

National Plan of Action and Government Priorities to Control IUU Fishing in Bangladesh

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It is well known that Bangladesh has a moderate amount of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, which has to be controlled. Considering the importance, the government of Bangladesh has created a National Plan of Action (NPOA) to prevent, discourage, and end IUU fishing in 2019. An action plan is typically a document that outlines the tasks that must be performed to accomplish a particular objective. An action plan's objectives are to specify the resources needed to achieve the goal, provide a timeline for when particular activities must be finished, and identify the resources needed.

In 2015, 17 global goals were adopted by world leaders. Even while we have made progress over the past seven years, there is still work to be done, and the goals are now more crucial than ever. Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) must be completed with ten targets by 2030, among which target 14.4 aims to effectively regulate harvesting, close IUU fishing practices and implement management plans based on scientific data to restore fish stocks in the shortest possible time. To prevent, deter, and eliminate IUU activities, the NPOA of the Bangladesh government is an important project that comes at the right time and advances SDG. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) International Plan of Action to Manage IUU Fishing served as a model for the development of the country's action plan. This action plan will put the livelihoods of fishermen and those reliant on the fisheries value chain at the centre of decision-making and management procedures, ensuring long-term benefits from fisheries for the people of Bangladesh.

To successfully execute this NPOA-IUU, the government of Bangladesh is required to foster ownership and actively engage with fisher folk and their representative organisations as well as collaborate with other government agencies and NGOs. The Bangladesh government

commits to prioritising efforts to gather more comprehensive information on fishing fleets, increase the visibility of fishing vessel activity and promote regional and international partnerships in order to close the gaps that IUU fishing vessels and illegal commercial fishing fleets exploits. Coastal marine resources in Bangladesh are already under stress from legal industrial and small-scale fisheries activities. To avoid adding to this stress, the government of Bangladesh commits to prioritising efforts to close these loopholes.

According to NPOA targets, under the Sustainable Coastal and Marine Fisheries Project, the country has started to keep a record of ongoing actions and focal areas to control IUU activities. The Bangladesh government also commits to reviewing this plan on an ongoing basis and submitting any revisions to FAO, as required. The unreported nature of IUU fishing makes it particularly difficult to quantify and recently the government has started to count all the fishing vessels operating in Bangladesh, including the possible updated number of fishermen to avoid the problem. Not only that but to get proper data on stock assessment the government also planned to electronic catch documentation facility in all the fishing vessels. FAO is in progress to develop the customised CALYPSO software for the country for e-reporting. The target is by January 2023 DoF will start the pilot project. Actually, according to the FAO guideline, there should be all data coverage on the catch record for any maritime country to discourage IUU fishing and the e-catch reporting is a part of data transparency. In our country, the Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) does the registration of fishing vessels and then DoF gives licenses for sea fishing according to Mercantile Marine Ordinance 1983. This ordinance includes that only the vessels >15 net tonnages need to do registration and license as well for sea fishing. But there is a huge number of fishing vessels in the country operating in the sea which are generally kept out of consideration. The present NPOA included that the vessels that are <15 net tonnage will have to take permission for fishing to keep accurate data, control IUU activities, and develop management techniques for sea fishing. In the present NPOA-IUU for the small-scale fisher alternative livelihood options, livelihood transformations and other training facilities are highlighted to reduce pressure on sea fishing. To control marine fishing at the national level Marine Fisheries Policy 2022 has been developed and the fishers and responsible officers are getting training on the existing rules and regulations to reduce IUU activities. To fulfil the conditions for fishing in marine Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), Bangladesh has become a member of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), an Intergovernmental organization that coordinates the rules and regulation to manage tuna fishery in the Indian Ocean. To leverage existing or establish new procedures to share information on IUU fishing with the BoB littorals, Bangladesh has joined the sub-regional platform named The Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organization (BOBP-IGO). According to the action plan 2.2.7.1, Vessel Monitoring Centre and Joint Monitoring Centre have been taken under consideration in Chattogram. For regular vessel monitoring, VMS system has been kept under consideration. On a piloting basis, five VMS will be set up in the trawler, free of cost and if it is successful, the trawler owner will have to develop the system at their own cost. There is a plan to develop Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) and Global System for Mobile communication (GSM) for all artisanal fishing vessels and plan for practical application by 2023. To diminish IUU activities Bangladesh always discourages incentives. Along with that to make fishing ban effective,

Bangladesh has proposed the idea to India for the joint implantation of the fishing ban period in the BoB.

Our country has one inspection site in Patenga, Chattogram which mainly covers all the commercial vessel catch but there is a plan to develop 17 inspection sites all around the country for keeping all vessels under inspection. Moreover to control IUU activities there is a plan to develop one fish landing centre for an artisanal catch like BFDC that is mainly engaged with a commercial catch. For any port state, the port authorities usually take requisite measures to ensure that 'IUU-catch products' are not entering the national and international market, and to do so, the port authorities may act by the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) of FAO. Bangladesh signed the PSMA in 2019 which is the first International condition to specifically target IUU fishing in the port. At present Bangladesh, officials are receiving various training on the existing PSMA for the successful application in our country and to declare a port as a sea fishing port. DoF has proposed the idea to the Shipping Ministry.

Practically the country becomes very serious about IUU activities in the sea. All the mentioned activities are planned and executed based on the developed action plan. There is a total of 45 action items that have been identified in NPOA to manage IUU activities. This effective plan of action will help to keep the ocean healthy, sustainable, and resilient for a better ocean for all.

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The article was published in [the daily sun](#) newspaper on December 21, 2022