

Forum: Environmental Commission

Issue: Addressing corruption in the fishing industry to safeguard sustainable fishing stocks*

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Introduction

The fishing industry has long existed in our world as a market sector as it is considered to be one of the oldest and largest industries. Just like hunting, fishing had originated as a process of people acquiring the nutrition they need ever since 60,000 years ago. Within civilizations, fishing was very common as long as they had some access to a body of water, this was especially evident within the Egyptians, Native Americans and Mesopotamians. However, the first ever “fishing community” were established during the 18th and 19th century in the United States, one of the most important fishing trade areas was established at Cathlamet by James Birnie during 1846. By 1861, the fishing community had evolved into the fishing industry, as his ventures involved receiving fish from Native Americans then salting it and packaging it for sale alongside selling and supplying fishing nets to fishermen in Europe. The fishing industry officially became part of the United States’ multiple footholds, it became a basic necessity of the population, as fish was being harvested, stocked and consumed. The growth of the fishing industry also increased employment opportunities and employment rate; immigrants in the U.S. mostly had substantial knowledge regarding fishing and harvesting (marine life).

Countries with long coastlines are often ones benefiting from the fishing industry and this is due to the fact that landlocked countries are not able to easily access and have their own fishing industry. Therefore, these countries depend on importing from the top fish producing countries which are; China, Peru, India, Indonesia and the United States. While other countries are recognized for exporting frozen fish which include; Russia, Norway, Chile and Taiwan alongside many LEDCs.

Fisheries play a crucial part in the economy of many nations, which is why nations that are unable to supply themselves sign agreements with neighbouring nations that permit them to access water sources and subsequently aiding them in creating their own fisheries. However, in some cases these agreements happen in secrecy due to their illegality and over long periods of time, such

practices begin contributing to the corruption of the fishing industry in addition to other environmental, social and economical consequences.

With this issue being prominent for a long period of time, the United Nations, some countries and non governmental organizations (NGOs) have attempted to approach the issue and find a solution that would both protect fish stocks and encourage sustainable fishing practices. An important body of the United Nation which recognizes the issue at hand is the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The UNODC believes that this issue could be solved through the cooperation of multiple countries on the enforcement of international laws; through international collaboration multiple organizations, countries and offices of the UN can be amended in order to enforce laws against fisheries crime.

Definition of Key Terms

Corruption

Corruption is the disruption or inconsistency in systems such as industries, it is due to the abuse of public power by an entrusted figure in return for personal benefit, change done to the system or industry is mostly negative and harms or impacts the usual or intended outcome.

Fishing Industry

The fishing industry is the economic activity and the work or process that is completed which concerns fishing activities, this includes processes such as; preserving, processing, transporting and selling the retained goods to international or local markets.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is essentially protecting somethings safety from possible or potential harm that could be imposed on it. It is the process or decision of taking appropriate measures depending on the issue at hand.

Sustainable

Sustainability is the measures taken in order to maintain resources to ensure their availability for future generations. Processes could be either aimed at conserving the finite resource or eliminating factors that have reduced the sustainability of the resource, such as; human consumption, markets, trade and cheap costs.

Fishing Stocks

Fishing stocks are the resource of fish. The use of the term “stocks” signifies that the population of fish is in some manner isolated from the complete population from the same species which is why they are often considered self sustaining.

Bribery

Bribery is the exchange of different goods between people, industries and companies with the purpose of influencing a party’s opinion or actions towards an issue or expected reaction. Bribery is illegal in most countries and its consequences include jail time or fines issued by the government itself.

Exploitation Rate

The exploitation rate in the fishing industry refers to the loss in biomass due to fishing. It is the proportion of the loss over the complete or initial amount. An example of this; if 200 tons are harvested from a population of 1000 tons, the exploitation rate would be a decrease of 20%. When calculated over a shorter period of time, this is referred to as fishing mortality.

Biodiversity

The variety or range of species or organisms amongst ecosystems. The level of biodiversity could reflect the sustainability of an ecosystem and act as a justification of what impact external factors could leave on specific environments.

Middlemen

Groups or people who are in charge of the communication occurring between such as but not limited to; industries and businesses in order to exchange or sell goods between both ends.

Background Information

Relationship towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs)

The issue at hand has been addressed by the United Nations multiple times specifically through some of the SDGs agreed on by all member states to be achieved by 2030. The issue is directly related to the 14th goal which focuses on conserving all oceans in order to protect marine resources, by 2020, the UN aim to protect marine life through creating resilience of marine life towards external factors that may affect their biodiversity, this clearly evident in target 14.4 under the 14th SDG.

On another note, this issue is directly related to SDG 16; “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. This issue is specifically addressed in target 16.5 which states; “Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms”. Corruption in the fishing industry has grown overtime due to multiple factors that include bribery for the purpose of illegal fishing and overfishing. While corruption and bribery have been mentioned vaguely in the addressed goal, the issue at hand still majorly falls under this target signifying its importance and the need of an immediate solution.

Corruption in fisheries

In the fishing industry, there are multiple opportunities for corruption to easily take place as it initially begins within institutions and eventually ends in the waters. The easy corruption in the fishing industry is due to the environment, which limits the scale of monitoring or surveillance to be used in oceans which are often used for industries on land. Alongside to the fact that the fishing industry is large and spreads across multiple oceans that are shared by multiple continents or countries, this limits the ability of sovereign, independent or government bodies to monitor all occurring situations and therefore, it is difficult to address any illegal activity.

Bribery occurs on an international level which has lead to the corruption in the fishing industry. Unfair trading occurs as MEDCs take advantage of LEDCs, which is why many of these agreements are kept in secret. MEDCs often ask LEDCs to access their water sources or fisheries in return for economic support or aid in an occurring crisis.

Illegal activities are often carried out by the processors, distributors, retailers and fishers working within the industry and this is through illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, as well as piracy transshipment. Globally, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing was estimated to be around only 16 million during 2002, which is equivalent to around 20% of the total fishing done in 2002 on a global scale. However according to an Oceana’s Genevan study this number has increased to 30% of the world’s fish catch. This rapid increase is due to the lack of consequences and monitoring, illegal fishing has become the drive of overfishing which has imposed threats on the marine ecosystem through directly impacting the biodiversity, in addition to the fact that it has played a role in food security.

On a global scale, seafood is around 20% of the human diet and according to the food and agriculture organization of the United Nations. In 2014, 93.4 million tonnes were caught, yet the fish consumption had risen to 44 pounds that year (global per capita fish consumption). With the numbers of people dependant on the fishing industry growing, the exploitation rate goes through an

unprecedented increase as well. According to the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SIOFC) as of 2010, 29% of 140 species were over exploited, decreasing the population of many species that are dependant on by communities as a source of food.

International fisheries corruption

Internationally, the likelihood of illegal activities regarding resources and the fishing industry is much greater and impactful to the environment as a whole. In 2001, there was a prominent international case of corruption in the fishing industry involving the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and Japan. IWC's initiative was to encourage sustainability through conserving whales. On the other hand, Japan supports whaling (the practice of hunting or killing whales). Japan had proposed to IWC to lift the whaling ban, however after upon voting on the procedure, most countries disagreed and therefore the proposal got rejected and was not implemented anywhere. Japan being on the brink of pulling out of IWC; Japan confessed that they bribed LEDCs, including 6 different Caribbean nations, to support their stance on supporting whaling. Due to this scandal, bribe accusations against Japan began emerging. According to The Solomon Islands in 2001 (The Guardian); Japan had bribed them through aid packages and gave them access to cheap tuna fisheries expecting their support at the IWC.

Japan's case with the IWC was a prime example of how agreements between fishing nations can be corrupt due to the illegal agreements that happen in secret, how the negotiations are often not transparent which leads to unfair distribution of resources that were initially agreed on. Unfair distribution or the violation of the signed agreement is what turns the secret deals into public scandals and causes an international chaos.

Corruption in processing and distributing fish

Other than prominent authority figures who are responsible and guilty for the corruption occurring in the fishing industry, middlemen also hold the same responsibility. An example of this is the shrimp sector of the industry in Thailand, it is amongst the sectors with the worst illegal labor conditions and wages. The shrimp industry is known for employing children more than any other industry. They force labour upon the employed children for very long hours in exchange for low salaries that are far below the minimum wage (\$0.25 an hour). The prominence of this issue is also evident in the Philippines, where fishermen responded to the situation through stating; "The shrimp live better than we do. They have electricity, but we don't. They have clean water, but we don't. The shrimp have lots of food, but we are hungry." This highlights that the priority of many governments, authority figures and industries is their economy and income regardless of the cost environmentally and socially.

On another note, middlemen are immensely involved with the processes of renaming and purposely mislabeling types of fish when selling them to markets; cheaper types of fish are sold for higher prices through having many products be marked as “ecofish” meaning that they should be completely organic and not include any sort of preservatives, growth hormones and antibiotics. Ecofish are often priced higher when in comparison to fertilized fisheries because of the greater amounts of time and effort put in and needed to sustain them before selling them. Mislabeling leads back to corruption as markets are selling and recording products based on what they have been labeled by the middlemen, stock assessments become contradicting to numbers obtained by markets and therefore species population and our consumption rate of them becomes very unclear. Illegal and unclear communication or agreement with middlemen only creates corruption in every related industry due to the attempts of gaining economical advantages through violating the law or contracts.

The impact of corruption on fisheries

Scientific Failure

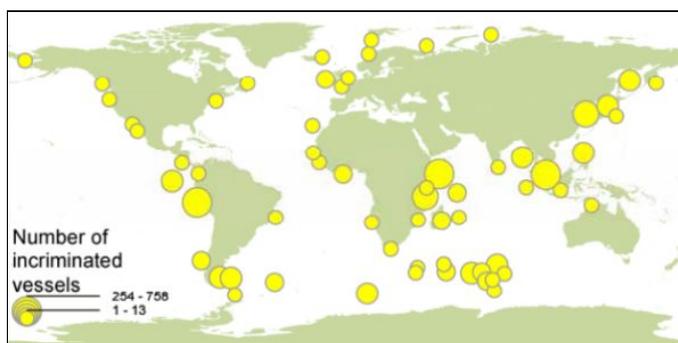
Corruption plays a significant role in scientific failure through directly altering results obtained by scientists such as stock assessments; as with the increasing rate of illegal fishing, the process of calculating the ratio of fish that is removed from oceans in comparison to the overall fish population becomes inaccurate and very different from the actual ratio. This leads to unsuccessful stock assessments as this calculation is crucial for its success. Furthermore, industries use stock assessments in order to regulate their fishing stocks as it gives them an insight to the current situation of stocks and what the industry should be doing in order to eradicate possible gaps and disruption to their economic profit and status.

Management and implementation failure

With increasing corruption within the fishing industry, this creates stress on the management system that is in charge of facilitating the decisions in regards to the activity of the industry. For example in an attempt of taking shortcuts to step up the fish industry's economy; managers will often allow for a much higher number of catches than advised by the stock assessments carried out by scientists, which is an example of management failure. Once orders by the managing system have been made, the implementation system try to catch higher amounts of fish regardless of what had been advised by scientists and other advisory bodies in an attempt of increasing the profit level, therefore this is an example of “implementation failure”.

The Indian ocean

The Indian ocean has become and important target location for businesses and organizations within the fishing industry, this is due to its strategic location that connects countries in the East with the West through major trade routes. India's economy has majorly benefited from fisheries and the fishing industry that are related to the Indian



ocean; as of now more than 10 million Indians rely on the Indian ocean as a source of income and for their basic food necessities. Opportunities found in the Indian ocean, has drove many countries to seek interest in the ocean's fisheries that it has reached to a point that (according to the food and agriculture organization) there are around 700 million unlicensed fishing vessels in somalian waters and 34% of fishing stocks are illegal and unreported. With the increasing amounts of illegal fishing (according to the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commision) 65% of the 140 species found in the Indian ocean are fully exploited and in 2010; 29% of the 140 species were over exploited.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

World Wildlife Fund Organization (WWF)

WWF is an organization that aims at preserving wildlife and reducing human impact that is inflicted onto our environment. WWF has addressed the issue at hand its work towards eliminating illegal fishing on an international scale. Firstly WWF uses technological solutions which is called the Automatic Identification System (AIS), where a satellite retraces routes and activities of fishing vessels which then leads to revealing areas where illegal fishing is occurring. Furthermore, WWF has partnered with Hewlett-Packard Enterprises and developed a web based tool which tracks fish movement from ports and countries. The tool is also able to recognize any sort of suspicious information and has the ability to identify illegal activities within 170 countries.

WWF has also partnered with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and has installed monitoring systems that collect and share information on the amounts of tuna catch. With the collected information, WWF is now able to identify the changes in fishing stocks as well as how sustainable the human consumption is. Recently, WWF has taken its work to a greater extent through working with leaders both in the private and public sector in the US and internationally

through collaborating with the Global Food Traceability Center in order to create more transparent work by countries and the fishing industry. As stated by WWF on traceability: “The results will have real world implications for consumers and the countless communities that depend on sustainable fisheries.”

Fisheries Transparency Initiative

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) is a non profit organization that is not owned by one single organization, but instead operates through a diverse range of stakeholders. The organization works and aims towards achieving a level of sustainable governance in regards to fisheries through increasing transparency in work done within the fishing industry, on a national, regional and international scale. While FiTI is an international organization, it implements its work and methods directly through the governing sector of a country and has promoted transparency through enhancing the availability of revealed information in regards to a country’s fishing sector, as well as monitoring companies that are working within the countries geographical region.

FiTI’s current goals now aim at working with organizations such as FAO as it has a similar work ethic of relying on the availability of reliable information or statistics in order to drive a change and make an impact. Within revealing the documents, FiTI reveals any new information regarding the fishing industry in general and corruption through their website in order to discourage future illegal actions taken by countries, as well as demonstrate how these actions are affecting the sustainability of our environment as a whole.

United nations office on drugs and crimes (UNODC)

In southeast asia corruption such as found in the fishing industry is found to be the reason behind many injustices such as the cause behind human right abuse in the region. According to the Environmental Justice Foundation; gives the fishing industry opportunities to take advantage of their need of jobs and exploit them on Thai fishing vessels. Due to overfishing, the fishing industry has implemented such procedures in order to remain profitable, furthermore, since there are no regulations that are applied globally; vessels are illegally catching fish and are laundering it into the global market, this increases the expenses used for operating and serious crimes and corruption such as ways through; forced labour.

Measures to address and solve this issue in have been put through The UN Convention against corruption (UNCAC). The treaty stated by the convention if implemented in all countries of Southeast Asia in a correct manner; it will be a method of addressing corruption in the fishing industry. Through this convention, corruption and illegal activity is all investigated and prosecuted on a national and international scale, consequences of failing results include criminalizing all parties involved within the bribery process giving the government or authority power over the fishing

industry. This type of publically implemented process; discourages other any sort of future illegal activities in the industry by the any party.

UNCAC also works on eliminating corruption in the fishing industry through creating a transparent work ethic which requires the creation of laws that considers **“legal persons liable for corruption related offences”** which ensures holding them accountable for any illegal activity affecting causing corruption in the industry as well as makes it very difficult for companies to involved in any illegal activity without public exposure therefore decreasing somewhat of the corruption occurring in the industry.

Mozambique

With Mozambique being located in Coastal East Africa, overfishing for regional consumption and exporting is a major concern. The sustainability of the fish stocks is not at its best as sharks, marine turtles and birds are in danger due to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing which is present because of the lack of authority enforcement in the region’s fishing industry. This is why the WWF has been actively seized on the matter with Mozambique.

One of the most important water sources of Mozambique is Lake Niassa as it is thousands of varying fish species such as; redbreast tilapias and Kampangos which were endangered due to of overfishing. In 2011, WWF partnered with Mozambique’s government to create a lake reserve. Additionally, Mozambique has helped find and create new sources of income as a substitute to the fishing industry, to reduce the bribery opportunities as well as reduce amount of illegally caught fishing stocks. WWF has also maintained fishing stocks through establishing sanctuaries, allowing coral and fish stocks to recover and grow without gaps or disruption. Mozambique and WWF are still actively taking measures in order to sustain their fishing stocks and eradicate possibilities of illegal fishing that could cause corruption to the fishing industry and their economy.

Barbados

Barbados’ population relies on the fishing industry in terms of food and jobs. At the end of 1970s, fisheries were put into threat due to the loss of fish as well as deterioration in the habitats. In 1995, Barbados collaborated with FAO to approach this issue by implementing the FAO’s code of conduct which focussed on responsible fisheries. The improvements included amending legislations in accordance to international law, only promoting activities that demonstrate responsible fishing and investigating fisheries economically, environmentally and socially.

Barbados has also worked on other aspects that are involved within the fishing industry which was through the technical and financial conservation of fisheries in order to maintain their sustainability in terms of food security and the lives of aquatic resources. Finally, Barbados’s

futuristic approach to the issue was through conducting research regarding fisheries, fishing stocks and the sustainability of their habitats/ecosystems. Barbados is great example of how changing policies and legislations results in a greater impact towards the issue at hand, ever since Barbados have changed their policies; marine species in the region have been safeguarded and the fishing industry kept unharmed.

Japan

Japan as a nation is heavily involved with the fishing industry in terms of its geographical location and economy. Japan's nation consumes around 10% of the world's catch on a yearly basis (7.5 billion), the huge demands of fish in Japan have caused it to control the world seafood prices. Since Japan is one of the few countries that contribute to 90% of the fishing activity in the oceans; overfishing illegal fishing have become a problem that contribute to the corruption in the fishing industry. The marine resources found in Japanese water have dramatically dropped in the past 20 years; In 1991 around 70,000 tons of the famous fish of the region (horse mackerel) was caught and sold to markets, however, in present day less than 20,000 tons are being caught in order to be sold. The government had blamed overfishing on climate change because it causes the rising of sea levels, however in many situations it has been proven that the government is in fact very involved with both overfishing and illegal fishing. Regarding the international rules on commercial hunting of whales; Dominica had an equal say on the issue to Japan, U.S.A and U.K; this equal say gave Domonica power that could be both in favor or against Japan's goals. Japan has acted actively in an attempt to ensure that Dominica's stance would be in favour of lifting the whaling ban off of Japan, they did this through; high economic support and aid towards the government.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, 29 January 1993 (**A/RES/47/192**)
- Fisheries bycatch and discards and their impact on the sustainable use of the world's living marine resources, 2 February 1995, (**A/RES/49/118**)
- Agreement for the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, 10 December 1982, (**A/RES/50/24**)

- Large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing, unauthorized fishing in zones of national jurisdiction and on the high seas/illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, fisheries bycatch and discards, and other developments, 12 December 2002, **(A/RES/57/142)**

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

While this issue has been long prominent in our world, its progression hasn't been very visible, however in recent years there have been visible disadvantages to our communities and environment. Many countries often stepped aside from approaching the issue in terms of finding a solution and this was due to it affecting their economy in various ways alongside their partnerships and contracts with other nations.

South Africa is a region that has been vastly exposed to corruption in their fishing industry. In 1999 South Africa took their efforts to a greater extent in an attempt of putting an end to the issue. South Africa first approached the issue through increasing the amount of fishery control offices and field stations across the coast and this was a measure of tightening security to limit the possibilities of illegal fishing occurring.

Furthermore, South Africa improved salaries of fishery controls officers in order to eliminate and decrease the chances of bribery by individuals businesses and industries who take advantage of citizens in LEDCs. South Africa had also created a 24 hour hotline that allowed people to anonymously inform enforcements of occurring illegal matters, which allowed the country to stop illegal activity without the interference between certain businesses and industries. South Africa also improved their monitoring control and surveillance systems (MCS) but were not as successful as they were proposed to be as MCS cannot overcome and track corrupt officials and illegal agreements. Their unsuccessful attempt was also due to the lack of technology that focuses on all aspects of the issue and its expansion to other regions of the world alongside its less economically developed government.

On another note, the most important attempts to solve the issue at hand was delivered through the UN and involved the cooperation of many Member States. The agreement is called "Straddling Fish Stocks Agreement" and was implemented on the 4th of December, 1995. The "Straddling Fish Stocks Agreement" recognized the damage being done to fishing stocks and proposed that the solution needed to be multinational in order to put an end to it and fulfill the concerns brought up by multiple nations. The treaty promoted the conservation of water sources with a purpose of eliminating the environmental and economical disadvantages that were caused by

external factors including the corruption of the fishing industry. Although this treaty is still on going, there hasn't been much progression because of it and this is due to a number of reasons; firstly the treaty does not work towards a specific time frame and therefore measuring its success is very limited. In addition, the treaty also is very broad and does not define the roles of the agreeing member states, which is not efficient for the issue at hand because it deals with varying complications that are influenced by a set of factors such as discussed previously in the report.

Possible Solutions

The issue at hand has been a prominent one to the world in the recent years, as it has been making a crucial impact on the environment, as well as the economies of many countries. In order for effective solutions to be applied, countries must stay actively seized on the matter as this issue emerged over a long period of time and thus can only be solved through a long period of persistence. Essentially and as similarly suggested by the United Nations, countries should support the solution development through adopting similar legislations and that leave a long term impact. This could be approached through solving the issue from its origins and eradicating factors that contribute to its growth or development.

Firstly, the most viable solution to combating corruption is to increase the enforcement of legislation regarding the protection of fishing stocks, as well as activities that play a role in their destruction. This solution should be implemented while taking into consideration the nature of this type of management and the other needs it will introduce as well as its priority depending on the region of the world and economic status of the country.

Additionally, the involvement of those employed in the field (such as fishers) in the decision making process, or any type of local participation is an important aspect of this issue. This is because according to multiple studies; the involvement and encouragement of individual quotas and their catch rights, creates a personal effect on the involved party (such as fishers in this case). This type of implementation is a drive for fishers and other local participants to be given an opportunity to express their opinions and ideas which will allow them to feel like they have a stronger voice to speak on what they believe in and on any wrongdoing they see and thereby reduce corruption. Fishers and local parties involved with the processing and catching of fish are creative circumnavigators (very experienced in travelling the oceans and problem solvers) due to their experience that allows them to recognize the faults that could possibly lead to corruption. This makes them eligible to be part of the management systems.

An essential factor that has been one of the base factors of corruption and the deterioration of fishing stocks is the involvement of multiple nations in international trade agreements that are

often vaguely written for the future benefit of a certain nation, as when disagreements occur between the parties involved, referring to the vague signed agreement does not help solve the issue but instead grows the conflict between them which at some point causes each nation to act on their own which plays a role in corruption since caught fish amounts probably begin exceeding the agreed on capacity. This is why access agreements between nations should be detailed and transparent in terms of consequences or failure to fulfill the suggested proposal, the agreement should also be publicly announced to avoid privately escalating tension between both nations.

In order to solve the issue, consumers of the fishing industry must be given the option and opportunity to track the process the fish they bought has gone through, starting from the origin of fishery up until it is in the hands of the supplier. This act could be applied through the Marine Stewardship Council which issues a type of certification called the “Chain of Custody”. This certification process should be implemented on a global and international scale as it enforces and permits only legal activity upon businesses and the fishing industry. The “Chain of Custody” targets consumers through giving companies the opportunities to use the “FSC” label which signifies that product has been responsibly sourced and made. Product consumers can track all their wanted information through the online database that is operated by the Stewardship Council rather than the fishing business to ensure the validity and unbiased shared information.

Finally, another global method of tracking the whole of the fishing industry would be through the establishment of a database that allows the investigation of all fisheries, which would be powered through only government officials and in direct cooperation with the United Nations. This will ensure the reliability of updated information as well as keep track with the activity of fisheries, alongside raising public awareness of the consequences.

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