

## Effects Of Sea Piracy Insurgent On Nigerian Fishing Industry

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**Abstract:** The effects of recent resurgence of marine piracy off the coast of Nigeria was investigated. Sea Piracy and hijacking of vessels have devastating effects on fishing operations and maritime trade/ transportation. Nigeria lose up to US\$ 600 million in export earnings due to piracy attacks to its fisheries. This has led to the killing and maiming of crew men thus making the highly productive areas in our marine waters totally inaccessible. The overall objectives of this work was to identify the economic causes and consequences of modern day sea piracy on Nigerian fishing industry and economy, however a consensus on the primary economic causes of piracy does not exist. It investigates whether variables such as a lack of employment opportunities, particularly in the fisheries sector, are a causal factor of sea piracy. The study revealed that insurgency is a manifestation of corruption, poverty, inequality and inability of the government to effectively utilize oil wealth to develop the nation. The result also showed that, the year, 2012 recorded the highest number of attack (140) while the highest number of deaths (15) occurred in 2010. Financial loss to the nation was highest in 2012, corresponding to the highest incident of attack. These led to several fishing companies going into limbo to the extent that only eight (8) out of forty (40) Companies with only 122 out of 250 fishing vessels (trawlers) are currently in operation. The issue of piracy and armed robbery at sea has contributed immensely to this drastic reduction and if allowed to continue will lead to total collapse of the Nigerian fishing industry.

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### Introduction

Fish and fisheries are integral part of most societies and make important contributions to economic and social health, as well as the only cheapest sources of animal protein in Nigeria. The products from these fisheries are used in a wide variety of ways, ranging from subsistence use to international trade as highly sought-after and highly-valued items. Nigeria has a coastline of about 853km bordering the Gulf of Guinea. Continental shelf widens progressively from 15km off Lagos in the West to about 85km in the South-East. The total area of the continental shelf is approximately 41,000km<sup>2</sup> and Economic Exclusive Zone of 200 nautical miles declared in 1978 covering an area of 210,900km<sup>2</sup> (NITOA). The coastal waters off Nigeria provide favourable environment for the development of a viable fishery. The industry is 100% agro-allied and largely driven by the need to harness the huge living marine resources available in our waters for the benefit of the generality of Nigerians. NITOA operations provide livelihood to over 10,000 Nigerians directly and about 500,000 indirectly nationally. The sub-sector has helped to pursue with vigour the need to assist Government in generating the much needed foreign exchange from non-oil exports. Though the industrial fishing sub-sector in Nigeria is capable of

supplying up to 35% of local fish demand from the abundant resources available, it is currently only able to meet just about 5% of the local supply due to various challenges that have frustrated developments in the sub-sector.

Piracy and Armed robbery at sea in Nigeria industrial Fisheries perspective no doubt has profound negative effect in capacity building for effective maritime security and safety. The industry has lost lives, valuable equipments, vessels, fish products valued over Three Billion Naira with overall losses of all components valued at Twenty Billion Naira in less than four years to the pirates (NITOA). There are many reasons for this unacceptable state of affairs, but the primary reasons all come down to a failure in fisheries governance in most countries particularly in Nigeria (Murphy, 2011). In many maritime regions of the world, illegal fishing has massively contributed to the depletion of fish stocks, especially in developing countries' coastal waters ( International Maritime Organisation,2007). Overfishing is part of the definition of what can be considered IUU fishing. The sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 defines overfishing as "a rate or level of fishing mortality that jeopardizes a fishery's capacity to produce the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) on a continuing basis". IUU fishing is highly attractive as they pay no taxes or

duties on these catches and often practiced with impunity. Moreover, illegal fishing diminishes the ability of millions of people who depend on the state of marine resources to feed themselves. We must not overlook the fact that the seas make up 90 per cent of the habitat of life on earth, and that over 140 countries are carrying on some kind of activities related to marine fishing (Ocean Beyond Piracy, 2012). IUU fishers rarely comply with regulations; thus may reduce future productivity and biodiversity and create imbalances in the ecosystem. This may lead to reduced food security in communities heavily dependent on fish as a source of animal protein. As a country we depend heavily on the fisheries and maritime environment to sustain our economy and so it is very important to find a lasting solution to the problem of piracy and hijacking of vessels to restore confidence of all operators in this very important sector (NITOA).

### Materials And Methods

Monthly survey trips were made in 2016 to establishments that are stakeholders in both Nigerian and international fishing/maritime industries to collect primary and secondary data. Primary data were retrieved from oral interviews with Directors and Chief Executives of; Federal Department of Fisheries; Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Unit; Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research; Nigerian Trawlers Owners Association (NITOA); Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA); Nigerian Navy; International Maritime Bureau; Nigerian Watch; Fishing and shipping companies. Secondary data were few, and included those from unpublished work of NITOA. The data collected were confidential

The research investigated the economic causes and consequences of modern day sea piracy on Nigerian fishing industry. A qualitative and quantitative analysis was conducted, covering the 8 and 27 coastal states and local government areas of Nigeria respectively. It relied both on descriptive statistics and deductive narration to study the political, economic, and social context of maritime piracy. This work adopted the methods used by NITOA (2015). Information collected includes offshore fatalities occasioned by maritime piracy, other forms of crime, and boat mishaps, date of attacks, location of attacks, number of pirate gang, financial lose, death of pirates as well as victims.

### Results

#### Number of vessels attacked

As shown in Table 1, the number of vessels fishing in Nigerian sea decreases dramatically from 173 in 2007 to 122 in 2013 due to the danger and fear of going to sea as a result of pirate insurgency.

#### Number of crew affected by pirate attack

Figure 2 shows that the number of fishing crew that have experienced pirate attack increases from 44 in 2003 to 1055 in 2013. Thus the total number of fishing crew attacked within the said period is 9791.

#### Number of attack and death

Within eleven years period (2003-2013), Nigeria recorded 908 and 62 numbers of attacks and deaths respectively (Figure 1). The result showed that the highest number of death (15) occurred in 2010 (table 1). From Table one also, the year 2012 recorded the highest number of attack (140).

#### Financial loss

Financial loss increased in local currency from N1.5 billion in 2003 to N4.5 billion in 2012 (Figure 3).

#### Areas of attack in Nigeria

The results obtained revealed six areas of attacks in Nigeria coastal environment to include:

1. Lagos to Lekki Axis
2. Awoye/Aiyetoro/Benin River
3. Escravos/Forcados/Ramos/Dodo

The ferocity of attacks is more with the acquisition of more sophisticated weapons/arsenals. The main focal point is to make sure that the Ramos Escravos river entrance is well patrolled and secured. It is the access route to sea for those coming to attack and return.

4. Fish town/Brass/Bartholomew/Barbara

This area has become a no go area, the lawlessness in the creeks makes nonsense of the security in this area; the closest major town is Brass. The security agencies need to do a reappraisal in this area.

5. Sombreiro/Bonny/BOT/Andoni/Opobo

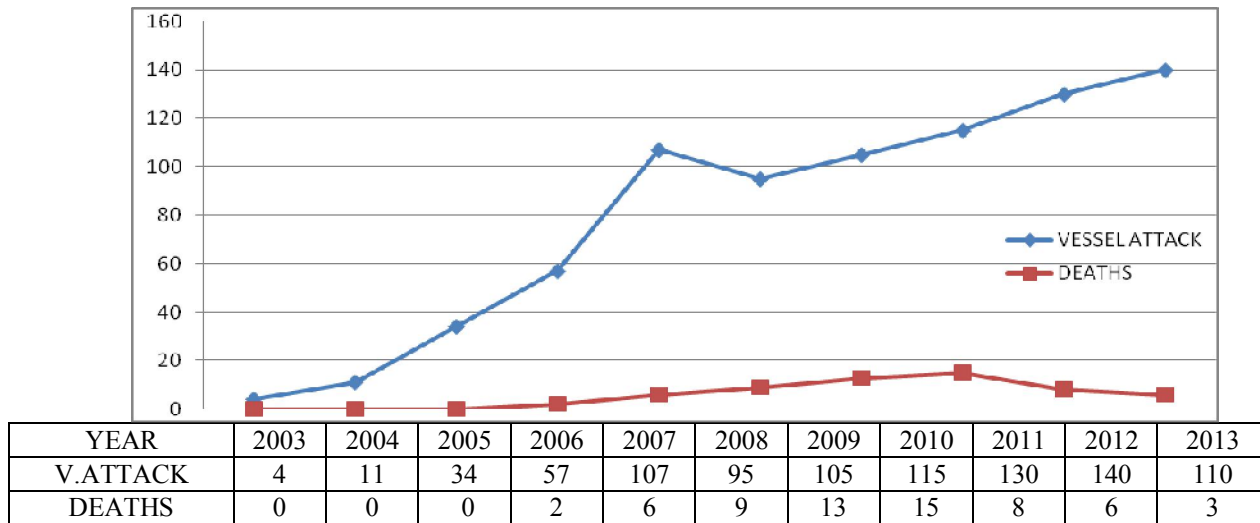
Ranks number one in terms of sophistication of attacks and hijacking of vessels. It is from this area that vessels are hijacked and used by the armed robbers to attack other vessels. They use the Bonny estuary as their route. They operate in over 200km of coastline.

6. Qua Iboe/Calabar/Rio Del Rey: Operations here are also sophisticated.

**Table 1 Incidence of attack with fatality and no. of fishing vessels in operation**

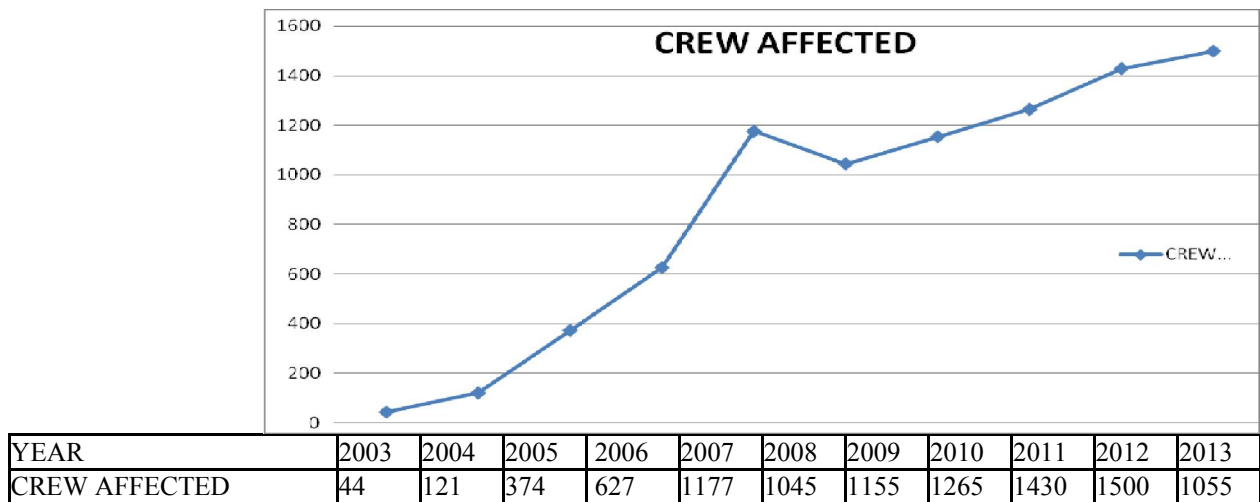
Year	No of vessels in operation	No of attacks	No of deaths
2007	173	107	6
2008	166	95	9
2009	143	105	13
2010	139	115	15
2011	136	130	8
2012	120	140	6
2013	122	110	3

Source: NITOA (2015)



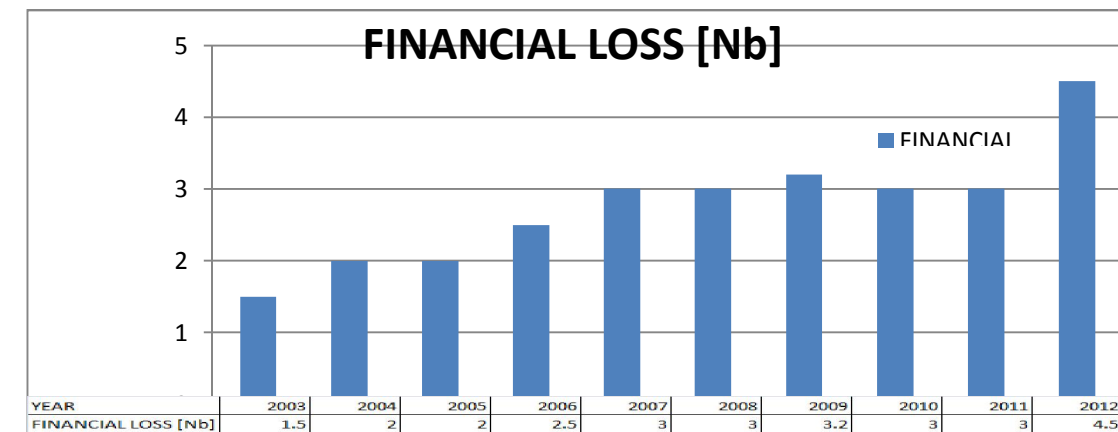
Source: NITOA (2015)

Fig. 1: Statistics of pirate attacks on fishing vessels in Nigerian waters



Source: NITOA (2015)

Fig. 2: Statistics on crew affected by pirate attacks on fishing vessels in Nigerian waters



Source: NITOA (2015)

Fig. 3: Statistics of financial loss due to armed pirate attack in Nigeria

### Discussion And Recommendation

Maritime piracy poses significant costs on local fishing economies. According to IMO (2007), pirates attacked tuna vessels at least three times in 2009 as they fished 650 to 800 kilometers beyond Somali territorial waters. One vessel was captured, leading to a ransom payment that exceeded US\$ 1million. The threat of pirate attacks has prompted many vessels to avoid some of the richest fishing spots. Dwindling catches have raised concern which could face severe economic problems. Fishing is the second largest non-oil export industry in Nigeria and pirates' attacks on fishing trawlers have reached the point that many fishing boat captains in Nigeria refuse to sail. Nigeria stands to lose up to US\$ 600 million in export earnings due to piracy attacks to its fisheries (Oceans Beyond Piracy, 2012). Incidents of sea piracy in West Africa occur mainly in Nigeria. This has led to the killing and maiming of crew men thus making the highly productive areas in our marine waters totally inaccessible. Nigerian Trawler Owners Association (NITOA) is the sectoral association representing the interests of producers and exporters of the Industrial fish/shrimp trawling Sector, has also experienced huge financial losses on account of payment of death benefits to the families of those that fell by the sea robbers'/pirates' brutality, increase in insurance premium, damage and theft of various equipment and loss of fishing time. Sea pirates are directly linked to oil production in the Niger Delta. Some pirates claim to be fighting for a fairer distribution of Nigeria's vast oil wealth, and as a protest to the damage caused by oil production in the Delta (Jimoh, 2013; Okoronkwo *et al.*, 2014). The cost of maritime piracy to Nigerian society and the economy has been significant, not only to the oil industry, but to local fisheries and regional trade as well (Murphy, 2008).

In 2012, the Industry lost a vessel due to pirates attack. Recently, the pirates progressed in their style of operation by hijacking vessels, with demands of huge ransom and threats of blowing up the vessels with their explosives if the company failed to pay as demanded. The pirates (sea robbers) regrettably carry out their nefarious activities unchallenged. Despite the more than \$3.2bn investment of NITOA members on jetty facilities and infrastructure, only 122 out of 250 fishing vessels (trawlers) are currently in operation due to the tempestuous situations that the industrial fishing operators have had to contend with. These led to several fishing companies going into limbo to the extent that only eight (8) out of forty (40) companies are operating as at date. The issue of piracy and armed robbery at sea has contributed immensely to this drastic reduction and if allowed to continue will lead to total collapse of the fishing industry.

The recent resurgence of marine piracy off the coasts of Nigeria is a manifestation of poverty and inequality. Fraud and corruption are the pillars of maritime piracy in this regard (Okoronkwo *et al.*, 2014). Simply put, poverty breeds desperation and inequality breeds discontent. "When the future becomes hopeless and you have nothing to lose, why not take up arms?. When resources are scarce, do the gains from fighting for control over these resources outweigh the risks of slow starvation? If economic trade-offs lie behind these problems, perhaps economics can help us find some answers" (Fisman and Miguel, 2009). As a result of the withdrawal of fishing vessels from Nigeria waters by Nigerian Trawler Owners Association and the International outcry of the menace of piracy attacks and its attendant consequences, the government reacted by convening a stakeholders meeting in Abuja on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February, 2008. The Synergy of NITOA with security agencies to curb the attacks has not yielded the desired impact. Piracy attacks have continued to date even with the deployment of security forces, and the assurance of safety given by the government to the industry.

In the light of the foregoing, the industrial fishing sub-sector must be assisted by the Federal Government to unveil its potentials by addressing these challenges in order for Nigeria and indeed Nigerians to continue to derive maximum benefits from their God given marine resources. We therefore recommend as follows:-

- Regular raiding of on-shore depots where pirates engage in marketing activities to dispose of stolen catches along the coast line.
- Regular patrol and increase in platforms with sustained operations including stop and search of strange vessels by the Navy.
- Dedicating some naval vessels for fisheries surveillance and security. Placement of fast gun boats at the identified black spots.
- Public enlightenment community relationships and intelligence information gathering to be improved upon by all arms of government.
- Aerial survey and patrol with helicopters to deter robbers and poachers like it is done in neighbouring countries.
- Adequate provision of advanced radar coverage of the maritime environment to monitor the activities of pirates.
- Putting in place Search and Rescue services according to international conventions and assist vessels in distress to reduce casualties.
- Adequate training of security personnel to meet up the level of sophistication being employed by the pirates.

- Direct communication through radios between vessels at sea and security patrol boats and naval bases for urgent and immediate response to the attacks.

### Conclusion

Piracy has devastating effects on our fishing operations and Maritime trade/transportation exposes our coastal communities to foreign intrusion with concomitant security risk and the damaging effects on economic growth of the nation. Nigeria depends heavily on the fisheries and maritime environment to sustain her economy and external trade, hence it is necessary that all contributions by the various sectors and concerned security agencies to find a lasting solution to the problem of piracy and armed robbery at sea. We have unshaken confidence that Nigeria's industrial fishing sub-sector holds great potentials in the attainment of fish food security agenda of government, increased employment opportunities, attainment of the millennium development goals and in-flow of local and direct foreign investment into the subsector. This will reduce the need to further import fish and the scarce foreign exchange that would have been deployed in this regard can be channeled to better productive uses in the delivery of the non-oil diversification of the present administration, to do otherwise may lead, God forbid, to the total collapse of the fishing industry in Nigeria.

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