

# IUU Fishing in the Maritime Territory of Bangladesh: Impacts and Possible Measures to Combat

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Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing has become a vital threat to marine biodiversity. National/overseas fishing vessels often capture fishery resources in the maritime territory of Bangladesh illegally. Before discussing the impacts of IUU fishing, we have to know the meaning of IUU fishing. Illegal fishing refers to fishing by vessels of one country in the jurisdiction of other countries except for permission. Unreported fishing refers to fishing that is unreported/misreported to proper authorities of the country.

Unregulated fishing refers to fishing by vessels without nationality in unregulated areas where there are no conservation measures.

The prime objective of this report is to highlight the factors that foster the IUU fishing and look at the acts, laws & policies in Bangladesh to deal with it. The study also scrutinizes the impacts of IUU fishing upon the socio-economic and environmental aspects of Bangladesh to provide possible recommendations for further interventions.

## Maritime Boundary and Marine Fishery Sector of Bangladesh

Bangladesh has sovereign rights on 118,813 sq km of the territorial sea, 200 nautical miles (NM) of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the continental shelf up to 354 NM. Within the maritime territory of Bangladesh, the sea has huge & valuable fishery resources. Bangladesh is estimated to catch only 0.70 million tons of fish every year out of the total 8 million tons of fish available in the Bay of Bengal (BoB).

In Bangladesh, about 6.55 lakh MT (15.31%) of the country's total fish production was contributed by the marine sector in FY 2017-18. So we have

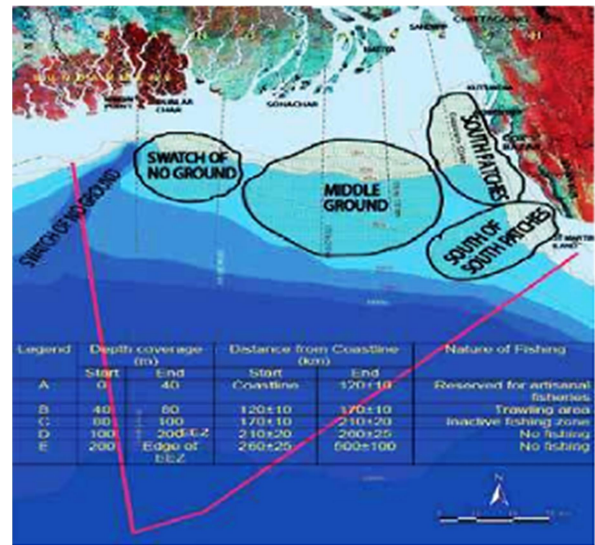
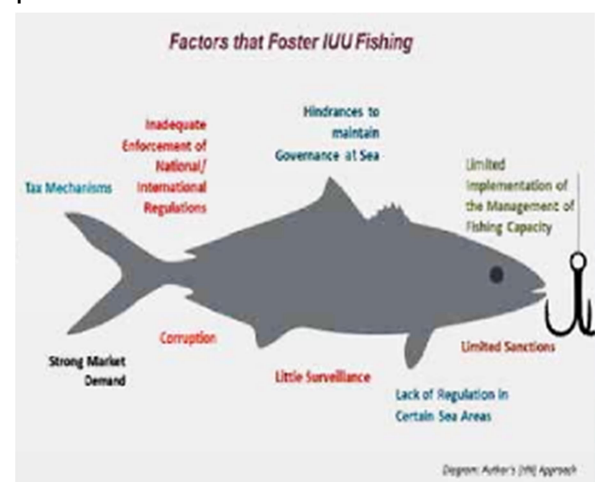


Figure : Marine Fishing Zones of Bangladesh

to utilize our potentiality to flourish the marine fishery sector and deal with IUU fishing in the BoB.

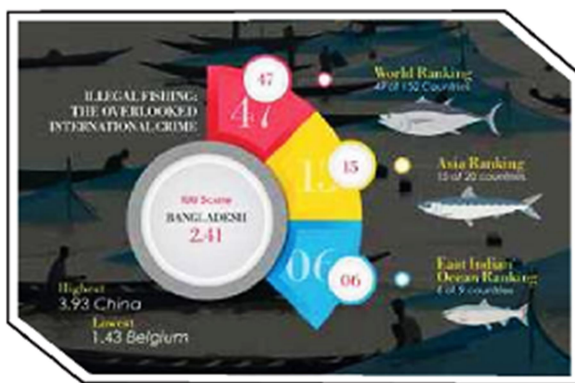
## Factors that Foster IUU Fishing

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing in the BoB is practiced by all types of vessels regardless of their registration in Bangladesh. IUU fishing in Bangladesh is fostered by several factors that are mentioned in the diagram below. Even strong demand in the EU market for certain species with a high added value, substantially contributes to perpetuating illegal fishing practices as well.



## IUU Fishing Index and Bangladesh

A Geneva-based NGO network of experts, developed the IUU fishing index in 2019. In the index, IUU score has been measured within a scale from 1 to 5 [1= country experience no IUU fishing, 5= country is too much vulnerable to IUU fishing]. The mentioned index has ranked 152 countries' scores that have a maritime coastline. Overall, the world IUU fishing score is 2.29. Bangladesh has been positioned 47th with a score of 2.41 in terms of vulnerability, prevalence, and response to IUU fishing. Hence, Bangladesh needs to conduct the gap analysis and find out the measures towards the best IUU fishing score.



## Socio-economic and Environmental Impacts of IUU Fishing

There are severe impacts of IUU fishing in the marine economy and the environment of Bangladesh. The

Issue	Impacts of IUU Fishing
Marine Biodiversity	Hampers marine biodiversity by depleting fish stocks of the BoB.
Employment	Creates a threat to the job of millions of people who are associated with the fishery industry.
Socio-economic imbalance	Creates socio-economic imbalances by undermining the protection and recovery measures.
Slavery	Actors in IUU fishing use cheap labor and workers are exploited.
Criminal Activities	Creates socio-economic disruptor which may have an impact upon the national security of Bangladesh.
Fish Stock Depletion	The depletion of fish stocks through IUU fishing poses threats to food security. Illegal fishing in overfished areas harms the crucial components of marine ecosystems and vulnerable species.
Loss of National Revenue	The economy of Bangladesh experiences the loss of licensing revenues from national & foreign boats and taxation on landings.
Tension between Countries	IUU fishing activities also pose growing risk to tensions between the littoral countries of the BoB.
Coral Reef System	Severe loss occurs in the coral reef system in the BoB because of blast fishing. Damage of coral reef system hampers the productivity of marine fishery resources in the BoB.
Stock Assessment	Fish caught by IUU vessels are not included within scientific stock assessments and thereby IUU fishing undermines efforts to gather necessary data.
The Health issue of Fishermen	The IUU fishing practices also pose health and safety risks to the fishermen themselves.
Bycatch	IUU fishing activities also result in significant bycatch, the incidental capture of non-targeted species that undermines the food supply of larger predators.

following table examines the impacts of IUU fishing upon socio-economic and environmental aspects of the country.

## Related Enacting Acts, Rules, and Policies in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the marine fishery sector is governed by the Marine Fisheries Ordinance, 1983, and Marine Fisheries Rules, 1983. On 30\*December 2019, the Cabinet of People's Republic of Bangladesh approved a draft of "The Marine Fisheries Act, 2019". Recently on November 25, 2019, the Cabinet approved the draft of the 'Bangladesh Maritime Zones Act 2019' aimed at unlocking huge potentials of the blue economy and checking crimes on the sea. On the other hand all industrial trawlers and mechanized fishing boats are required to have a license for fishing in the BoB. Industrial fishing trawlers must have sailing permission (SP) from the Department of Fisheries (DoF), Bangladesh. Under The Marine Fisheries Ordinance-1983, 40-meter water depth is reserved for small-scale fisheries, 40m to 200m-depth is for fishing by industrial trawlers and from 200m in depth to the end of the EEZ is for long-line fishing.

The Fish and Fishery Products (Fish Inspection and Quality Control) Rules, 1997 provide guidelines for the production of safe seafood in trawlers. Freezing trawlers must have a license by the Fish Inspection and Quality Control Office ensuring that the vessels comply with sanitary and hygienic standards. To facilitate spawning and observed conservation of marine fishery resources, fishing remains banned for 65 days from 20 May to 23 July each year. The government has adopted coordinated programs to conserve and protect Juvenile Hilsa and Brood Hilsa during the spawning season as well. Catch of brood Hilsa is prohibited for 22 days every year in 7000 square km in the coastal waters.

## **Possible Measures to Combat IUU Fishing**

The BoB littoral nations including Bangladesh have to set objectives to stop IUU fishing. To attain this, several strains for motion are needed.

Implementation of global agreements and measures is necessary. We need to be aware of the market actors in Europe concerning the traceability of the marine fishery product's value chain.

Neighborhood countries surrounding the BoB need to come together to ensure the reinforcement of resource management and surveillance structures (MCS) system. MCS tactics must be applied to amplify boat registration and issuance of fishing licenses too.

Fishermen and stakeholders should be provided with training on compliance with a range of relevant regulations and conservation of marine resources.

Awareness building programs need to be arranged addressing the impacts and regulations of the IUU fishing with the presence of representatives from the law enforcement agencies, policy-makers and all related stakeholders. All the relevant stakeholders need to work together to implement mitigation measures and eliminate hindrances to maintain good governance at sea.

Harmful fisheries subsidies need immediate attention. Harmful fisheries subsidies are estimated to total more than \$20 billion a year in the world. The value of these subsidies could be instead used to invest in sustainable fisheries and coastal community livelihoods.

Vessel Tracking Monitoring System needs to be properly established and monitored. Mesh size of trawl nets and gears must be controlled for industrial trawlers.

Mass recognition campaigns are needed to be face lifted in root level to aware

concerning the negative impacts of IUU fishing.

## **Concluding Remarks**

IUU fishing needs to be taken seriously as an international safety threat. Combating unlawful fishing results in environmental and social-economic development. The IUU fishing is one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) issues (Indicator 14.6.1 of SDGs, associated with SDG 14 'Life below Water'). The visionary Government of Bangladesh has taken several initiatives to boost the blue-economy concept. Subsequently cooperation and marine diplomacy are vital to combat the IUU fishing in the BoB. The developed countries could assist Bangladesh via technological support to deal with IUU fishing. Bangladesh could learn from the measures taken by other developed countries and take initiatives to receive support and cooperation from them to deal with IUU fishing. We have to conduct some extensive research works regarding IUU fishing in the BoB and run awareness-building programs, so that we can identify and discover need-based solutions based on the persisting constraints to combat IUU fishing. The educational and research institutes related to maritime security may come together to serve this purpose with the cooperation of Govt. and development partners. Moreover, policy-makers, law enforcement agencies concerning maritime security like Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Coast Guard, all the stakeholders in the marine fishery sector, national/ international researchers, etc. need to work together to control the IUU fishing by national and international actors and run mass awareness in this regard. However, the National Plan of Action (NPOA) should be implemented strictly to eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Bangladesh.