

# Development of Regional Fishing Vessels Record as Tool to Combat IUU Fishing in Southeast Asia

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SEAFDEC has been assisting the Southeast Asian countries in their efforts to combat IUU fishing through the project on the Promotion of Sustainable Fisheries and IUU Fishing-related Countermeasures in Southeast Asia which is funded by the Japanese Trust Fund (JTF). One of the main activities of the project focuses on the Promotion of Fishing License, Boats Registration, and Port State Measures in Southeast Asia, which is being carried out through a series of regional meetings. One of the objectives of this activity is the development of a regional record of fishing vessels, starting with vessels 24 meters in length and over phase. Moreover, assistance has also been extended by SEAFDEC to the countries in the region in improving their respective fishing licensing systems to conform to regional and international requirements. It is envisioned that this regional fishing vessels record together with the refined fishing licensing systems could be effectively used as fisheries management tools in combating IUU fishing in the Southeast Asian region.

The JTF three-year Project on the Promotion of Sustainable Fisheries and IUU Fishing-related Countermeasures in Southeast Asia was initiated in 2010, and includes the activity on the Promotion of Fishing License, Boats Registration and Port State Measures. This activity is being carried out by SEAFDEC as a rejoinder to the provision in the Regional Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries in Southeast Asia: Responsible Fisheries Management, which stipulated that: “*States should identify steps needed to limit access (rights-based fisheries) when over-capacity exists, by implementing an improved system of national and local registration of fishing vessels...*” (SEAFDEC, 2003).

Moreover, the aforesaid activity is also meant to address a concern in the 2011 Plan of Action on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security for the ASEAN Region Towards 2020, on the need to “*strengthen regional and national policy and legislation to implement measures and activities to combat IUU fishing, including the development and implementation of national plans of action to combat IUU fishing, and promote the awareness and understanding of international and regional instruments and agreements through information dissemination campaigns*” (SEAFDEC, 2011).

The objectives of the activity on the **Promotion of Fishing License, Boats Registration and Port State Measures in Southeast Asia** are to:

- Promote fishing licensing, boats registration and port state measures as fisheries management tool to combat IUU fishing;
- Promote MCS management for sustainable fisheries in the region;
- Prevent IUU fishing and its products from being exported; and
- Assist the SEAFDEC Member Countries in the application and implementation of IUU fishing-related countermeasures.

In order to attain the objectives of this activity, SEAFDEC convened a series of regional meetings and compiled the necessary inputs from the Southeast Asian countries for the development of the regional record of fishing vessels, initially starting with vessels measuring 24 meters in length and over. The minimum requirements for fishing licensing and boats registration in the region have also been harmonized as agreed upon during the regional meetings to take into consideration the existing practices in the Southeast Asian countries. Such harmonized minimum requirements could be used as inputs in the development and implementation of fishing licensing system and boats registration for the Southeast Asian region.

## Systems of Fishing Licensing and Vessels Registration in Southeast Asia

While it has been well recognized that the declining fishery resources in the region is mainly due to fishing over-capacity, the countries in Southeast Asia are also increasingly aware that the level of unsustainability in fisheries is becoming very alarming. The persistent practice of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing by many fishers in the waters of Southeast Asia has also been recognized as one of the major causes of the declining fishery resources. Since IUU fishing can take place in all capture fisheries whether within national jurisdictions or in the high seas, it could easily undermine all efforts to conserve and manage the fisheries leading to its possible collapse and seriously impairing efforts to rebuild fish stocks that have already been depleted. This scenario could therefore lead to the loss of both short- and long-term social and economic opportunities for fishers and create negative impacts on the region’s food security.

Recognizing of the magnitude of the above-mentioned concerns which are mainly brought about by IUU fishing,

countries in the region initiated efforts to address the problems through their respective fisheries agencies at the national level, and with the collaboration of SEAFDEC at the regional level. Thus, while the Southeast Asian countries at the national level placed more focus on the promotion of sustainable fisheries management and adoption of countermeasures to address IUU fishing, at the regional level and with support from the Japanese Trust Fund (JTF), SEAFDEC has been exerting efforts to promote the improvement of fishing licensing, boats registration and port state measures as means of combating IUU fishing in the region; promote MCS management for sustainable fisheries in the region; develop measures to prevent the export of IUU fishing products; and provide assistance to the SEAFDEC Member Countries in the application and implementation of IUU fishing-related countermeasures. Through a series of meetings and consultations, SEAFDEC has been compiling information that could be used as basis for the development of a regional record of fishing vessels for Southeast Asia even though the countries in the region have been implementing various systems of fishing licensing and vessels registration which vary in a way, from country to country (SEAFDEC/TD, 2011; SEAFDEC/TD, 2012) as shown in **Box 1**.

### **Development of Regional Record of Fishing Vessels 24 m in Length and Over**

During the Regional Core Experts Meeting in Fishing License, Boats Registration and Information on Export of Fisheries Products in Southeast Asia organized by SEAFDEC/TD in October 2011, the procedures for fishing licensing and boats registration in Southeast Asian countries as well as the corresponding minimum requirements for obtaining fishing license and boats registration certificates



*Photo: Courtesy of Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (SEAFDEC/TD, 2011b)*

were discussed, the results of which were compiled in a database maintained by SEAFDEC/TD.

Moreover, the Regional Core Experts Meeting also considered the development of the regional guidelines on fishing licensing and boats registration while the ways and the means of preventing the export of IUU fishing products in the region have been initially identified (SEAFDEC/TD, 2011). In order to strengthen the regional networking and enhance the collaboration among the countries in the development of such guidelines as well as in future relevant activities, an electronic email group (*combat\_iuu@seafdec.org*) was established which has since then been actively used to exchange and update the necessary information.

In the subsequent Experts Group Meeting on Fishing Licensing and Boats Registration in Southeast Asia convened by SEAFDEC/TD in June 2012, the development of the Regional Record of Fishing Vessels 24 meters in length and over was endorsed. The Meeting also

**Box 1. Important aspects in the fishing vessel registration systems of the countries in Southeast Asia**

Features	Brunei Darussalam	Cambodia	Indonesia	Myanmar	Malaysia	Philippines	Thailand
Registration No.	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Owner, charterer	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Name of vessel	/	/	/	/	-	/	/
Type of fishing method/gear	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Port of registry	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Gross tonnage (GT)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Length (L)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Breadth (B)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Depth (D)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Engine Power	/ (HP)	/ (HP)	/ (HP)	/ (HP)	/ (HP)	/ (KW)	/ (KW)
Shipyard	/	/	-	-	-	-	-
Date of launching	/	/	-	-	/	-	-
International Radio Call Sign	/	-	/	-	-	/	-

recommended that the compilation could be expanded to include vessels measuring below 24 meters considering that this group of vessels which accounts for more than 80% of fishing vessels in most countries in the region could also be involved in IUU fishing.

While noting that the procedures for fishing licensing differ from those of vessels registration and in some countries are undertaken by different national agencies, the Experts Group Meeting agreed that the roles of the various national agencies in vessels registration as well as those in fishing licensing should be clarified and properly defined. Since fishing vessels in the region have varying classifications, *i.e.* either based on size (length) or gross tonnage or engine power in horsepower, henceforth measurements of all vessels should be expressed into length in meters to facilitate analysis and harmonization of the procedures and systems of registering and issuing fishing licenses for fishing vessels 24 meters and over. This would also facilitate the development of the regional record for this group of fishing vessels as an initial step (SEAFDEC/TD, 2012). In this connection, the minimum basic requirements for vessel registration in Southeast Asia agreed upon during the Experts Group Meeting are shown in **Box 2**. Furthermore, the initial compilation of the national systems of recording fishing vessels 24 meters in length and over in the Southeast Asian countries is summarized and shown in **Box 3**.



Fishing vessels in Brunei Darussalam (left)  
and Cambodia (right)

In a similar development, registration procedures adopted by the countries for fish carriers would also be analyzed in line with the development of the regional record considering the functions and involvement of fish carriers in fishing activities. Fish carriers would therefore be included in the proposed regional record of fishing vessels measuring 24 meters in length and over. Furthermore, in the development of the initial database of fishing vessels in the region, the existing compilation systems of the respective countries (**Box 5**) would be used to update the database maintained by SEAFDEC/TD, which would be strictly controlled and would be made available only to the Member Countries through the project's webpage.

## Way Forward

In response to the concerns raised during the June 2012 Experts Group Meeting, the proposed development of the Regional Fishing Vessel Record as tool to reduce IUU fishing in Southeast Asian region was presented during the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Regional Technical Consultation (RTC) on International Fisheries Related Issues on 31 October-2 November 2012 in Bangkok, Thailand. While expressing the view that the initiative is useful to help in enhancing the initiatives and efforts of the region in combating IUU fishing, the RTC recommended that more in-depth review should be conducted by the respective countries in order to provide the necessary data to the Regional Record. The Program Committee of SEAFDEC was also informed during its 35<sup>th</sup> Meeting in November 2012 on the proposed compilation of regional fishing vessels 24 meters in length and over in accordance with the definition of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Conventions. Recognizing that the regional vessels record is in parallel with the FAO Global Record and other Regional Records, the Program Committee endorsed the proposed development of the Regional Record of Fishing Vessels 24 meters in length and over, for the consideration of the SEAFDEC Council during its 45<sup>th</sup> Meeting in April 2013. Meanwhile, SEAFDEC/TD would continue to compile the relevant data from the countries in the region to serve as inputs for the proposed Regional Record and enhance the inputs in the project's database.

### Box 2. Basic requirements for vessel registration in the countries of Southeast Asia

• Name of vessel	• Serial number of engine
• Type of fishing method/ gear	• Hull material
• Port of registry	• Date of registration
• Gross tonnage (G.T.)	• Area (country) of fishing operation
• Length (L)	• Nationality of vessel (flag)
• Breadth (B)	• Previous name (if any)
• Depth (D)	• Previous flag (if any)
• Engine Power	• Name of captain/ master
• Shipyard	• Nationality of captain/ master
• Date of launching	• Number of crew (maximum/minimum)
• International Radio Call Sign	• Nationality of crew
• Engine Brand	

Cambodia and Lao PDR have no record of existing fishing vessels that measure 24 meters and over. Therefore, their respective procedures and systems of fishing licensing and vessels registration would be considered part of the regional system that would be adopted in coming up with the over-all regional record of fishing vessels. Based on the information provided by the countries during the Experts Group Meeting, the initial total number of fishing vessels in the region shown in **Box 4** is currently being updated by SEAFDEC/TD with the cooperation of the countries in the region.



Clockwise from top-left: fishing vessels of Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, and Philippines

### Box 3. Recording of Fishing Vessels 24 Meters and Over in Southeast Asian Countries

#### Brunei Darussalam

Under its Registration of Fishing Vessels and Pleasure Craft Regulation 2011, all fishing vessels in Brunei Darussalam must be registered for national security and safety of the operators. While fishing vessels registration is the responsibility of the country's Marine Department, fishing gears licensing is carried out by the Fisheries Department, which promulgates the prohibition of fishing gears from operating without vessels registration and vice versa.

#### Cambodia

All categories of marine vessels in Cambodia with capacity of 1.0 ton or more are registered with the Merchant Marine Department (MMD) or the Provincial Department of Public Works and Transport. To be able to undertake fishing operations, all marine vessels must also apply for Vessel Card and Technical Inspection Book to be shown to authorities during inspection and given to authorities after each operation, and used for the application of fishing licenses with the Fisheries Administration. Since Cambodia has no vessels measuring 24 meters in length and over, the country could prepare for the next step which is the development of the regional record of vessels less than 24 meters.

#### Indonesia

Based on the laws and regulations on vessel registration and fishing licensing in Indonesia, three types of fishing licenses are issued, namely: fishery business license, fishing license, and fish carrier license. Under its laws, the country does not approve the procurement of fishing vessels that are known to be ex-IUU fishing vessels.

#### Lao PDR

Focusing on Namtheun 2 Reservoir (NT2) in Nakai District, Khammouan Province, the national fishing licensing and boats registration in the reservoir is the responsibility of the NT2 Reservoir Management Committee. Three types of licenses are issued, namely: license for commercial fishing, license to fish for family consumption, and license for other fisheries-related activities. Although the fishing vessels in NT2 are only 7-13 meters in length, the system and procedures of collecting information on such fishing vessels would be used to compile the relevant information on the number of fishing vessels along the stretch of the Mekong River within Lao PDR.

#### Malaysia

The fisheries licensing policy of Malaysia mainly aims to maintain the condition of the fishery resources for the sustainability of fisheries. The Department of Fisheries Malaysia is promoting vessels registration on line to shorten the time for registration with the condition that vessels are inspected annually for sea worthiness.

#### Myanmar

Within the demarcated fishing grounds of Myanmar which comprise Rakhine, Ayeyarwaddy, Mon and Tanintharyi, local vessels are allowed to operate in one or two adjacent fishing grounds while foreign vessels can operate in selected fishing grounds except in Mon. The fishing vessels registration system of Myanmar covers registration of national fishing vessels operating inshore and offshore fisheries, and registration of foreign vessels.

#### Philippines

The aspects that are licensed in the Philippines include: commercial fishing vessels, fishing gears, vessel officers and crew members, and fish workers. The country is promoting a mobile fishing vessel registration and licensing system especially in far flung areas of the country. This mobile registration is a collaborative effort of the country's Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

#### Thailand

Fishing licensing, which covers fishing gears operating in Thai waters as well as in overseas waters, is the responsibility of the Department of Fisheries (DOF) of Thailand, is required for obtaining a boat registration certificate from the Marine Department. This certificate is used during the change and transfer of registration certificate, replacement of lost vessel registration certificate, building new vessels, and in the computation of vessels' registration fee and license fee. The fishing license is used for fisheries operation, fishing area and ground identification, catch information collection and reporting by DOF. Vessel registration is required for new vessels and renewal of vessel registration.

#### Vietnam

The objectives of fishing licensing and boats registration in Vietnam are to: prevent IUU fishing; make the fisheries policy makers and managers aware of the number of vessels to enable them to promote the management of fishing effort and set up appropriate management objectives; and to ensure safety at sea of the fishing vessels. The efforts of the country to intensify fishing licensing resulted in the registration and licensing of more than 92.6% of the total fishing vessels in the country.

**Box 4. Number of fishing vessels in Southeast Asia (compiled during the June 2012 Experts Group Meeting)**

Country	Total		** Less than 24 meters	** 24 meters and over	Remarks
	*2010	**2011			
Brunei Darussalam	2,743	2,480	2,476	4	
Cambodia	-	7,034	7,034	0	
Indonesia	570,827	570,827	569,105	1,722	24 meters in length and over consist of 1367 fishing vessels, 355 fish carriers
Lao PDR	-	1,615	1,615	0	Fiber and wooden boats in Namtheun 2 Reservoir only
Malaysia	49,756	49,756	49,673	83	
Myanmar	32,824	28,357	27,000	1,357	
Philippines	-	473,400	472,804 (data covers 5,869 from 3.1 to 149.99 GT)	> 596 (data cover 150 GT and over)	
Thailand	-	**33,915	33,050	865	Data for 2012
Vietnam	***25,346	**128,000	127,700	-300	Data for 2012

\* Source: Fishery Statistical Bulletin of Southeast Asia 2010

\*\* Source: Report of Experts Group Meeting on Fishing Licensing and Boats Registration in Southeast Asia, Bangkok, Thailand, 25-28 June 2012. Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center, Bangkok, Thailand; 97 p

\*\*\* Source: Website – General Statistics Office of Vietnam

Note: Unless specified, data is for 2011

**Box 5. National data compilation systems for recording vessels of 24 meters in length and over**

Country	Format	Remarks
Brunei Darussalam	Microsoft Excel Format	Available in electronic and hard copy
Cambodia	Microsoft Excel Format	Registration with MPWT Licensing with FiA
Indonesia	Central office: database	Database on Directorate General of Capture Fisheries
Lao PDR	Microsoft Excel Format	Collaborate with NTPC database sector
Malaysia	Database	Centralized and updated on-line
Myanmar	Manual recording	Assistance needed to develop electronic files
Philippines	Database (MARINA) Logbook or excel format (BFAR)	Registration: MARINA; Licensing: BFAR Decentralized recording of data by region
Thailand	Database	Marine Department Database for fishing license by DOF
Vietnam	Database and Excel format	Each month submitted to ministerial level

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