

Information Paper No. 12

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Coastal Monitoring Control, Surveillance and Enforcement (MCS&E) data collection

BACKGROUND

1. Good quality data and a reliable recording and storage system are fundamental for effective Monitoring Control, Surveillance and Enforcement (MCS&E) activities in coastal fisheries and aquaculture. While some countries do undertake MCS&E activities, these are generally not well recorded or reported¹ and this is an area where Pacific Community members could improve.
2. Having a record of when and where illegal activity is occurring enables fisheries officers to deploy scarce personnel and capital resources in those areas where maximum results can be achieved. Data from past boat and market inspections, creel surveys and other monitoring activities are among the key forms of information required for planning future MCS&E activities.
3. The following information and activities are examples of data that is helpful to record on a regular basis at the national level:
 - a) **A register of vessels and licences issued by the national government, provincial government or island council** including details of who the licence or permit is issued to, what it enables the licensee to do and vessel details if applicable. Ideally, if the licence or permit is linked to a vessel or a particular fishing ground or method this could be recorded as well.
 - b) **Boat, creel, fish vendors, market and export inspections**, including when, where and the name of the fisheries officer who did the inspection.
 - c) **Any warnings that may have arisen as a result of the inspection**, including the name of the person who has been warned and some detail on the nature offence.
 - d) **Any spot fines.**
 - e) **Any arrests, apprehensions or prosecutions that may have resulted from the inspection.**
 - f) **Any other information that may lead to better compliance in the future.**
4. Once there is a record of MCS&E inspections and information, the fisheries agency is able to track the effectiveness of its activities. The agency can then focus future MCS&E activity to where it is most required and also prioritise inspection points to maximise the use of limited resources.
5. At the regional level a '**Persons of interest**' register could be developed that can be shared with members of the Pacific Community who enter into a data sharing agreement. Such an agreement already exists in the Niue Treaty Subsidy Agreement (NTSA) to which several Pacific Community members are signatories.
6. Several coastal fisheries resources have become more valuable with increasing demand from Asia for their use in traditional medicine and as a delicacy for the growing middle class. As

¹ Coastal Fisheries Report Card 2017 highlighted that evidence of MCS&E activity in coastal fisheries management measures, is a data gap at the regional level.

demand grows and supply decreases, illegal operators can be expected to move from one country to another to attempt to maintain supply and market share. It would be very advantageous for countries to share information on warnings and prosecutions of illegal activity so that when one of these operators attempts to obtain a licence or permit in another country, they are not anonymous and their past records are revealed.

KEY ISSUES

7. A key component of any MCS&E data collection is to undertake awareness building and education at the community level. Coastal fisheries management is about managing people and their expectations; therefore, communities should be involved. A greater understanding of why there are rules such as size limits or nursery area closures usually results in improved compliance and ultimately more sustainable fishing in the future.
8. A key issue with recording and reporting MCS&E activity is to ensure it is ongoing and stored in a manner that is available to officers. Little is gained if one fisheries officer issues a warning to an offender for an illegal activity but other officers are not aware of that warning being issued. This highlights that it is important that each officer can analyse the data records *before* they undertake an inspection.
9. Countries that do collect MCS&E data should have a storage system – preferably a database that allows reports to be generated and this involves additional cost. The system could be as simple as an Excel spreadsheet, and suitability of each storage system will depend on the amount of data the country is collecting and having the staff capacity to enter the data.
10. To assist in improving MCS&E data at the national level and across the region, the Pacific Community can develop a web-based database that each country would be able to access. A country's information would remain its own unless a data sharing agreement was reached with another country and a reporting facility would be included. This would enable officers to print a list of prior warnings or arrests and would significantly improve MCS&E efforts in each country.
11. The Pacific Community can assist with training on how to improve MCS&E data collection and how to interpret the data in order to maximise the effectiveness of future operations.

CONCERNS

12. The key concern with collecting the data at the national level is the ongoing and extremely important issue of scarcity of human and financial resources. This type of data is fundamental for sound coastal fisheries and aquaculture management and required if the goals of the 'New Song for coastal fisheries' are to be achieved. If a reporting process is initiated and a data housing system established, then each country should try to ensure that they have adequate staff numbers to input data and generate reports on a regular basis.
13. In terms of ensuring that fisheries officers know about past offenders, the solution could be to have a mobile application and internet connection so that the officer can check records within the database. However, in cases where no internet connection is available the fisheries officer

could synchronise the list of offenders on their phone/tablet so that when an offender's name is entered, a warning of the previous offence is displayed.

14. There will be legal issues in developing a region-wide 'persons of interest' register and while these are not insurmountable, the sharing of such a register between countries will require a formal sharing agreement. This currently exists in the NTSA, and those members who are also signatories to that agreement may be able share data under that arrangement.
15. Otherwise a separate data sharing agreement can be developed specifically for coastal fisheries and aquaculture data that countries would be able to join when ready.

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION POINTS

- What MCS&E data is already being collected by your country and how is this stored?
- What assistance would be required to collect and store more MCS&E data for your country?
- What type of MCS&E data is considered a priority for your country?
- Do fishers and the public know the fisheries regulations as well as what is legal and illegal, and if not, how can this be improved?