RPOA-IUU Data Sharing Mechanism (DSM) Working Group meeting
25 November 2024, Makati, Philippines

Introduction

The Indo-Pacific region is the global epicenter of marine biological diversity and home to the most productive fisheries on the planet. However, the region's marine ecosystems are threatened by pollution, uncontrolled coastal development, the impacts of climate change, and unsustainable and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. IUU fishing poses a significant threat to the ocean ecosystem and causes severe loss and damage to the environment. It also has an impact on both economic and ecological imbalance. IUU fishing is categorized as a transnational crime, hence its eradication needs international cooperation amongst the countries. Distant-water fishing fleets of foreign state actors contribute to unsustainable and IUU fishing in the Indo-Pacific, threatening regional economic and food security, and eroding national sovereignty and maritime security.

Given the shared interest to combat IUU fishing regionally, the USAID Sustainable Fish Asia Technical Support (SuFiA TS) Activity and the Secretariat of the Regional Plan of Action to Promote Responsible Fishing Practices including Combating IUU Fishing (RPOA-IUU) developed a partnership concept note to represent a collaborative effort being made by both parties to advance efforts in the Indo-Pacific region to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and promote sustainable fisheries and marine biodiversity conservation.

The initiative to advance the data-sharing mechanism activity, including the establishment of the Working Group has been agreed in the 16th RPOA-IUU Coordination Committee Meeting in Dili, Timor-Leste, and has been incorporated into the 2024 RPOA-IUU Work Plan. As agreed in the work plan, countries are invited to nominate the dedicated focal points for the data-sharing mechanism in which the submitted focal points have been completed and received by the RPOA-IUU secretariat.

On 1 July 2024, RPOA-IUU secretariat, in collaboration with USAID SuFia TS, organized the 2nd Focus Group Discussion on Data-sharing Mechanism in virtual format. The primary topic of discussion covers defining type of data to be shared and outlining follow-up activities for the Working Group, including the establishment of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Working Group.

Therefore, the RPOA-IUU secretariat organized the 1st RPOA-IUU Consultative Meeting to solicit inputs on the order of potential Chair and Vice Chair of the Working Group and several key activities of data-sharing mechanism. Following the meeting outcome, the RPOA-IUU secretariat proposed to hold a one-day meeting, back-to-back with the 17th RPOA-IUU Coordination Committee Meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to agree on what data can be shared and how the mechanism will work. Additionally, the meeting will also outline the roadmap for the working group.

Objective(s)

The objectives of this activity are to formalize the Data Sharing Mechanism Working Group and determine the forms or types of data that can be shared. Additionally, the meeting aims to

discuss the possibility of integrating the data-sharing mechanism into the existing RPOA-IUU MCS Sub-Regional Group structure, explore a tailor-made protocol for data sharing, and harmonize and standardize data collection and reporting practices to ensure consistency and comparability across member countries.

Expected Outputs and Outcomes

- List of Data Sharing Mechanism Working Group members.
- Draft Roadmap of the implementation of Data Sharing Mechanism
- The form or type of data that can be shared.
- Having a functional DSM WG will support RPOA-IUU's work in the region to obtain data that are crucial in promoting responsible fisheries especially in addressing IUUF in the region. The DSM will be in place and the roadmap developed by the WG will guide participating countries in implementing and managing data sharing among themselves.

DATA SHARING MECHANISM WORKING GROUP MEETING

The meeting attendees were mostly attended by government officials and representative countries participating in RPOA-IUU. The Data Sharing Mechanism Working Group Meeting event took place on November 25, 2024, at the Alpha Suites Hotel, Makati, Philippines. This hybrid event was attended by 41 people from 11 countries, both in person and virtually. The event comprised 3 core discussions. Sticky notes and whiteboards are tools used to support and facilitate countries in providing opinions and discussions.

Prior to core session, Mr. Farid Maruf from USAID SuFiA TS Technical Team gave an introduction highlighting the types of data that can be shared. Not only the data type, Mr. Farid also explained how the data type can determine the protocol that will be used to exchange information and data.

The workshop core sessions:

1. Type of data to be shared.
2. Data Sharing Protocol
3. Timeline of DSM WG activity including the development of a Roadmap outline

Discussion 1: Type of Data to be shared

In this session, Mr. Farid presented the types of data used in fisheries management, which consist of strategic, tactical, and operational data. He explained that **Operational data** supports day-to-day management and decision-making. It includes vessel tracking data such as AIS and VMS, catch data like daily reports and bycatch, and environmental conditions such as weather and sea state. Port activities data encompasses landings, inspections, and transshipments, while real-time enforcement monitors patrols, violations, and fishing credentials. Lastly, market prices provide daily updates on fish values at various ports.

Tactical data supports medium-term planning and decision-making. It includes seasonal fishing patterns, such as migration routes and closures, fleet capacity data on vessel types and gear impacts, and quota management, which tracks annual limits and allocations. It also covers market information on demand and price trends and enforcement statistics, which analyze violations and strategy effectiveness.

Strategic data informs long-term planning and high-level decision-making. It includes stock assessment data on population trends, species distribution, and ecosystem health. Economic data covers market trends, economic impacts, and trade patterns. Climate and environmental data highlights projections for climate change, ocean acidification, and sea level rise. Additionally, policy, law, and governance data involves international agreements, long-term management plans, stakeholder analysis, and legal frameworks.

In this session, Mr. Farid also explained that when determining the type of data to be included in the Data Sharing Mechanism, several important aspects need to be considered. These include the data definition, which consists of a description of the data, the ownership of the data to be shared, and the key data elements (KDE).

Discussion 2: Data Sharing Mechanism Protocol

In this session, Mr. Farid facilitated the discussion using tools such as sticky notes and boards to gather ideas and input from participants, aligning with the presentation he delivered during the first discussion.

Mr. Farid also explained how to determine the sharing protocol, which can be tailored to the specified type of data. The protocol provisions are categorized into the scale of sharing, the media used for sharing, routing requests, the expected response time, and specific requirements or notes.

In this session, participants played an active role in determining the type of data and selecting the data to be shared. From the selection process conducted by participants, six top types of data were selected and approved to be shared between participating countries. These types of data are:

- **Data definition 1: Protected or Regulated Species**, with an emphasis on clearly defining the specific topic, such as stock assessment status. The sharing protocol for this data type is designed for sub-regional groups but is generic enough to allow sharing at the regional level. Data is shared through a knowledge hub, with routing requests made during CCM meetings and an expected response time of one year. The specific requirement and notes include that countries will review their lists of endangered species, such as MMPA, to assess implementation status. The data is shared through the CCM, with the Secretariat coordinating with member countries under certain conditions from the perspective of protected species. Information sharing through websites is practical due to the easier access to public domain data. Links to key organizations, such

as the FAO, can serve as references, and additional relevant links can be provided in country reports to enhance data accessibility and transparency.

Note: The management of protected species is not within DAFF's objectives and is overseen by other agencies.

- **Data definition 2: Legislation and Policies, management plans, types of arrangements, and market targets** at the regional level. The media sharing platform for this data is the RPOA Knowledge Hub, and the request for routing should be directed from the countries to the RPOA-IUU Secretariat with a yearly response time. It is crucial that the fishing vessels list be included in the country report, ensuring consistency and minimal differences across the data. The main requirement is to document the general procedures for data-sharing, emphasizing that the data should originate from the countries' websites, with shared links directed to the RPOA-IUU to maintain transparency and accuracy in information dissemination.

- **Data Definition 3: List of IUU vessels.** The scale of sharing is at the regional level, with the medium of sharing being the RPOA-IUU website. The request for routing should come from countries to the RPOA-IUU Secretariat, with an expected response time corresponding to the timing of the incident. Specific requirements and notes indicate that the data should be submitted directly from countries and shared with the RPOA-IUU Secretariat.

- **Data Definition 4: Vessels crossing boundaries in other countries**. This process is subject to bilateral level engagement, with requests for routing made by authorized persons. Information is circulated via email and WhatsApp, with key data elements dependent on bilateral engagement. The contact point for these communications should be regularly updated to ensure effective information sharing. Detecting suspected fishing vessels is crucial for combating IUU fishing. It is proposed that sub-regional groups be willing to share information about any suspected vessels. The sharing protocol will be mainly bilateral and between sub-regional groups, which can complement each other. The mechanism and guidance prepared on this meeting outline corrective and prompt action to respond to such incidents. The expected response time is challenging to define precisely, but an acknowledgment of the message should be sent within 24 hours. Information regarding vessels crossing boundaries and being detained should be reported to Flag State responsibilities.

- **Data Definition 5: vessel details and license details** circulate through bilateral agreements and sub-regional channels. The medium of sharing is via email and WhatsApp messaging, with acknowledgment within 24 hours. For Australia's best practices, confirmation from operational authorities on how information is exchanged is necessary. Specific requirements and notes should be communicated first.

- **Data Definition 6: IUU fishing incidents** should be handled on a bilateral and request basis. The medium of sharing is via email and official letter, with acknowledgment within 24 hours. Through a designated focal point by official letter via bilateral mechanism, it is necessary to provide a generic government email address to make it official so the designated focal point can provide the acknowledgment. A specific requirement is to attach initial evidence or video. The third party of suspected fishing vessels or non-state vessels should be addressed at the regional level. The formal letter, alongside a package of documents, should be circulated by the sub-regional groups with a reference number, including historical data.

  Note: PNG suggested to prepare a standardized format, including the details of suspected vessels.

Discussion 3: Timeline of DSM WG activity including the development of a Roadmap outline

The content and context of the roadmap were discussed during the 16th RPOA-IUU CCM, where the Terms of Reference (ToR) was adopted, and it was agreed to formulate the roadmap. Australia highlighted that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry (DAFF) would be involved in the data-sharing mechanism and would need additional time to review the roadmap. The results of the meeting outlined key takeaways, emphasizing the need for a clear approach. Australia noted that the consultative meetings and forums are not consensus platforms as long as it attends. The guidance for the roadmap will be raised in the Working Group (WG) meeting, discussed in the Coordinating Meeting (CM), and brought to the CCM for endorsement.

The WG meeting will reconvene in February and March 2025, where it is hoped that the roadmap can be adopted. The flexibility of the timeline is acknowledged, with two months required for certain processes, allowing for coordination at the domestic level. The primary task is to review and provide comments and feedback on the draft. The focus on national legislation to collect and gather data for the national regulation of the data-sharing mechanism was stressed, emphasizing that this does not involve reviewing other countries' regulations but rather studying the position of countries' data-sharing mechanisms.

The discussion also covered lessons learned from AN-IUU and the types of data to be shared, with a proposal for the first workshop in May 2025. A follow-up from Thailand noted that the AN-IUU Secretariat, managed by the Department of Fisheries (DoF), would administer the interactive platform. AN IUU has developed three documents to be shared with the participants, and the ASEAN Secretariat will communicate these documents and seek approval from the ASEAN Member States (AMS). The aim is to develop functions through bilateral communication and a fishing vessel list, with the Secretariat requesting support from AN-IUU.

Timor-Leste requested an extended timeline for reviewing the outline and roadmap, including the data to be shared, stating a need for more time to understand the timeline and roadmap fully. Malaysia also sought additional time to familiarize itself with the proposed timeline and outline. The importance of a simple communication process to facilitate understanding and

engagement was noted, with the Secretariat arranging activities and preparing a realistic program, supported by USAID. The extension of the program should align with the rationale of the USAID SuFia TS program.

The conversation concluded with a focus on the sustainability of the work and initiative, emphasizing the need for continued funding to develop the mechanism and program. The targeted timeline for these developments will be the next CCM in 2025. The RPOA-IUU Secretariat will seek possible partners to support several programs, highlighting the collaborative effort required for successful implementation.

Conclusion

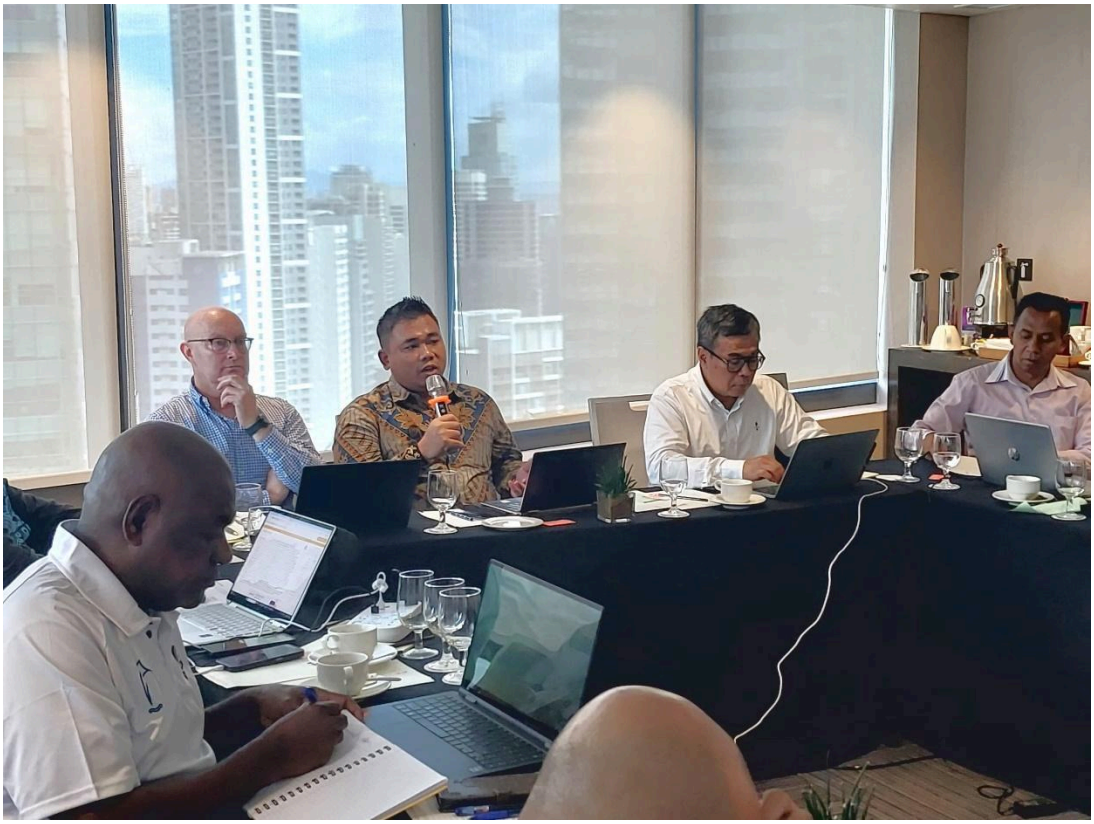
- All of the participating countries agree with the draft timeline which will be finished on the 18th RPOA-IUU CCM. The consultative meeting to accommodate countries to learn more.
- The proposed outline and timeline have been presented during the first Data Sharing Mechanism Working Group Meeting.
- Countries agreed to take the drafts for in-country consultation.
- It has been proposed to have another working group meeting for discuss those two documents and followed by a consultative meeting.
- DSM WG recommends to the CCM to assign the secretariat to coordinate with AN-IUU to have a Coorporation frame work, TOR, and Roles and procedures to align with the RPOA-IUU roadmap of the data sharing mechanism.

Documentation:












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