

First Community-Based Fisheries Dialogue at the Fourth Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture

The Fourth Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture (RTMCFA4), held online from 12–15 October 2021, was the first meeting to include the Community-Based Fisheries Dialogue (CBFD). The meeting was convened by, and focused on, civil society organisations (CSOs) and other non-state actors (NSAs), with the Pacific Community’s Division of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) as the secretariat. The purpose of the CBFD is to give CSOs and other NSAs an opportunity to provide information and advice on key needs and issues. This is done through the RTMCFA to the Heads of Fisheries, to assist with informing ministers and Pacific leaders about priority issues associated with the sustainable use of coastal fisheries resources. The CBFD also provides an opportunity to share experiences and lessons from community-based initiatives to strengthen efforts to maintain productive and healthy ecosystems, and their associated fisheries resources, which are critical to the wellbeing of coastal communities.

The CBFD was held as a virtual meeting on 13 October 2021. The first CBFD session was facilitated by an independent convenor, Kesaia Tabunakawai from Fiji, with at least 38 representatives of CSOs and other NSAs engaged in plenary and breakout group discussions. There were over 100 participants in the CBFD session, including representatives of government agencies and other observers.

This first CBFD focused on laying the foundation for future dialogues through consideration of the CBFD Provisional Terms of Reference, and discussion of CSO and NSA contributions to the implementation of the “Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling-up CBFM”.¹

The CBFD Outcomes Report – along with all of the working, information and background papers, and presentations – are available on the SPC RTMCFA4 webpage.² The CBFD Outcomes Report summarises outcomes and points of consensus among CBFD participants, highlights priority issues and needs to be actioned by CSOs and other NSAs, including SPC members, provides guidance to SPC’s Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Programme (CFAP), and identifies key recommendations to be taken to the 14th Heads of Fisheries Meeting in early 2022 via the RTMCFA4, and for transmission to the Regional Fisheries Ministers Meet-

ing in mid-2022. During the CBFD, and from the CBFD Outcomes Report post-dialogue written feedback, several points were raised by participants requiring clarification. To ensure these were captured and available for future participants, the convenor compiled these points and responses into a “Q & A” information paper that is available on the SPC RTMCFA4 webpage.²

Background on the CBFD

The CBFD is a new mechanism for increasing the engagement of CSOs and other NSAs to give effect to the Pacific Island Forum Leaders’ decision in relation to coastal fisheries (paragraph 10, 47th Leaders Communique, 2016).³ The Regional Fisheries Ministers, at their Special Meeting⁴ in 2019, requested the Pacific Community to commission a review of the former Coastal Fisheries Working Group (CFWG) to, in part, provide options and recommendations for a new mechanism. SPC member Heads of Fisheries, past participants in the CFWG, CSO representatives, Pacific Community staff, and other stakeholders were consulted during the external review. The final proposed mechanism (originally referred to as the “CBF session”), including draft provisional terms of reference, was reviewed and approved at the Twelfth Heads of Fisheries meeting (May 2020) and endorsed at the First Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting (August 2020).

CBFD terms of reference and convening arrangements

As this was the first CBFD, it focused on establishing an appropriate administrative foundation for future CBFD meetings. Through plenary and breakout group discussions, participants reviewed and generally agreed on future CBFD session arrangements relating to:

- the terms of reference for the CBFD session within the RTMCFA agenda;
- convening arrangements for the CBFD session; and
- processes for selecting participants to future CBFD sessions.

¹ <https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/yr5yv>

² <https://fame1.spc.int/en/meetings/253>

³ Forum Communiqué, 47th Pacific Islands Forum, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, 8-10 September, 2016. http://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2016-Forum-Communique_-Pohnpei_-FSM_-8-10-Sept.pdf

⁴ Special Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting Outcomes: <https://www.ffa.int/node/2296>

The convenor acknowledged that not all participants were in full agreement with all of the arrangements. Recognising this is the start of a process, it is anticipated that it will take several dialogues to ensure that effective and broadly

accepted processes are in place, and will be refined after each meeting. The Cbfd agreed to use the modified provisional terms of reference (included in the Cbfd Outcomes Report) to organise and run the next Cbfd in 2022.

The Cbfd noted the following issues for ongoing consideration.

- 1. Membership:** The Cbfd should include members of CSOs and NSAs that are actively engaged in CBFM in Pacific Island countries and territories.
- 2. Purpose:** The purpose of the Cbfd should be expanded beyond community-based fisheries management to include ecosystem-based fisheries management.
- 3. Preparatory work:**
 - a. To increase value of the overall process, adequate resources should be assigned to preparatory time at the national level in the lead up to the Cbfd.
 - b. The role of national focal points needs to be clearly defined and adequately resourced.
- 4. Selection of convenor and vice-convenor:**
 - a. The establishment of a technical advisory group to work with FAME, the convenor and vice-convenor on agenda, report and other matters, should be considered. The role, procedure for selection, and period of appointment should be described for future consideration.
- 5. Convenor and vice-convenor:**
 - a. SPC is encouraged to secure funding support for these two posts.
 - b. Each vice-convenor would be involved for two years – one year as vice-convenor and a second year as convenor – to assist with developing familiarity with the process and building capacity.
 - c. Consideration should also be given to regional or international organisations that are working on community-based fisheries management within countries or territories, not just national groups.
 - d. Consideration should be given to the option of rotating the role of convenor and vice-convenor between the three subregions of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia and, that within each region, alphabetical rotation be encouraged.
- 6. Selection of participants:**
 - a. The number of people involved in preparatory consultations should be increased.
 - b. The national selection process would be led by CSOs and NSAs, being sensitive to domestic considerations such as geography and other factors.
 - c. Effective community representation is needed through representatives who are engaged in community-based fishing and can speak confidently on behalf of their constituents.
- 7. Reporting:**
 - a. Cbfd outcomes should be reported back, in simple language, to CSOs, NSAs and community groups between the RTMCFA, Heads of Fisheries, and RFMM.
 - b. The convenor and vice-convenor will accompany the chair of the RTMCFA to report to the Heads of Fisheries (HoF), and will be present at the time the HoF outcomes document to the RFMM is adopted by HoF.
 - c. There is a need to provide for CSO, NSA, and minority and majority views when consensus is difficult to achieve.

Implementing the Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling-up CBFM

The Cbfd included breakout and plenary sessions on “Implementing the Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling-up CBFM”⁵ Cbfd participants discussed how CSOs and NSAs could contribute and/or further align to achieving the outcomes in the Framework for Action. It also considered how implementation progress can be monitored and evaluated, and what role CSOs and NSAs can play in strengthening and improving national and regional reporting.

The Cbfd and other RTMCFA participants highlighted the broader activities being implemented to support the Framework for Action, and raised some key support needs to strengthen future implementation, including:

- evidenced-based management information to support communities;
- government support in developing national and sub-national CBFM scaling-up strategies to guide CBFM implementation in each Pacific Island country and territory;
- government and donors funding support to sustain CBFM programmes at national and subnational levels;
- CBFM capacity building at national and subnational levels; and
- strengthening legal frameworks and monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement to support implementation and scaling up of community-based fisheries management.

Reporting to the Fourteenth SPC Heads of Fisheries meeting

The Cbfd Outcomes Report, including the revised provisional terms of reference, will be presented to the Fourteenth Heads of Fisheries (HoF14) by the Cbfd convenor as part of the RTMCFA4 reporting to HoF14.

Feedback

Participants were asked to complete an online survey to rate aspects of the meeting. Only 12 participants from CSOs and NSAs, and from 11 Pacific Island countries and territories, responded to the survey. Respondents rated the meeting content highly (4.25 out of 5.0), and most participants stated that they were given the opportunity to provide feedback when they wanted. Seventy-eight per cent of re-



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spondents agreed that the purpose of each session was clear, and 82 per cent mentioned that they gained new knowledge from the Cbfd. Two sets of written review comments on the draft outcomes report and provisional terms of reference were received and considered by the convenor, contributing to the “Q & A” information paper.

Participant feedback and other lessons learned from the first Cbfd will be used to modify the next meeting, which will be held in conjunction with RTMCFA5, which is planned for mid- to late-October 2022. Whether it will be a virtual, hybrid, or in-person meeting will be determined by mid-2022.

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⁵ See: Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling-up CBFM (<https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/yr5yv>) and Policy Brief #37 (2021): Scaling up community-based fisheries management: A regional commitment supporting Pacific island communities in sustaining coastal fisheries (<https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/z2csz>)