

PROBLEM STATEMENT:3.

Development of an application to support registration of the commercial small-scale fishing fleet in West Africa (proponent: Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission)

The coast of West Africa, particularly from Mauritania down to the Gulf of Guinea, contains some of the world's richest fishing grounds. However, many of the fish stocks in these waters have been over-exploited and are providing fewer benefits to the region than they could be. Both foreign and national fleets of industrial fishing vessels have contributed to this situation, but small-scale commercial fleets have grown as well and are increasingly contributing to over-exploitation in the region. To date, these commercial small-scale fleets have been outside the formal systems for fisheries management, and with increasing technology and migration have also in some cases moved beyond the capacity of traditional management systems as well. For this reason, many Governments in the region, with the support of the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission, are taking the important initial step of requiring all commercial small-scale fishing vessels to be legally registered. This key step in the region's efforts to better manage the fisheries has been difficult, given that there are tens of thousands of commercial small-scale fishing vessels in the region, many of which migrate over long distances. Governments have struggled to send staff to all beaches and landing sites for registration, and the process has taken months and years in some cases.

The challenge is to develop an application to enable any fisher, wherever he or she is located in the region, to send a registration request by mobile phone. This request would then be received by the appropriate authorities for review and approval, via an authorization message with a registration ID number that would need to be written or embossed on the vessel, in parallel to being entered into the appropriate national and regional databases of registered vessels. For those fisheries and countries where commercial small-scale fishing vessels are required to be licensed, such an application could also facilitate this process in the same fashion. Such technology, if deployed on a large scale in the sub-region, could make a tremendous impact on better management of the commercial small-scale fishing fleets, and enhance inclusion of the fishers themselves in this process. The application would need to be designed with a very simple and user-friendly interface between fishers and the appropriate authorities.