

Institutional collaboration is key to regulating coastal fisheries in Kiribati

Kiribati made significant progress towards strengthening national coastal fisheries governance with the recent National Consultation Workshop on Kiribati Coastal Fisheries Regulations, organised under the Coastal Fisheries Governance Project funded by the New Zealand Government. The workshop was held in Tarawa on 8–9 May 2018, and was attended by approximately 30 representatives from Kiribati's Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development (MFMRD), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), Ministry of Women, Youth and Social Affairs (MWYSA), Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agriculture Development (MELAD), the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), a local fishers' association, donor partners, and a team from the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pathways Project. The workshop provided an important opportunity for key stakeholders to come together, share information and experiences, and explore opportunities for future cooperation.

Teue Baikarawa, Deputy Secretary of MFMRD, opened the meeting and declared the workshop a *key milestone* in working towards MFMRD's vision for sustainably managed coastal fisheries. She noted that coastal fisheries had been sustaining the livelihoods of the I-Kiribati people for generations, and acknowledged the great value of traditional marine ecological knowledge for resource management. The Deputy Secretary highlighted the role of population growth, difficulties in enforcement, the impact of climate change, and land-based marine pollution in the decline of coastal fisheries resources. She emphasised the need to prioritise effective coastal fisheries management and the value in bringing key stakeholders together to work towards a coherent and comprehensive approach.

Presentations by MFMRD and OAG set the scene by summarising current fisheries legislation for Kiribati and the content of the Draft Fisheries (Protection of Certain Marine Resources) Regulations. Other presentations followed, including ones by MELAD, which included aspects of the Environment Act relating to protected species and protected areas, as well as its experience with enforcement; MIA on the role of Island Councils and the process for making fisheries bylaws; and MWYSA on the potential for incorporated community organisations to be involved in community-based coastal fisheries management. Workshop attendees then engaged in lengthy and detailed discussions about the scope of potential coastal fisheries regulations and licensing, the level of government at which different issues were best addressed, technical aspects of coastal fisheries management, and the manner in which community-based efforts to manage local resources could best be supported in the regulations.

The workshop provided an invaluable opportunity for participants to broaden their understanding of the role and responsibilities of each of the government ministries, and to identify where these interests intersect and overlap in relation to coastal fisheries. Considerable progress was made in clarifying the required scope and content of the proposed coastal fisheries regulations, and the Coastal Fisheries Office



From right to left: Taati Eria, MFMRD Senior Fisheries Officer, was the workshop master of ceremony, under the guidance of Ian Bertram, SPC Coastal Fisheries Science and Management Adviser, and Teue Baikarawa, MFMRD Deputy Secretary. Image: Ariella D'Andrea

of MFMRD will continue to work closely with OAG, with support from SPC and the Pathways Project, in finalising the draft. The workshop also provided the foundation for ongoing coordination and collaboration between MFMRD and key ministries to ensure continuing support in the management of Kiribati's coastal fisheries for the benefit of current and future generations. In October, SPC will host staff from MFMRD and OAG on a two-week attachment to work on the draft regulations.

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