse cases and support follow-up actions** – Providing the analysis of various data sources, guidance on complex matters and facilitation to support a professional, well informed and active Task Force.

From the enforcement cases:

- **Many of the IUU fishing incidents link to inadequate flagging and licensing policies** – This highlights the need for a review of all vessels currently registered and licensed to fish in the region and for further improvement in the processes for duly assessing vessels' histories and owners/operators before registering or licensing them.
- **IUU fishing vessel lists of the regional fisheries management organisations are strong tools when negotiating or dealing with IUU fishing operators and their flag States** – In order for these vessel lists to be used effectively, enforcement, licensing, and registration authorities require easy access to updated lists.
- **The use of fraudulent licenses and ships documents to mask illegal activity is more widespread than previously considered** – The pattern of forging licenses and documents needs to be understood so that improved safeguards and preventative measures can be put in place.
- **Gaps in the regional coverage by Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) provide loopholes that IUU fishing operators are currently taking advantage of** – These need to be systematically removed to provide full VMS coverage of the region.
- **The presence of corruption is a common denominator in most of the cases** – While the correlation between corruption and IUU fishing incidents is well-known, the real challenge lies in identifying solutions to limit this behaviour.
- **All of the IUU fishing incidents have involved more than one country** – Therefore, international cooperation is key to addressing IUU fishing cases successfully.
- **Media is a valuable tool to catalyse enforcement actions against IUU fishing operators** – Not only does publicity place pressure on IUU fishing operators and the vessel owners, but more so, it serves to motivate and empower those with authority to act.
- **The investigation of IUU fishing incidents requires highly technical analysis, access to databases, and a strong network of experts within the global community** – In this respect, the FISH-i Africa initiative provides a successful model on how these tools can be combined with country-level political will to result in successful enforcement actions.



Where is FISH-i Africa going?

With a successful year-long pilot project completed and a three-year commitment by the Pew Charitable Trusts to continue supporting the work of FISH-i Africa, we are excited to build on our experiences. To build a robust and effective mechanism for regional information sharing and cooperation, to catalyse enforcement actions, and to secure a sustainable end to illegal fishing in the Western Indian Ocean.



Manuel Castiano, Mozambique

FISH-i Africa is very good. It is assisting us with better communication and getting timely information, this is very important when the vessel is coming to Port, we know, and we prepare ourselves to receive that vessel. I believe that with effort from all of us, if we cooperate we can eliminate illegal activities and that our populations will have more fish on the plate.

Zahor El Kharousy, United Republic of Tanzania

FISH-i Africa shows how easy it can be to actually cooperate between the different countries and how much that simple thing of writing an email can help a manager in terms of fighting illegal fishing.

Roy Clarisse, Seychelles

FISH-i Africa sends a strong signal that there is collaboration, working together against IUU fishing, there is no port that a vessel can go to and offload its illegal catch because this network shares information all around.

Naivo Raijkot, Madagascar

Illegal fishing is a big problem for Madagascar, it means economic losses for us. It is vital that we join forces with neighbouring countries and regional bodies to face this problem.

Satish Dwarka, Mauritius

When you cannot fight alone you have to join hands, and when you join hands, you feel more courageous – this I sincerely believe is going to close the door on IUU fishing.

Said Boina, Comoros

With just a simple internet connection we can communicate with each other “I’ve got such and such a boat here, it’s not authorised, did this boat fish in your waters, has it got a licence...” and this way, without expensive technology, we can protect our waters and resources.

Nicholas Nketheka, Kenya

Especially for countries with no VMS, it is very important that FISH-i Africa should be expanded. I’m excited! The project is very good.

www.fish-i-africa.org

