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**PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STANDARD
STATUTORY CERTIFICATES
FOR SMALL FISHING VESSELS**

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PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STANDARD STATUTORY CERTIFICATES FOR SMALL FISHING VESSELS

Introduction

The SPC Maritime Programme has been working with Marine Departments and governments to ensure national legislation is in place to meet international requirements and standards as specified by IMO.

In a number of Pacific Island countries this has included the development of legislation which includes requirements for fishing vessels to carry certified crews and masters.

With legislation already developed, the real challenge is to develop national strategies which will ensure certification standards are relevant to national context and obtainable by established operators as well as industry new entrants.

New Zealand School of Fisheries Interests

The NZSOF has a 20 year history of delivering statutory certificates to fishing vessel crews. The School offers formal statutory certificate courses and programmes ranging from basic safety to Deep Sea Skipper with the latter allowing the holder to operate any size fishing vessel anywhere in the world.

During the last 2 years the School has been deeply involved in the development of competency based programmes for fishing vessel crews and the Maritime Safety Authority (as the equivalent of a Marine Division) has recently introduced regulations allowing persons to be examined for a number of statutory courses on the basis of demonstrated competencies (rather than attendance at a course).

During recent consultancy assignments undertaken by School staff, a number of concerns have been raised by fisheries operators and fisheries departments regarding the implementation of certification programmes for fishing vessel crews. These concerns can be briefly summarised as:

- Concern regarding a lack of consultation with recipient groups – fishing industry representatives
- Concern over the relevance of specific content of safety and G6 certificates to small vessel fisheries
- Concern that fishers are not sufficiently resourced (economically and educationally) to attend courses
- Concern that there should be pathways to standards which are achievable over time and on an incremental basis

- Concern to ensure that prior knowledge and experience can be taken into account in meeting qualification requirements
- Concern to ensure that the focus of qualification is on aspects of assessment standards rather than prescribed course attendance requirements.

In reflection of these areas of concern, the School will shortly undertake a consultancy assignment in Tonga to assist in the development and planning of strategies for fishers to gain certification.

In the Tongan context, the Marine Department has agreed that their focus should be on examining a standard and not prescribing the means by which that standard should be obtained in terms of course attendance for lower level certification.

This strongly reflects the philosophy of the New Zealand Maritime Safety Authority as adopted in relation to accepting competency based pathways for certification.

In the New Zealand Model, competencies are formulated as Unit Standards which outline specific areas of required knowledge and capability but focus on what constitutes valid observation and assessment of competence.

The process of completing competencies can be undertaken in the work place under the general management of a training provider. Persons who have completed the assigned competencies for specific qualifications can complete their qualifications through undertaking formal oral examination.

The Programme for Tonga

Under a Pacific Island Industry Development Scheme Grant, School of Fisheries tutor Alastair Robertson, will spend an initial 2 weeks in Tonga immediately after the RTMF meeting.

Alastairs assignment in Tonga is being undertaken at the request of the Tonga Export Fishermans Association but has been supported in principle by the Ministries and Marine and Ports and will include activities as follows:

- Summarise proposed legislative and regulatory requirements for fishing vessel crews to hold statutory certification.
- Hold discussions with all interest parties to develop strategies for management of certification training and assessment for existing non certified crew and small vessel operators and industry new entrants.
- Develop options for work place delivery and activity assessment for appropriate elements of safety and G6 qualifications.

- Prepare learning guides and resources and assessment summaries based on currently available resources.
- Work with TEFA members, the Tonga Maritime Polytechnic, the Marine Department and the Ministry of Fisheries to undertake cooperative agreement on the implementation of a safety certification training and assessment programme.
- Prepare a delivery plan, appropriate to TEFA membership needs, for the implementation of Safety and G6 certification for Tonga fishing vessels.

It is hoped that developing an implementation system for fisheries certification for Tonga will provide accessible mechanisms for crew certification and at the same time maintain common assessment standards.

G6 Certification in context

One of the difficulties encountered in the delivery of statutory certificates to fishermen is the general tendency to challenge any aspect of a course syllabus which may not be seen to be relevant to the situation of the aspirant certificate holder.

What suits a particular fishery in one country in terms of required certification may not suit another. Similarly, specific knowledge requirements may be of little practical use to fishers.

For example, the engineering knowledge required for an Alia skipper operating outboards and that required for a 28ft skipper in Tonga with a small diesel engine will be vastly different. Neither will really want to know (or use) about the operation of equipment they do not use.

For both, a knowledge of refrigeration or detailed electrics will not necessarily be seen as useful. Similarly, teaching an Alia crew member about lifeboats or even life rafts is unlikely to make for a safer crew. Teaching about small vessel safety preparedness and appropriate emergency responses would be more appropriate.

It is perhaps important to look at the full G6 programme as being a series of steps, with safety elements for small and large vessels, and additional requirements for general knowledge, navigation and engineering which might also be broken down into smaller components.

Whatever the scenario, countries undertaking to incorporate small fishing vessels into manning regulations will need to give serious attention to achieving the aspirations of the regulations.

The New Zealand School of Fisheries maintains an interest to work with fishing interests and Government bodies in this regard.