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DRIVERS AND IMPACTS OF DISTANT WATER FLEETS ON NATIONAL FISHERIES AND FISHERFOLK IN PRIORITY USAID GEOGRAPHIES:

A research agenda to support responsive action



CONTRACT INFORMATION

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USAID'S ROLE IN RESPONDING TO THE IMPACTS OF DISTANT WATER FISHING FLEETS

Sustainable fisheries as a development issue

USAID recognizes the sustainable management of coastal, marine, and freshwater resources as an important development issue. The Agency has decades of experience promoting coastal and fisheries management for improved food security, livelihoods, and biodiversity conservation. The majority of our work has focused on supporting governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector in strengthening the capacities, constituencies, and information needed to implement science-based, collaborative management in ways that reflect ecological realities and social fairness. This work includes building the enabling policies, laws, and precedents that underpin effective management, as well as addressing the underlying drivers of unsustainable behavior by shifting incentives and responding to the high dependence on natural resources that is typical in the contexts where we work. USAID has also implemented innovative regional and global programs aimed at addressing key fisheries issues, for example by expanding transparency and traceability in seafood supply chains to counter illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.¹

Growing concerns about the threat of distant water threats to sustainable fisheries

Within this context, industrial distant water fleets (DWFs) have typically been identified in USAID programs as one of many threats to fisheries sustainability that can be mitigated through broader efforts to improve scientific, governance, and enforcement capacities and informed, organized constituencies. More recently, however, some USAID Missions have started to identify DWFs as a more direct and significant impediment to improving the management of national fisheries, and are beginning to consider targeted interventions to counter the impacts of DWFs on national fishery resources.² In particular, China's multi-prong engagement in fisheries has been identified as a significant confounding driver to improved management in some contexts, a result of its large, heavily subsidized DWF; voracious demand for seafood; and other development investments and diplomatic engagements.³

1 The Oceans and Fisheries Partnership. n.d. "Home". <https://www.seafdec-oceanspartnership.org/>; The Seafood Alliance for Legality and Traceability. n.d. "Home". <https://www.saltraceability.org/>

2 Stark, J., H.Z. Schuttenberg, M. Newton, S. Edminster, G. Asiedu, E. Ekekpi., and G.J. Torrens-Spence. 2019. *Advancing Reforms to Promote Sustainable Management of Ghana's Small Pelagic Fisheries*. Washington, D.C., USA: USAID. 57pp. <https://biodiversitylinks.org/projects/completed-projects/bridge/bridge-resources/advancing-reforms-to-promote-sustainable-management-of-ghana2019s-small-pelagic-fisheries/view>; Belhabib, D., V. Koutob, V. Lam, C. Mathews, N. Lazar, V. Ndiaye, J. Tobey, and D. Pauly. 2014. Beyond the unseen: a first collaborative model towards estimating illegal, unreported, and unregulated catches off Senegal. Vancouver, Canada: Fisheries Centre, The University of British Columbia. <http://www.searoundus.org/doc/publications/wp/2014/Belhabib-et-al-Senegal.pdf>; BBC News. 2014. "Senegal seizes Russian vessel for 'illegal fishing'". <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-25621864>

3 EJF. 2018. *China's hidden fleet in West Africa: A spotlight on illegal practices within Ghana's industrial trawl sector*. London, United Kingdom: EJF. <https://ejf.org/resources/downloads/China-hidden-fleet-West-Africa-final.pdf>; EJF. 2020. *Fear, hunger and violence: Human rights in Ghana's industrial trawl fleet*. London, United Kingdom: EJF. https://ejf.org/resources/downloads/EJF_Ghana-human-rights-in-fisheries_2020_final.pdf; EJF. 2020. "New Trawlers With History Of Illegal Fishing Threaten Senegalese Fisheries." EJF website. <https://ejf.org/news-media/new-trawlers-with-history-of-illegal-fishing-threaten-senegalese-fisheries>; Stop Illegal Fishing. 2018. "Madagascar Agrees To A 10 Year Fisheries Agreement With Chinese Consortium". Stop Illegal Fishing website. <https://stopillegalfishing.com/press-links/madagascar-agrees-to-a-10-year-fisheries-agreement-with-chinese-consortium/>; Molinari, C.. 2020. "Chinese vessels swarming, Ecuador rushes to protect the Galapagos". Seafood Source website. <https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/environment-sustainability/ecuador-rushes-to-protect-galapagos-faced-with-predatory-chinese-fishing-vessels>; Molinari, C.. 2021. "Four South American countries prepare to challenge Chinese fishing abuses at COM9". Seafood Source website. <https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/environment-sustainability/four-south-american-countries-prepare-to-challenge-chinese-fishing-abuses-at-comm9>; Varley, K., A. Leung, H. Dormido, X.Q. Nguyen, and P. Heijmans. 2020. "Fight over Fish Fans a New Stage of Conflict in South China Sea". Bloomberg website. <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2020-dangerous-conditions-in-depleted-south-china-sea/>

DWFs can negatively affect national fishery resources, industries, and communities in a number of ways. DWFs sometimes engage in harvesting practices that are legal but unsustainable; the licenses that allow unsustainable activity may be the result of weak data and technical analyses and/or of corrupting influence on issuing officials. DWFs can also degrade fisheries if they extract resources illegally, resulting in habitat destruction or overharvesting. Often enforcement of illegal fishing by DWFs is challenging in developing country contexts, either because enforcement institutions are under-equipped or because political influence disrupts the hand of justice. Additionally, there can be conflicts between DWFs and national fishers, which can include physical collisions, perceptions of unfair resource allocations, or extractions that erode domestic support for compliance with management rules.

Options for countering the negative impacts of DWFs from USAID's development perspective

Given the global dimension of DWFs and changing perceptions about their influence on USAID's fisheries programs, the [Agency's Community of Practice for Marine Conservation and Sustainable Fisheries](#) has taken a fresh look at responsive programming options for USAID Missions and the analyses needed to inform potential programming decisions. Based on key informant interviews, survey results, meetings, and webinars with expert staff at USAID Missions and U.S. Government counterparts, USAID staff prioritized the following six potential strategic responses for addressing the threat from illegal and unsustainable activities by DWFs operating in national exclusive economic zones (EEZs):

- 1. Enhancing transparency in licensing and supply chains to reveal illegal and unsustainable practices by DWFs**
- 2. Empowering fishing associations and other civil society organizations to advocate for government action against illegal or unsustainable fishing activities by DWFs**
- 3. Strengthening national enforcement efforts against illegal activities by DWF vessels**
- 4. Developing or strengthening alliances of organizations that collectively take actions to deter illegal or unsustainable fishing practices by DWFs**
- 5. Improving regional data sharing to strengthen enforcement efforts against illegal activities by DWF vessels**
- 6. Strengthening fisheries access agreements to achieve greater sustainability and fairer resource allocations**

USAID Mission staff noted a common reticence by many host country governments to address DWF issues, particularly those involving China, and indicated the need and value of regional to global action to address these issues.

Enabling evidence-based programming by USAID Missions through implementation of this research agenda

Through this work USAID staff also prioritized the information needed to support programmatic decision-making by the Agency's bilateral and regional Missions with current fisheries programs or relevant equities in the sector. This research agenda describes these analytic priorities and key geographies. USAID will implement the research agenda through coordination with other partners and ongoing research initiatives, as well as strategic investments in key studies as resources allow. We are currently initiating work on several priority questions and updates on implementation will be posted to [our website](#). If your organization would like to contribute toward the implementation of this research agenda, please contact Heidi Schuttenberg (hschuttenberg@usaid.gov) or our Research Integrator, John Parks (John.Parks@tetrattech.com).

RESEARCH PRIORITIES TO SUPPORT PROGRAMMATIC DECISIONS FOR RESPONDING TO THE IMPACTS OF DISTANT WATER FLEETS ON SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

This DWF Research Agenda aims to provide relevant and robust information to support decision-making by USAID Missions with investments or equities in the sustainable management of wild-capture marine fisheries. It prioritizes information, by Mission, around 11 research questions under these four research areas.

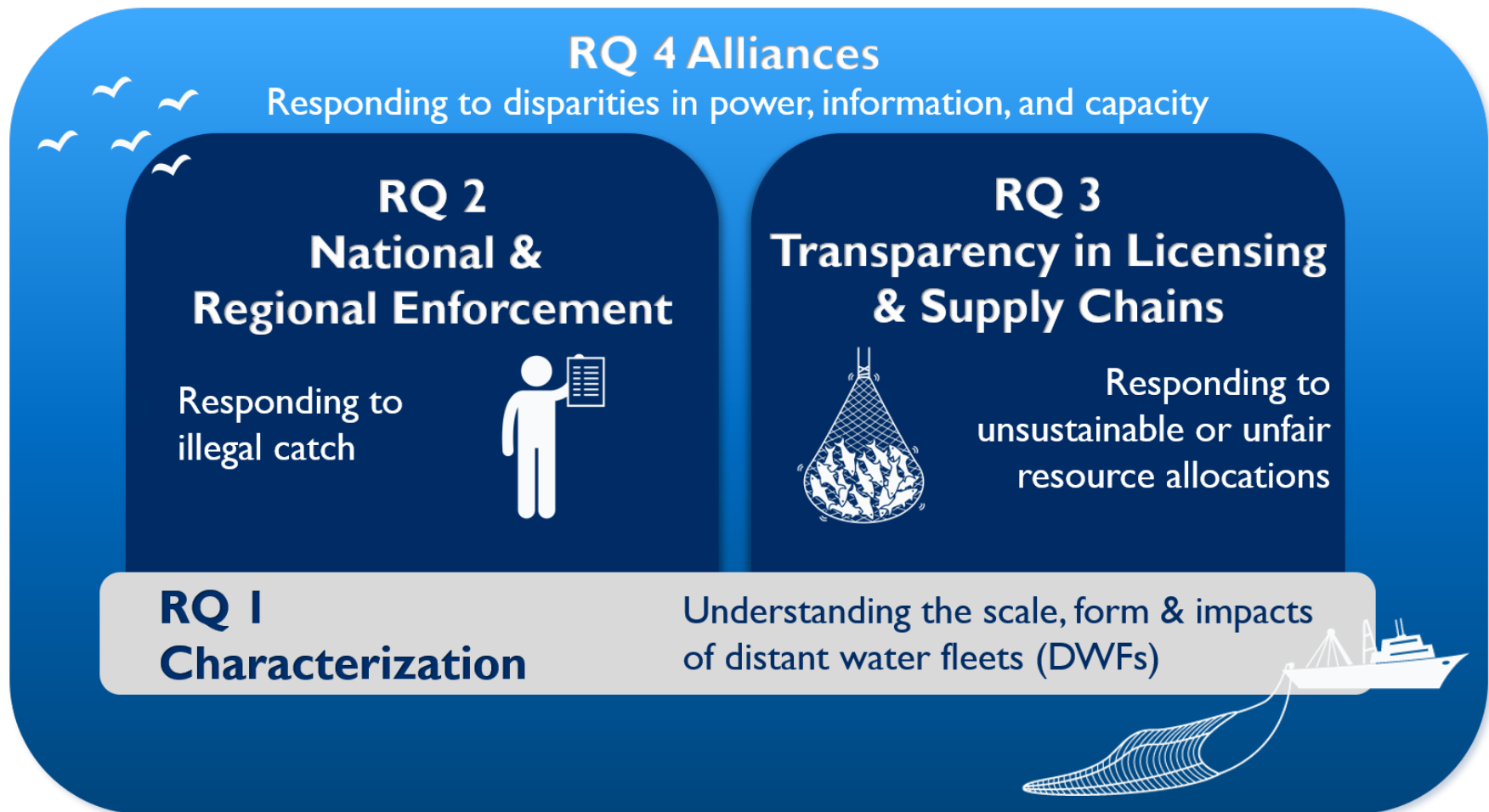


Figure 1: Graphic depicting the relationship between the four research areas.

Research Area I: Characterizing the scale, form, and impacts of DWFs on national fisheries and fisherfolk

USAID Missions identified this research category to support decisions about empowering fishing associations and other civil society organizations to advocate for government action against illegal or unsustainable fishing activities by DWFs.

- I.A. What is the scale of illegal or unsustainable fishing by DWFs in the country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)?
What are the main forms of illegal fishing by DWFs (e.g., licensing, gear, area)? What are the main forms of legal, unsustainable fishing by DWFs?
- I.B. What are the ecological costs of illegal and/or unsustainable fishing by DWFs operating in the country's EEZ?
- I.C. What are the economic costs of illegal and/or unsustainable fishing by DWFs operating in the country's EEZ?

A more specific understanding of how DWFs are impacting national fishery resources, industries, and communities would help clarify how DWFs compare with other threats to priority fisheries, as well as the costs to national revenues. Quantifying these impacts in terms of lost ecological productivity, jobs, income, and tax revenue would help identify the extent to which DWFs warrant priority attention from stakeholders and donors.

Priority geographies: Ghana, Madagascar, Mozambique, Senegal, Somalia, East Africa Regional, Southern Africa Regional, West Africa Regional, Philippines, Pacific Islands Regional, Regional Development Mission for Asia, Ecuador, Peru, Southeastern Caribbean (Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Suriname), South America Regional

Other geographies of interest: Bangladesh, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Timor-Leste, Vietnam, El Salvador, Honduras, Caribbean Regional

Research Area 2: Barriers to national and regional enforcement of illegal activities by DWFs operating in national EEZs

USAID Missions identified this research category to support decisions about programming to strengthen national and regional enforcement efforts.

National Enforcement

- 2.A. What are the most significant barriers to national enforcement of illegal activities by DWFs operating in national EEZs (i.e., corruption, concerns about taking action given other equities with the flag country, lack of awareness, lack of capacity to detect or respond, etc.)?

A more granular understanding of the barriers to effective enforcement is needed to identify and prioritize effective strategic approaches for improving enforcement. An analysis that considers technical, social, and power dynamics would be most useful.

Priority geographies: Ghana, Senegal, Madagascar, Philippines, Pacific Islands Regional, Peru, Ecuador, South America Regional, Caribbean Regional
Other geographies of interest: Indonesia, PNG, East Africa Regional

Regional Coordination

- 2.B. What regional arrangements for information sharing and coordinated enforcement action are currently in place? What are their strengths and weaknesses in addressing this issue?
- 2.C. Are there good practice models for improving regional enforcement against IUU by DWFs that could be useful in this geography?

Because DWFs often move between the EEZs of different countries, effective regional coordination is needed to take enforcement actions against vessels involved in illegal activities. Understanding how existing practices for regional coordination of enforcement efforts compare to global good practices would help determine the extent to which USAID programming could improve these efforts in our priority geographies to reduce IUU fishing by DWFs.

Priority geographies: East Africa Regional, West Africa Regional, Regional Development Mission for Asia, Pacific Islands Regional, Caribbean Regional, South America Regional

Research Area 3: Transparency and sustainability in licensing and supply chains associated with DWF activity in national EEZs

USAID Missions identified this research category to support decisions about enhancing transparency in licensing and supply chains to reveal illegal and unsustainable practices by DWFs. Question 3.C also supports potential programming to strengthen source country access agreements to improve the fairness and sustainability of resource allocations.

- 3.A. How are licensing decisions for foreign fleets currently made? What information about this process or the resulting decisions is publicly available?
- 3.B. Are there good practices around licensing transparency that could be useful in this geography?

Understanding how existing practices for licensing DWFs compares to global good practices for decision-making and transparency would help determine the extent to which programming in these areas could reduce unsustainable or unfair resource allocation for DWFs.

Priority geographies: Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Senegal, East Africa Regional, Pacific Islands Regional

Other geographies of interest: Philippines, PNG, Vietnam, Tanzania, Ecuador, South America Regional

- 3.C. What is the status of existing access agreements with DWFs? How do the existing agreements compare to good practices for negotiating and enforcing access agreements?

Understanding the extent to which existing access agreements either support or work against the equitable and sustainable allocation of fish can inform future programming. It would be helpful to understand both the terms of the access agreements and how they are enforced. For regional geographies, it would be helpful to understand the variation in the terms of key agreements across countries.

Priority geographies: Ghana, Senegal, Madagascar, Philippines, Ecuador, Peru, South America Regional

Other geographies of interest: Tanzania, Mozambique, East Africa Regional, PNG, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Pacific Islands Regional, Caribbean Regional

- 3.D. Where are fish harvested through illegal or unreported practices by DWF being sold? Who are the buyers?

A more specific understanding of how illegal or unreported catches by DWF vessels are entering supply chains could inform responsive actions against buyers who are enabling illegal activities.

Priority geographies: Ghana, Madagascar, Mozambique, Senegal, Indonesia, Regional Development Mission for Asia, Pacific Islands Regional, Ecuador, Peru, South America Regional

Other geographies of interest: Kenya, Tanzania, East Africa Regional, Philippines, PNG, Vietnam

Research Area 4: Opportunities to develop or strengthen effective alliances of organizations that collectively take actions to deter illegal or unsustainable fishing practices by DWFs

USAID Missions identified this research category to support decisions about enhancing alliances to counter illegal and unsustainable practices by DWFs.

4.A. What other organizations have shared interests and influence with the national government?

Understanding the interests and comparative strengths of existing alliances, as well as relevant local, national, regional, and global organizations can help inform strategic decisions about how USAID might work to collaborate, strengthen, or develop alliances at national to regional levels.

Priority geographies: Senegal, Madagascar, East Africa Regional, Philippines, Pacific Islands Regional, Ecuador, South America Regional

Other geographies of interest: Ghana, Indonesia, PNG, Regional Development Mission for Asia, Peru, Caribbean Regional

ANNEX A: RESEARCH QUESTIONS BY PRIORITY GEOGRAPHY

USAID Mission	RQ1: Characterizing Scale, Form, and Impacts		RQ 2A: National Enforcement		RQ 2B/C: Regional Enforcement		RQ 3A/B: Licensing Decisions for Foreign Fleets		RQ 3C: Status of DWF Access Agreements		RQ 3D: Buyers, Supply Chains for IUU		RQ 4: Alliances		Totals	
	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest
Africa																
Ghana																
Kenya																
Madagascar																
Mozambique																
Senegal																
Somalia																
Tanzania																
East Africa Regional																
Southern Africa Regional																
West Africa Regional																
Africa Total	8	0	3	1	2	0	6	1	3	2	4	3	3	1	29	8

USAID Mission	RQ1: Characterizing Scale, Form, and Impacts		RQ 2A: National Enforcement		RQ 2B/C: Regional Enforcement		RQ 3A/B: Licensing Decisions for Foreign Fleets		RQ 3C: Status of DWF Access Agreements		RQ 3D: Buyers, Supply Chains for IUU		RQ 4: Alliances		Totals	
	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest
Asia																
Bangladesh																
Indonesia																
Philippines																
PNG																
Sri Lanka and Maldives																
Timor-Leste																
Vietnam																
Pacific Islands Regional																
Regional Development Mission for Asia																
Asia Total	3	5	2	2	2	0	1	3	1	4	3	3	2	3	14	20

USAID Mission	RQ1: Characterizing Scale, Form, and Impacts		RQ 2A: National Enforcement		RQ 2B/C: Regional Enforcement		RQ 3A/B: Licensing Decisions for Foreign Fleets		RQ 3C: Status of DWF Access Agreements		RQ 3D: Buyers, Supply Chains for IUU		RQ 4: Alliances		Totals	
	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest	Priority	Of Interest
LAC																
Ecuador																
El Salvador																
Honduras																
Peru																
Caribbean Regional																
Southeastern Caribbean*																
Central American Regional																
South America Regional																
LAC Total	4	3	4	0	2	0	0	2	2	1	3	0	2	2	17	8

* Includes Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Suriname.

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