



Study of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU) in Territorial Waters of Somalia

Advocacy Paper

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Summary:

Somalia has the longest coastline in Africa with great potential for near shore and offshore fisheries development. The northeastern coasts of Somali waters are one of the highest productive regions in the world due to the productive upwelling region off these coasts. Years of internal conflict and external interventions have however meant that Somalia has not benefited from the full potential of its fisheries. War has damaged the fisheries infrastructure and displaced¹ fishing communities. Moreover, insecurity and foreign illegal fishing have negatively affected the livelihoods of Somali fishermen. In the absence of centralized fisheries governance Somalia's fisheries became open access, leading to further proliferation of foreign illegal fishing², which led to the much-publicized piracy (Bawumia and Somaila, 2010).

Anti-Piracy Task Force from foreign navies³ moved into the region apparently to protect shipping. This further complicated the life of Somali fishermen. These foreign navies intending to rid the sea of pirates, however, protected illegal fishing vessels according to fishermen interviewed for this study. Fishermen said they could not go out fishing, as they are mistaken for pirates by the navies and illegal fishing vessels, which are suspected of having armed guards on board⁴.

This paper attempts to address the problems of fisheries sector development, complexities of illegal fishing, issues of fisheries management and the question of development assistance for fisheries. These and other vital issues of interest to the Somali fisheries, including: small-scale fisheries and human rights, food security and community well-being, gender policies and youth participation in fisheries, fish promotion and consumption and advocacy of citizen groups for small-scale fisheries are discussed briefly followed by recommendations.

¹ According to UNHCR reports about one million Somalis are internally displaced, among them fishermen.

² There were 800 IUU fishing vessels in Somali waters in 2005 (Source: the High Seas Task Force, 2006).

³ More than 30 naval vessels from more than a dozen countries have been floating in the Gulf of Aden and Western Indian Ocean region to counter piracy (Source: Bawumia and Sumaila, 2010).

⁴ Personal communication by community elders in the fishing village of Eyl in Puntland on June 13, 2014..

Table of Contents

Summary	1
Table of Contents.....	2
1. Illegal fishing and rights of fishers and fishing communities.....	2
2. Small-scale Fisheries for community well-being.....	3
3. Women and youth roles in Fisheries.....	4
4. Fish Promotion and consumption for food security and health.....	5
5. Fisheries for food security and healthy living.....	5
6. Grass-roots campaigns for fair fisheries management.....	6
Recommendations.....	7
References.....	8

1. Illegal fishing and rights of fishers and fishing communities

In Somalia artisanal fishermen, before the war, have been relegated in social, economic and political terms. They often faced obstacles to participate in development decision-making process. Since the outbreak of the civil war the fishing communities were badly impacted by the war and their livelihoods rundown and further complicated by foreign illegal fishing still ongoing at present.

Small scale fisheries can make vital contributions towards employment, food security, and foreign exchange earnings. Somalia is gradually recovering from the effects of decades of war. Now the nation needs rehabilitation of its fisheries and protection the rights of its citizens engaged in subsistence fishing. With start up support fisheries can secure livelihoods deprived by insecurity and illegal fishing.

Rights in fisheries are freedom to fish and social and economic rights of fishing communities. This defines rights based fishery management and human well-being in society. This approach is linked to the concept of good practices in small-scale fisheries (FAO, 2007). Good practices (Charles, 2010) in small-scale fisheries are: (1) access rights to a fair share of fisheries; (2) good governance, organizational capacity, legal space and empowerment; (3) sustainable development approach; (4) food security and well-being at individual, household and community levels; and (5) livelihood diversification options.

Fishery rights are held by individual fishers, fishing communities, including rights to be involved in management of the fishery represented by their organization. The benefits from fish resources are measured in economic terms and non-monetary values, including: sharing of power, greater dignity, capacity development, empowerment, decreased conflict, increased food security and enhanced social cohesion (Cox, 2012). Somali fishermen lack these rights. Somalia should, therefore, refrain from privatizing aquatic ecosystems through policy mechanisms that result in concentration of resources rights in the hands of few at the expenses of the fisher folks.

Rights of artisanal fishermen are closely associated with their human rights. In Somalia artisanal fishermen were deprived of their rights to earn their livelihoods for over two decades, because of civil war, IUU illegal fishing and foreign navies in pursuit of piracy allegedly mistaking them for pirates. Fishermen interviewed for this study reported that they have been denied access rights to fishing grounds by these external actors. They claim to be unable and unsafe to earn their living because they are shot at by illegal fishing vessels and foreign navies in the area.

2. Small-scale fisheries for food security and community well-being

Fisheries development is effective when integrated towards poverty alleviation, food security, foreign exchange earnings, and employment creation strategies, including for women and unemployed youth. The sector has gone through decades of neglect, disuse and insecurity. The fishing communities are still affected from years of the civil war, intermittent drought/famine and displacement. Rehabilitation of artisanal fisheries could be realized with external assistance and full participation of the fishing communities to address said objectives.

To this effect, international partners have an important role to play in sharing the burden of much needed assistance for the Somali fisheries. Financial support and capacity building are needed towards improved livelihoods of the fishing communities without compromising the health of the marine ecosystem that has been fished illegally for over two decades. In view of multiple uses of the Somali coastal waters, the government is required to ensure that the fishing communities are involved in coastal area development planning and consulted in decision-making processes as the coastal waters are their only means of livelihoods.

Fisheries co-management would work well in Somalia given the long coastline and federal system of government. Fisheries co-management allows the fishing communities to be involved in fisheries management at national⁵ and regional⁶ levels. This is devolution of federal authorities to the local level through fisheries co-management by which the fishing communities are consulted and involved in all matters of fisheries management.

3. Women and youth roles in fisheries

Women's participation in fisheries is determined by political, socio- economic and cultural contexts. Mostly, power relations between women and men are unequal and unfair to women in fisheries. Fair gender and youth policies are needed to address these issues in Somalia's fisheries. Generally, Somali women play a very active role in their society. However, this role has to be supported by policy through empowering rules and regulations that enable women to gain better rights and more benefits. These are vital for women as individuals, their families, the fishing communities and the nation by extension.

Fishery and aquaculture production activities around the world provide direct employment and revenue to an estimated 155 million people-a substantial proportion of whom are fish processors and traders and female (FAO, 2007). In some countries, women also work in management and fishing activities. Therefore, in Somali small-scale fisheries development policies and strategies need to be directed towards women and youth, some of the largest category of unemployed groups in Somalia at present.

⁵ See *Fisheries Legislative Framework for Somalia* submitted as part of this study on IUU in Somalia, it is recommended to establish a Fisheries Advisory Council, including representative of the fishing communities, to advise the fisheries authority.

⁶ In the *Fisheries Legislative Framework for Somalia* creation of Regional Fisheries Management Committees is recommended to manage fisheries resources at regional levels.

Not much is written about Somali women in fisheries. As is the case in many African countries, the majority of women are generally involved in fish processing and trade. Somali women could also contribute in management and other activities in fisheries. With peace and stability gradually being restored in Somalia many will look for employment as is the case in post-conflict situations. Fisheries could have opportunities for creating employment for women and the youth.

Fish landing towns surveyed for this study lack proper equipment to handle fish. The civil war has damaged facilities that existed before the war and no new facilities have been built since the outbreak of the war. Boosaaso fishing port is a case in point. It needs basic fish landing and handling facilities that women fish traders can use for fish processing and marketing. Presently, women fish traders keep fish in boxes on ice and display the fish on top of the box in the open. The absence of fish landing jetties, fish receiving and handling sheds and cold storage facilities discourages fishermen, traders and customers. When customers get fresh and high quality products they buy more, which is what fishermen need.

All fishing towns and villages need basic fish landing facilities, with fish inspection and quality control laboratory and trained personnel. These are vital facilities for basic operations of a fishing port. Fishermen, women fish traders, customers and the state would benefit greatly from fisheries resources customers buy quality fish. Then fishermen would get a fair price for their catch and the government generates revenue.

Women in small-scale fisheries need to set up their own organizations. Women's access to fish and fish markets could be improved through women cooperatives and support through credit and revolving fund programs. Appropriate facilities for fish handling and processing at landing sites, fish marketing outlets in towns and creating of training centers for women would advance their professional standard, enhance the quality of their services and increase their income and help improve the standards of living of their families and their communities.

4. Fish promotion and consumption campaigns

Annual per capita fish consumption in Somalia is low compared to the global average of 19 kg/year. It is one of the lowest in Africa (FAO, 2013). In Somalia with its long coastlines and vast potential of fish resources (Hitchcock and Olson 1992) its seafood consumption could be much higher.

The majority of Somalia's population eats meat for traditional reasons and because meat is more popular and easily available since Somalia is rich in livestock. Fishermen surveyed for this study reported that fish provides 84 percent of their protein. In inland communities animal and plant sources (meat and lentils) provide the population their major portion of protein intake.

With the aim of encouraging Somalis to include fish in their diet and increase fish consumption, FAO and World Food Program (WFP) jointly conducted fish consumption campaigns among internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Gedo Region of Somalia in October 2013. The campaign was aimed at promoting nutritional value of fish and encouraged sustainable food systems. It is essential to continue similar campaigns among displaced Somalis, in schools or universities, at hospitals and among the youth to increase their intake of seafood.

5. Fish for food security and poverty alleviation

The nutritional value of seafood contributes to alleviating malnutrition and hunger in a region where food insecurity is a chronic problem due to inconsistency of rainfall, draught and famine, which Somalia experiences intermittently. Marine fisheries could play an important role in providing food security. It is not impacted by natural factors that affect agriculture or livestock. Seafood is better substitute to meat. Fish protein contains less of undesirable fats than meat. This makes fish a better alternative to meat.

Given the enormous potential in the fisheries sector, it is essential to develop fisheries and bring it into mainstream Somali society, especially, among the younger generation, and particularly in Puntland and Somaliland. These two regions seem to have basic requirements in terms of peace and stability combined with essential fisheries rules and regulations already in place.

6. Grass-roots campaign for fair fisheries management

The fisheries agency in Somalia ensures that laws and regulations are enforced. They enlighten the fishing communities, fishing companies and the public on the laws in force. In addition, NGOs and citizen groups also fill the gap that enforcement agencies are not able to cover and in some cases even challenge these public agencies in defense of public's rights and well-being of the marine environment.

There are NGOs active in Somalia and Somaliland working, among other things, in humanitarian aid, health, education, agriculture, fisheries, food security, water management, and women/children issues. The local and international NGOs partner with bilateral and multilateral organizations to implement development programs. Local organizations like KAAALO, HAVOYOCO and their partners, OXFAM (UK) and STIDIT (Dutch) other NGOs are active in Somalia and Somaliland in fisheries.

Non-profit and non-political NGOs do play crucial roles in time of peace and war doing things that governments cannot do. NGOs active in Somalia and Diaspora Somali organizations can be involved in advocacy issues related to fisheries. Government role is crucial in providing efficient and transparent administrative support at Federal and State levels. Support of fishing communities, the public, as well as, funding agencies to provide financial support is vital for their activities.

These NGOs can work to enlighten the fishing communities, which have been operating without fishing laws for over twenty years. A whole generation of fishermen has grown up in fisheries lawlessness. This was evident during interviews for this study. Fishermen expressed little awareness of the existence of fishing laws. They need education on fishing laws, to respect and to abide by laws and to heed to advices from enforcement officers. Moreover, there is need for work on advocacy issues related to fishermen and fish women rights, role of women and youth in fisheries, fish promotion campaigns and fisheries for food security and poverty alleviation.

Recommendations

Below are recommendations for interest groups, non-governmental organizations and citizen activists interested in advancing interests of Somali fishing communities towards sustainable exploitation and equitable development of fisheries, curbing illegal fishing, advancing fishers/fish women and youth rights, and campaigns for fish promotion and consumption by enlightening the fishing communities, as well as, lobbying international partners for support.

IUU fishing, rights and fishing communities

- Consider involving fishermen in social, economic, and political decision-making process pertaining to the fisheries sector.
- Work towards sustainable fishing operations within the limits of the law
 - Use appropriate fishing gear to protect small size fishes, untargeted species, including marine mammals and other endangered species
 - Avoid unsustainable and prohibited fishing methods including use of fishing lights, explosives and coral mining.
 - Follow the law in regards to closed seasons, closed species or closed areas
 - Minimize by-catch during fishing and find ways to utilize any by-catches.
 - Educate the fishing communities and the public on the impacts of illegal fishing and on refraining from cooperating with domestic or foreign illegal fishing companies
- Help in organizing fishers, fish women and fish traders associations to protect the rights of their members, to participate in fisheries management activities, to have a say in legislative and policy development processes, to take part in enforcement of fisheries laws, and to take part in regional fisheries management issues etc.
- Embrace rights-based approach towards equitable development and sustainable management of fisheries by involving the fishing communities in all aspects of fisheries management and by curbing current and deterring future illegal fishing activities
- Ensure secure access rights to local fishermen, domestic fishing firms, and legal foreign entities for fair share of resources while encouraging diversification towards secure livelihood alternatives. Limit privatizing aquatic ecosystems to multinational companies.
- Solicit bilateral and multilateral agencies, and NGOs to commit supporting efforts in sustainable artisanal and industrial fisheries development towards self-sufficiency of Somalia and Somaliland.
- Create partnerships with overseas institutions aimed at cultivating inter-cultural ties and opening new avenues of cooperation for women and youth through exchange programs.
- Help initiate common policy for Somalia and Somaliland for sustainable of development and management of fisheries resources towards achieving set objectives.
- Work with conservation organizations to restore and protect the health of marine ecosystems for future generations given that foreign illegal fishing has plundered Somali waters for over two decades.

Women and youth roles in fisheries

- Assist in empowering women in fisheries decision making roles. Creating new operating facilities for women means empowering their role in society. Improving fish landing, handling, processing and marketing of fish products is helping women towards economic self-sufficiency and professional independence.
- Support women and youth to organize in cooperatives to have a voice in society, to negotiate better deals for their products and services and to access banking facilities or credit and revolving fund programs for their members.

Fish consumption promotion

- Introduce fish into Somali society by promoting its consumption in urban centers and rural communities aimed at increasing consumption, especially, in hospitals, schools, internally displaced (IDPs) camps, military barracks and residential areas.
- Diversify of existing livelihoods - livestock husbandry and farming -to integrate with fisheries and aquaculture. Integrated systems share water, feed, human and material resources by utilizing outputs of one activity as inputs for another.

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