

Coastal Fisheries Law and Policy Task Force

A Task Force on Coastal Fisheries Law and Policy was recently established under the Coastal Fisheries Working Group (CFWG)¹, which is coordinated by the Pacific Community (SPC). The aim of the Task Force is to advise the CFWG on options to improve the legal and policy frameworks for Pacific coastal fisheries and aquaculture management, in line with regional and global policy documents. The peculiarity of the Pacific context is the crucial role that is played by customary or traditional rights and practices related to coastal fisheries resources, as well as local tenure arrangements over inshore waters.

Regional policy documents adopted in 2015, namely the *Future of Fisheries – A Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries*² and *A new song for coastal fisheries – pathways to change: The Noumea strategy*³, highlight the need for Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) to have strong and up-to-date laws and policies to regulate coastal fisheries. Through these documents, PICTs have also committed to adopting policies and legislation that empower coastal communities to manage their fisheries resources by clearly defining their use rights.

These commitments are also reflected in global soft law instruments, such as the *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries*⁴ of 1995 and the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication*⁵ of 2015, both endorsed by the member states of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Against this backdrop, at the 47th Pacific Island Forum held in 2016, Pacific Island Leaders tasked SPC to coordinate with national fisheries agencies, regional agencies and community groups with a view to strengthening support and resourcing for coastal fisheries management. In response to this request, at its first meeting on 1 December 2017, the CFWG was established and the set-up of the Task Force on Coastal Fisheries Law and Policy was proposed. At its second meeting on 18 April 2018, the CFWG endorsed the creation of the Task Force.

Initially, the Task Force will be focusing on collecting relevant information and documentation from different sources in order to support the formulation of legal and policy advice as required by the CFWG. In particular, it will endeavour to identify constraints to the effective operation of law and policy and options to support community empowerment in coastal fisheries management in the Pacific context. It will also identify key indicators for the *Noumea strategy* outcomes, compile an inventory and repository of laws and policies, and map out the competence of different national and subnational authorities over coastal fisheries resources.



Comparing the enforceability of minimum fish size regulations to that of other types of regulations could be a piece of work to be undertaken by the Task Force (image: Ariella D'Andrea).

The Task Force is a small mix of legal and policy advisors, fisheries managers and field workers who are to be endorsed by the CFWG, and may include suitable national and international candidates. Members should be currently working in the Pacific Islands region or have significant experience in providing advice for law or policy formulation in coastal fisheries/resource management in the region. It is not intended to be a representative body but a tool for collaboration and information exchange. If you wish to help with any of the tasks and, most importantly have time to commit *pro bono*, please feel free to contact us.

For more information:

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¹ See article on p. 7, this issue.

² <http://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/xnc9f>

³ <http://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/b8hvs>

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/v9878e/v9878e00.htm>

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/i4356en/I4356EN.pdf>