

ORIGINAL : ENGLISH

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

NINETEENTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 3 - 7 August 1987)

TRAINING PROGRAMME IN EXTENSION SKILLS AND COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES
FOR PACIFIC ISLAND FISHERIES OFFICERS

(Paper prepared by the Secretariat)

Background

1. A survey of the training needs of the fisheries sector of member countries has been undertaken by means of country visits by the SPC Fisheries Training Officer and by circulating postal questionnaires. While this survey has not yet encompassed all of the countries of the region the training needs which have been expressed are diverse and largely depend on the size and stage of development of the country. The survey has however, clearly identified one area of training which is common to most countries and which is rated a high priority area for many, namely training in extension skills and communication techniques for fisheries extension officers. Senior fisheries personnel have frequently expressed disappointment in the field performance of their extension officers, who although technically competent, are not using their knowledge to good effect due to an inability to establish meaningful contact and communication with both the fishing community they wished to help and with their own superiors.

Development of training Programme

2. In line with the policy that training developed by the SPC Regional Fisheries Training Programme should draw as far as possible on existing resources and operate in co-operation with training institutions within and outside the SPC region, a thorough investigation of the training available to Pacific Island countries in this field was undertaken. This established that while there was no specific fisheries extension training available in Australia, New Zealand or North America, there was in these countries and throughout the region, an extensive body of training and expertise in the area of agricultural extension, and it was from this group that advice has been sought.

3. The principal agencies identified are the Agriculture Training Unit of USP, situated at Alafua Campus, Western Samoa and the Extension Training section of the Department of Primary Industries, Queensland, Australia. Both of these establishments have a similar, very practical approach to extension training and have expressed interest in the concept of a combined exercise with SPC to develop appropriate training for the fisheries sector.

Workshop on the role of the Fisheries Extension Officer

4. It was considered important that before any training was developed the role of the fisheries extension officer should be fully understood and defined, and that appropriate methods for training should be developed with the maximum possible input from the senior fisheries officers of the region. To accomplish this, a one-day workshop on "The Role of the Fisheries Officer in Pacific Island Fisheries" was held during the 1986 Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries. The workshop was conducted with assistance from several sources, including FAO and USAID, and was chaired by Mr B. Trendell, from the Extension Training Section of the DPI, Queensland. Unfortunately due to staff changes occurring at this time, representatives from Alafua could not attend. The workshop was successful in generating awareness of the diverse duties of the extension officer and highlighting the problems which exist in developing training that could improve their ability to communicate. The workshop concluded with the following formal recommendation from the meeting:

"That taking into account the material produced by the discussion group on what skills are desirable for Fisheries Extension Officers in the Pacific, it is recommended that the South Pacific Commission organise training in extension skills suitable for the region."

Pilot Extension Workshop

5. In November 1986 a six-week "Fishing Methods and Extension Skills" course, was held in Fiji and attended by 12 officers from 9 Pacific Island countries. The two-week extension skills section of the course was used as a pilot project to test the training approach and methodology developed during the workshop. DPI Queensland released Mr B. Trendell to conduct the 2-week extension section.

6. The course was very successful, and the extension skills section particularly well received by the trainees, further reinforcing the choice of training approach.

**Proposed Training Programme in Extension Skills and Communication Techniques
For Pacific Island Fisheries Officers**

7. The South Pacific Commission now believes it has all the information necessary to address country needs in developing fisheries extension training. It is proposed to implement the programme in the following manner:

Stage I - Four week core course for national instructors (18 participants)

8. The purpose of Stage I is to 'train the trainers': to give participants from SPC member countries, who have either substantial experience in fisheries extension, or have experience in fisheries or general education, a solid background in the principles of communication and extension; and by means of selected training methods let them demonstrate and practice the best way of passing these ideas onto fisheries extension officers in their own countries. It is anticipated that each of the larger countries will wish to send two participants. Very careful selection of these participants will be essential to ensure they have the ability to become extension trainers and that their on-going responsibilities in their home countries will ensure the continuity of their long-term input into extension training. The proposal of some countries to send both a senior fisheries extension officer and a teacher from an appropriate discipline is seen as a good balance.

9. The teaching of this section of the course will primarily be undertaken by experienced facilitators with an appropriate training background using modern participatory methods. As this will include small discussion and activity groups three core tutors will be necessary for this section of the course. Each tutor will be assigned the countries he will be assisting with their Stage II courses (see below) early in Stage I and will liaise with these students throughout the Stage I course. With 18 participants there will be nine Stage II courses. Each tutor will be involved in developing and participating in three Stage II in-country courses, which is another reason for having 3 tutors.

10. The contents and methodology of Stage I shall largely be decided by the core tutors but close liaison with the SPC Regional Fisheries Training Programme is essential to ensure the programme follows the direction indicated by the previous fisheries extension workshops.

11. To address concern expressed during the RTMF workshop that this type of training would best be carried out by trainers having experience of regional fisheries, the core tutors will be assisted by a carefully selected senior regional fisheries officer with experience in the fisheries extension field, and also by the Fisheries Training Officer of the South Pacific Commission when he is not engaged in administrative duty and course support activities. The actual input of the above can be decided through consultation.

12. Since commencing the development of this training programme several countries have asked for training material that they could use for their own courses on extension skills. Although there is general literature on extension training, we have been unable to find anything specific for short courses for fisheries extension officers. One of the responsibilities of the core tutors should therefore be to develop this literature so that it is available for the Stage II courses and for general distribution as a manual for extension officers and future courses.

Stage II - In-country courses (2 week course for national fisheries officers)

13. At the completion of Stage I that the participants will be more aware of the importance and the role of the extension worker, and be keen to implement the many new ideas and approaches they have learnt. It is essential that this impetus be maintained and that each student is able, within a relatively short period of time, to conduct a two-week national course in extension skills for the fisheries officers of his own department. These courses will constitute the Stage II activities.

14. Much of the grounding and preparation for Stage II will have been completed during the Stage I course and the participants will be liaising from the start of Stage I with the particular tutor who has been selected to assist them with the on-ground running of the Stage II course. It is anticipated that smaller countries who may have only sent one participant to Stage I will share Stage II courses on a sub-regional basis.

Implementation

15. Funding for Stage I of this training programme has been generously donated by the International Centre for Ocean Development (ICOD) and it is proposed to carry out this Stage in early 1988. Finance for the various in-country courses is being sought and it is hoped that these will be completed before the end of 1988.