ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOUNDATION

Protecting People and Planet

Protecting and promoting environmental justice in the context of Thai fisheries

Dominic Thomson: Regional Director (SEA)

The origins of the Environmental Justice Foundation

- Formed 20+ yrs ago - Our mission is to protect people **and** planet
- We believe environmental security is a **basic human right**
- We use investigations and film to uncover environmental and human rights abuses
- We train environmental defenders so they have the tools to protect their own env rights

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EJF in Southeast Asia

- Worked in Thailand since 2014, Indonesia since 2017, Philippines since 2021, Vietnam investigations since 2018
- Combatting IUU fishing and human rights abuses + marine plastics
- Advocating for **regional** adoption of transparency principles
- Working with range of actors from CSOs through to government

What is EJF's role?

- IUU/FL/HT investigations
- High level legislative advocacy
- Encouraging greater transparency/digitisation of data
- Fostering regional/transboundary cooperation
- Victim identification & labour inspection training
- Empowering and involving local communities

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What is Environmental Justice?

- Env justice ensures that all communities (esp. marginalized), have **equitable** access to a healthy environment and are **protected** from env harm
- At the global level, env justice is enshrined in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals – Goal 13, Goal 14, Goal 16
- Env justice means: inclusivity, equity, **transparency**, accountability in environmental governance

Environmental (in)justice in the context of fisheries

- Mismanagement and **lack** of **equitable** resource **allocation** leads to a precarious imbalance
- Continued mismanagement can lead to a **vicious cycle** and eventual collapse
- Smaller vessels, small-scale fishers lose out compared to industrial operators
- Bad operators take advantage of the vulnerable
- Cascade of problems including human rights abuses

"Before the regulations, industrial trawlers were fishing within 1000 metres from shore. Within a few years, short-bodied mackerels and crabs had drastically decreased. We went from a situation where we had so much catch we gave it away for free to a situation where we had almost nothing at all."

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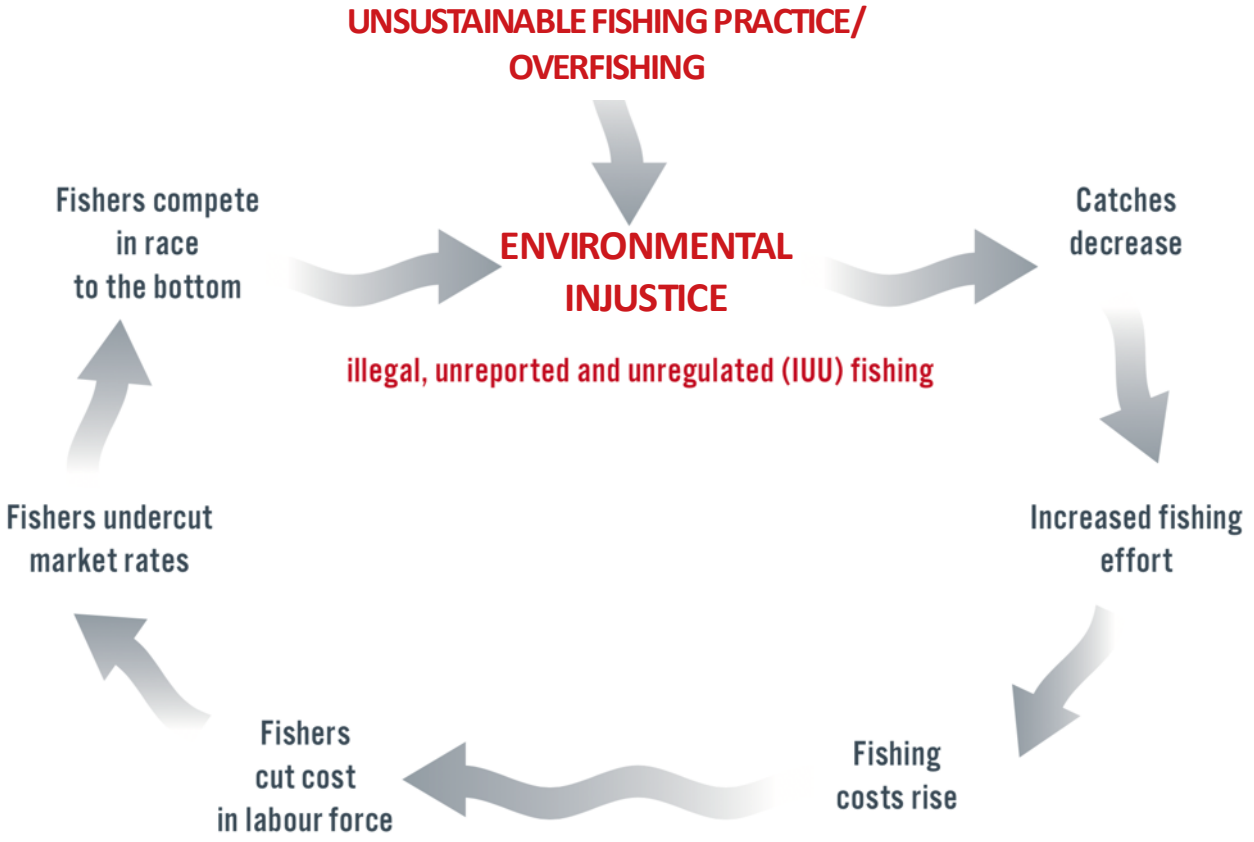
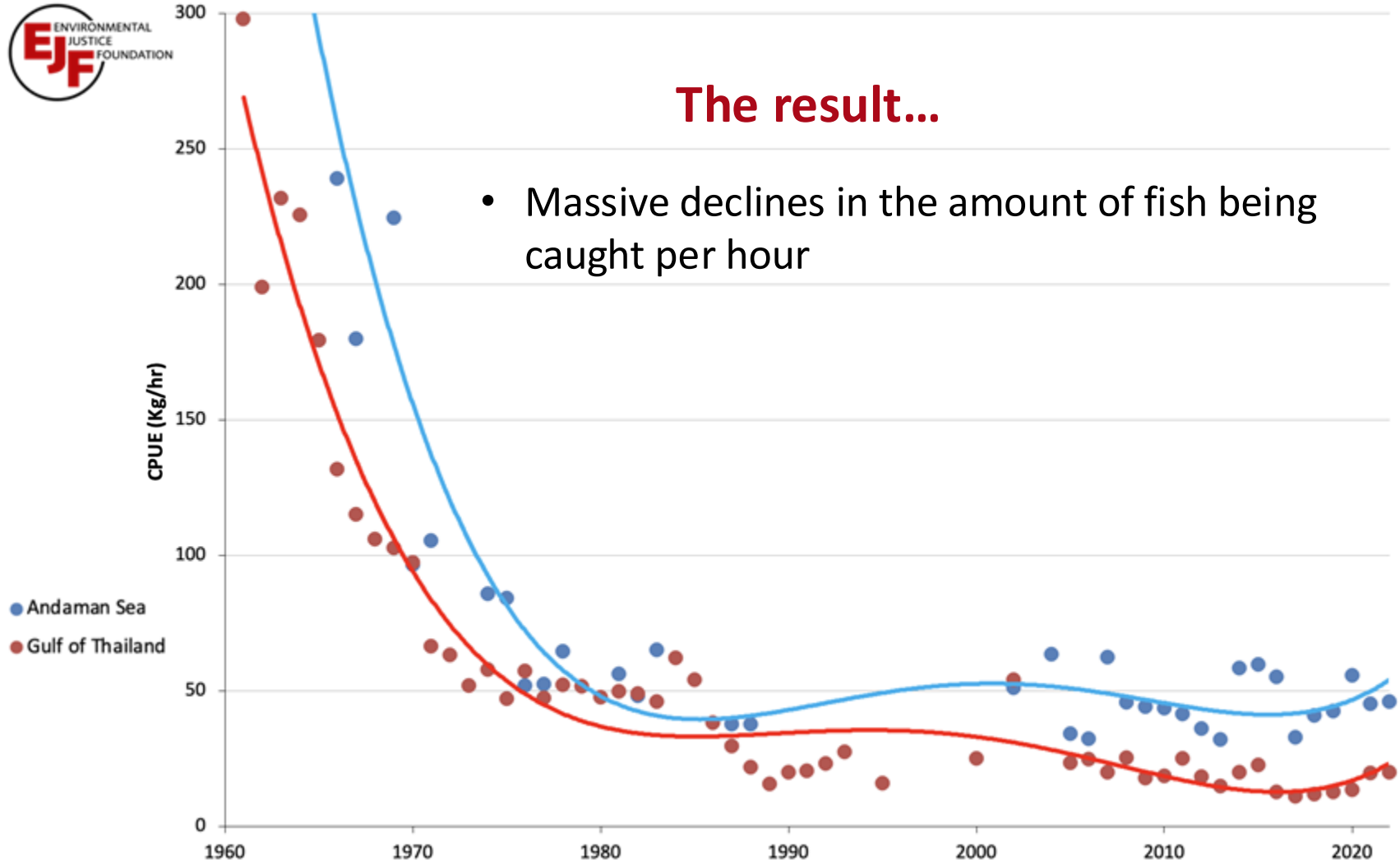
IUU fishing and human rights abuses are linked

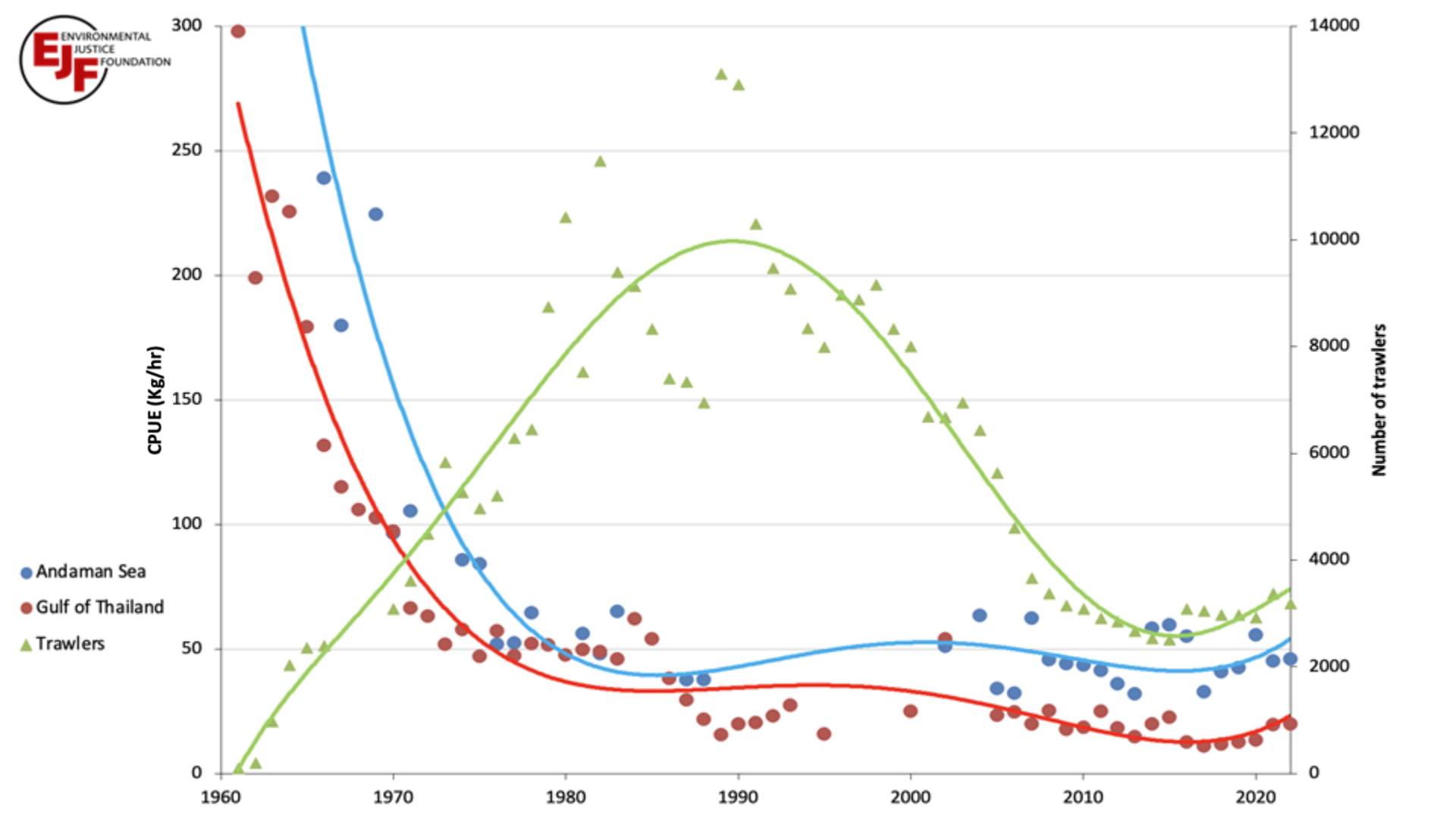


The result…

The result…

- Massive declines in the amount of fish being caught per hour

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CPUE (Kg/hr)
Number of trawlers
300
250
200
150
100
50
0
14000
12000
10000
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1960
1970
1980
1990
2000
2010
2020
Andaman Sea
Gulf of Thailand
Trawlers

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What drove the env injustice in Thai fisheries?

- Complete absence of transparency/accountability:
- Poorly developed fleet records, lack of info exchange on vessels
- Limited VMS and/or confidential information
- Worker registration gaps
- Lack of labour inspections at ports
- Lack of observers/coordinated at-sea patrols

What was done to remedy the situation in Thailand?

- Public, digital license list available online
- Vessel monitoring system for larger commercial vessels
- Network of 30 PIPO centres across the country
- At-sea patrols to verify compliance
- Labour *and* fisheries port inspections to screen for indicators of abuse
- Regularisation/registration of workforce

What was the impact?

- Reduced IUU fishing in protected areas such as MPAs and IEZs
- Reduced destructive fishing practices
- Improved catches for small-scale fishers
- Fewer clashes between fishing sectors
- Regularised/transparent payment of fishers
- Reduced incidences of FL & HT

> *"VMS recordings help prevent commercial vessels from entering the IEZ . Fewer commercial vessel intrusions have finally given juvenile fish the chance they need to mature."*

Artisanal fisher from the northern coast of the Andaman Sea.

> *" Now I can see that the seagrass beds are looking much healthier. They are vital for the survival of juvenile fishes and now we see more fish growing up to survive and replenish the sea."*

Artisanal fisherwoman from the northern coast of the Andaman Sea.

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How can we entrench environmental rights/justice?

- Rollout and promote transparency mechanisms in fisheries
- Regulate, monitor enforce laws
- Inform, educate communities about their env rights
- Involve small-scale fishers in decision making processes
- Inform consumers so they can make educated purchasing decisions that promote sustainable, ethical, legal fisheries

> ***"I feel like there's hope because our coastal resources have begun to recover. It makes me feel hopeful to know that our children will get to carry on our legacy."***

Artisanal fisher from the western coast of the Gulf of Thailand.

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Fisheries are a global industry…

- Fish and IUU fishing boats don't respect borders
- Regulatory gaps can allow ports/flags of convenience to proliferate
- Lack of regional cooperation/info exchange leads to monitoring & enforcement gaps
- IUU/HR abuses pushed to intl waters and boundary areas where env rights are blurred

Coalition for Fisheries Transparency

Global Transparency Coalition

Coming together to tackle a global challenge

Coalition for Fisheries Transparency

Policy Principles

Vessel information

1. Require unique identification numbers for all fishing vessels (including transport and supply vessels).
2. Publish lists of licenses, authorizations, and sanctions.
3. Make public the beneficial ownership of vessels.
4. Stop the use of flags of convenience by fishing vessels.

Fishing activity

5. Make vessel position data public.
6. Ban or closely monitor at-sea transshipment.
7. Mandate seafood traceability from boat to plate.

Governance and management

8. Ratify international agreements that set standards for fishing vessels and trade.
   (Including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Agreement on Port State Measures; International Labour Organization (ILO) Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; ILO C188; and International Maritime Organization (IMO) Cape Town Agreement.)
9. Ensure public and equitable access to fisheries data and participation in fisheries management and decision-making.
10. Collect data on the conditions of fishing vessel crews and publish it in aggregate form.

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Recommendations for addressing these issues

- Foster action-led monitoring, information sharing, enforcement action to clamp down on IUU fishing, restrict market access and investigate illegal operators
- Promote a multi-stakeholder approach to ensure sustained implementation
- Push for adoption of the Transparency Charter's mechanisms to inhibit IUU fishing, labour abuses and corruption at the regional level
- Push for regional ratification of C188 alongside PSMA, C87, C98 etc
- IUUF and HR abuses should be recognised as transnational crimes at ASEAN level

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Thank you!

Dominic.thomson@ejfoundation.org