



# FISHERIES AND FOOD SECURITY IN THE COMMONWEALTH

A BRIEFING BY THE



# *The state of marine capture fisheries, of concern to the 47 Commonwealth Member States which have shores facing the high seas, is extremely vulnerable<sup>1</sup>.*

Fisheries are critical to the food security of many Commonwealth countries, for some providing as much as 65% of all animal protein consumed. Fisheries employ over 72 million people and providing 24% of all animal protein consumed.

The FAO estimates that by 2050 the world's population will reach 9.1 billion, and that in order to feed this larger population, food production must increase by 70%. Yet, it is estimated that 50% of marine fish stocks are fully exploited and 32% overexploited, depleted or recovering.

Unsustainable fishing practices and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing threaten global fisheries and the countries and communities that depend upon them. The losses due to IUU fishing are estimated to be between US\$10 billion and US\$23.5 billion per year, representing between 11-26 million tonnes of fish.

The Commonwealth has a vital role in improving sustainable fisheries within its waters and supporting the initiatives of the wider global community. Strong measures to improve sustainable fisheries will directly benefit the food security, economic development and social stability of Commonwealth countries, particularly vulnerable developing countries that are most dependent on fisheries resources.

*At CHOGM 2009, Commonwealth Heads 'expressed concern at the plunder caused by Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU), in violation of, inter alia, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. They recognised that many developing states were particularly vulnerable to illegal fishing by foreign fleets. They agreed that urgent action was needed to strengthen fisheries and marine management in member states' waters, particularly in the case of the more vulnerable member states.'*

This strong statement was encouraging, but there is still much to do. In the two years since CHOGM 2009, EJP has identified numerous instances of damaging IUU fishing in the waters of Commonwealth countries. Commonwealth states, collectively and individually, can take meaningful actions that build on their ambitious statement.





Losses due to Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) or 'pirate' fishing are estimated to be \$US10 – 23.5 billion annually

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The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) seeks Commonwealth support to address the decline in global fisheries, thereby improving the food security of Commonwealth Member States. In particular, EJF seeks support for the following measures to improve the transparency and governance of international fisheries, prevent pirate fishing and protect threatened fish stocks:

- Improved transparency for global marine fisheries including a binding and comprehensive Global Record of fisheries vessels, as well as improved traceability of fisheries products;
- Binding standards for Flag State performance, an end to the exploitation of Flags of Convenience and sanctions for those states that fail to monitor and control their distant water fishing fleets; and
- Prioritising funding to developing countries to improve fisheries management and governance, to increase the contribution of fisheries to food security and economic development. Support for Trans-boundary enforcement actions will ensure that illegal 'pirate' fishing operators cannot escape sanction and continue their illegal activities elsewhere.

## Introduction

Fisheries are vital to global food security, providing 15% of animal protein consumed in 2007. An estimated 119 million people are directly dependent on fisheries for employment, 97% of whom are in developing countries<sup>2</sup>.

However, fisheries are coming under increasing pressure from unsustainable fishing and the increasing demand for fish. Global production of seafood from wild stocks is at or close to its biological maximum<sup>3</sup> and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 50% of marine fish stocks are fully exploited and 32% overexploited, depleted or recovering<sup>4</sup>.

A growing threat comes from IUU fishing – fishing activities that ignore national and international laws and regulations to sustainably manage fisheries. IUU fishing depletes fish stocks, destroys marine habitats, puts legitimate fishers at an unfair disadvantage and jeopardises the livelihoods and food security of some of the world's poorest people. Current losses due to IUU fishing are estimated to be between US\$10 billion and US\$23.5 billion annually, representing between 11 – 26 million tonnes of catch. In some regions, IUU fishing reports more than a third of the total catch<sup>5</sup>.

IUU fishing occurs in all oceans and is undertaken by fishing activities that range in size and sophistication from subsistence and artisanal fishers to large-scale international industrial operations. Disproportionate impacts of IUU fishing are borne by developing countries that lack the resources, management capacity and effective governance required to control their waters<sup>5</sup>, and where fish is one of the few resources available for employment and food security in coastal communities. Commonwealth countries are amongst those most at risk from declining fisheries.

EJF considers that the Commonwealth has a key role in addressing the unsustainable exploitation of global fisheries, both within the waters of Commonwealth countries and those of the international community. Global fisheries have effectively reached their maximum sustainable yield and if strong action by world leaders is not taken now, there will be severe economic, social and ecological consequences. Vulnerable coastal communities in developing countries are most at risk, as they often depend on fisheries for their livelihoods and food security.



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## The role of the Commonwealth

At the 2009 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Trinidad and Tobago, heads expressed concern that the unsustainable exploitation of the world's fish stocks posed a threat to food security. They also acknowledged the plunder caused by IUU fishing and that many developing states were particularly vulnerable to illegal fishing by foreign fleets. They agreed that urgent action was needed to strengthen fisheries management in Member States' waters, particularly in the case of the more vulnerable Member States<sup>6</sup>.

This acknowledgement is encouraging, but given the growing global population and increasing demand for protein, pressure on fish stocks will continue to increase. The FAO estimates that by 2050 the world's population will reach 9.1 billion, and that in order to feed this larger population food production must increase by 70%<sup>7</sup>. The Commonwealth has a key role in ensuring that unsustainable fishing practices do not endanger the food security of its Member States, which include many leading fishing nations and many of those most dependent on fisheries resources.

The Commonwealth also has an important role in supporting the work of international organisations such as the United Nations (UN). EJF believes that the Commonwealth can provide global leadership in addressing fisheries sustainability issues and build the international consensus that is required to protect global fisheries, the food security of Member States and that of the wider international community.

## The importance of fish to Commonwealth food security

The FAO stated in 2010 that the number of undernourished people in the world remains unacceptably high. Despite a decline from one billion in 2009, a total of 925 million people were estimated to be undernourished in 2010, representing almost 16% of the population of developing countries. The fact that nearly a billion people remain hungry highlights the risk that international goals to reduce hunger, including the first Millennium Development Goal and the 1996 World Food Summit goal<sup>8</sup>, may not be achieved.

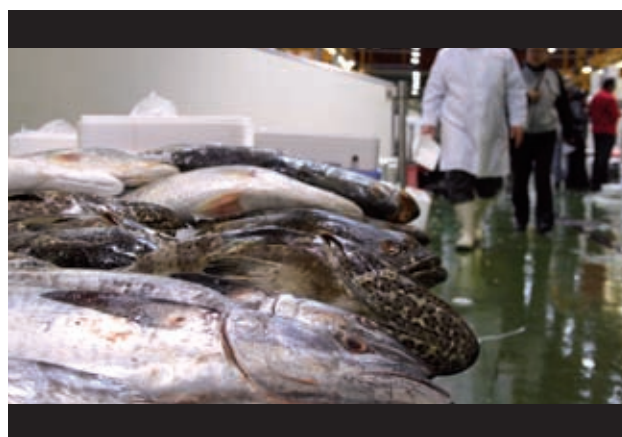
Fisheries make an important contribution to food security, both as a food source and by generating wealth that provides livelihoods and fuels economic growth. Fisheries are the main source of protein for an estimated one billion people. Fisheries are particularly significant for many developing countries, and in low income food deficit countries they provide 22% of animal protein consumed. In coastal areas this dependence is often higher<sup>9</sup>. Fish is of particular importance to poverty-stricken areas, where it can be one of the cheapest, most nutritious and most accessible sources of protein available. Fisheries can also act as a social 'safety net', preventing poverty-stricken groups and individuals from falling deeper into deprivation<sup>10</sup>. However, safety nets can become poverty traps if fisheries are not sustainably managed, with depleted fish stocks limiting long-term economic growth.

Fisheries are equally significant to the food security of the Commonwealth. When combined, over 72 million people are employed in fisheries, which contribute on average 3.17% of GDP and an average of 24.4% of the total animal protein consumed in Commonwealth countries. Fisheries are particularly important to the food security of several regions and countries, as detailed in Table 1.

Fisheries are important to the food security of both developed and developing countries



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**Table 1: Contribution of Fisheries by Commonwealth Country and Region\***  
(including aquaculture and inland fisheries, but excluding landlocked countries)

Region	Country	People employed in fishing industry <sup>41</sup>	Value of fishing industry in USD (% of GDP) <sup>41</sup>	Fish protein (% of animal protein) <sup>31</sup>	Fish Products Imported (1000 USD) <sup>42</sup>	Undernourished (% of Total Population) <sup>41</sup>	Fish Consumption (kg per cap) <sup>43</sup>
Eastern Central Atlantic	Cameroon	195,000	107 million (0.4)	35.9	98,411	22	14.1
	Gambia	38,000	0.7 million (0.1)	54.2	800	19	25.7
	Ghana	526,400	108 million (3)	58.3	128,725	5	28.6
	Nigeria <sup>49</sup>	6,350,000	803 million (0.7)	27.8	618,062	6	9
	Sierra Leone	243,500	136 million (9.4)	65.5	3,466	35	27.1
	<b>Average/Total</b>	<b>7,352,900</b>	<b>1.2 billion (2.7)</b>	<b>48.34</b>	<b>849,464</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>20.9</b>
Western Central Atlantic	Antigua & Barbuda	1,193	13.3 million (1.33)	22.9	6,545	22	52.8
	Bahamas	9,300	95.8 million (1.6)	14.2	21,780	6	30.7
	Barbados	2,825	208 million (8)	23	20,291	n/a	43.8
	Belize	1,795	49.5 million (5)	11.8	2,084	5	12.8
	Dominica	2,903	12.8 million (4.8)	17.4	1,964	n/a	27.8
	Grenada	2,800	9.1 million (1.7)	26.9	4,619	20	37
	Guyana	12,500	157 million (2.8)	19.7	1,246	7	33.3
	Jamaica <sup>48</sup>	15,214	25.5 million (0.3)	20.1	102,792	5	29
	Saint Kitts	600	3.8 million (0.8)	20.4	3,336	16	31.6
	Saint Lucia <sup>51</sup>	2,439	7.4 million (0.9)	20.1	8,338	8	41
	Saint Vincent	2,050	4.9 million (2)	10.6	2,523	5	16.2
	Trinidad & Tobago	7,085	13.3 million (0.1)	12.9	26,615	11	16.5
	<b>Average/Total</b>	<b>60,704</b>	<b>600 million (2.5)</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>202,133</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>31</b>
South East Atlantic	South Africa	27,729	322.5 million (0.04)	7	238,670	0	8
	Namibia	13,700	372 million (7.4)	16.6	39,404	19	15
	<b>Average/Total</b>	<b>41,429</b>	<b>704.5 million (7.4)</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>278,074</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>11.5</b>
North East Atlantic	UK	35,000	562 million (0.03)	9.3	4,220,392	0	20.5
North West Atlantic	Canada	84,258	1.9 billion (0.1)	10.2	2,045,524	0	23.7
Eastern Indian	Australia	16,000	2.2 billion (0.2)	8.3	1,101,164	0	24.7
	Bangladesh	44,300,000	236 million (3.9)	54.1	9,553	27	14.5
	India <sup>47</sup>	14,600,000	9.6 billion (1.5)	15.8	57,623	21	5
	Malaysia	111,000	1.4 billion (0.7)	43.8	581,960		51.2
	Sri Lanka	350,000	338 million (1.7)	53.5	126,073	19	18.9
	<b>Average/Total</b>	<b>59,377,000</b>	<b>12 billion (1.6)</b>	<b>35.1</b>	<b>375,274</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>22.9</b>
Western Indian	Kenya	863,000	90 million (0.5)	5.7	6,236	31	3.6
	Maldives	20,066	54.1 million (6)	59.2	8,501	7	142.4
	Mauritius	11,900	307 million (4.9)	18.4	303,721	5	20.8
	Mozambique	90,000	273.2 million (4)	26.9	38,895	38	4.7
	Pakistan	379,489	232.5 million (0.3)	2.4	2,149	26	1.8
	Seychelles <sup>52</sup>	243,500	212 million (31)	46.5	63,538	7	64.3
	Tanzania	2,171,000	324.2 million (0.3)	23.7	3,949	0	6
	<b>Average/Total</b>	<b>3,778,955</b>	<b>1.2 billion (6.6)</b>	<b>26.1</b>	<b>53,481.4</b>	<b>16.3</b>	<b>34.3</b>
Mediterranean & Black Sea	Cyprus	1,248	36.4 million (0.2)	12.9	100,207	0	23
	Malta	1,409	13.3 million (0.3)	13.9	53,916	0	31.3
	<b>Average/Total</b>	<b>2,657</b>	<b>50 million (0.3)</b>	<b>13.4</b>	<b>77,062</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>54.3</b>
Western Central Pacific	Brunei <sup>46</sup>	1,015	45.8 million (0.4)	17.8	11,850	0	35.1
	Fiji	8,800	56.2 million (1.7)	31	40,788	0	36.6
	Kiribati	936	11.8 million (8.7)	55.8	336	0	75.5
	Nauru	4,513	2.2 million (0.4)	17.2	n/a	n/a	3.9
	Papua New Guinea <sup>50</sup>	120,000	185 million (3.4)	12.9	28,037	n/a	16.5
	Samoa	11,700	28.5 million (5.4)	28.8	6,669	n/a	47.8
	Singapore <sup>53</sup>	498	364.5 million (0.2)	22.5	900,737	0	38.7
	Solomon Islands	5,114	27.4 million (6)	75.7	2,594	10	31
	Tonga	1,050	10 million (4.1)	23.4	1,886	n/a	30.5
	Vanuatu	15,758	3.8 million (0.8)	39.2	2,314	7	31.1
	<b>Average/Total</b>	<b>521,294</b>	<b>944 million (4.4)</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>119,302</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>34.5</b>
South West Pacific	New Zealand	26,620	1.24 billion (0.6)	13	121,863	0	26.7

\* **Please note:** Figures for Commonwealth countries are sourced from FAO Country Profiles from varying years, as a result some figures may be out of date. Updated GDP data for Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom was sourced from the International Monetary Fund<sup>44</sup> and population and employment statistics for these countries sourced from their national Government websites<sup>45</sup>.



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## The Nutritional Value of Fish

Fish provide a wide range of essential micro-nutrients, protein, vitamins and minerals that are often lacking in the carbohydrate-rich staples that form the bulk of the diet of the world's poor<sup>11</sup>. Deficiencies in these nutrients are virtually nonexistent in developed nations, but still plague developing countries. The impacts of these deficiencies on child and maternal health are particularly severe.

- In developing countries, the lack of complete proteins is the primary cause of death in children. The World Health Organisation estimates that 35% of under-five deaths are associated with under-nutrition<sup>12</sup>.
- Deficiency in Vitamin A among African children is a common health problem that affects over 30 million<sup>13</sup>. It is the leading cause of preventable blindness in children, increases risks of disease and death from severe infections and increases the risk of maternal mortality<sup>14</sup>. In Sierra Leone one in eight women die of pregnancy-related causes<sup>15</sup>.
- Another major health problem in Africa is severe iron deficiency anaemia which causes the death of between 15,000 and 20,000 African women each year<sup>16</sup>. Sufficient levels of fish in diets would help alleviate some of these concerns.



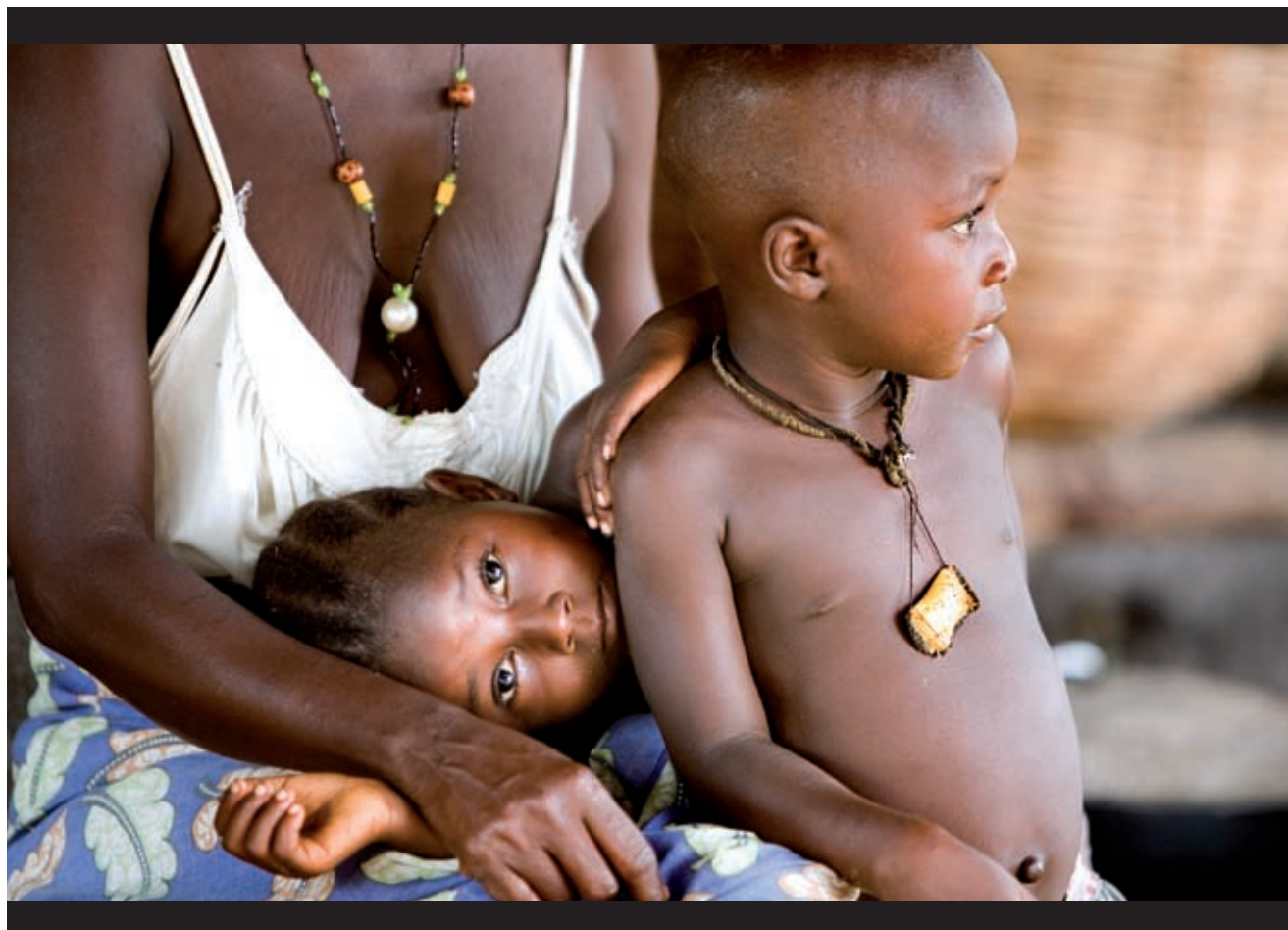
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The data in Table 1 indicates that fisheries are particularly important to Commonwealth food security in West Africa, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific. While there are variations between countries, within these regions fish contributes significantly more than the worldwide average of 15% of total animal protein consumed. These regions also include a high proportion of developing countries where rates of undernourishment range from 10-21% (with the exception of the Western Pacific). The importance of fisheries to food security within these regions has been acknowledged by a number of regional and international forums, including:

- The Pacific Islands Forum in 2009 acknowledged the high importance of food security as an emerging issue and committed governments to immediate action to address food security issues nationally and regionally. The Pacific Islands Forum also reaffirmed the importance of securing the long-term flow of benefits from fisheries conservation and sustainability efforts<sup>17</sup>.
- The importance of fisheries to the Caribbean was highlighted by Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) Executive Director at the 2011 Multi-Disciplinary Workshop on a Common Fisheries Policy for the Caribbean Community. His comments included the important role of fisheries regarding nutrition and food security in the Caribbean and that the sector provides employment and livelihood opportunities for some of the most socio-economically disadvantaged people in the region. He also noted that the Caribbean is a net importer of fish, accounting for an estimated 30% of total regional demand<sup>18</sup>.
- The special needs and vulnerabilities of artisanal, dependent coastal communities and Small Island Developing States, including their socio economic and food security, was considered a guiding principle for the allocation of tuna quota by a group of like-minded coastal states at the 2011 Indian Ocean Tuna Commission Technical Committee Meeting on Allocation Criteria<sup>19</sup>.

Commonwealth countries that are most dependant on marine resources for food security and suffer the highest levels of undernourishment include:

- |                |              |                     |                    |
|----------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| • Mozambique   | • Bangladesh | • Antigua & Barbuda | • Sri Lanka        |
| • Sierra Leone | • Cameroon   | • Grenada           | • Solomon Islands. |



Sufficient levels of fish in diets would alleviate many nutritional concerns plaguing developing countries

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## Case Study: Pacific Islands – The Nauru Agreement

For small Pacific Island countries, fisheries are critically important as a source of food, employment, government revenue and economic development<sup>20</sup>. While each country must be viewed in its own context, many share characteristics that include a limited resource base, environmental vulnerability and a heavy reliance on fisheries. These similarities have helped unite the islands to combat unsustainable fishing practices, which are a significant threat to food security in the region<sup>21</sup>.

The Nauru Agreement was established to protect the region's tuna stocks, which contribute an estimated 25% of the world supply and are a critical source of revenue<sup>22</sup>. The Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), are the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu, which allows collective bargaining and control over terms for tuna fishing licenses in the region<sup>23</sup>. The agreement represents a significant achievement in that it allows small, developing countries to effectively manage and control their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), generate greater economic returns and protect fish stocks from increasing numbers of foreign fishing vessels.

The Nauru Agreement establishes stringent measures to improve and regulate sustainable fishing practices within the region, both within EEZs and international waters. The Agreement coordinates the management of common fish stocks, improves compliance with management measures and Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS). The Agreement also includes a groundbreaking initiative to manage 'pockets' of international waters located between parties' EEZs. Operators wishing to fish within the EEZs of PNA member states must agree to stop fishing within these pockets, improving the abundance of tuna stocks within the region.

The effectiveness of the Nauru Agreement illustrates the benefits and progress that can be achieved through cooperative fisheries management, despite limited resources or levels of development.



High Seas "Pockets"

© Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2010

# Impacts of IUU fishing on the food security of Commonwealth countries

IUU fishing is a significant issue across the world's oceans, as detailed in table 2.

Impacts of Illegal and Unreported Fishing by Region <sup>5</sup>				
Region	Total FAO catch in region (000' tonnes)	Average % of catch constituted by IUU	Extrapolated lower value of illegal catch (US\$m)	Extrapolated upper value of illegal catch (US\$m)
Eastern Central Atlantic	3,623	37%	828	1,581
Western Central Atlantic	1,769	10%	91	241
South East Atlantic	1,703	7%	61	158
North East Atlantic	11,195	9%	553	1,292
North West Atlantic	2,227	9%	80	296
Eastern Indian	5,139	32%	957	1,986
Western Indian	4,192	10%	396	969
Western Central Pacific	10,345	34%	1,964	4,325
South West Pacific	740	4%	8	49
Eastern Central Pacific	1,890	15%	160	344
North West Pacific	22,692	33%	3,728	9,859
North East Pacific	2,731	3%	29	114
Sout West Atlantic	2,142	32%	311	918
South East Pacific	13,438	19%	1,477	3,166
Antarctic	137	7%	9	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>83,963</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>10,061</b>	<b>23,561</b>

Source data is from 2003 and does not include unregulated artisanal fishing. Values of IUU catches are extrapolated from a study of representative samples of fisheries in each region.

Of the areas most heavily impacted by IUU fishing—both in terms of proportion of total catch and value of catch lost—three have significant numbers of Commonwealth fishers: Eastern Central Atlantic, Western Central Pacific and Eastern Indian. Combined, there are over 67 million Commonwealth citizens employed in the fisheries sector in these regions. Many Commonwealth countries are particularly affected by IUU fishing. Sierra Leone, for example, loses an estimated US\$29 million per year due to IUU fishing, which threatens the livelihoods of coastal communities<sup>33</sup>.



Fisheries are the main source of protein for an estimated one billion people © EJF



Artisanal fishers in Sierra Leone face declining catches due to IUU fishing © EJF





IUU fishing depletes fish stocks, destroys marine habitats and jeopardises food security

© Greenpeace

Some Commonwealth countries are taking strong measures to address IUU fishing, which include improving MCS capacity, undertaking regional partnerships and supporting international initiatives. The following are just a few examples:

- Namibia de-flagging vessels implicated in illegal fishing<sup>25</sup>;
- Tanzania cancelling 69 licences held by foreign fishing vessels suspected of operating illegally in the Indian Ocean<sup>26</sup>;
- Sierra Leone announcing the planned closure of its open shipping registry to foreign-owned vessels in 2010<sup>27</sup>;
- Canada leading cooperative international MCS initiatives in the North Pacific<sup>56</sup>;
- United Kingdom, championing the development and implementation of the EU fisheries regulation, Council Regulation (EC) No. 1005/2008, established to prevent IUU fishing;
- Australia undertaking strong cooperative MCS activities in the South Pacific<sup>57</sup>; and
- New Zealand recently expanding its patrol capacity to increase surveillance efforts in Antarctic waters<sup>28</sup>.

These actions are commendable, but ongoing vigilance is required to protect global sustainable fisheries through both the individual actions of Member States and Commonwealth support of international initiatives.

# Case Study: West Africa – the importance of fish to food security in the world’s IUU hotspot

## West Africa

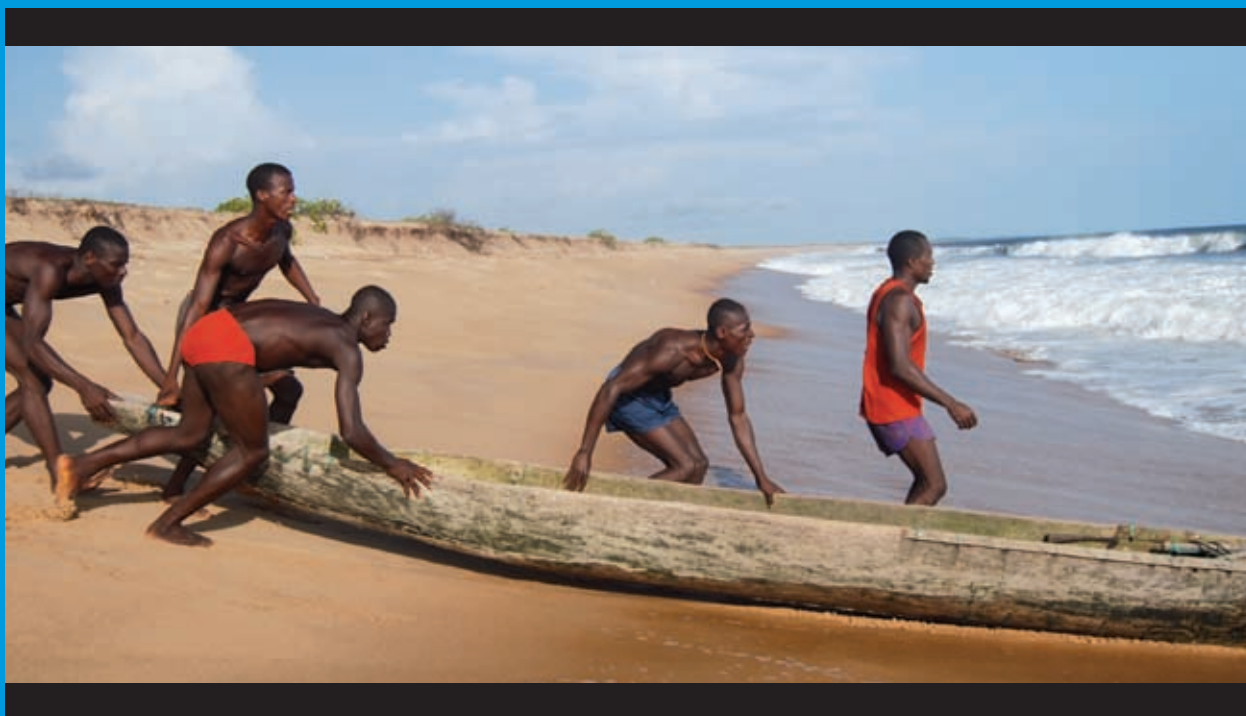
Marine fisheries make an important contribution to the economies and food security of West African coastal states. In 2006 Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone and Cote d’Ivoire exported US\$587 million in fisheries products, and fish provide as much as 64% of daily animal protein intake and 9.4% of GDP for some West African countries<sup>55</sup>. West Africa is one of the poorest and most vulnerable regions of the world, with most countries considered to be ‘Least Developed Countries’<sup>24</sup>.

West African waters are believed to have the highest levels of IUU fishing in the world, with the illegal catch in the wider Eastern Central Atlantic estimated to be worth between US\$828 million – US\$1.6 billion per year, or 37% of the region’s total catch<sup>5</sup>. Illegal ‘pirate’ fishing operators target this region and take advantage of the limited capacity of West African governments to effectively monitor and control their waters.

With some exceptions, West African fisheries governance is under-resourced and ineffective, resulting in fisheries being over-exploited economically and beyond sustainable limits. Policy objectives are often ill-directed and have unintended consequences that result in unsustainable fishing and longer-term economic losses.

## Sierra Leone

Fisheries are also critical to the lives and livelihoods of many coastal communities in Sierra Leone, which is recovering from a brutal civil war that resulted in more than 50,000 deaths, the displacement of one third of the total population and the destruction of schools, hospitals and food production capacity<sup>29</sup>. Sierra Leone is ranked 158th in the 2010 UN Human Development Index, making it one of the least developed nations in the world. Currently 70% of the population lives below the national poverty line, 58% are severely deprived in terms of health and 46% are undernourished<sup>30</sup>. Most Sierra Leoneans lack access to healthcare, education, sanitation, clean water or sufficient nutrition.



An estimated 119 million people are directly dependent on fisheries for employment, 97% of who are in developing countries

© EJF



Fisheries are one of the few sources of income and livelihoods for many coastal communities. In 2006 the fisheries sector contributed 9.4% of GDP and in 2005 employed 243,500 people. Of these, 30,000 were artisanal fishers and 200,000 employed in the artisanal secondary sector. Fish is the most affordable and widely available protein source in Sierra Leone, contributing 64% of animal protein consumed<sup>31</sup>.

Sierra Leone lacks sufficient resources to monitor and control their waters and is targeted by illegal industrial 'pirate' fishing operators. It is estimated that illegal fishing in Sierra Leone is as high as 26% of the total catch<sup>32</sup>, with economic losses estimated to be US\$29 million per year<sup>33</sup>. IUU fishing by artisanal fishers is also a significant issue that undermines sustainable fisheries in Sierra Leone. The use of illegal fishing gear and the targeting of key breeding and spawning grounds by some fishers is of particular concern.

EJF's engagement with coastal communities in Sierra Leone has exposed the impacts of IUU fishing. Communities are struggling to cope with declining fisheries resources, destruction of their fishing equipment and local fishers have in some cases been attacked by the crew of pirate fishing vessels. Declining inshore fish stocks are forcing artisanal fishermen to fish further out to sea and for longer periods, in small craft that are unsafe in offshore waters. The threat of harm and loss of livelihoods is forcing some artisanal fishers to abandon fishing altogether, further impacting food security.

Sierra Leone also suffers from a lack of effective fisheries management and governance. The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources has limited capacity and a lack of fisheries data limits effective management of the country's fisheries<sup>54</sup>.

## Protecting food security in Sierra Leone

Since 2008, EJF has worked with the Sierra Leone Government and coastal communities to improve fisheries management and governance. Local EJF staff operate a community patrol boat that photographs and documents IUU fishing. This information is provided to national and international authorities in order to assist the identification and prosecution of the IUU operators.

Between January and March 2011, EJF identified and documented the activities of several industrial fishing vessels operating illegally in Sierra Leone waters, and tracked their catch to the Spanish Port of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The import of IUU fish into EU markets breaches the new Council Regulation (EC) No. 1005/2008, established to prevent IUU fishing. EJF provided this information to European authorities, who seized over 1100 tonnes of suspected illegal fish worth over US\$6 million that had been caught by vessels flagged to South Korea and Panama, within the waters of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Conakry and Guinea Bissau.

## Support of the Commonwealth

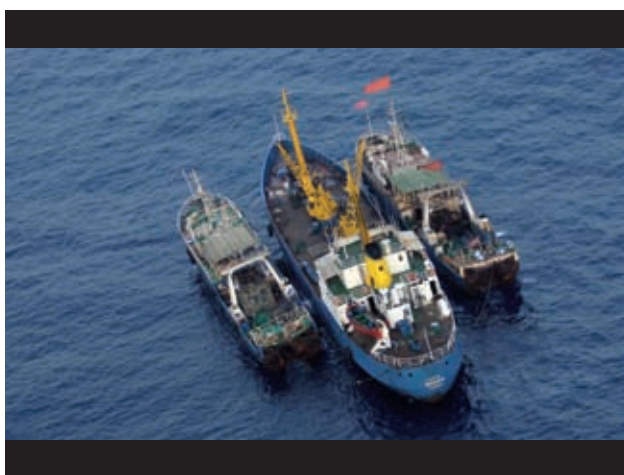
West African states share similar circumstances to other developing coastal countries whose food security is threatened by IUU fishing and a lack of effective fisheries governance and management. Commonwealth assistance and support is fundamental to the success of the local, regional and international initiatives required to prevent IUU fishing and the lack of transparency that facilitates it. In particular support is required for improved fisheries management, co-management of local fisheries, alignment of fisheries management frameworks and trans-boundary enforcement efforts.

## Key areas for Commonwealth Support

EJF considers that the following fisheries issues and recommendations for Commonwealth support, are key to addressing IUU fishing, sustainable fisheries and protecting food security and livelihoods.

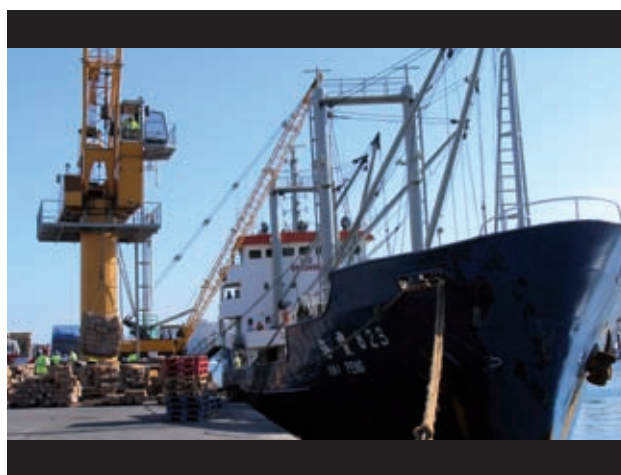
### Improving Transparency

A chronic lack of transparency in global marine fisheries is hampering attempts to sustainably manage fish resources and address IUU fishing. In addition to a lack of transparency in vessel licensing and fisheries access agreements, it is extremely difficult for authorities to identify and prosecute IUU vessels that range freely across the world's oceans. Many IUU vessels rarely come into port, are seldom subject to inspection and the owners are hidden behind shell companies. There is no universal identification system for fishing vessels, which makes it almost impossible to assess their numbers, activities and to whom they belong. Penalising the actual beneficial owners of IUU vessels is extremely difficult, and sanctions are often a small risk in comparison with the profits of IUU fishing. The lack of traceability in many fisheries products further compounds the lack of transparency and accountability.



Illegal fish is often laundered by transshipping at sea

© EJF



Las Palmas: A Port of Convenience

© EJF

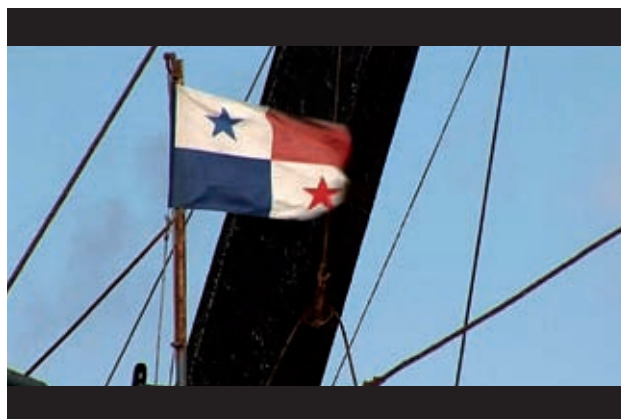
### Global Record

The adoption of a Global Record of fishing vessel information would increase the transparency of the global fishing fleet considerably, making it easier for authorities to identify and prosecute the beneficial owners of IUU fishing vessels. The 29<sup>th</sup> UN FAO Committee on Fisheries considered the adoption of a Global Record in 2011, but determined that it should be a voluntary, long-term initiative<sup>34</sup>.

EJF considers that a binding and comprehensive Global Record is required to prevent the beneficial owners of large, organised, illegal fishing operations from continuing their activities. A voluntary agreement would not compel non-cooperating countries and operators to improve the transparency of their fishing fleets.

### Flags of Convenience

Flags of Convenience (FoC) are a major loophole in international law that are exploited by IUU fishing operators. FoC involve vessels flagging to an 'open registry' operated by a country that lacks the capacity or will to enforce its international fisheries management obligations. FoC are a common way that IUU operators avoid detection and sanctions for illegal fishing activities. Backed by shell companies, joint ventures, hidden owners, and by 'flag-hopping' (where vessels frequently change their flag), FoC are a considerable obstacle to authorities when combating IUU fishing.



Panama: A Flag of Convenience

© EJF



Ending the exploitation of FoC requires international pressure on FoC States to operate their registries responsibly and comply with international fisheries management obligations. If FoC States lack the capacity to do so, closure of their open registries to foreign-owned fishing vessels represents a simple and achievable solution.

## Case study: The Xiong Nu Baru 33 and Sima Qian Baru 22

In February 2011 New Zealand authorities observed two vessels, the Xiong Nu Baru 33 and Sima Qian Baru 22, fishing illegally in the Ross Sea<sup>35</sup>. Both vessels were fishing without the authority of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). The Xiong Nu Baru 33 was using banned deep-sea gillnets, an environmentally destructive and non-discriminatory fishing method known for its high levels of bycatch and ghost-fishing from lost and discarded nets.

The vessels, formerly named the Draco-1 and Corvus, were both previously blacklisted by CCAMLR for similar IUU fishing activities. Following their initial blacklisting in 2003 and 2004, both vessels repeatedly changed their names and flags in order to evade detection and continue their IUU activities. Flags adopted by both vessels included many of the major FoC states, including Togo, North Korea, Panama, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Sierra Leone<sup>36</sup>. The ownership of these vessels is historically linked to Vidal Armadores, a Spanish company associated with numerous IUU operations<sup>37</sup>.

The New Zealand Government raised concerns with the North Korean Government, which responded that it has deregistered the vessels but did not provide any further information<sup>38</sup>. The ownership and current locations of both vessels remain unknown. Given their long IUU fishing history and their repeated use of FoC, there is no guarantee that they are not continuing their IUU activities under other FoC.

The Xiong Nu Baru 33 and Sima Qian Baru 22 clearly illustrate how FoC and the lack of international fisheries transparency facilitate IUU fishing and the difficulties they present for authorities.



Caught fishing illegally: the Sima Qian Baru 22, current flag and owner unknown

© NZ Herald





## Supporting management and governance in developing countries

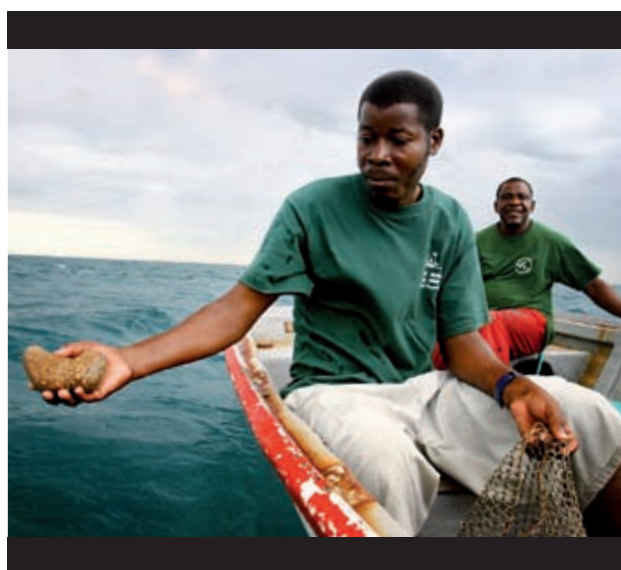
A lack of effective management and fisheries governance results in wastage, overexploitation and degradation of fisheries resources and marine environments<sup>39</sup>. The World Bank and FAO estimate that US\$50 billion is wasted each year due to inadequate fisheries management. By improving governance of marine fisheries, a substantial part of this annual economic loss could be recovered<sup>3</sup>.

In 2009 Commonwealth Heads of Government expressed concern about the threat that unsustainable fishing poses to food security. Heads also agreed that urgent action was needed to strengthen fisheries and marine management in member states' waters, particularly in the case of the more vulnerable member states<sup>6</sup>.

There is a strong correlation between a lack of governance and IUU fishing, with developing countries most at risk. Developing countries with poor governance records are more vulnerable to illegal activities conducted by both their own fishers and vessels from distant water fishing nations. In Africa, for example, many coastal states licence foreign vessels to fish in their waters but lack the capacity to ensure that they do not engage in illegal activities<sup>5</sup>.

Article 5 of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (The Code) calls for countries and organisations to work towards the adoption of measures to address the needs of developing countries, especially financial and technical assistance, technology transfer, training and scientific cooperation and in enhancing their ability to develop their own fisheries and participate in high seas fisheries<sup>40</sup>.

EJF considers that continued Commonwealth support and assistance to improve developing countries' governance is fundamental to protecting food security. Support for trans-boundary fisheries management and enforcement is critical to reducing wastage and overexploitation, allowing countries to derive greater benefit from their fisheries resources. Furthermore co-management between governments and coastal communities is often the best means of protecting local marine resources.



Tanzanian Ranger returning illegal fish: inadequate management wastes an estimated US\$50 billion each year © Mike Markovina/Marine Photobank



© Jiangang Luo/Marine Photobank

## Recommendations:

The Commonwealth has a vital role in improving sustainable fisheries within its waters and supporting the international consensus that is required to protect global fisheries. EJF recommends that the following actions be taken to protect fisheries and ensure their vital contribution to Commonwealth food security:

That Commonwealth Heads of Government address the importance of sustainable fisheries to food security through a joint statement, addressing, in particular:

- Improved transparency for global marine fisheries including a binding and comprehensive Global Record of fisheries vessels, as well as improved traceability of fisheries products;
- Binding standards for Flag State performance, an end to the exploitation of Flags of Convenience and sanctions for those states that fail to monitor and control their distant water fishing fleets; and
- Prioritising funding to developing countries to improve fisheries management and governance, to increase the contribution of fisheries to food security and economic development.



Protecting People and Planet

**The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) works internationally to protect the natural environment and human rights.**

Our campaigns include action to resolve abuses and create ethical practice and environmental sustainability in cotton production, shrimp farming & fisheries. We work to stop the devastating impacts of illegal fishing operators, prevent the use of unnecessary and dangerous pesticides and to secure vital international support for climate refugees.

EJF has provided training, equipment, support and know-how to grassroots campaigners in Sierra Leone, Cambodia, Vietnam, India, Mali, Guatemala, Indonesia and Brazil, helping them stop the exploitation of their natural environment.

The Environmental Justice Foundation is a UK-based environmental and human rights charity registered in England and Wales (1088128).

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