

THE FISHERIES OBSERVER

A CAREER FOR WOMEN AND MEN IN THE FISHERIES INDUSTRY



Do you tick all the boxes?

Do you:

- care about the environment and people's livelihoods in the Pacific region?
- have a sense of adventure?
- love to travel and meet new people?
- have a good eye for detail?
- like to work hard?

Are you:

- reliable?
- curious?
- able to spend long periods away from home?

If you tick all the boxes, the role of a fisheries observer may be just right for you.

For many Pacific Island countries, their fisheries are their most valuable natural resource. At the front line of protecting those fisheries is the fisheries observer. Being present at the fishing grounds, observers are the 'eyes and ears' of fisheries managers, scientists and compliance officers.

As an observer, you will collect information from commercial fishing vessels, making sure it is accurate and unbiased.

The role is crucial because, for some data, the observer is the only person who can independently verify the data supplied by fishermen. The data may later be subject to scientific review or court interrogation, so it needs to stand up to scrutiny.

On returning from each trip, you will be debriefed. After checking that you are safe and well, the debriefer will review the data, check that violations are correctly dealt with, follow up on any unusual events.



SPC
Secretariat
of the Pacific
Community



European Union

A single trip may be anywhere from one day to three months at sea. The work is offered on a contract basis, trip by trip, so you can choose to have time off in between trips. It's up to you.

There's no doubt that it's a tough environment on a fishing boat. You need to be prepared to handle unusual, sometimes difficult, working conditions. But you don't have to be a superhero to apply.

'With few costs at sea, it's a great opportunity to save money and provide financial support for the family.'

***Linslyn Sopamana,
PIRFO Accredited Observer, Solomon Islands***



OPPORTUNITIES

Can women apply? Absolutely!

Attitudes are changing and, more and more, women are seen as being at least as capable as men in the fisheries industry.

As of 2012, around 40 women from Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Palau and Papua New Guinea have been certified as observers.

'We are grateful for the high level of respect shown to us by fishing vessel crews, which are generally all-male crews on mostly foreign Asian vessels.'

Grace Dorothy Kumuli, Shirley Wini, Linslyn Sopamana and Irena Geseni,
Observers, Solomon Islands



'It was challenging at first, working in a field dominated by men. My aim was to be professional, smart and independent. There is an energy, a power, being a woman working among men and being in control of what you do and what you don't do.'

PIRFO Accredited Observer, Papua New Guinea



WORKING IN THE FISHERIES INDUSTRY

Getting selected

Trainees are carefully selected. You will be interviewed to see if you have what it takes to spend long periods of time at sea. Then the certification management committee will test your basic numeric, observation and writing skills.

We train you

Once selected as a trainee, you will need to complete a two-week safety-at-sea course followed by a five-week observer training course.

If you successfully complete the training, you will be certified to a regional standard known as PIRFO, or Pacific Islands Regional Fisheries Observer. Being certified qualifies you to work with your own country's national observer programmes, as well as with programmes operating under the umbrella of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission's Regional Observer Programme, which includes those operated by the Forum Fisheries Agency, the Parties to the Nauru Agreement and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

PIRFO certification is a qualification recognised throughout the Pacific. The rest of the world is still catching up with Pacific observer standards.

'Never in my wildest dreams did I see myself being in a role other than as an observer, which I was for seven years in PNG.

Then I became a national observer trainer before being chosen to coordinate observer training at the PNG National Fisheries College.

At SPC, my job is to provide debriefing training to all 22 Pacific Island countries and territories. I achieved all this with just an Observer Certificate and my experience as an observer.'

Manoi Kutan,
Observer Debriefing Training and Support Officer, SPC

The first step in a long career path

Being an observer has been the first step in the career path of many people in the industry.

You could go on to become a debriefer, a trainer of observers, a port coordinator, a debriefing coordinator or even an observer manager.

Many observers step sideways into other fisheries-related jobs. Some have become fisheries compliance or enforcement officers, some have become senior fishery managers and others have used their income to fund further education or start their own business.

Apply now

To apply for a position as an observer, or to find out more about what to put in your application, please contact your local observer representative:

It is a growth industry; the work is ramping up and more observers are required.

Linslyn Sopamana,
Observatrice titulaire d'un brevet PIRFO, Îles Salomon

