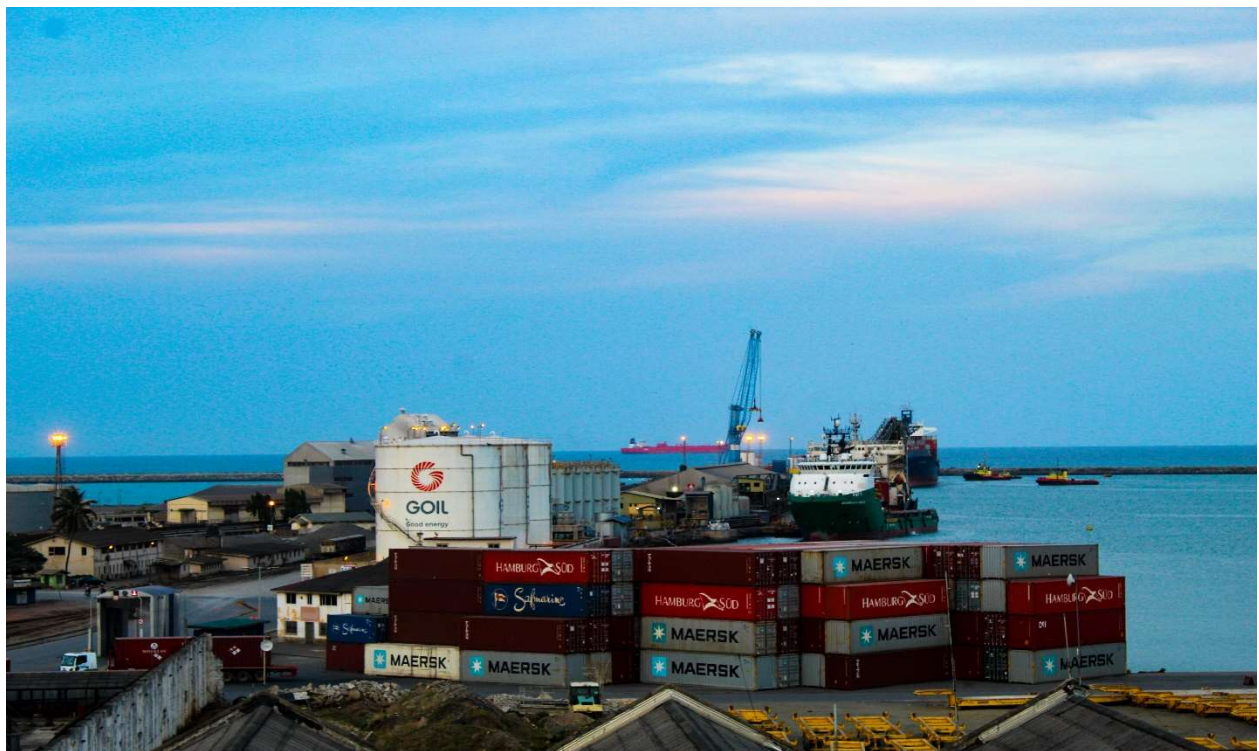


**KOFI ANNAN INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING TRAINING CENTER**



**MARITIME INSECURITY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA: GHANA'S  
ACTUAL MARITIME CRIME PICTURE**



Credit: @lens.stories

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## *Maritime Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea: Ghana's Actual Maritime Crime Picture (2021)*

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## **MARITIME INSECURITY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA: Ghana's Actual Maritime Crime Picture**

### **Introduction**

Until recently, the problem of transnational organized crime at sea had received only minimal attention.<sup>1</sup> Referred to as 'blue crimes', their effects transcend the maritime domain into terrestrial spaces. Their consequences are often felt along coastal communities, and has a direct correlation to national security. These crimes include trafficking of arms and light weapons, humans and narcotics, environmental crimes that are detrimental to various ecosystems, piracy and armed robbery at sea, and territorial crimes that breach the laws and rules governing territories and jurisdictions. Over time, blue crimes have had negative consequences on the economic prosperity and wellbeing of individuals in coastal communities and more broadly, on the human security of coastal states along the Gulf of Guinea. These crimes are perpetrated by criminal elements, which operate in several coastal countries, with networks that often exceed the region, and with acts committed in more than one state's territory and in this sense, these are transnational.<sup>2</sup> Ghana is substantially impacted by various manifestations of blue crimes. These include acts of piracy, stowing away, human trafficking, narcotics trafficking and illegal importation of medicines, arms smuggling and illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (IUU). Ghana's response to these crimes reflects the truncated preparedness of the entire coastal states along the Gulf of Guinea to deal with the multifaceted threats that confront the safety and security of the blue economy of the region.

This policy paper outlines the nature and extent of blue crime along the Gulf of Guinea, with particular emphasis on Ghana. It begins by sharing an overview of both Ghana's historical and contemporary blue crime evolution, followed by a discussion of what is involved in the preferential prioritization of piracy. The paper then discusses the trends of these crimes and concludes by demonstrating which crimes require more attention and proposes policy recommendations. In subsequent sections, the paper identifies and elaborates on the development of blue crimes in Ghanaian waters.

### **Overview of Blue Crimes**

According to Bueger and Edmunds, three basic groupings of blue crimes can be distinguished.<sup>3</sup> These categories are: (1) crimes against mobility; (2) criminal flows; and (3) environmental crimes.<sup>4</sup> First, some crimes target movements at sea. Not only does this include piracy, but it also involves related challenges, such as stowing away, cyber theft and infiltration of software used for communication among vessels. Upon getting aboard vessels, monitoring and communication software, which are essential for both terrestrial and marine-based activities are breached and overrun. These include locations of connected vessels, databases, documentation of cargo aboard and the hardware component itself. This information is further used for other criminal

activities. The challenge for ship owners is even more complex because cybercriminals target diverse facets of the shipping industry. For example, there was a well-documented case of drug smugglers subverting an IT system at a major port to facilitate the smuggling of contraband in containers.<sup>5</sup> This constitutes a form of cyber-marine piracy with a purely terrestrial manifestation.

The second major category of maritime crime concerns those activities in which the sea is used primarily as a conduit for criminal enterprise, rather than the main site of that endeavor itself. While the main idea influencing these types of crimes is the illicitness of the commodities, tax evasion is another major motivation. This involves various maritime-based smuggling networks and associated illicit goods, such as counterfeit products, narcotics, or illicit arms and smuggling of or trafficking in persons as part of illicit migration flows.

The third category relates to environmental crimes that target the marine environment directly. These include unprescribed fishing activities, pollution or forms of illicit resource exploitation. In entirety, blue environmental crimes harm the maritime environment with an extended effect on climate change and loss of essential biodiversity, and to a larger extent, food security and the livelihood of coastal communities.<sup>6</sup>

Each of these crimes negatively affects a country's economy and stifles development. In addition, their occurrence leads to unpredictability, and the associated damage can be wide-ranging leading to a decline of employment opportunities and less income from trade, taxes, or fees.<sup>7</sup> Illegal trans-shipment by industrial trawlers, for instance, imply often the inaccurate representation of the harvest at sea, as suggested by an executive member of the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC).<sup>8</sup> Officers from the Ghana Fisheries Commission (GFC) also confirmed incidents of deliberate wrong labelling of catches to avoid paying taxes.<sup>9</sup>

In the following sections, empirical evidence is provided to demonstrate how Ghana is affected by each of the three categories of blue crimes. Analyzing the data, we demonstrate which crimes need more attention.

## **Crimes against movement of humans and goods**

### ***Piracy***

While piracy is a looming threat in Ghana's waters, it is not a predominant crime across all parts of Ghanaian territorial waters. In the northern parts of the Gulf of Guinea, Ghana, together with Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire, are the leading maritime commerce destination states attracting substantial shipping traffic.<sup>10</sup> For example, significant amounts of bunkered oil from Nigeria and other maritime waters in the Gulf of Guinea, are sold in Ghana.<sup>11</sup> Between Ghana and Nigeria are

Togo and Benin, two countries that operate a free port policy aimed at attracting significant maritime commerce given the reduced cargo clearance tariffs associated with a free port regime. Of these two free port states, while Benin relies on trade with neighboring Nigeria, the Togo Port is lately focusing on bulk oil trans-shipments. The net effect is that these states along the Gulf of Guinea (from Nigeria to Cote d'Ivoire and beyond) provide various dimensions of attraction to pirates.

Indeed, most of the recent piracy attacks in the region including those reported as occurring in Ghanaian waters, have moved across national territorial waters and ended in Nigerian waters.<sup>12</sup> Although the final destination has not been reported to be Nigeria, these attacks are mostly linked to activity in the Niger Delta.<sup>13</sup> The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has become the epicenter of the threat in recent times. The indicators that corroborate this assertion are twofold: first, all pirates that have been arrested are from Nigeria; second, all hijacked vessels or kidnapped crew have been brought into Nigeria's territorial waters, held in captivity in Nigeria and released subsequently after negotiations and payments of ransom.<sup>14</sup> Examples of pirate arrests and interdictions are the MT MARIAM and MT MAXIMUS cases in 2015 and 2016, respectively; the 8 pirates were Nigerians and were arrested on-board the vessel off the coast of Ghana, by the Ghana Navy.<sup>15</sup>

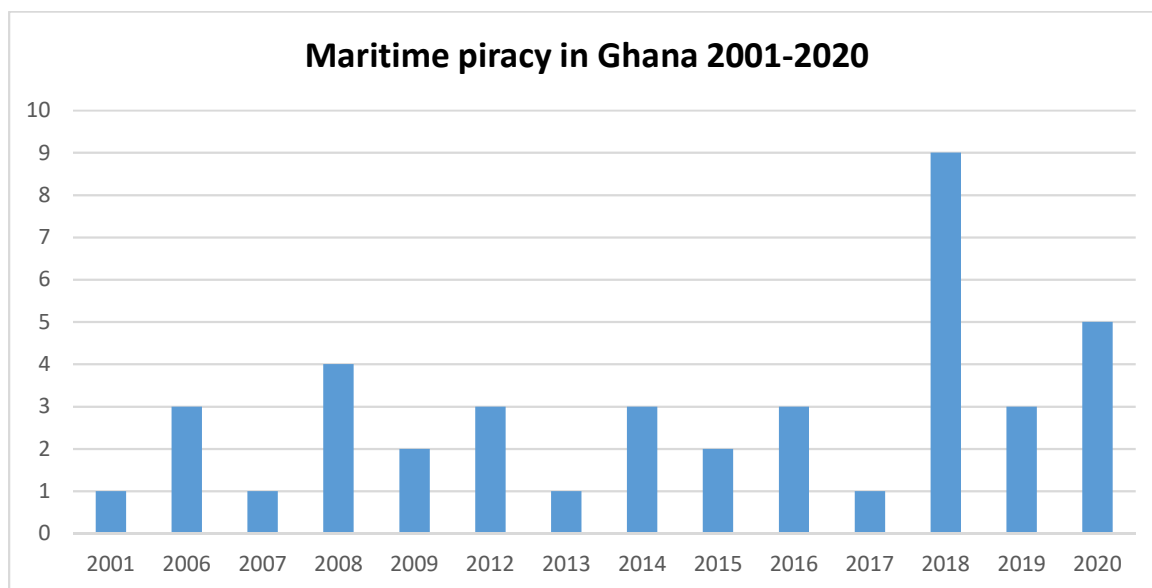


Figure: Data from International Maritime Organization's reports on Ghana from 2001-2020.

### ***Stowing Away***

Another crime in this category is the problem of stowaway persons, where individuals illegally board vessels in the hope of gaining free transit to other destinations. This crime is steeped in a history of seeking better livelihoods in European destinations. Some of the popular destinations

for this type of crime are Spain, Italy and Syria. The history of stowing away is deeply steeped in the preference and deep regard for foreign products which are deemed exotic, yet affordable. A stowaway is also known as, a clandestine traveler in the coastal communities is regarded and accorded the reverence of being able to travel abroad and returning with foreign products, thus the affinity for a supposed better life overseas. Although these products are likely affordable in the European countries and less affordable in Ghana due to economic disparities, they have ascribed a respectable level of quality. This is a substantial problem for the transport industry anchoring in Ghana. The hotspot for stowing away is Sekondi-Takoradi, in the Western Region of Ghana. This can be attributed to the proximity of this town to the Takoradi Port. The lack of employment and other opportunities for the youth can be seen as the main drivers of stowaway in coastal communities in Ghana.<sup>16</sup> The director of the Marine Police headquarters in Takoradi indicated that stowing away is prevalent due to the weak punitive measures, which do not deter the youth from venturing into such crimes.<sup>17</sup>

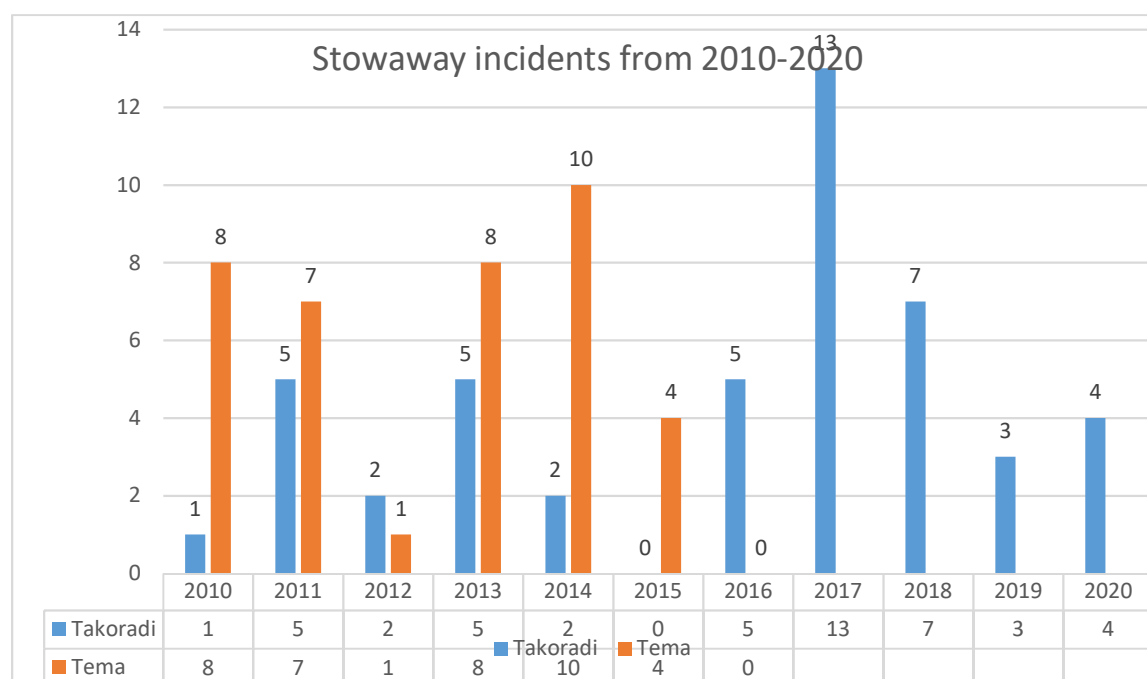


Figure 2: Unpublished data from Ghana marine police (Tema and Takoradi)<sup>18</sup> and Robmarine Shipping data.<sup>19</sup>

## Criminal flows

Criminal flows are activities in which the sea is used primarily as a conduit for criminal enterprise, rather than the main site of that endeavor itself. Across Ghana's coast, various types of these activities occur. These include small arms trafficking, human trafficking,<sup>20</sup> drug trafficking,<sup>21</sup> fuel smuggling,<sup>22</sup> and prostitution.<sup>23</sup> For example, the prostitution that occurs is primarily engineered by cronies of the crew onshore. Before the vessel docks, the crew firstly anchor close by, allowing

several women to be transported to them by boat. After a couple of days onboard the vessel, the prostitutes are returned to shore, followed shortly by the vessel.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Arms trafficking***

In Ghana, arms and ammunition importation licensing is administered by the Ghana Police Service under the Ministry of Interior (Mol) through the Arms and Ammunition Amendment Act of 1996 (519) 1 and the Arms and Ammunition Act of 2001 (Act 604).<sup>25</sup> Imports of arms, ammunition and explosives mainly arrive via seaports. These include both licit and illicit arms. Sometimes, supposedly licit arms are deemed illicit and given media attention. However, these shipments largely find their way out of the port when the owners engage the various state actors to establish the veracity of their licenses and regularize supposed infractions to the law (where necessary) to cart their shipments out of the port.<sup>26</sup> Arms trafficking also includes arms that are contained in shipments deliberately mislabeled to trick officials. For example, in late 2020, the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) reported ‘a container described on arrival at the Tema Port as containing personal effects and household goods.’<sup>27</sup> However, the port scanning machines flagged it red, and upon further inspection, eighteen packages identified as restricted items were found in the container. Upon revelation, these packages included 436 Pistols (Side Arms), 26 packs of 50 pieces of Ammunition and 1 (40ml) piece of pepper spray.

### ***Narcotic and Drugs trafficking***

Heroin and controlled pharmaceuticals from Asia, as well as cocaine from South America, are smuggled into the country for limited local consumption and onward shipment.<sup>28</sup> Ghana is part of the transit route of cocaine from South America to Europe and hence faces a substantial problem with the smuggling of narcotics.<sup>29</sup> For this reason, experts warn that the threats and challenges posed by organized criminal groups that operate in countries like Ghana have become grave due to their activities, as a result of their distinct characteristics, thus representing particular ‘African criminal networks’.<sup>30</sup> Ghana has indeed become a significant trans-shipment point for illegal drugs, particularly cocaine from South America and heroin from Afghanistan. Trafficking has also fueled increasing domestic drug consumption.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Illicit Migration and Trafficking for Labor***

A third kind of illicit activity via the sea that presents a pressing problem in Ghana concerns the flow of people, either as part of illicit migration or in the form of modern-day slavery and human trafficking. It is important to note that Ghana is a source, a transit point and a destination country for victims of human trafficking.<sup>32</sup> The government reported initiating 137 investigations into suspected human trafficking in 2019, compared to 82 investigations in 2018.<sup>33</sup> Although human trafficking is an international problem, it is quite prevalent in Ghana. Traffickers generally subject Ghanaian boys and girls to forced labor within the country, especially in inland and coastal

fishing.<sup>34</sup> Particularly, the internal trafficking of children is a major challenge as many kids are trafficked from their home villages to work in the fishing industry in the south of the country. A study on the prevalence of child trafficking in selected communities in the Volta and Central Regions revealed that children from nearly one-third of the 1,621 households surveyed, had been subjected to trafficking, primarily in fishing and domestic servitude.<sup>35</sup> Along the banks of Lake Volta, the trafficked children live under poor conditions and work long hours every day.<sup>36</sup> In addition, due to decreasing fish stocks in Lake Volta, fishermen find it increasingly difficult to survive on fishing alone. Therefore, to make a living, they need the children as cheap labor in the fishing industry, but also their small, nimble fingers are useful in releasing the fish from the smaller nets.<sup>37</sup> Thus, boys as young as five years old work in hazardous conditions, including deep diving, with many suffering waterborne infections.<sup>38</sup>

The driving forces behind child trafficking extend beyond fish scarcity. Deep-rooted traditions can help explain the prevalence of this crime. For example, it is a common tradition in Ghana for children to participate in apprentice work with a relative or family friend. Many children, and their parents, believe that going away to work is a route to a better life.<sup>39</sup> A recent assessment conducted by the International Justice Mission (IJM), found that 57.6 per cent of children working on southern Lake Volta's waters were trafficked into forced labor.<sup>40</sup> The report further noted that the majority of the child laborers were too young to legally conduct the hazardous tasks inherent in many aspects of the fishing industry. While in 2003, the Ghana Child Labor Survey Report published by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) found that over 49,000 children were involved in the fishing industry in Ghana, with many being disproportionately young to legally perform tasks in the fishing industry. The situation persists.<sup>41</sup> The 2016 Global Slavery Index estimates that there are 103,300 people in Ghana in modern slavery and 21,000 of them are children found along Lake Volta.<sup>42</sup> These views were reflected in the recent United States Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report rankings. In 2003 and 2004, Ghana was given the best ranking (tier 1). From 2005 onwards, alongside the proliferation of anti-trafficking organizations and intensification of their initiatives, Ghana has only managed a Tier 2 rating.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, since 2015, the country has fallen further in the rankings; it is currently on the Tier 2 Watch List as a country that is no longer compliant with the minimum standards.<sup>44</sup>

## **Environmental Crimes**

Environmental crimes include activities that cause significant harm to the marine environment. They are particularly prevalent in the form of fisheries crimes and pollution crimes, such as illicit waste or ballast water disposal.



## ***Fisheries***

To begin the discussion on fisheries crimes, it is essential to recognize the significance of the fisheries industry in Ghana's economy. Fish contributes 60 per cent of all animal protein consumed by Ghanaians;<sup>45</sup> 1.2 per cent of the national GDP is obtained from the fisheries sector;<sup>46</sup> it accounts for 5.4 per cent of the GDP in agriculture, and 10 per cent of the labor force works in the sector.<sup>47</sup>

The fishery sector is however in significant decline, partially caused by maritime crime. Production from marine fisheries has been declining since 1999, from almost 420,000 to 202,000 tons in 2014.<sup>48</sup> By 2015, the total fish supply had risen to 451,099.35 tonnes.<sup>49</sup> As of 2016, the fishing industry in Ghana had reached a low-level equilibrium that provided little prospects for improving the welfare of fisherfolk or contributing to Ghana's economy as a whole.<sup>50</sup> While it is insinuated by the United States Agency for International Development that Ghana is unable to effectively monitor the amount of fish caught from its waters and trans-shipped onto other vessels, it is also important to note that the West African region suffers a mild variation of Ghana's fate.<sup>51</sup> West Africa alone loses \$1.3 billion per year due to illegal fishing.<sup>52</sup> Information received from the Fisheries Commission of Ghana indicates that illegal fishing accounts for up to 30 per cent of total catches in some important fisheries.<sup>53</sup> In their entirety, fisheries crimes are both a domestic and an international menace. The fisheries crimes relate mostly to illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing. Below are subcategories of this crime per the respective perpetrators and dynamics involved.

### ***Illegal unregulated and unreported fishing by international perpetrators***

As stated earlier, Ghana's fishing industry is on the brink of collapse due to widespread IUU fishing. The perpetrators are predominantly foreign nationals on vessels that operate in Ghanaian waters. A report has indicated that Chinese-owned fishing companies cheat Ghana in millions of dollars annually in fishing license revenues, as the Chinese vessel owners use shell companies to fraudulently obtain lower-priced local licenses.<sup>54</sup> This is termed 'fronting'.<sup>55</sup> The study estimates that 90 per cent of coastal bottom trawlers operating in Ghana are Chinese owned, but these figures, however, do not translate into high annual licensing revenue for the Ghanaian government when compared with fishing license revenue of nearby countries. Ghana, according to a report by the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)<sup>56</sup> based on these benchmarks, is said to be missing out on between US\$14.4 and \$23.7 million annually in fishing licensing revenue.<sup>57</sup> Although these license fees are a minute fraction of the earnings, these individuals evade and avoid paying them.<sup>58</sup> For example, the annual fishing license fee for an average trawler of 200 gross registered tons operating in Ghanaian waters was around US\$ 30,000, nearly four times less than in Guinea, where a foreign trawler of this size pays around US\$ 119,000 annually.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, a single, Chinese state-owned company with trawl operations in Ghana reported

operating revenue of around US\$ 164.5 million in 2019, while also receiving subsidies for its overseas fishing operations of around US\$3.0 million in the same year.<sup>60</sup> While the Chinese are the main malefactors of this crime, Korean nationals have also been apprehended.<sup>61</sup>

Apart from Chinese and Korean trawlers operating with licenses owned by Ghanaians, they are also engaged in IUU fishing and cause harm to the country's fishing industry. The foreign trawlers engage in widespread illegal fishing in Ghana's waters, while failing to report huge catch volumes to the state, while decimating the 'pelagic' fish populations the government has reserved for local communities.<sup>62</sup> The main loophole in this crime is that the documentation for operating these vessels are often not appropriately licensed. To this effect, when accosted by Marine Police or any other legitimate institution, these permits are produced but cannot be fully verified.<sup>63</sup> This calls for an effective verification system and process for documentation for vessels. As a matter of obligation, fishing vessels need to document and declare their 'manifest,' that is the type and number of fish harvested at sea when they dock at shore.<sup>64</sup> Upon reaching the shores, the crew produces a made-up document to prove this. The main motive for this wrongdoing is to evade tax policies that are attached to the various types of fish in the zones assigned to them to fish in. Due to unsustainable fishing practices, Ghana's fisheries face imminent doom, which might in turn, affect the livelihoods of over 2.7 million Ghanaians.<sup>65</sup>

Another documentation issue that is tied into illegal trans-shipment in Ghana, is the fact that these industrial vessels default and fish in unauthorized zones. According to the law, while artisanal vessels are allowed to fish closer to shore, semi-industrial and industrial vessels are required to operate in waters deeper than 30m (Act 625, 2002).<sup>66</sup> This law recognizes the types of fish in the respective zones assigned to both artisanal and industrial fishing vessels. Coastal pelagic fish inhabit sunlit waters up to about 655 feet deep and are found in the column close to the surface of the water;<sup>67</sup> which include anchovies, sardines, tuna and mackerel.<sup>68</sup> Demersal fish, also called groundfish, on the other hand, are found lower and closer to the seabed.<sup>69</sup> These include flatfish, sole, grouper and snappers. With this law in place, artisanal fishermen are expected to harvest bounties of demersal fishes which are peculiar to their assigned zone for fishing. Pelagic fishes, which are found beyond, are the type of fish the industrial vessels are allowed and expected to fish by law.<sup>70</sup>

Even though these regulations exist, they are often flouted by industrial vessels. This is the main maritime crime plaguing the maritime economy of Ghana.<sup>71</sup> They begin fishing from the shore and with nets that have small holes. By so doing, they scrape the ocean floor of juvenile fish, demersal fishes and pelagic fishes entirely.<sup>72</sup> This is the first phase of the illegal trans-shipment process. After assessing their catch, they sort them out and produce documentation for the demersal catch. In some cases, they falsify this documentation in a bid to evade taxes.<sup>73</sup> The

unwanted portion of the catch is the traded commodity in the illegal trans-shipment process. Technically, trans-shipment is the unloading of goods from one ship to another to complete a journey to a further destination.<sup>74</sup>

In Ghana, the Japanese term 'Seiko', which is homophonic and synonymous with the English term 'psycho', equally means a mentally deranged person, is the jargon for illegal trans-shipment.<sup>75</sup> Chinese have been the major culprit indulging in 'Seiko' or 'Saiko' fishing, which entails illegal trans-shipment of frozen blocks of unwanted by-catch onto canoes of local fishermen who do not have the illegal nets the trawlers use.<sup>76</sup> As mentioned earlier, Seiko is the IUU crime that tops the list of maritime crimes in Ghana. A recent investigation in Ghana (and Nigeria) revealed a network of Chinese companies involved in trans-shipment along the Gulf of Guinea, which is a breach of the Ghana Fisheries Management Plan; which aims to protect Ghana's fish stocks, marine habitat and biodiversity, and ensure adherence to national fisheries legislation.<sup>77</sup> Fishery crimes, such as trans-shipment, are avenues to engage in multiple crimes, and hence require better surveillance measures. A representative of the Fisheries Commission of Ghana in Apam confirmed that 'it will be difficult to determine what exactly is exchanged during trans-shipment since other things like drugs and arms could be exchanged in addition to the fish.'<sup>78</sup>

### ***Domestic fishery crimes***

Domestic fishery crimes include the use of under-sized fishing nets, which obstruct the regeneration of the fish population in the marine ecosystem since fingerlings miss the opportunity to thrive in the marine habitat. This is perpetrated by artisanal fishermen, mostly Ghanaians.<sup>79</sup> Other illicit fishing methods include the use of chemicals like carbide, dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) and dynamite, blue pigment for brightening clothes. These chemicals kill the fish. Light fishing is another illegal fishing method. In this type of illegal fishing, a bright light is dropped into the ocean in a bid to attract curious fish, both juvenile and of age. This is mostly the first phase of dynamite blasting. When a substantial shoal of fish clusters around the light, the explosives are detonated, killing thousands of fish, which are eventually handpicked and brought to shore.

When fisherfolk use dynamite explosions to kill or stun large shoals of fish before they proceed to collect them, not only does the residue of the explosive material dissolve in the ocean and get ingested by fish, but they eventually affect humans who consume them. Other fishermen use the blood and chum of dead fish to attract predatory fish, such as sharks.<sup>80</sup> The concomitant effect of the use of these chemicals is the death of other vital plants or animals in the marine ecosystem. For instance, blast fishing especially destroys the coral reef which is an essential element of marine survival and protection.<sup>81</sup> The motives for these activities are underpinned by the frustration among fishermen as they struggle to harvest substantial amounts of fish due to the

harm caused by industrial fishermen. They are well aware of these crimes and their consequences. However, they would rather fall on these dubious means to support their livelihood.

Another option for them is to collaborate with the Chinese industrial trawlers and buy unwanted fish from them. The fishermen argue that, instead of dumping the unwanted fish back in the sea, which is also a crime, it is of better use to subsistence on land if collected and sold at the shore.<sup>82</sup> An interview with a group of fishermen in Apam<sup>83</sup> revealed that they do not consider transshipment a crime but see it as a way of saving the environment and providing for the needs of their community. One fisherman stated: 'If we do not collect the dead fishes, they will be thrown into the sea and will pollute the water we all depend on. Our people also need the fishes that will be thrown away so we are not criminals.'<sup>84</sup>

### ***Dumping***

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization, dumping can be technically defined as that portion of the total organic material of animal origin in the catch, which is thrown away, whether dead or alive or dumped at sea. Technically, dumping is the dislodging of rejected fish or remnants of a fish stock back in the ocean. However, dumping as an act of dislodging solid waste material in the waters is also another major crime.

Waste dumping has also been defined as the deliberate disposal at sea of wastes or other matter from vessels, aircraft, platforms or other man-made structures. The constituents of these dislodged materials are mostly non-degradable. This takes up to 400 years to degrade. Apart from being hazardous to humans, whales, and dolphins; other marine animals are at a high risk of ingesting them or getting entangled in them and dying as a result. On 4 April 2020, for instance, dead sea species littered beaches in Accra and near the capital's shoreline. Officials said close to 100 dead dolphins washed up on Axim beach and initial findings showed 'environment' and 'stress factors' had caused the deaths.<sup>85</sup>

### **Growing Maritime Insecurity: Recommendations**

Although piracy captures the headlines, other blue crimes are equally significant and most importantly, ridding the Gulf of Guinea of a stable (blue) economy. These crimes deserve more national and international attention to inform the mechanisms necessary to eradicate or manage them. Maritime security policymakers and international actors must recognize the broader spectrum of maritime security challenges and blue crime. It is not a single blue crime that undermines sustainable development; it is the general level of security at sea that is at stake. The following recommendations are therefore suggested:

First, it is important for Ghana, and other Gulf of Guinea states, and the international community to consider maritime security beyond piracy. Maritime insecurity needs to be viewed holistically and the many different blue crimes that harm a country's economy and population considered.

Second, it is important to acquire a better understanding of how one blue crime relates to another, and what effect a response to one crime has on the likelihood and opportunities of other blue crimes.

Third, as this review has shown, piracy is a crime that is well documented – and relatively well understood. The same can, however, not be said for the other expressions of blue crime, which are extremely difficult to reconstruct, with a lack of official reporting and little evidence is provided to the media. There is an urgent need for Maritime Domain Awareness organizations to collate such data and share information concerning the entire spectrum of blue crime.

Fourth, acknowledging the inter-dependency of different crimes in the maritime space is the precondition for better coordination of the various agencies that deal with security at sea, whether this is the education of fisherfolk, enforcement of environmental regulation or interception of smugglers.

Last, while well-intended, international capacity building providers tend to emphasize piracy. Other issues must feature as equally important on these agendas, considering that from a national blue economy perspective these might be much more important.

Krasner argues that 'a state that cannot regulate what passes across its borders will not be able to control what happens within it.'<sup>86</sup> Ghana, like the other Gulf of Guinea countries, is challenged with different maritime threats and has an interest in addressing and securing its maritime domain. The strategic position of Ghana as a shipping route for international trade, and the positions of Ghanaian ports of Tema and Takoradi serve as an important transit hub especially for neighboring land-locked countries like Burkina Faso.<sup>87</sup> The nature of piracy attacks targeted at maritime assets of multi-national stakeholders, often attract international media attention and are analyzed annually to inform perceptions of security in the waters of the Gulf of Guinea, and for that matter, Ghana's maritime domain. However, environmental crimes with specific reference to fisheries crimes that directly connect with local employment levels and the state of food security are recorded daily but hardly attract international media attention. IUU fishing activities undertaken by the artisanal, semi-industrial and industrial fishermen produce damaging consequences on the country's maritime domain, but do also not generate international headlines.

It is not only poly-criminal gangs that raise the need for holistic maritime security thinking, it is also the question of how responses to different issues can be better coordinated and form a coherent response. The most effective policy solutions will certainly be those that reduce marine insecurity overall and hence enable the blue economy and blue justice. The entire array of respective crimes in the region must be considered in the design of maritime security and safety policies, by not only the government of Ghana but also by other regional and international actors that have a stake in the region.

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