

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing Regional Overview



GULF OF GUINEA

Geography

The Gulf of Guinea is a large body of water off Africa's west coast. It serves as the final discharge point for several major rivers including the Niger and the Volta. Its maritime security and basin is adjacent to 18 countries, and is a biological hotspot sometimes referred to as the Galapagos of Africa. It's also home to vast quantities of mineral and hydrocarbon resources and until recently, has also enjoyed incredibly bountiful, relatively unexploited fishery resources. The principle economic activities of the Gulf region are petroleum exploration, mining, and fishing.



IUU Fishing is a key contributing factor to regional instability and increasing rates of piracy.



In West Africa, IUU fishing has robbed coastal states of \$2.3 billion a year and has contributed to the loss of 300,000 jobs.



**World's #1
Piracy
Hotspot**

Strategic Significance

The Gulf of Guinea is a vital maritime route for trade between Europe, Africa, the United States, and the Indo-Pacific. It hosts one of the world's most important undersea intercontinental communication cables, and regional gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to be \$550 billion annually. It serves as a major hub for African oil exports and accounts for more than 35% of the world's total petroleum reserves.



GULF OF GUINEA IUU CHALLENGES

PIRACY

The International Maritime Organization recognizes piracy in the Gulf of Guinea as one of the biggest threats to maritime shipping in the world. Maritime domain awareness remains low, and regional coordination is limited. Poor governance and insufficient enforcement have resulted in increased piracy attacks, kidnapping, oil theft, and armed robbery at sea. Research has shown a correlation between destructive IUU fishing methods and a rise in incidents in maritime piracy.

DISTANT WATER FLEETS (DWFs)

Distant Water Fleets consist of industrial sized trawlers which originate in nations without any territorial claim to Gulf of Guinea waters, such as China and European Union Countries. Chinese fleets regularly cause the most economic and ecological damage, with some estimates equating the amount of illegally caught fish to 65% of the legal catch. Over the last 50 years, Africa has lost more than \$200 billion to illegal fishing by vessels linked to foreign nations. Fish caught by DWFs are rapidly transited via smaller boats to foreign-owned onshore processing facilities. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) concluded that these DWFs and their associated foreign-owned processing facilities have severely adverse impacts on food security and social stability.

FOOD SECURITY

IUU fishing deprives local coastal communities of legal and legitimate economic opportunities and food sources. Fish stocks are negatively impacted and fishers are traveling farther to find productive catches. IUU fishing not only destroys marine habitats and ecosystems, it disrupts local supply chains, livelihoods, and food sources. Fishers unable to make a living frequently turn to piracy as a way to supplement income.



GULF OF GUINEA KEY PARTNERS & ACTIVITIES

REGIONAL

- [Yaoundé Code of Conduct](#)
- [Economic Community of Central African States \(ECCAS\)](#) - regional political & economic union
- [Economic Community of West African States \(ECOWAS\)](#) - regional political & economic union
- [Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea \(FCWC\)](#) - a regional fisheries organization designed to facilitate cooperation in fisheries management
- [Gulf of Guinea Commission \(GGC\)](#) - regional commission designed to foster consultation and cooperation, as well as the promotion of peace and security

UNITED STATES

[Presidential Policy Directive 23](#) (PPD-23) provides an overarching framework for security sector assistance and capacity building. Under PPD-23 the Department of Defense and Department of State, and the U.S. Coast Guard work closely to provide security assistance in Africa. Examples include:

- [Africa Maritime Security Initiative \(AMSI\)](#)
- [Africa Conflict and Stabilization Border Security \(ACSB\)](#)
- [Africa Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership \(AMLEP\)](#)
- [Operation Guinex](#)
- [U.S. Navy April 2022 Gulf of Guinea Maritime Security Patrol](#)

INTERNATIONAL

- [European Union Strategy on the Gulf of Guinea](#)
- [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\) - IUU Fishing](#)
- [G7++ Friends of The Gulf of Guinea \(FoGG\)](#)
- [International Chamber of Commerce \(ICC\) International Maritime Bureau \(IMB\)](#)
- [International Maritime Organization](#)
- [The World Bank West Africa Regional Fisheries Program](#)