

Organizing for Change

strategic opportunities to advance accountability
in wild-caught fisheries



FISHERIES
GOVERNANCE
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B L U E
sanctuaries

executive summary

Purpose

In 2022, the [Fisheries Governance Project](#) (FGP) and the US Agency for International Development co-hosted an expert workshop aimed at addressing illegality in industrial fisheries. Participants developed recommendations for improving information flows to increase consequences for illegal harvesting and labor practices (Annex A). These recommendations offered a comprehensive response to illegality in the sector, achieved through action by key actors: industry, fisher-led organizations, civil society, and governments. They also provided a framework to map current initiatives, identify gaps in action, and chart next steps. This report updates the 2022 recommendations based on interviews with 25 experts.

Recommendation Updates

- Recommendations focused on business and fisher-led organizations were updated to reflect stronger roles for these groups (Recs 1 & 2).
- The importance of efforts to build the capacity of governmental authorities was reaffirmed. Crew States were identified as an additional responsible authority; a recommendation dedicated to building US government capacity and budgets was removed. (Rec 3)
- The importance of verifiable data and networks to connect decision-makers with credible information was reemphasized (Recs 4 & 5). Networks focused on data sharing & transparency have expanded since 2022. There are key opportunities to accelerate data flows through supply chains and strengthen other networks.
- Technological advancements in wifi connectivity and electronic monitoring offer key opportunities to reduce isolation and invisibility at sea if effective systems can be developed around them (Rec 6).

Next Steps

Interviews revealed that experts contextualize the workshop recommendations into different theories of change (TOC) for advancing accountability. Mapping the updated recommendations onto these theories of change identifies priority actions for:

- 1 promoting compliance with labor & harvesting laws
- 2 supporting fisher-led organizations in negotiating collective bargaining agreements
- 3 supporting small-scale fisher associations in negotiating fair catch allocations with industrial fleets
- 4 strengthening information flows that enable responsive action

Contents

- 1 background and methods
- 2 suggested updates to recommendations from the 2022 experts workshop
- 3 theories of change for implementing the recommendations in different contexts
- 4 suggested focus areas for the FGP
- 5 conclusions

Annex A 2022 workshop premise, recommendations, & illustrative actions

1. background & methods

The Fisheries Governance Project

(FGP) works at the intersection of ecological sustainability and labor rights to advance solutions in international fisheries. It co-hosted the 2022 expert workshop through one of its three work streams.

The 2022 Expert Workshop

brought together 70 experts through four virtual, facilitated sessions. It developed recommendations for improving information flows to increase consequences for illegal harvesting and labor practices in wild fisheries. It was based on an aspiration to promote more meaningful remedy and deterrence to illegality by further engaging the different authorities of government, business, fishers, and other actors (see Annex A).

This report aims to update the 2022 recommendations.

Methods

- 1. Interviews.** The analysis is based on expert opinion, triangulated between experts and written references. The data come from key informant interviews with 25 experts who provided 23 hours of data. Interviews were coded into Taguette to systematically track patterns. All experts were connected to the 2022 workshop, either because they attended themselves or because they now fill the position of a former attendee. Most experts were from civil society with a few from business and philanthropy; all have extensive knowledge of the sector.
- 2. Updating the workshop recommendations & illustrative actions.** Experts were interviewed about 1-2 recommendations that were most aligned with their expertise. They shared opinions on what had changed over the last 3 years and provided advice on updating the recommendations and illustrative actions. Section 2 presents a synthesis of these responses.
- 3. Key opportunities to implement the recommendations.** Experts also gave opinions on key opportunities to achieve the recommendations based on current circumstances. These responses are summarized in synthetic quotes that combine phrases from multiple experts to convey their collective advice.
- 4. Inferring theories of change.** Interviews revealed that experts contextualize the recommendations and opportunities into different theories of change (TOCs). The TOCs are useful for prioritizing next steps and are described in Section 3.
- 5. Suggesting focus areas for FGP into the next 3 years.** Section 4 maps key opportunities and recommended actions from Section 2 onto the TOCs from Section 3 to suggest priority components for FGP's new strategic plan (2026-29).

2. suggested updates to recommendations from the 2022 expert's workshop

Purpose of the recommendations

The workshop recommendations offer a comprehensive framework for responding to illegal labor and harvesting practices in wild fisheries.

This framework supports work to map current efforts, identify gaps in action, and chart next steps.

Overview of suggested updates

Insights from the experts interviewed for this analysis suggest the following updates to the 2022 workshop recommendations and illustrative actions:

- Experts emphasized the importance of proactive business engagement in the current context (Rec 1), encouraging more effective use of influence and analysis.
- Building on expanded fisher organizing, experts suggested stronger recognition of fisher-led organizations as central to countering illegality in the sector (Rec 2).
- Noting deregulations and defunding decisions by the current US government, the 2022 recommendation focused on building US government budgets and capacity was removed.
- Experts suggested adding crew States alongside other responsible authorities (Rec 3) and continued emphasis on strengthening joint, harmonized inspections and the legal basis for combating illegal labor practices.
- Applauding the expansion of networks focused on data sharing and transparency, experts reaffirmed the importance of multi-stakeholder networks for responding to illegality and called for expanding engagement with lawyers, journalists, and investors (Rec 4).
- Appreciating greater agreement on key data elements for traceability, experts observed a need to accelerate data flows through supply chains and address the quality of underlying data sets, particularly ultimate beneficial owners (Rec 5).
- Leveraging technology advances, experts called for expanding both wifi and on-board monitoring to reduce isolation and invisibility at sea (Rec 6).

Figure 1. Suggested updates to 2022 workshop recommendations

The recommendations connect key actors (1-3) with networks (4), supported by verifiable data (5) and on-water communication & monitoring (6)

1



Enable businesses throughout fishery supply chains to prevent, detect, and remedy illegal labor and harvesting practices and strengthen normative standards

2



Support fisher-led organizations as central actors in deterring, detecting, and remedying illegal labor and harvesting practices

3



Strengthen the capacities of coastal, port, flag, crew, and market States, as well as regional fisheries bodies, to obtain, share, and take action on credible information

5



Improve the availability of timely, reliable, interoperable data and risk-based analyses to support governments, business, fisher-led organizations, and civil society in countering illegal labor and harvesting practices

4



Strengthen networks that enable decision-makers from government, business, fisher-led organizations, and civil society to take action in response to reliable information about illegal labor and harvesting practices

6



Refine and scale systems that provide safe communication for crew and enhance visibility of activities and conditions on vessels.

recommendation 1: proactive business practices

2022 workshop

Enable proactive and more effective business engagement, including of financial sector actors, in supply chains for wild-caught seafood to remedy and deter illegal labor practices and IUU fishing and advance good practices

Illustrative Actions

- A. Industry actors increase participation in collaborations and define current barriers and what they need from government to more efficiently obtain supply chain information, strengthen normative standards for good practice, and amplify responses to illegality.
- B. Governments clarify and strengthen expectations for industry accountability and due diligence in seafood supply chains to create market certainty and comparable standards for all market actors.
- C. Industry, government, and CSOs develop incentives for obtaining, sharing, and using verifiable data (e.g. preferential purchasing, import processes, or recognitions).

suggested update

Enable businesses throughout fishery supply chains to prevent, detect, and remedy illegal labor and harvesting practices and strengthen normative standards

Illustrative Actions

- A. Pricing, purchasing, and partnerships throughout supply chains: 1) strengthen normative good practice standards, 2) reflect compliance risks, 3) fairly distribute the costs of verified compliance, and 4) deliver timely, commensurate remedy when violations occur.
- B. Risk determinations that underpin business decisions and liability are based on analysis of recent, reliable data that accounts for known risk factors.
- C. Businesses, fisher-led organizations, and CSOs advocate for the formal adoption of strengthened labor and harvesting standards to stabilize a competitive environment for good practices across the sector.

significant changes

- With shifts in the posture of the US and the EU, Recommendation 1 is even more important
- There is stronger agreement among civil society on normative good practices for labor
- There is heightened uncertainty within industry about how to respond to potential legal exposure

key opportunities

- 1. Foster positive responses to legal uncertainty**
We want the message to be that legal exposure is reduced by knowing your supply chain and taking action when something goes wrong, not by looking the other way. Otherwise, you're going to have the same problems shoved deeper underground.

- 2. Update expectations for the analytical rigor of due diligence given increased data and AI**
This is what keeps me up at night; we're letting a lot of people get away with paper-based programs.

- 3. Engage sector service providers to better reflect compliance risk in the cost of business**
NGOs have monetized consulting based on a problem as it previously existed. With the data, APIs, and AI available now, we can do a lot better.

- 3. Engage sector service providers to better reflect compliance risk in the cost of business**
Insurers and investors are an under-utilized leverage point and could do a lot to stop risky behavior before it starts.

recommendation 2: fisher-led associations

2022 workshop

Support fishers as key partners in preventing, detecting, and remedying illegality in wild fisheries.

Illustrative Actions

- A. Develop and expand multi-actor partnerships between worker-led organizations, CSOs, and industry to empower and protect fishers to improve labor conditions and prevent, detect, and remedy illegality in wild fisheries
- B. All actors work to significantly strengthen the support available to fishers who have survived forced labor to enable them to recover, provide testimony, receive compensation, and rebuild their lives
- C. Develop and expand safe, accessible, effective grievance mechanisms for fishers at sea that allows reporting and response in native languages and connects victims with assistance
- D. Expand connectivity at sea to enable fishers to communicate with trusted organizations and relatives, removing the isolation that enables illegality and poor treatment

suggested update

Support fisher-led organizations as central actors in deterring, detecting, and remedying illegal labor and harvesting practices

Illustrative Actions

- A. Fishers are increasingly represented by effective worker-led associations, including unions for crew or associations for small-scale fishers and processors.
- B. Fisher-led organizations increasingly have legally-binding collective bargaining agreements with recruitment agencies, the vessels on which they work, and other supply chain actors as relevant, to ensure rights, pay, and effective grievance mechanisms.
- C. Associations of small-scale fishers and processors are effectively engaged in co-governance arrangements that fairly allocate a sustainable harvest with accountable enforcement.
- D. [Connectivity at sea shifted to Recommendation 6]

significant changes

- There is increased agreement on identifying labor abuse in industrial fishing and greater awareness of the limits of social audits and certifications to address labor issues in fisheries.
- Unions / associations representing crew and negotiating agreements have grown, although union density remains low and many continue to face legal repression or discrimination.
- Associations of small-scale fishers and processors continue to expand and some have successfully advocated for reforms to protect their stocks from competition with industrial fleets.

key opportunities

1. Host dialogues between fisher-led organizations and supply chain actors

Dialogues were one of the precursors to the Bangladesh Accords in apparel. If top-level leadership could sit down and build trust, it would help form the basis for co-creating solutions that can be implemented through the supply chain.

As unions deliver better conditions and pay, fishers will be able to pay their dues creating a virtuous cycle.

2. Develop accessible grievance mechanisms for crew that reliably deliver meaningful remedy

There are many fishers seeking justice and not getting satisfactory results.

We need ways to remediate harms at the lowest possible level that are fast and accessible in making fishers whole.

former recommendation 3: US government

2022 workshop

Strengthen U.S. Government capacities and approaches to identify, target, and address forced labor and illegal harvesting in imported seafood through administrative, civil, and criminal actions.

Illustrative Actions

- A. Incorporate forced labor indicators into SIMP's risk-based approach for analysis, investigation and action by the Department of Homeland Security and other relevant agencies
- B. Strengthen operational networks and information sharing to enable all parts of the USG to bring full authorities to bear in delivering civil and criminal consequences for illegality in imported seafood
- C. Increase U.S. government staff and budgets at relevant agencies to enable significantly more investigations and prosecutions of illegalities in imported seafood, including at NOAA, CBP, Labor, Justice, and Treasury

suggested update

Given the current administration's focus on deregulation and cutting budgets, the 2022 workshop recommendation to build US government capacity likely faces insurmountable headwinds in the current political environment.

The U.S. remains one of the world's largest seafood importers and strategic work by US IUU Fishing and Labor Rights Coalition will continue to be important for advancing legality in labor and harvesting practices.

For the purpose of these globally-focused recommendations, the US government can be considered alongside other state actors, rather than having a dedicated recommendation.

significant changes

- Most US Government foreign assistance investments to counter IUU fishing and associated labor abuse have been eliminated. All fishing programs funded by the US Agency for International Development, valued at \$42 M in FY23, will be eliminated by December 2025. Programming supported through the Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs has also been terminated.
- A Presidential Executive Order issued on [17 April 2025](#), directs efforts to reduce fisheries regulation, including the Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP).
- Staffing cuts and reduced engagement in international fora are expected to further [reduce US influence](#) in seafood legality and sustainability.

recommendation 3 (former recommendation 7): formal institutions

2022 workshop

Strengthen the capacities of Flag, Coastal, Market, and Port States, as well as regional fisheries bodies, to obtain, share, and take action on credible information

Illustrative Action

- Continue and strengthen support for key authorities to effectively implement their responsibilities in preventing, detecting, and responding to illegality in wild fisheries.

suggested update

Strengthen the capacities of coastal, port, flag, crew, and market States, as well as regional fisheries bodies, to obtain, share, and take action on credible information

Illustrative Actions

- Continue to strengthen key authorities to effectively implement their responsibilities in preventing, detecting, and responding to illegal labor and harvesting practices
- Strengthen inspections in port and at sea to optimize the opportunities for detecting, reporting and effectively responding to illegal labor and harvesting practices.
- Strengthen the legal basis for responding to labor violations, including through expanded implementation of c188, and Regional Fishery Management Organization (RFMO) measures.

significant changes

- Some coastal states have implemented effective actions to counter illegal harvesting and labor practices in their EEZs; [Ghana](#) is an example.
- [Tools](#) for joint port inspections are further developed.
- There has been a push at some RFMOs to integrate labor-related measures; however in comparison to PSMA, implementation remains weak.

key opportunities

1. Coastal States

There has been a lot of focus on flag and market states; there's a real need to focus on coastal states that are impacted by distant water fleets. Coastal states with democratic governance have a vested interest in making sure their resources aren't overexploited & their people aren't being harmed.

2. Port Inspections

You're not going to see labor abuse on AIS; you need to see it in port.

Harmonized port inspections are really important if you're going to get the port and flag states to work together

3. Implementation of c188

The legal basis for countering labor abuse in fishing is still underdeveloped. We need broader adoption of c188 and implementation at the national level.

recommendation 4: stakeholder networks

2022 workshop

Strengthen networks and protocols to enable more effective information sharing among industry, civil society, and government to facilitate more coordinated approaches to labor and harvesting issues

Illustrative Actions

- A. Strengthen agreements and networks between jurisdictions and across government, civil society, and industry to strengthen information sharing about potential labor and harvesting issues
- B. Strengthen planning, networks, and systems to facilitate follow-on when issues are detected (e.g., what actions will industry take after a WRO)
- C. Management authorities strengthen the legal basis for responding to labor violations including through expanded implementation of c188, and supported and encouraged by RFMO measures
- D. Increase cooperation among USG agencies and international governments and organizations to identify the true beneficial owners of vessels engaged in forced labor and IUU fishing and ensure they face the relevant consequences

suggested update

Strengthen networks that enable decision-makers from government, business, fisher-led organizations, and civil society to take action in response to reliable information about illegal labor and harvesting practices

Illustrative Actions

- A. Strengthen networks that facilitate information sharing, verification, and analysis to inform risk analysis, business decisions, inspections, case development, and journalism.
- B. Strengthen networks that facilitate commensurate, responsive actions when credible information documenting illegality is available.
- C. [Strengthening authorities for labor violations shifted to new Recommendation 3]
- D. [Identifying ultimate beneficial owners shifted to Recommendation 5]

significant changes

- Networks have formed or strengthened to improve information and action to counter illegal labor and harvesting practices, e.g., Joint Analytic Cell, West Africa Task Force, and IUU Action Network.
- A [civil case](#) recently brought in the US against Bumble Bee Seafood by four Indonesian crew demonstrates the complex evidence needed for international cases seeking remedy for labor abuse.
- There have been examples of insurers and flag states dropping vessels involved in IUU fishing, but they remain the exception rather than the norm.

key opportunities

1. **Expand networks of lawyers and investigative journalists, particularly in coastal & crew states**
If you have local lawyers close to the communities that need representation it is easier to build trust and cases.

We need to bring together local and international lawyers, unions, and civil society to discuss strategy. How can cases be brought locally? In additional jurisdictions?

It would be helpful to have an impact fund to help start cases.

Investigative journalism provides a critical role in motivating companies and governments to address these issues, and in countering corruption.

recommendation 5: reliable data & analysis

2022 workshop

Improve the accessibility of timely, reliable, interoperable data and risk-based analyses to support business, government, and civil society efforts to counter illegality in wild caught seafood supply chains

Illustrative Actions

- A. Continue to strengthen and expand electronic systems that improve data reliability and enable timely data verification as a foundational building block for the detection, deterrence, and response to illegality in seafood.
- B. Continue and expand efforts to harmonize key data elements for labor and harvesting in wild fisheries and appropriate accessibility to that data.
- C. Continue to strengthen and expand accessible, risk-based analysis to support the detection, deterrence, and response to illegality in seafood.
- D. Continue and expand efforts to increase accessibility to data and information that is critical for determining legality and liability in wild fisheries.

suggested update

Improve the availability of timely, reliable, interoperable data and risk-based analyses to support governments, business, fisher-led organizations, and civil society in countering illegal labor and harvesting practices

Illustrative Actions

- A. Strengthen and expand electronic systems that improve data reliability and enable timely data verification.
- B. Expand efforts to harmonize key data elements for labor and harvesting in wild fisheries and appropriate accessibility to that data.
- C. Strengthen and expand accessible, risk-based analysis to support the detection, deterrence, and response to illegality in seafood.
- D. Expand efforts to increase accessibility to data and information that is critical for determining legality and liability in wild fisheries, particularly ultimate beneficial ownership of vessels.

significant changes

- There has been an increase in data about vessels, including free look-up tools.
- There is greater agreement on key data elements for seafood traceability, although data flow remains limited and primarily focused on food safety. A positive change is Indonesia's adoption of GDST standards for its [national Stellina traceability system](#).
- Expanding conversations about data transparency have led to some examples of government action. For example, Papua New Guinea shared its VMS data with Global Fishing Watch after [advocacy by their Fishing Industry Association](#).

key opportunities

1. Leverage advances to accelerate data flows

This is a key moment to leverage increased agreement on data elements and get better quality data flowing. With verifiable data and AI, governments can do better enforcement and business can weaponize data to drive [investments](#) and trust.

You want to fuel decisions with a cable of information that runs from the crew recruitment agency to the end retailer.

2. Ultimate beneficial ownership of vessels

Often there is a very high analytical burden to [identifying the ultimate beneficial owners \(UBOs\)](#) of fleets involved in violations. But if you want to get at the responsible parties when sanctioning offenses, you have to get through those layers to the real owners. We should prioritize identifying UBOs for fleets flying flags of convenience.

recommendation 6: crew communication & vessel visibility

2022 workshop

Improve visibility of on-water activities & conditions

Illustrative Actions

- A. Strengthen inspections in port and at sea to optimize the opportunities for detecting, reporting and effectively responding to illegality in wild fisheries
- B. Strengthen and expand efforts to provide effective monitoring and analysis of activities on fishing vessels, taking advantage of new technology and creating appropriate protections for observers and fishers

suggested update

Refine and scale systems that provide safe communication for crew and enhance visibility of activities and conditions on vessels

Illustrative Actions

- A. Expand wifi at sea and systems that enable fishers to communicate with trusted organizations and relatives, reducing the isolation that enables illegality and poor treatment.
- B. Expand electronic monitoring (EM) and analysis of activities on fishing vessels, taking advantage of new technology and creating appropriate protections for observers and other crew.

significant changes

- There have been notable commitments to expanding electronic monitoring by some coastal states and retailers, such as through the [Tuna Transparency Pledge](#).
- [Dedicated campaigns, research, pilot programs](#), and improved technology are working to expand wifi for crew, particularly those on distant water fleets.

key opportunities

1. Expand the effective use of wifi and electronic monitoring

Wifi is critical; you could almost say that wifi is a human right. But there are issues that need to be worked out if it is going to enable safe communication for crew. Otherwise it could give the illusion of safety without improving things.

We were concerned captains would see wifi as a liability, but in our pilot 100% of crew—including captains—said they felt safer. They were banking, verifying payments, handling family issues.

EM has been demonstrated to improve transparency, enforcement, & data quality for better fisheries management. The AI to facilitate analysis continues to develop.

3. theories of change

for implementing the recommendations in different contexts

As experts discussed the workshop recommendations and key opportunities for implementation, they often shared how these elements fit into a theory of change (TOC) for advancing accountability in different contexts. Four of these TOCs are summarized here. TOC 1 describes compliance theory, which is a widely pursued approach to addressing illegality across a range of contexts. TOCs 2 & 3 focus on supporting fisher-led organizations as key agents of change. Figures 2 - 4 depict these three TOCs as results chains; the diagrams also map the workshop recommendations and current FGP investments on the main intermediate results they aim to achieve. TOC 4 reflects an opportunity to focus investigative and enforcement efforts on a small number of bad actors that are disproportionately associated with illegality in the sector. Because implementing TOC 4 is not within FGP's comparative advantage, a results chain was not developed for this report.

TOC 1: Promote compliance

This TOC aims to promote widespread compliance through legal frameworks that remove incentives for non-compliance, including: economic benefits, perceptions of illegitimacy, and social norms. A legitimate, participatory design process; practical, effective legal structure; and impartial, proportionate response to non-compliant actions are essential for creating a virtuous cycle where high levels of rule-following are rewarded.

TOC 2: Support fisher-led organizations

This TOC proposes to support crew on industrial vessels through labor organizing and agreements with multinational brands. Labor rights and grievance mechanisms are negotiated into legally-binding collective bargaining agreement between fisher-led organizations, suppliers, and recruitment agencies. Organized crew are better able to decline instructions to harvest illegally.

TOC 3: Support small-scale fishers

This TOC aims to support small-scale fishers (SSF) who are competing with industrial distant water fleets. Through organizing and co-governance structures, SSF negotiate enforceable harvesting agreements that achieve fair catch allocations and sustainability.

TOC 4: “Cut off the head”

This TOC focuses on ownership concentrations within the sector. It proposes to identify owners disproportionately associated with illegality in their fleets and to build multi-faceted legal cases that remove these bad actors.

Figure 2. Theory of Change: Promote Compliance

Economic, social, and legitimacy barriers to compliance are removed through the process, structure, and implementation of legal frameworks

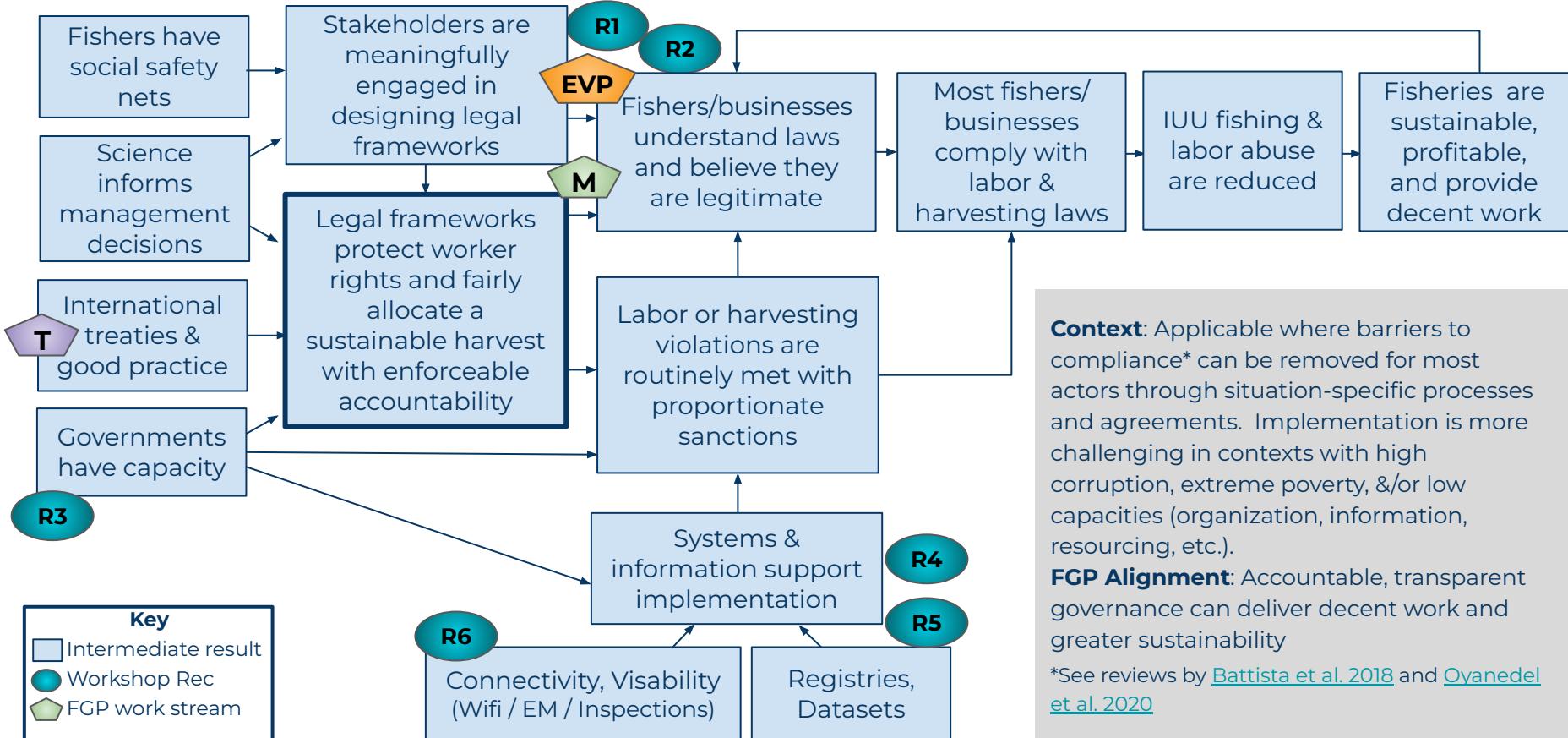


Figure 3. Theory of Change: Support Fisher-Led Organizations Representing Crew on Industrial Fleets

Collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) create norms and accountability to advance decent work & legal harvesting

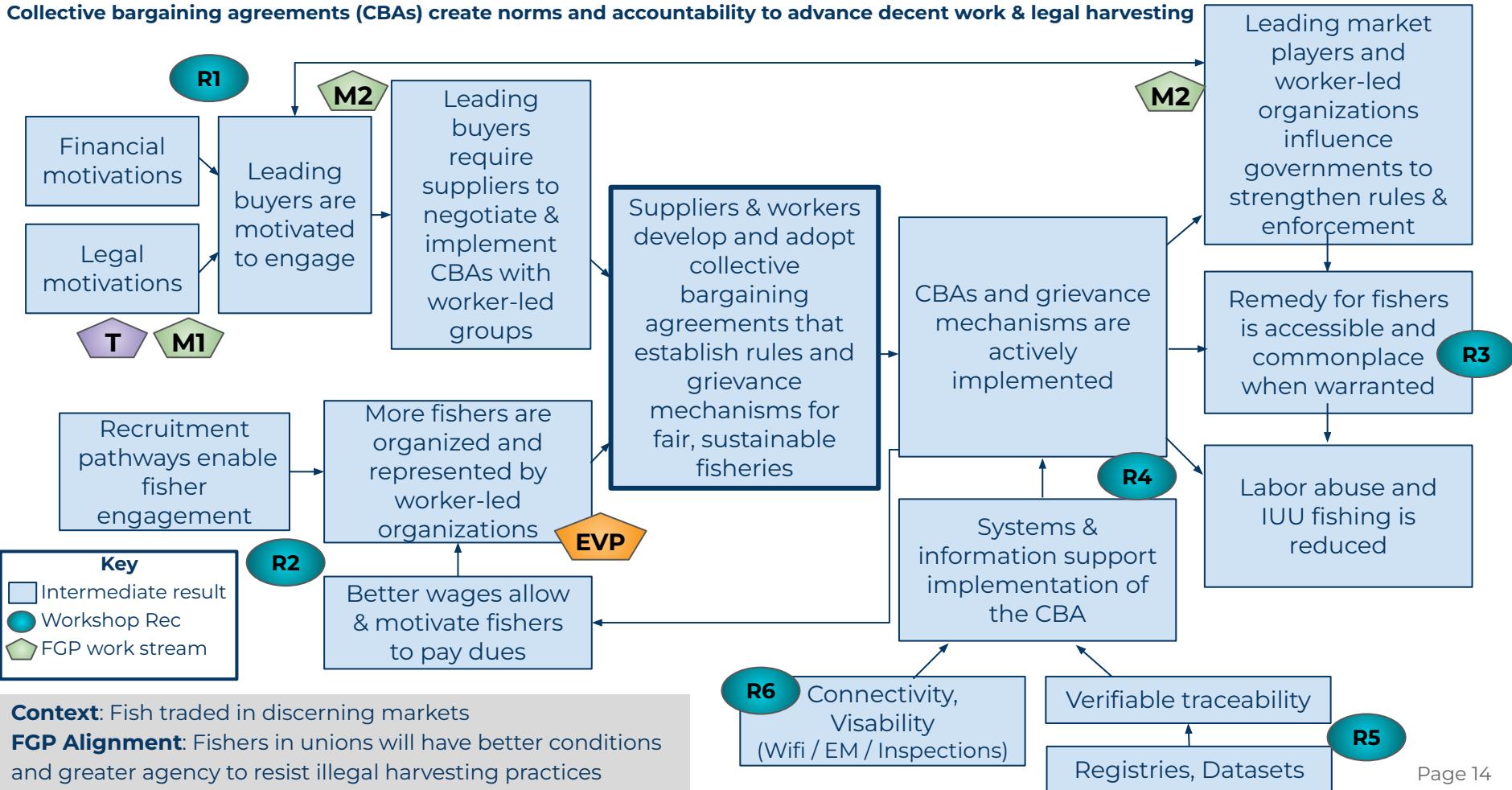
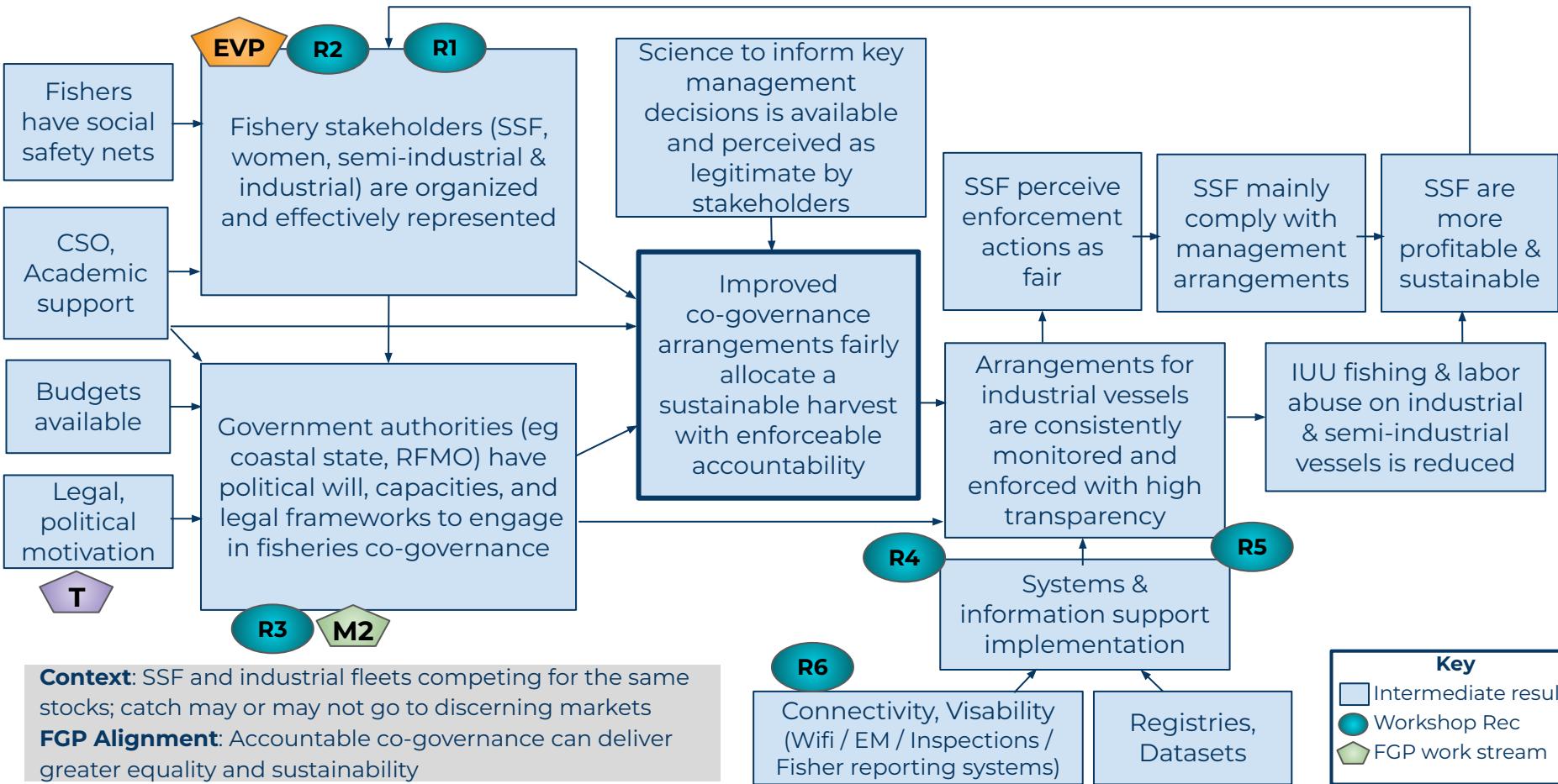


Figure 4. Theory of Change: Support Small Scale Fishing Communities Competing with Industrial Fleets

Strengthening constituencies, transparency, & capacities improves co-governance agreements and advances more equitable & sustainable fisheries



4. suggested focus areas for FGP

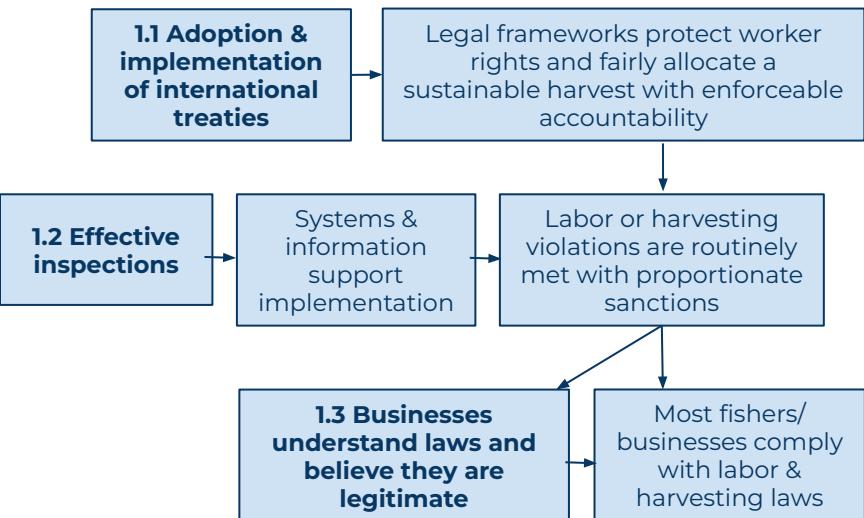
Building on FGP's work to date and the key opportunities identified in Section 2, FGP could advance implementation of the theories of change described in Section 3 by focusing on these areas:

Theory of Change 1: Promote Compliance



To Achieve These Intermediate Results

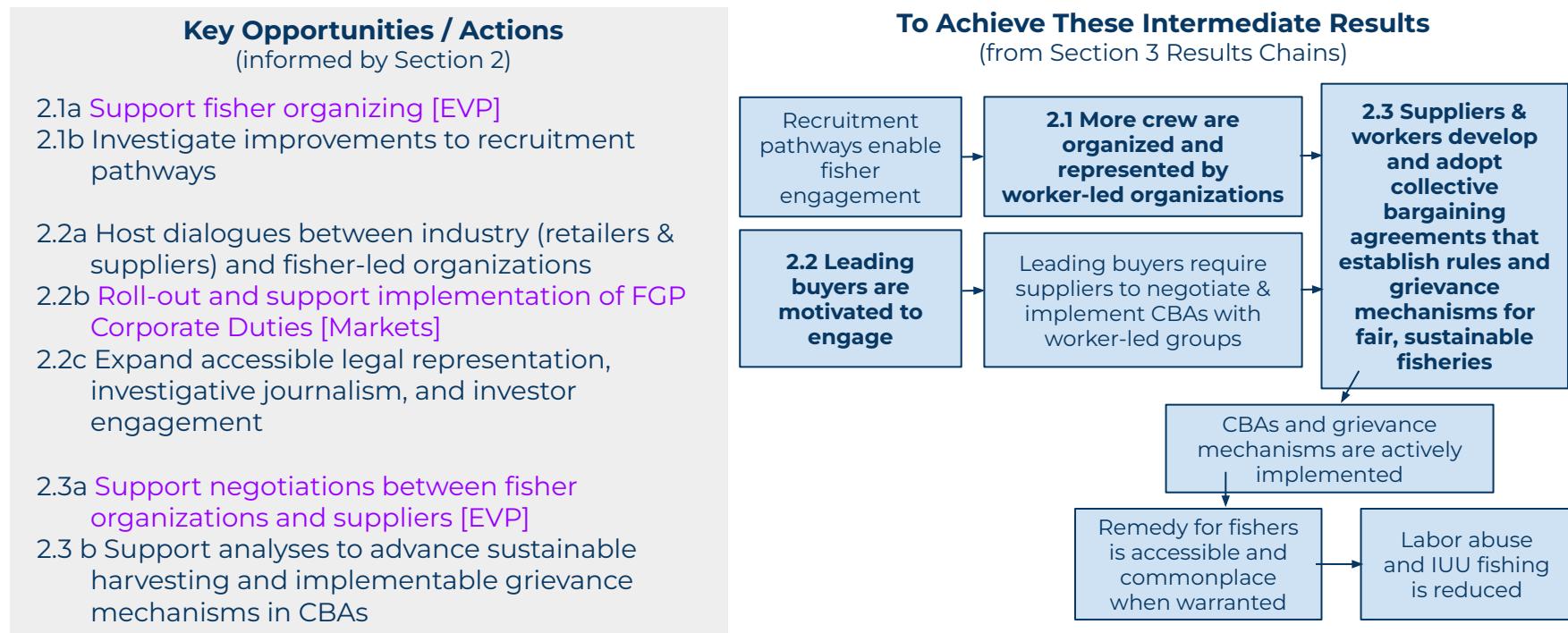
(from Section 3 Results Chains)



suggested focus areas for FGP

Building on FGP's work to date and the key opportunities identified in Section 2, FGP could advance implementation of the theories of change described in Section 3 by focusing on these areas:

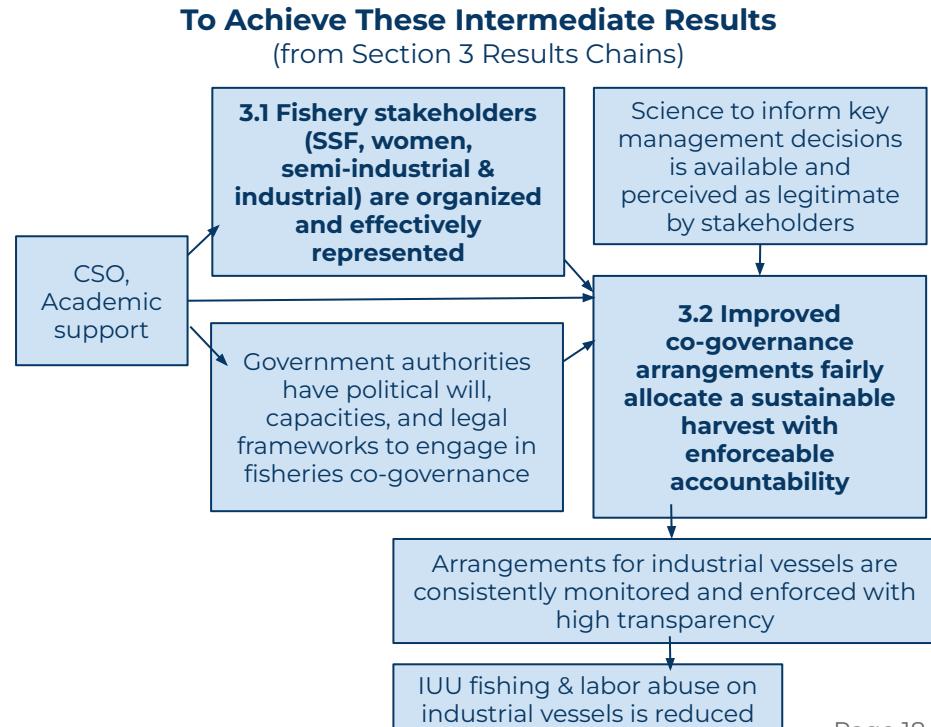
Theory of Change 2: Support Fisher-Led Organizations Representing Crew on Industrial Fleets



suggested focus areas for FGP

Building on FGP's work to date and the key opportunities identified in Section 2, FGP could advance implementation of the theories of change described in Section 3 by focusing on these areas:

Theory of Change 3: Support Small Scale Fishing Communities Competing with Industrial Fleets



* Recommendations shown in purple are existing FGP work elements

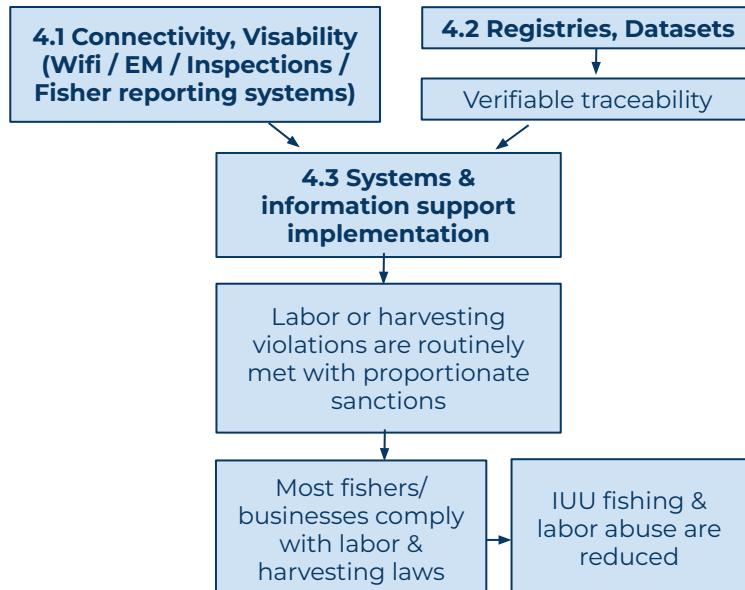
suggested focus areas for FGP

Building on FGP's work to date and the key opportunities identified in Section 2, FGP could advance implementation of the theories of change described in Section 3 by focusing on these areas:

Actions that support intermediate results across all three theories of change

Key Opportunities / Actions (informed by Section 2)
4.1 Accelerate implementation and scaling of Wifi and electronic monitoring on vessels to improve labor conditions and sustainability
4.2 Contribute to efforts to strengthen datasets, including transparency around ultimate beneficial owners and crew arrangements
4.3 Leverage collaborations & technology to accelerate data flows & uses through supply chains

To Achieve These Intermediate Results (from Section 3 Results Chains)



* Recommendations shown in purple are existing FGP work elements

5. conclusions

Strategic opportunities to advance accountability in wild-caught fisheries

- Building on the 2022 Expert's Workshop, this report updates 6 recommendations for deterring, detecting, and responding to illegal labor and harvesting practices in wild-caught fisheries. These recommendations focus on:
 - Factors that influence the actions of key stakeholder groups—industry, fisher-led organizations, and governments (Recommendations 1-3),
 - The ways stakeholder groups interact in their responses to information about illegality (Recommendation 4), and
 - The data flows and technology that create transparent and reliable information to enable responsive action (Recommendations 5, 6).
- Depending on the context, these recommendations advance different theories of change (TOC) for countering illegality. Experts described a well-developed TOC around promoting compliance. They also expressed emerging TOCs enabled by increasingly effective fisher-led organizations. These include a TOC that aims to improve labor conditions on industrial vessels through collective bargaining agreements. Another TOC advances human wellbeing when small-scale fishers negotiate fair and sustainable catch allocations for stocks that are also targeted by industrial fleets.

Emerging TOCs around fisher-led organizations

Fishers are key agents of change for addressing illegality in the sector. As migrant crew and small-scale fishing communities become more organized, they are increasingly able to achieve outcomes that advance human wellbeing and ecological sustainability. The TOCs presented here identify pathways for delivering this change.

Collaboration around the theories of change

Implementing the three TOCs requires the expertise and energy of a range of organizations. By depicting the TOCs as results chains, this work supports conversations and collaborations about aligning efforts to achieve intermediate results along these pathways.

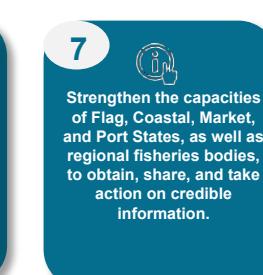
annex A. experts workshop on improving information flows to increase consequences for illegal harvesting and labor practices in wild fisheries – february 2022

Through four virtual, facilitated sessions approximately 70 leading experts, participating as individuals, developed recommendations for improving information flows to increase consequences for illegal harvesting and labor practices in wild fisheries. These experts work for civil society groups, research organizations, industry, the US Government, multinational organizations, and philanthropy.

The workshop was designed and premised on the following:

- Illegal practices associated with fishing vessels should be met with appropriate consequences that remedy wrongdoing, deter future violations, and provide remedy to fishers.
- While legal, policy, and normative frameworks have continued to become more sophisticated, implementing actions that provide meaningful remedy and deterrence have remained challenging in many contexts.
- While industry, government, and civil society organizations each have incentives and responsibilities for countering illegal harvesting and labor rights violations on fishing vessels, they vary in the types of consequences they can bring to bear and their agility to respond.
- Where labor abuse and illegal harvesting on vessels co-occur, responding to these illegalities is likely to benefit from further information sharing and coordination; these efforts should ensure the anonymity and safety of affected workers.
- To address illegal harvesting and labor rights violations we need a set of complementary strategies and associated actions that utilize and build across the relative strengths of government, industry, and civil society.

Based on our discussions at the workshop, over 94% of the participating experts agree on the following recommendations:



During the workshop, experts also identified illustrative actions that could be implemented to realize these high-level recommendations. By design, we have not sought consensus on these actions; we acknowledge and embrace the need to pursue complementary actions which draw on the comparative strengths and roles of government, industry, and civil society.

Together these recommendations create a framework, or set of complementary strategies, which we believe will enable different actors in the system to see the necessary and related pieces of a comprehensive response. This framework also supports work to map current efforts and to identify gaps in action. The Fisheries Governance Project (FGP), who co-convened this meeting with USAID, will further explore the recommendations of the meeting, associated actions, and current work to identify potential opportunities for further engagement. We invite other collaborations and platforms who address these topics as part of their work to do the same.

annex A

2022 Workshop Results

RECOMMENDATIONS

To be effective, this work will involve collaboration among businesses, worker organizations, civil society, governments, and financial institutions to establish information flows, improve safeguards for workers, and strengthen regulatory or policy frameworks with regard to both IUU fishing and labor conditions.

1 
Enable proactive and more effective business engagement, including of financial sector actors, in supply chains for wild-caught seafood to remedy and deter illegal labor practices and IUU fishing and advance good practices.

Government, civil society, and industry create and maintain the enabling space for fishers to be key partners in oversight and industry reforms that better detect, deter, and remedy illegality. This is achieved through safeguards, access to communication, the right to organize, effective mechanisms for grievance and redress, and enforceable and binding regulations/agreements.

2 
Support fishers as key partners in preventing, detecting, and remedying illegality in wild fisheries.

As one of the world's largest seafood importers, the U.S. Government has a significant opportunity to leverage market access to eliminate illegal labor or harvesting practices in wild-caught seafood. Through increased targeting and operational integration, the U.S. should focus on bringing consistent detection, meaningful accountability, victim remedy, and deterrence to violations of human rights and illegal harvesting in wild seafood.

3 
Strengthen U.S. Government capacities and approaches to identify, target, and address forced labor and illegal harvesting in imported seafood through administrative, civil, and criminal actions.

For consequences to cascade, it is important that information relating to labor and harvesting issues is shared among those who can act upon it, including among industry, civil society and governments.

4 
Strengthen networks and protocols to enable more effective information sharing among industry, civil society, and government to facilitate more coordinated approaches to labor and harvesting issues.

5 
Improve the accessibility of timely, reliable, interoperable data and risk-based analyses to support business, government, and civil society efforts to counter illegality in wild caught seafood supply chains.

The ability to efficiently collect, generate, and access reliable, electronic data on vessel crews, operations, and ownership underpins much of the work needed to detect, deter, and remedy illegality in wild-caught seafood supply chains. Cross-sectoral, collaborative efforts will be essential to fill critical information gaps, strengthen data credibility, and produce risk-based analyses that support decision-making.

6 
Improve visibility of on-water activities & conditions.

Visibility into, and analysis of, fishing activities at sea and creating safe and effective mechanisms for workers to connect to trusted organizations can reduce isolation that contribute to these illegal activities.

7 
Strengthen the capacities of Flag, Coastal, Market, and Port States, as well as regional fisheries bodies, to obtain, share, and take action on credible information.

Many of the states and authorities that have jurisdiction for oversight and investigation of illegality in wild fisheries lack the capacity to do so. Effective capacity building addresses the political, economic, and technical issues preventing the consistent execution of these responsibilities and is more effective through collaborative support from government, civil society, multinational organizations, industry, and philanthropy.

RECOMMENDATIONS & ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIONS

annex A

2022 Workshop Results

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Enable proactive and more effective business engagement in supply chains

2

Support fishers as key partners in preventing, detecting, and remediying illegality in wild fisheries

3

Strengthen U.S. Government capacities and approaches to identify, target, and address forced labor and illegal harvesting

4

Strengthen networks and protocols to enable more effective information sharing

5

Improve the accessibility of data and risk-based analyses to support efforts to counter illegality

6

Improve visibility of on-water activities & conditions

7

Strengthen the capacities of States and regional fisheries, to obtain, share, and take action on information

ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIONS

- A. Industry actors increase participation in collaborations and define current barriers and what they need from government to more efficiently obtain supply chain information, strengthen normative standards for good practice, and amplify responses to illegality.
- B. Governments clarify and strengthen expectations for industry accountability and due diligence in seafood supply chains to create market certainty and comparable standards for all market actors.
- C. Industry, government, and CSOs develop incentives for obtaining, sharing, and using verifiable data (e.g. preferential purchasing, import processes, or recognitions)

- A. Develop and expand multi-actor partnerships between worker-led organizations, CSOs, and industry to empower and protect fishers to improve labor conditions and prevent, detect, and remedy illegality in wild fisheries
- B. All actors work to significantly strengthen the support available to fishers who have survived forced labor to enable them to recover, provide testimony, receive compensation, and rebuild their lives
- C. Develop and expand safe, accessible, effective grievance mechanisms for fishers at sea that allows reporting and response in native languages and connects victims with assistance
- D. Expand connectivity at sea to enable fishers to communicate with trusted organizations and relatives, removing the isolation that enables illegality and poor treatment

- A. Incorporate forced labor indicators into SIMP's risk-based approach for analysis, investigation and action by the Department of Homeland Security and other relevant agencies
- B. Strengthen operational networks and information sharing to enable all parts of the USG to bring full authorities to bear in delivering civil and criminal consequences for illegality in imported seafood
- C. Increase U.S. government staff and budgets at relevant agencies to enable significantly more investigations and prosecutions of illegalities in imported seafood, including at NOAA, CBP, Labor, Justice, and Treasury

- A. Strengthen agreements and networks between jurisdictions and across government, civil society, and industry to strengthen information sharing about potential labor and harvesting issues in wild fisheries
- B. Strengthen planning, networks, and systems to facilitate appropriate follow-on consequences when issues are detected (e.g., what actions will industry take if CBP issues a WRO)
- C. Management authorities strengthen the legal basis for responding to labor violations in wild fisheries including through expanded implementation of c188, and supported and encouraged by RFMO measures
- D. Increase cooperation among USG agencies and international governments and organizations to identify the true beneficial owners of vessels engaged in forced labor and IUU fishing and ensure they face the relevant consequences

- A. Continue to strengthen and expand electronic systems that improve data reliability and enable timely data verification as a foundational building block for the detection, deterrence, and response to illegality in seafood.
- B. Continue and expand efforts to harmonize key data elements for labor and harvesting in wild fisheries and appropriate accessibility to that data
- C. Continue to strengthen and expand accessible, risk based analysis to support the detection, deterrence, and response to illegality in seafood
- D. Continue and expand efforts to increase accessibility to data and information that is critical for determining legality and liability in wild fisheries

- A. Strengthen inspections in port and at sea to optimize the opportunities for detecting, reporting and effectively responding to illegality in wild fisheries
- B. Strengthen and expand efforts to provide effective monitoring and analysis of activities on fishing vessels, taking advantage of new technology and creating appropriate protections for observers and fishers

- A. Continue and strengthen support for key authorities to effectively implement their responsibilities in preventing, detecting, and responding to illegality in wild fisheries

This report was prepared for the Fisheries Governance Project (FGP).

FGP is a funder-practitioner collaboration working to advance solutions at the intersection of improved fisheries governance and advancements in labor rights. Launched in 2020 to break down silos between IUU fishing and labor rights experts working in the seafood sector, FGP works to:

- Build a shared understanding of how the complex issues on both sides intersect.
- Foster alignment to accelerate progress on effective solutions.

FGP works on three issues:

1. Supporting the adoption of key international treaties and their implementation in priority countries.
2. Exploring, strengthening, and aligning corporate duties at the intersection of IUU fishing and labor rights in the fisheries sector.
3. Improving fisher empowerment while increasing accountability, remedy, and deterrence for labor abuse and harvesting violations in the fisheries sector.



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recommended citation:

Schuttenberg, HZ. 2025. *Organizing for Change: Strategic opportunities to advance accountability in wild-caught fisheries*.
Fisheries Governance Project. 20pp.

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