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Advancing Sustainable Fisheries
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FISH WARS

THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF FISHERIES CONFLICT IN TANZANIA

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Fisheries conflicts are on the rise. Declining fish populations, rising demand for seafood, and efforts to reduce widespread illegal fishing are increasing the risk that conflict over fisheries resources will undermine stability and peace in our waters. Greater understanding of the links between fisheries and conflict are needed to predict where such conflicts may occur and how they can be prevented.

Secure Fisheries is proud to announce the Fisheries Conflict Database. Our goals are threefold:

1. to establish a protocol for collecting event-level fisheries conflict data,
2. to determine whether fisheries conflicts are increasing or decreasing in frequency, and
3. to characterize and quantify the drivers of fisheries conflict.

In our first study, we investigated the frequency, causes, and consequences of fisheries conflict in the United Republic of Tanzania between 1990 and 2017. Tanzania ranks in the top ten African nations in fish catch. Fisheries are important to its economy: fisheries directly employ over 183,000 fishers, and another 4 million people are engaged in boatbuilding, fish processing, and gear repair. The top three fisheries—dagaa, Nile perch, and cichlids—are critical sources of food and income to fishing communities in Tanzania's lakes and rivers. Tanzania's coastal communities also depend on healthy coral reefs for tourism and fisheries revenue.

Tanzania is recognized as one of the most peaceful nations in East Africa: it has not experienced the civil wars that have plagued other East African nations. But stories of fisheries conflicts—often with deadly results—abound.
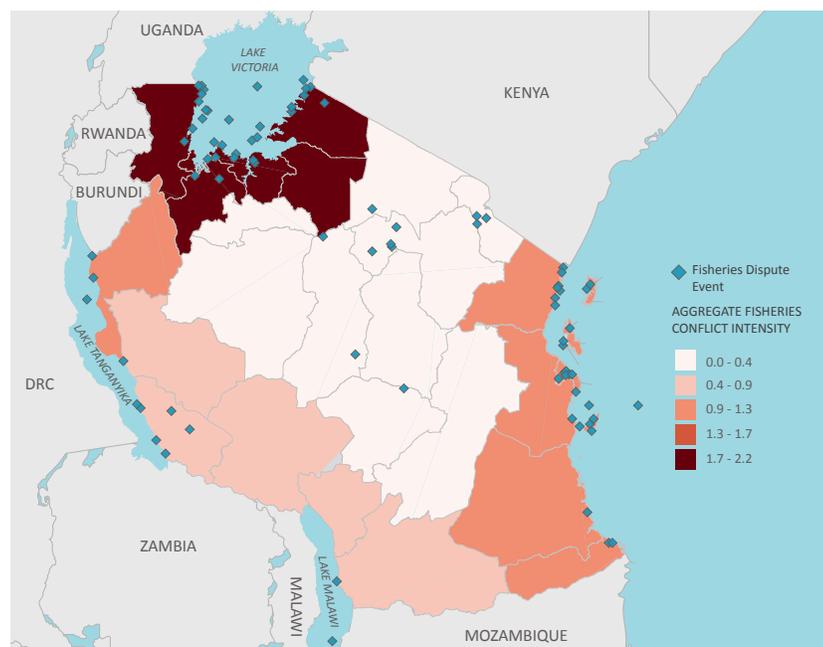
- In Lake Victoria, border conflicts with Ugandan and Kenyan fishers have led to security operations, widespread confiscation of fishing gear, and imprisonment of hundreds of fishers.

- In Lake Tanganyika, Tanzanian fishers were attacked, abducted, and killed by rebel groups for their fish, their gear, and their boats.

- Along the coastline, illegal dynamite fishing has caused community protests, clashes between fishers and security forces, and territorial fights between tourist hotels and fishing communities.

Are these conflicts becoming more widespread? What are the consequences for fishing communities? And how can we avoid or reduce fisheries conflict?

Fisheries Dispute Event

AGGREGATE FISHERIES CONFLICT INTENSITY

- 0.0 - 0.4
- 0.4 - 0.9
- 0.9 - 1.3
- 1.3 - 1.7
- 1.7 - 2.2

STUDY RESULTS: AGGREGATE AND EVENT-LEVEL FISHERIES CONFLICT IN TANZANIA, 1990-2017

To answer these questions, the Fisheries Conflict Database collects incidents of fisheries conflict at the level of individual events. We define a Fisheries Dispute Event (FDE) as *an incident in which a fisheries resource is contested, disputed, or the source of conflict between a minimum of two human actors, at a discrete temporal moment, and in a discrete location*.

We reviewed news reports for the occurence of fisheries conflict. Event-level coding provides the date, location, actors, consequences (e.g., fatalities), and drivers of the conflict. For each FDE, we noted if any of the following drivers were causes of the conflict: reduced fish populations, ecosystem change, weak governance, political marginalization, market access, poverty, illegal fishing, increased fishing pressure, increased fishing efficiency, fishing-ground limitations, foreign fishing, multiple scales of fishing operations, maritime crime, food insecurity, or civil unrest.

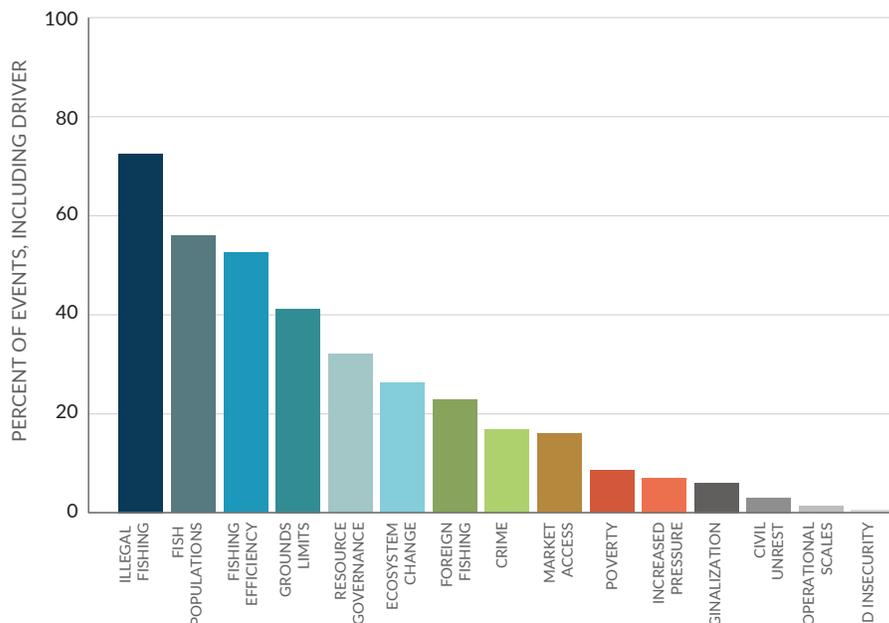## DRIVERS OF FISHERIES EVENTS IN TANZANIA
1990-2017

MAIN FINDINGS

- Fisheries conflicts are increasing in both frequency and intensity.

- The two primary causes of fisheries conflict are illegal fishing and declining fish populations.

- Most conflicts over illegal fishing involved Tanzanian—not foreign—fishers.

- Most conflicts were between Tanzanian fishers and government actors.

- Fisheries conflict in Tanzania resulted in 498 arrests, 41 fatalities, and eight abductions.

- Conflict was most intense in inland water bodies that share international borders.

- While women play an active role in the post-harvest fisheries sector, women were rarely involved in fisheries conflicts.

Governments can better mitigate fisheries conflict by managing illegal fishing in a proactive—not reactive—manner. The government of Tanzania has taken important steps to deter illegal fishing in its exclusive economic zone, and it is addressing declining fish populations in Lake Victoria through co-management strategies that engage fishing communities directly. Critically, this report showed most fisheries conflicts start at the local level between small groups of actors.

Consequently, one key step in preventing or solving fisheries conflict is to link local knowledge of fisherfolk to technical and governance capacity at the national level. This way, federal policy makers and resource managers can anticipate the conditions that cause conflicts to erupt.

Secure Fisheries plans to expand the Fisheries Conflict Database to other countries in East Africa and the Horn of Africa. As the database expands, we can address larger issues, such as:

- What governance approaches work best to solve fisheries conflict?

- What causes fisheries conflicts to escalate into larger forms of conflict?

- How do fisheries conflicts vary from place to place, and why?

Fisheries conflict is a threat to the stability and health of communities—but that threat is underappreciated. We are still scratching the surface of what fisheries conflict is, let alone what causes and prevents it. The need is urgent—fisheries are a critical component of livelihood and food security around the world, especially in developing nations. Competition over fisheries resources is inherent and predictable. But violent conflict is not inevitable, and management of that competition is the most effective way to promote resilient and peaceful fishing communities.