

THE POHNPEI, FSM EXPERIENCE AT SPC

It is uniquely enriching to witness first hand, the work of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). In our short attachment with the SPC Coastal Fisheries Management Section, we found the many people who are dedicated to serving the Pacific community through SPC extremely helpful. SPC attracts the elite and the best of the Pacific, thus creating a truly exemplary Pacific community at the Noumea, New Caledonia regional office. SPC also attracts many accomplished people from around the world, making its staff composition a unique world community.

Our experience with SPC goes back to May 2007. The State of Pohnpei (SoP), through the FSM Foreign Affairs Office, requested assistance from SPC in developing viable programmes and fisheries management plans that would promote the sustainable management and utilisation of coastal fisheries resources. References were made to the following key areas:

- Undertaking a preliminary study to determine how such management plans may be developed.
- Assessing the level of resources available within the SoP, at both the government and community level, with particular attention to personnel and finance.
- Making recommendations as to how the management of the local pearl industry might be facilitated by local communities.
- Providing assistance for the future management of inshore fisheries.

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- Presenting the findings of the preliminary study to the state government at the end of the assignment.

A preliminary study was undertaken by SPC's Coastal Fisheries Management Officer, Etuati Ropeti, in July 2007. The main purpose of the study was to assess the resources available at the SoP Fisheries Authority to implement the programme, and most importantly, to provide key recommendations for the establishment of a management programme for Pohnpei's coastal fisheries resources. Findings of the preliminary study were presented at the end of the assignment to SoP authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community representatives from Pohnpei's municipalities.

One of the recommendations from the preliminary study was to conduct a workshop on the community ecosystem-based fisheries management programme (CEbFMP). The workshop was carried out in October 2007, and participants included personnel from SoP's fisheries and agriculture offices, NGOs, and representatives from municipal governments.

On behalf of Pohnpei's communities and our people, we would very much like to acknowledge SPC's Director-General, Dr Jimmy Rodgers, for his empowering support, especially our efforts to equip our communities

with tools to achieve sustainable coastal fishery resource management, which is a challenge across the Pacific. We also recognize Lindsay Chapman, SPC's Coastal Fisheries Programme Manager, and Ueta Faasili, SPC's Coastal Fisheries Management Adviser. Most of all, we wish to thank our facilitator Magele Etuati Ropeti for his outstanding commitment and hard work in working with Pohnpei to chart a Pacific community solution through the CEbFMP framework. Lastly we extend our sincere thanks to Nicole Milot, SPC's Travel Officer and others who worked behind the scene to facilitate this attachment with SPC.

The Lirorohki Pohnpei Sarawi model produced through this attachment recognises our communities' roles and their voices in the management of their marine resources. The guidelines presented in this model are a combined partnership between communities, government, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders. For the first time, coastal and inshore fishery management in Pohnpei has a draft model that will be beneficial to the management of our coastal resources. This model represents the foundation for sustainable resource management while fully recognising the vital roles of our communities and placing them in the "driver's seat".

Lirorohki refers to revitalising traditional resource management practices that served people well in the past. The word Sarawi has several meanings: respect, care, and that the concept that people are the proud stewards of their land and sea and should protect and preserve it at all cost through an ancestral declaration. Deeply rooted and a cornerstone in our culture, wahu means immense respect for life in order to perpetuate peace and unity in our Pohnpeian way of life.

Unique among similar CEBFMP models in the region, the Pohnpei model achieved a unified government and NGO partnership. At every step during the development of the model, staff from the Pohnpei Division of Marine Development and the Conservation Society of Pohnpei worked closely together.

Having developed this model, it is in the best interests of Pohnpei and other FSM states to actualise this programme at the community level and to provide the necessary resources and technical support to make it happen. Equally so, SPC can play a significant support role to see this programme through by committing resources (both technical and financial) towards developing community capacity and alternative income generation strategies (e.g. FADs). We do however caution that meaningful results can only be achieved with a long-range view, and can not be treated as a "quick fix" solution. A plan is the essential first step, but it takes commitment, resources and more to achieve this vision.

From this attachment, it is encouraging to learn that SPC is taking serious steps towards strengthening partnerships with NGOs. Already, strong partnerships are being developed in the north Pacific region between NGOs and govern-

ment entities, and it would be highly productive for SPC to recognise this evolution and align its programmes accordingly. Case in point: the five Micronesian jurisdictions — FSM, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam — have agreed to place under effective conservation, 30% of their nearshore marine resources and 20% of their terrestrial resources. This is truly an unprecedented initiative, unifying the Micronesia region with high NGO participation and support. Micronesians in Conservation (MIC) is a unique leadership network of NGOs that are highly focused on building leadership capacity.

The Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) network focuses on community issues and needs, the Pacific Islands Marine Protected Areas Community (PIMPAC) focuses on training mid-management level NGO staff in best conservation management practices, such as site management plan development, with an emphasis on marine protected areas (MPAs). Furthermore, conservation NGOs operate in each Micronesian jurisdiction to support government partners. The Conservation Society of Pohnpei, which has been in service for 10 years, has contributed significantly to

resource management and conservation (both terrestrial and marine) through its innovative education and awareness approaches.

SPC has much to offer in terms of technical capacity development and should acknowledge the exciting, strong NGO partnerships that are forming. There is considerable capacity within NGOs and governments that could be used by SPC, thereby minimizing travel costs for SPC staff, while at the same time supporting capacity development for SPC's northern partners. Furthermore, the recent joint SPC/FSM strategic plan would serve as a good fresh start for FSM and SPC to move forward together, a step that supports the true needs of communities in FSM.

To conclude, the Pohnpei attachment would not have been successful without the generous support and partnership of SPC, in particular the Coastal Fisheries Management Section section. Ueta Faasili and Etuati Ropeti are dedicated to serving Pacific Island communities, and both have a profound knowledge and dedication to charting a sensible course for coastal fishery resource management.

