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on Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture
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Summary/short description/key points:

Against the backdrop of travel restrictions aimed at curbing the Covid-19 pandemic, SPC continues to provide advisory and technical support to members, albeit remotely, to enhance members' capacity for effective management and sustainable development of coastal fisheries. This paper illustrates the activities undertaken by SPC since the past meeting (RTMCF3) and provides an opportunity to discuss how to improve assistance to members in this context.

Outcomes and recommendations:

Participants are invited to provide feedback on how can SPC activities in Coastal Fisheries & Aquaculture (CFA) policy, legislation and MCS&E be better integrated to enhance capacity for effective coastal fisheries management in your country/territory?

Enhancing capacity for effective coastal fisheries management

Background

1. Marine resources are the backbone of community economies in many parts of the Pacific and are a crucial component of coastal communities' food security. Fish is the primary source of animal protein for people in coastal areas, and is essential for nutritional well-being, particularly for children. It is feared, however, that coastal fisheries will not be able to meet future demands. Overfishing, driven by high prices, is depleting high value commodities, such as *bêche-de-mer*, while localised fishing pressure and land use changes have also contributed to decreased stocks of large seafood species, such as bump-head parrotfish, and other marine species, such as turtles.
2. The global COVID-19 pandemic is having a major impact across the globe and the effects on Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) have been severe. Lockdowns and travel restrictions implemented by countries have not only created logistical challenges for trade but have also resulted in closure of most of the tourism and associated industries, leaving thousands unemployed or in temporary employment. This has resulted in an increase in urban-rural migration as those affected no longer have the means to support themselves in the more expensive urban areas and return to their communities to fish and plant as a means of supporting food security and livelihood.
3. With the increased pressure on Pacific economies, it is a greater struggle for Governments to continue to effectively manage their coastal fisheries resources. This has resulted in existing management measures and strategies, such as *bêche-de-mer* harvest bans or controls, being loosened or in some cases removed in an effort to support community livelihood and increased export revenue. In many cases, focus has shifted from strict regulatory measures towards strategies that land more fish on the table (e.g. Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) Development Plans, Aquarium Trade Management Plans).
4. Over the last 18 months, despite the implementation of travel restrictions in the region, SPC has continued to provide advisory and technical support to members, albeit remotely, in order to enhance capacity for effective management and sustainable development of coastal fisheries. In particular, support is being provided in the review and development of policies, plans, laws and regulations, as well as through online training opportunities, including for the strengthening of monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) activities.

Activities Implemented (under COVID-19 travel restrictions)

Policy and management plans

5. Since the 3rd Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries (5-8 November 2019), SPC has been providing support in these broad focus areas:
 - a. Development of anchored FAD Development and Management Plans that are fundamental for developing sustainable national FAD programmes.

- b. Review of existing, and development of new, management plans and policies that support members in implementing measures for the sustainable management and development of coastal fisheries.
 - c. Provision of advice to members on specific issues pertaining to coastal fisheries management and development.
6. SPC has also been exploring the potential to develop and deliver trainings through virtual streams. As part of this work, an e-training workshop on fisheries management planning was developed, in partnership with the New Zealand Ministry of Primary Industries (NZ MPI). The first e-training workshop on “Developing Fisheries Management Plans” was successfully delivered to members from the Polynesian and Melanesian subregions, targeting government officials. The e-training workshop can be adjusted for a range of participants, across both government and non-governmental sectors, including fisheries staff, individuals from the private sector and civil society groups, as well as community-based fisheries management practitioners. The workshop materials are designed to offer learning opportunities to participants of all levels of experience.

Laws and regulations

7. Since the beginning of the pandemic, SPC has also been providing remote support to members in the review and development of laws and regulations for sustainable and equitable coastal fisheries management. In particular, the following activities have been carried out:
- a. Assistance was provided to fisheries agencies in drafting laws and regulations on coastal fisheries and aquaculture, via email and other available communication platforms.
 - b. A virtual workshop on gender and human rights in coastal fisheries legislation was successfully held in August 2020¹, followed by the publication of a [legislative review for 6 PICTs](#) and a [Policy Brief \(No 36/2021\)](#)².
 - c. More recently, to enhance the writing skills of government staff, SPC has started developing an online training course for legislative drafting in coastal fisheries³. The online course will provide tips and methods to draft laws, regulations and other supporting documents that are key to sustainable coastal fisheries management.
 - d. To increase awareness and facilitate access to relevant information, legal resources are also made available on [REEFLEX](#) – Pacific Law and Policy Database on Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture, including country profiles describing the current legal framework for coastal fisheries in each PICT.
8. To support implementation of the *Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling up Community-based Fisheries Management*, endorsed by Fisheries Ministers in 2021, SPC is also developing

¹ More information in SPC News 20 July 2020 (www.spc.int/updates/news/media-release/2020/07/at-virtual-meeting-7-pacific-countries-discuss-how-legislation) and in SPC Web Stories (www.spc.int/updates/blog/2020/08/online-regional-workshop-discusses-how-legislative-frameworks-address-gender).

² More information in D’Andrea A. and Graham A. *Human rights law in coastal fisheries and aquaculture in the Pacific*. In: SPC Fisheries Newsletter #164. Available at: <https://coastfish.spc.int/en/component/content/article/523>

³ More information in Sauerwein A., D’Andrea A. and Vapnek J. 2021. *How to draft effective coastal fisheries and aquaculture legislation*. In: SPC Fisheries Newsletter #164. Available at: <https://coastfish.spc.int/en/component/content/article/523>

a legal guide to identify enabling provisions for community-based fisheries management (CBFM). The guide is intended to assist PICTs fisheries agencies in implementing CBFM on a larger scale by assessing and improving their legislative framework. A variety of examples of legal provisions will be presented to illustrate national legal frameworks for CBFM in the Pacific and outside the region. The main objective of the guide is to allow PICTs to select among different approaches and develop a CBFM framework that is adapted to their national context.

Monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement

9. In line with the move to online learning and capacity building, SPC offers the following virtual courses, in partnership with the NZ MPI Te Pātuitanga program, the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) and other agencies:
 - a. Certificate IV in Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Compliance, accredited by the University of the South Pacific (USP) at Regional Level and delivered online as a full year course.
 - b. Professional Certificate for Community Compliance Officers, at national and regional level, delivered online and face-to-face as a 3-month course.
 - c. National Training Workshops run in partnership with the NZ MPI Te Pātuitanga program, tailored to each countries' needs and delivered virtually, including several practical market inspections.
 - d. Assistance with drafting and developing National Compliance Strategies and MCS&E Policies for coastal fisheries.
 - e. Assistance with drafting of Standard Operating Procedures for routine MCS&E work.
 - f. When requested, ongoing assistance mentoring support for fisheries officers as they pursue their career.

10. The most recent training workshops at the national level, held in Vanuatu and Kiribati, featured a move away from classroom-based theory training to more practical inspection and interview work. The shift to practical on-the-job learning has the advantage that participants are getting real life experience and the general public is seeing a far greater MCS&E presence in markets and seafood vendor stores. The practical exercises are supported by a general debriefing session after each inspection and a smaller but still important amount of theoretical online learning.

Question for breakout groups

How can SPC activities in Coastal Fisheries & Aquaculture (CFA) policy, legislation and MCS&E be better integrated to enhance capacity for effective coastal fisheries management in your country/territory?