- **Nordenfjeldske Development Services (NFDS):** provides technical, legal and political analysis and support as part of the Technical Team.
- **The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC):** provides advice and information to the Task Force members that are all also members of IOTC.
- **The Indian Ocean Commission's SmartFish Programme:** provides resources and technical support.

Next steps

In order to strengthen the FISH-i Africa Task Force's ability to take action against illegal operators, future efforts should focus on:

- Increasing information sharing within the Task Force to include; vessel monitoring information, full and up-dated licence and registration lists, exit and entry reports, and inspection and violation reports.
- Maintaining a FISH-i Africa website.
- Providing regular and detailed operational, legal, technical and intelligence advice.
- Convening regular and dedicated FISH-i Africa Task Force meetings.
- Strengthening inter-agency cooperation nationally and regionally and improving strategic and integrated approaches to developing cases.
- Catering for the multi-lingual needs of the Task Force.
- Growing greater political support for FISH-i Africa's work.
- Strengthening partnerships between African governments and investigative units.
- Encouraging harmonisation of fisheries legal frameworks to increase deterrence and coherence.

Further information

Policy implications

- Task Forces, such as FISH-i Africa, should be introduced more widely in Africa and linked into a continental network of FISH-i Task Forces.
- FISH-i Africa should be strengthened to facilitate international collaboration and information exchange, including between coastal, flag, port and market States, in relation to evidence gathering, investigations, arrests and prosecutions in fishery cases in the Indian Ocean.
- Transparency in fisheries governance should be increased through publishing and sharing vessel licence and registration lists, licensing procedures, fisheries agreements and information on IUU fishing cases and outcomes.
- National, regional and international collaboration between fishery, police, customs, ports, immigration and tax authorities to investigate and prosecute associated crimes such as corruption, fraud, money laundering, tax evasion and human trafficking must be strengthened through mechanisms and agreements.
- National legal frameworks and regional fisheries instruments require further strengthening to facilitate regional cooperation in fisheries law enforcement.
- Ratifying and implementing agreements on fishery related issues, such as the Port State Measures Agreement[i] and implementing RFMOs' resolutions supports national actions against IUU fishing operators.
- Stop Illegal Fishing plays a vital and unique role in the fight against IUU fishing in Africa – it must be supported to continue to do so.

Acknowledgements

Footnotes

[i] Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing.

THE FISH-I AFRICA TASK FORCE
TESTING REGIONAL COOPERATION TO STOP ILLEGAL FISHING

Background

The first decade of the 21st century saw several successful, but also many flawed and unsuccessful cases against illegal fishing operators in Africa. These cases demonstrated that political will and national monitoring control and surveillance (MCS) capacity had improved, however, they also illustrated the struggles that remain to successfully follow cases through to prosecution. Administrations often lacked access to the information and intelligence needed to follow the movements and activities of illegal fishing operators – resulting in illegal fishing remaining a low risk and high reward business.

The successful cases demonstrated the benefits of exchanging and comparing information between States. But information and intelligence sharing between countries and regional partners tended to be limited in scope, scale and time, and often limited to one-off cases. There was an apparent need for routine information and intelligence sharing mechanisms.

The story

In December 2012, a pioneer initiative to pilot coordinated sharing, analysis and use of intelligence and information to generate enforcement actions against illegal fishing operators was launched in the Seychelles. It became known as FISH-i Africa. The original FISH-i Africa countries included individuals representing fisheries agencies from five countries in the Western Indian Ocean: Comoros, Kenya, Mozambique, Seychelles and the United Republic of Tanzania. In mid-2013, following requests from Madagascar and Mauritius, they also joined FISH-i.

All of these FISH-i Africa countries are developing coastal or small island States, some of them among the poorest in the world, and all of them facing challenges such as weak governance, limited resources and vast areas of ocean to manage. In recent years the countries have all made national and regional commitments to overcome the environmental destruction and social and economic losses that illegal fishing is causing and all were ready to turn words into action.

FISH-i Africa

National Action

FISH-i Africa Taskforce

Information sharing platform

Technical support and research

Tools and procedures

Integration and communication
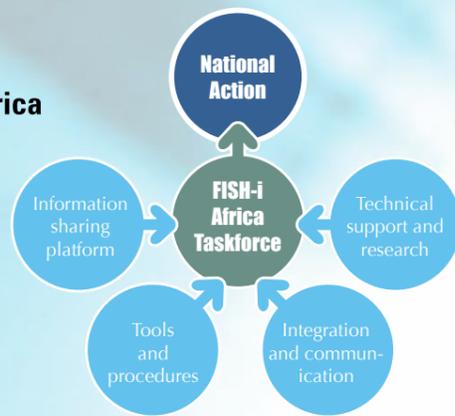
The story
(cont'd)

The purpose of the one-year pilot project was to test if cooperation and the sharing of intelligence and information between fisheries enforcement officers, technical experts, regional organisations and other regional and global players could spur enforcement actions against illegal fishing operators, and if this, in turn, would help to overcome illegal fishing in the Indian Ocean. The Task Force although new, was not starting from scratch. Many individuals had worked together previously, all FISH-i countries had basic but varied MCS capacity and all had participated in regional or bilateral projects to improve capacity and cooperation.

The FISH-i Africa Task Force is facilitated and supported by a Technical Team of operational, legal and analytical experts and institutional partners that provide the information, skills, networks, experiences and insights required to assist the national enforcement officers of the Task Force. The FISH-i countries share information they have never shared before: such as on their registered and licensed fishing vessels and those active in their waters and ports. Through the Technical Team, the FISH-i Africa countries can access intelligence and information which can help provide key evidence to track down illegal operators. This information includes identification of fishing vessels and reefers, their flags and owners, their movements, catch and landing information from flag and port States and trade data. Such information is shared during face-to-face Task Force meetings and through an on-line communications platform. On this platform FISH-i Africa members can also ask questions, store data and discuss ongoing activities, cases and issues of risk-assessment or strategy. Operational, legal or strategic advice can also be provided bilaterally to individual Task Force members.

FISH-i Africa uses high-tech input to provide necessary information but the network itself and the effective communication between its members is based on a simple and low-

cost model. Critical factors for the success of the pilot have been the trust and sharing of information among the members of the network, the openness to learn through the cases and to continuously share these lessons and to always carefully assess the risks involved.

Drivers

Concern over the losses IUU fishing was causing to African societies and resources spurred the 2010 Conference of African Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture (CAMFA) to recommend *'that MCS systems and regional cooperation should be strengthened and that urgent actions at national and regional levels are required to deter and eradicate IUU fishing'*. The Pew Charitable Trusts' Ending Illegal Fishing Project joined forces with the countries of the FISH-i Africa region and Stop Illegal Fishing to form the pilot initiative FISH-i Africa.

Key features and outcomes

FISH-i Africa Task Force members have:
- **Conducted port inspections of vessels suspected of IUU fishing** based on cross-country exchange of intelligence.
- **Denied fishing licences to vessels with an IUU fishing history** following due diligence and risk assessment based on analysis of intelligence, legal assessments and revelations that vessel operators had forged documents.
- **De-registered fishing vessels** that had been listed, under previous names, as IUU violators on regional fisheries management organisation lists, based on analysis of intelligence.

- **Denied port access and fishing licenses to a fishing vessel with an IUU fishing history** from West Africa based on the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) Port State Measures Resolution.
- **Identified corruption** and initiated judicial proceedings relating to forged licences following a tracking and monitoring effort.
- **Identified document fraud** of vessels changing identity and nationality to hide their illegal fishing operations.
- **Contributed towards cases resulting in USD 2.7** million being collected in fines, paid by illegal operators in Liberia and Mozambique.
- **Engaged actively in IOTC processes** for combating IUU fishing based on evidence gained from intelligence sharing and analysis.
- **Cooperated with Interpol Project Scale** resulting in assistance being provided in respect to IUU fishing cases in cooperation with Interpol National Central Bureaus.

Challenges

- **Limited human capacity and resources within MCS agencies –** to effectively monitor and patrol fishing activities and to inspect and maintain surveillance of fishing vessels and operators.
- **Lack of action within the Task Force –** at times Task Force members were slow to engage or respond to queries from other Task Force members, due to lack of capacity or specific national concerns, at times slowing down progress on potential cases.
- **High levels of complexity in cases –** has been the norm, demanding that integrated intelligence and information, from a range of sources, is gathered

and analysed, requiring considerable time and resources.
- **Threats to individuals' safety –** due to the sensitivity and/or scale of cases that required careful handling.
- **Political fragility –** that is associated with developing countries has influenced decision-making and hampered processes at certain points in time.
- **Unclear or weak legal frameworks –** have presented challenges for interpretation and decision-making in some cases.
- **Lack of unique vessel identification numbers on industrial vessels –** has created challenges in identifying vessels especially when several vessels have been operating with one licence.
- **Lack of coordinated police effort to investigate international corruption and fraud issues –** has slowed progress on several cases and resulted in cases not being fully investigated.

Players involved

- **FISH-i Africa Task Force:** is formed from MCS personnel from the countries of: Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and the United Republic of Tanzania.
- **Stop Illegal Fishing:** is a Working Group of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and a not-for-profit organisation that facilitates the FISH-i Africa Task Force and the Technical Team.
- **Pew Charitable Trusts:** provides support through their Ending Illegal Fishing Project.
- **Analytical Unit of the Trygg Mat Foundation:** provides intelligence and analytical information as part of the Technical Team.

Lessons learned

- **Political support from regional champions –** helped in successfully launching the initiative, maintaining momentum and demonstrating a strong will to bring illegal operators to justice.
- **Regular communication between Task Force members through the on-line FISH-i Africa communications platform –** facilitated rapid information sharing and transparency between Task Force members and regional partners and encouraged more reticent members to 'do the right thing' or to 'respond'.
- **An accessible, available and trusted expert Technical Team –** that engaged through transparent processes and dialogue was essential to provide requested analysis and support.
- **The power of media and communications –** has been evident throughout the FISH-i Africa

pilot as a means to spur action, to keep the momentum in compliance cases and to gain buy-in at operational and political levels.
- **This is a global issue and oceans are not isolated –** several cases demonstrated that vessels move and trade internationally and that those fighting illegal fishing need to cooperate and share information beyond their sub-regions.
- **Features of FISH-i Africa that were deemed the most valuable –** were the provision of access to information about fishing vessels and licences from other FISH-i countries; regional cooperation resulting in timely communications; advice provided to support decision making in respect to potential or realised cases; and increased awareness about IUU fishing.