

# RESULTS SUMMARY

## Rethinking maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

Author: Danida Fellowship Centre (2025)

[Find project on OpenAid](#)

PROJECT	<b>Title:</b> (Counter) Piracy infrastructures in the Gulf of Guinea (COPIGoG)
	<b>Partner:</b> University of Copenhagen, Center of Maritime Law and Security (Ghana), Danish Institute for International Studies, Stakeholder Democracy Network (Nigeria)
	<b>Country:</b> Ghana
	<b>Period:</b> 2022-2024

**CHANGE**



Findings from the COPIGoG research project inform new security approaches in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). The research shows that while the number of piracy attacks in the GoG are historically low in 2023/24, the pirates have moved their criminal activities elsewhere – both on land and at sea with the risk of resurgence. These findings contributed to a change in approach by the Danish Maritime Security Programme III (DMSP III) and its security partners in the region, which now focuses on addressing criminal activities both at sea and on land.

**CONTEXT**

The GoG has historically been the world’s number one piracy hotspot, with major economic and human consequences. In 2020, 40% of the world’s piracy attacks and 95% of all registered kidnappings by pirates took place in the GoG, including attacks on Danish vessels. However, since 2021 piracy attacks and kidnappings have decreased with only a few attacks in 2023. Following this change in the security situation, actors have been re-evaluating what to focus on in order to prevent a return of piracy at sea and other threats to maritime security.

**CONTRIBUTION**

One of COPIGoG’s main contributions has been to question the effects of counterpiracy interventions by showing how pirates remain engaged in other types of crime at land which present a continued risk of a resurgence of piracy. This finding sparked debates about how interventions at sea can be complemented by long-term development and crime prevention initiatives in the surrounding societies. Consequently, this informed the DMSP III’s priorities, e.g. supporting convicted pirates in their reintegration to reduce recidivism.

IMAGES	 <p>Confiscated ship used for smuggling oil. Photo: [insert credit]</p>	 <p>The COPIGoG team on stakeholder visit. Photo: [insert credit]</p>
--------	--	---

See next page for more details →

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### ACTIVITIES

Research projects such as the COPIGoG project involve many activities as well as a variety of actors. Key to the research was the large-scale fieldwork and data collection to understand the actual effects of existing counterpiracy efforts as well as to deepen the understanding of piracy itself, including what pirates do when they don't engage in piracy. The team of Danish and West African researchers interviewed key maritime security practitioners, community members, and policymakers from the region and the international community. Respondents included naval personnel, boat drivers, the DK special forces, as well as stakeholders in the shipping industry – and also self-identifying pirates. A crucial part of the project has been to disseminate findings and offer research-based knowledge to actors in the region, in Denmark, in the EU, and beyond, including recommendations on how to more sustainably address piracy in the GoG. This has been achieved via security conferences and meetings with key stakeholders to feed into policy debates and development of maritime security.

### LESSONS

As COPIGoG was a partnership project between researchers in Denmark, Ghana, and Nigeria, building strong relationships and ensuring capacity strengthening of team members in West Africa and in Denmark has been central to its success. Working closely with individual researchers in Ghana and Nigeria to co-author research articles has been key to strengthening research capacity and networks of all COPIGoG team members - specifically within maritime security. This has been an important step in laying the foundations for future collaborative research within the security area. In the process of engaging with stakeholders, it was key that researchers came from organisations where working with policy and engagement to create an impact beyond academia was part of the organisational culture. The project thus already had a network to build on. A strong collaboration with the sector counsellor in Ghana further supported the process of engaging with relevant stakeholders.

### EVIDENCE

The project has seen keen interest from policy makers who wish to receive research-based knowledge to use as a basis for policy decisions, as evidenced also by contributions from the project into the DMSP III. The programme now focuses on maritime security interventions on addressing criminal activities at sea (through interdiction and arrests) and on land (through investigations and prosecution of actors within the wider criminal network) in a holistic manner. Read more about the DMSP II programme here: <https://test.openaid.um.dk/project/XM-DAC-3-1-286708>. The research project group wrote reports and policy briefs on their findings including: "Vessel protection against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea: a public private hybrid" (DIIS); "Do No Come Out to Vote" (Global Initiative); as well as several academic publications, including in high-ranking international journals like International Affairs: "Piracy and the Broader 'Gun Business' in the Niger Delta (2024)".

### DOMAINS

<i>Development strategy priorities:</i>	Democracy and Human Rights
<i>Changes in the lives of people facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability</i>	-
<i>Changes in laws, policies and practices that affect people's rights</i>	x
<i>Changes in the capacity of organisations and communities to support rights</i>	x
<i>Changes in partnerships and collaborations that support people's rights</i>	-
<i>Changes in participation of groups facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability</i>	-
<i>Changes in local leadership of development and humanitarian work</i>	-