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Co-establishing Sustainable National Community-based Fisheries Management Programs in the Pacific “Pathways-2 Project”

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Purpose of Brief

1. This information brief presents a profile of the ‘Pathways-2’ project, with the intent of informing CBFM stakeholders in the region of its thematic foci, institutional partnerships and implementation activities. We do so by invitation of The Pacific Community (SPC), so as to contribute to cultivating a broader understanding of what is being done, where and by whom in the Pacific coastal fisheries space.

Project profile

Full Title:	Coalitions for change in sustainable national CBFM programs in the Pacific (ACIAR project FIS/2020/172)
Key partners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development (MFMRD), Kiribati- Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR), Solomon Islands- Vanuatu Fisheries Department (VFD), Vanuatu- Wan Smolbag, Vanuatu- WorldFish, Solomon Islands- The Pacific Community (SPC)
Funding agency:	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
Duration:	2021-2025
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Project summary

2. Coastal communities in the region face a range of threats and opportunities. Principal among them is climate change, which is recognised as the single most significant threat to Pacific economies and societies. COVID-19 has further tested the resilience of Pacific Islands and Territories by compromising connectivity and capacity to absorb extreme weather events and other external shocks.
3. Securing the sustainable supply of coastal fish is recognised as a priority response to the region’s food security challenges. Effective and socially inclusive community-based fisheries management (CBFM) has shown to make significant contributions to the ability of communities to adapt to change and absorb shocks. This project contributes to this broad challenge by building on and leveraging over a decade of Australian investment in innovative CBFM research in development.
4. The project contributes to the ongoing evolution of CBFM by supporting the establishment of self-sustaining national CBFM programs, as part of a regional network of investments. Building on long term national partnerships, the project energises existing momentum of institutional change in the coastal fisheries sectors of Kiribati (KIR), Solomon Islands (SLB), and Vanuatu (VUT). Through partnership with SPC-FAME the project aligns with regionally coordinated CBFM initiatives and seeks to contribute to coherent and connected learning across the Pacific (Figure 1).

5. The overarching goal of the project is to co-develop self-sustaining national CBFM programs in KIR, SLB, and VUT. These programs seek to ensure all coastal communities in these countries become aware of CBFM principles, and that coastal fisheries are sustainably managed in a meaningful proportion of the coastlines so that they contribute to peoples' long-term food and nutrition security. To ensure continued growth of effective CBFM, the project strengthens both national agencies and community-based organisations. The project builds on a critical partnership with SPC-FAME across several areas of work, so as to integrate with regional SPC-led CBFM scaling initiatives and significantly contribute knowledge and lessons learned that can inform and strengthen CBFM across the Pacific.

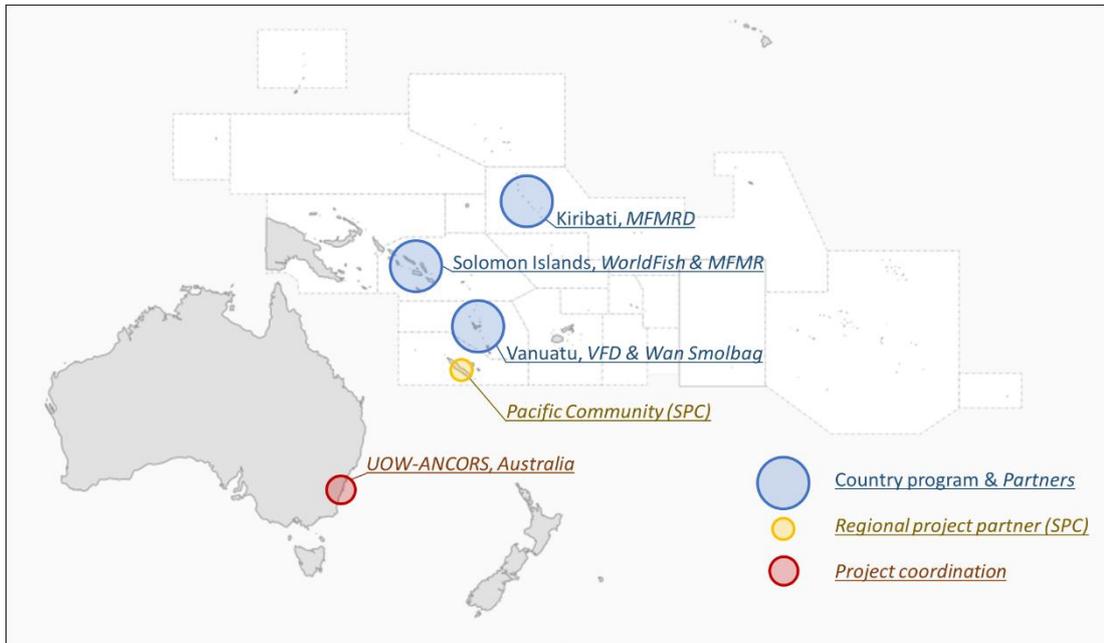


Figure 1. Map of project coverage, indicating implementing partnerships and project coordination.

6. The project builds on lessons learned and extensive networks of partnerships to implement activities that are centred on five main objectives. These have been developed to explicitly align and complement broader approaches for scaling CBFM being developed and applied:
 - I. Informing coastal communities on the importance of effective fisheries and resource management for food and nutrition security
 - II. Sustaining adaptive CBFM practice by engaging with coastal communities to scale CBFM innovations and support adaptation
 - III. Amplifying CBFM in the non-government sector by mobilising national agencies and non-government stakeholders to support and enable CBFM nationally
 - IV. Encouraging institutional change for CBFM in the government sector by strengthening national and provincial fisheries agencies
 - V. Energising regional CBFM networks by contributing to bodies of knowledge that will inform and influence CBFM regionally and globally

Implementation status

7. The project commenced in November 2021, with activities beginning in early 2022. Despite ongoing disruptions caused by COVID-19, several key areas of work that find home across the five project objectives are underway.

Scaling CBFM in KIR, SLB and VUT (Obj 1-4) & Regionally (Obj 5)

8. Efforts here are on co-developing and strengthening mechanisms that enable CBFM at greater scale. There is a particular focus on subnational programming for community support, and multi-community CBFM partnerships. Our approach includes the co-design of tools, instruments and procedures that improve (i) nationwide communication and information dissemination, (ii) resource management by coastal communities, (iii) engagement by non-government groups (non-state actors (NSAs) and their subset civil society organizations (CSOs)), and (iv) institutional capacity of national agencies as the most legitimate and overarching coordinating unit.
9. Within the implementation countries, the project is supporting the development of national CBFM scaling strategies, co-establishing CBFM tracking and monitoring systems (including establishing baseline status of CBFM coverage), co-developing platforms for information exchange and partnership-formation among domestic stakeholders, and facilitating reviews of fisheries regulations and policies. Management support to communities is being delivered at appropriate levels of governance to reflect scaled approaches, by for example utilising existing community networks.
10. Regionally, the project supports SPC-FAME's coordinating role around support for scaling CBFM in the Pacific. This follows members' endorsement of the Framework for Action on Scaling up CBFM in 2021. The project is assisting in, for example, the development of web-based information dissemination platforms and providing technical support to other PICTs interested in establishing CBFM scaling programs.

Tracking Change and Monitoring CBFM (Obj 2&4)

11. The project is refining fisheries monitoring methodologies developed in previous phases to expand the longitudinal evidence base for understanding changes to community-based fisheries. The monitoring program is a central part of the continued learning across the three project countries. National capacity to oversee and implement CBFM monitoring differs between the project countries so the project is reviewing how methodologies can be best suited as a part of national CBFM programs.
12. Analyses of patterns, and rates of change, in catch and trophic levels across sites need to inform adaptive management requirements by types of fisheries. As part of this, the project is collaborating closely with technical experts at SPC-FAME to co-develop an additional module in the existing *Ikasavea* online data management platform, specific for CBFM monitoring. This module integrates artificial intelligence processing technology to identify fish in photos and provide length-weight estimates. In so doing, it minimises time lags between data collection and feedback to national agencies and/or communities. Ultimately, this allows monitoring to more effectively inform and influence management measures in communities. In addition, the project is applying and co-developing various instruments to monitor CBFM change across a landscape, including [a guide for participatory review of CBFM plans](#), monitoring instruments for solar-powered freezer monitoring, and a province/island CBFM status survey tool.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) (Obj 1-5)

13. Under SPC's regional leadership, the project adopts a gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) perspective. Gender equality is based on intrinsic rights and is a core element of good governance. The many barriers to gender equality perpetuate poor representation of women in the formal economy, and result in a lack of women's [and other marginalized groups] voices at multiple scales of governance. Research and development activities that engage with gender-related expectations, barriers, and dynamics have shown to enable more effective management and potential benefits to a broader base.
14. The project's GESI focus concentrates on effective integration of GESI principles and approaches in scaling processes, and works closely with SPC gender and social inclusion experts. As part of information and communication strategies, the project is ensuring different outreach and dissemination approaches are socially inclusive; involving co-development of socially inclusive communication strategies and products (e.g. a quick guide for fisheries officers on how to be gender-inclusive in outreach and dissemination activities). In collaborating with CSOs the GESI component is engaging with national women's agencies, as well as women and youth groups, to develop joint activities to support their own CBFM activities. Finally, in increasing the GESI capacity of (sub)national staff and other CBFM-supporting institutions, the project provides training to subnational fisheries staff in KIR, SLB and VUT. Project staff are also working with communities to identify capacity needs of CBFM associations and marginalised groups for more inclusive CBFM.

Integrating Food and Nutrition Security Perspectives into CBFM Scaling (Obj 2)

15. In this component, the project is strengthening the interrelationship between CBFM and the role of fish within local and national food systems. This work augments ongoing research in sister projects funded by ACIAR. Activities will range from descriptions of dietary diversity to national and regional patterns in food trade, production, acquisition, and consumption, and the public health and environmental consequences of those food system activities. Providing evidence to understand the role, opportunities and risks of CBFM in food and nutrition security, can enhance cross-sectoral capacity (i.e. practice, and local and national policy) to apply nutrition sensitive food system approaches to combat the triple burden of malnutrition. Implementation of this component is planned for in the latter half of the project.

Civil Society Engagements (Obj 3)

16. The project supports opportunities that bring together NGOs and CSOs to share information, resources and experience, and build/strengthen collaborations. To catalyse CSO contributions to national CBFM programs, national agencies utilize such partnerships in their service delivery to communities. The project stimulates partnership-building momentum to, for example, explore new facilitation models with communities. This involves increasing capacity of community members to function as facilitators rather than outside extension officers, and can lead to new more community-embedded facilitation that may better steer co-management outcomes towards local needs. The project's partnerships with NSAs is allowing for joint CSO-national agency activities and is supporting independent CSO activities. The project, for example, supports means to disseminate messaging and information on CBFM through work with established CSOs in country.