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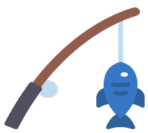
COUNTERING ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED FISHING

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a major environmental and security concern, impacting livelihoods, food security, and development. In response, USAID builds enforcement capacity, strengthens governance, promotes transparency and traceability, and builds alliances to address the impacts of IUU fishing overseas and on U.S. markets.

IUU FISHING



US \$15.5 billion to US \$36.4 billion comprises the annual economic cost of IUU fishing



20 to 50 percent of the global fish and seafood harvest is caught illegally



Over 3.3 billion people rely on fish and seafood for more than **20 percent** of their protein source



39 million people globally work in fisheries on a full-time, part-time, or occasional basis. Small-scale fisheries contribute approximately half of the global fish catch



50 percent of workers in the sector are women

At both local and global scales, unsustainable and IUU fishing damages ecosystems and economies. IUU fishing harms fish stocks and causes the “bycatch” of marine life, including at-risk species, compromising fisheries management and conservation efforts. Further, IUU fishing spurs distrust of seafood sources and food safety, undermines responsible fishers and seafood companies, and increases the risk of food insecurity.

Illegal fishing is also associated with the trafficking and forced labor of crew working on fishing vessels (SOFIA 2020) and other crimes. Forced labor at sea is exacerbated by the isolation on fishing vessels, limitations on the ability of vulnerable fishers to organize, complex jurisdictional issues, corruption, and weak capacity among many of the agencies mandated with protecting fishers at sea. Additionally, over-harvesting and forced labor reinforce each other in an unvirtuous spiral of decline. Degraded fisheries make fishing livelihoods less desirable creating a “pull” factor for labor abuse. Concurrently, crew that do not have agency over harvesting decisions can be directed to fish illegally with damaging consequences for the marine environment.





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OUR APPROACH

USAID’s marine biodiversity programming focuses primarily on efforts to promote sustainable fisheries and conserve marine biodiversity. At the same time, IUU fishing is a priority cross-cutting issue that affects USAID’s work to advance resilient and nutritious food systems, peace and stability, sustainable economic growth, women’s empowerment, and biodiversity conservation. USAID’s comparative advantage in addressing IUU fishing includes efforts at sub-national, national, and regional scales to improve fisheries enforcement systems, enhance transparency and traceability of seafood supply chains, strengthen fisheries governance, and build effective alliances.

USAID’s Marine Conservation and Sustainable Fisheries Community of Practice identified strategic responses for addressing the threat from illegal and unsustainable activities by distant water fleets operating in national exclusive economic zones. USAID is implementing a Research Agenda on the Drivers and Impacts of Distant Water Fleets on National Fisheries and Fisherfolk through a consortium of leading civil society, academic, and private sector partners.

Enhancing Enforcement

USAID helps reduce IUU fishing through developing in country institutional and operational capacity to address IUU.



The Partnership for Sustainably Managed Fisheries supports the governments of Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia to effectively enforce domestic fisheries regulations and international fisheries agreements.

Building Alliances

USAID partners with the interagency to help implement the Maritime Security and Fisheries Enforcement (SAFE) Act, which promotes a whole-of-government approach to addressing IUU fishing.



As part of these efforts, USAID participates in the Interagency Working Group to Counter IUU Fishing. Working together, this Group aims to strengthen maritime security and combat IUU fishing.

Strengthening Governance

USAID collaborates with communities and governments to strengthen sustainable fisheries management.



Fish Right, a partnership between USAID and the Government of the Philippines, trains local government officers on ecosystem-based fisheries management. Local governments use an IUU Fishing Index and Threat Assessment Tool to assess the risk of IUU fishing in a given area, quantify the losses from harmful fishing practices, and identify targeted solutions to reduce IUU fishing, enabling managers to use the best available data to inform fishery policies.

Improving Transparency & Traceability

USAID helps partners improve transparency in the fisheries sector through traceability—tracking the movement of seafood through supply chains.



Through the Seafood Alliance for Legality and Traceability (SALT), USAID assists in accelerating learning and supporting collaboration on traceability solutions for legal and sustainable seafood.

Unsustainable fishing refers to (i) a situation characterized by “overfishing, or inadequate fishing pattern; (ii) fishing activities that lead to long-term losses in the biological and economic productivity, biological diversity, or impacting ecosystem structure in a way that impairs functioning of the exploited system across several generations (FAO 2009). Overfishing, destructive fishing and IUU fishing are all components of unsustainable fishing (FAO 2009).

Illegal fishing refers to fishing activities that contravene applicable laws and regulations, including laws and rules adopted at international and regional levels.

Unreported fishing refers to fishing activities that are not reported or are misreported to relevant authorities, contravening national laws and regulations or reporting procedures of a relevant regional fisheries management organization.

Unregulated fishing occurs in areas or for fish stocks where there are no applicable conservation or management measures and where these fishing activities occur in a manner inconsistent with State responsibilities for the conservation of living marine resources under international law (NOAA 2021).

Please see the two-pager, ‘USAID Marine Conservation and Sustainable Fisheries Programming’ for more on these topics.

Sources:
FAO. 2009. Report of the FAO/UNEP Expert Meeting on Impacts of Destructive Fishing Practices, Unsustainable Fishing, and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing on Marine Biodiversity and Habitats. Available online at: <http://www.fao.org/3/i1490e/i1490e.pdf>
FAO. 2020. The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture. Available online at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9229en/ca9229en.pdf>