

Securing sustainable small-scale fisheries

Small-scale fisheries (SSF) are of significant importance in the Pacific. Industrial tuna fisheries tend to attract more attention than SSF, however SSF make a larger contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) than all other capture-based fishing and aquaculture production sectors in 15 of the 22 Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) (Gillett 2009).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) recently co-hosted the Pacific Regional Consultation on the development of Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries. The guidelines seek to enhance the contribution of SSF to poverty alleviation, food security and economic growth. They are intended to support the enhancement of the sector's already important role and to contribute towards the eradication of hunger and poverty (FAO 2012).

What are small-scale fisheries?

FAO (2005) defines SSF as traditional fisheries involving fishing households (as opposed to commercial companies), using relatively small amounts of capital and energy, relatively small fishing vessels (if any), making short fishing trips that are close to shore and using fish mainly for local consumption. In practice, the definition varies between countries. SSF can be subsistence or commercial fisheries, providing fish for local consumption or export.

For this paper, we adopt the definition of SSF (also called artisanal fisheries) as including capture-based subsistence and commercial coastal and freshwater fishing.

The importance of small-scale fisheries

SSF generate income, provide food and make an important contribution to economic development. They employ over 90 per cent of the world's capture fishers and fish workers, about half of whom are women (FAO 2012). In addition to full- and part-time fishers and fish workers, occasional fishing often provides vital supplements to other livelihood activities in times of difficulties or as a recurrent side-line activity.

SSF in the Pacific are of great importance to the economies of all PICTs. They are an important source of livelihood, food security, employment and income, economic growth, recreation and culture.

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the fisheries sector's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the combined economies of the Pacific.

The significance of SSF to the aggregated economies of the Pacific Islands is well demonstrated in Figure 1. SSF accounts for 53% of fisheries' total contribution to GDP, which significantly outweighs the contribution from locally based industrial fleets (35%) and aquaculture (12%). Note that these figures exclude post-harvest activities.

SSF is the most important fishing sector, in terms of value added to the domestic economy, in 15 of the 22 PICTs. Figure 2A provides a breakdown of the contribution of different fisheries sectors to GDP by country.

Figures 2A and 2B display the importance of SSF to the economies of the 22 PICTs, with SSF contributing a larger proportion to GDP than any other capture-based fishing or aquaculture production sector in 70% of PICTs. Again, these figures exclude post-harvest activities.

Figure 3 presents the makeup of SSF by capture-based subsistence, coastal commercial and freshwater fisheries, which gives an indication of what subsector makes the most significant economic contribution. In a majority of cases, the largest subsector contributor to GDP is subsistence — fishing for household consumption — which is often undervalued because it is difficult to measure.

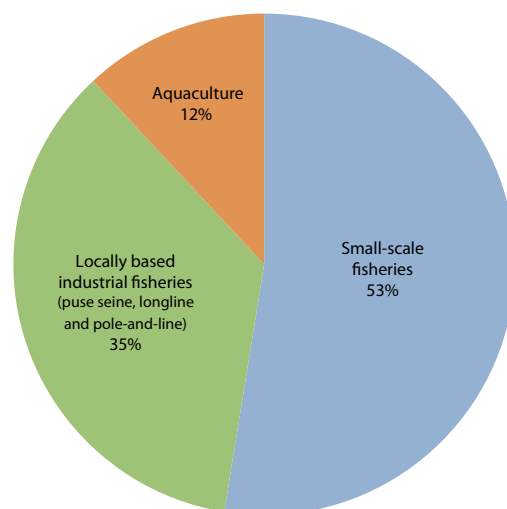


Figure 1. Contribution by fisheries sector to GDP of all PICTs (2007). Source: Gillett 2009.

SPC ACTIVITIES

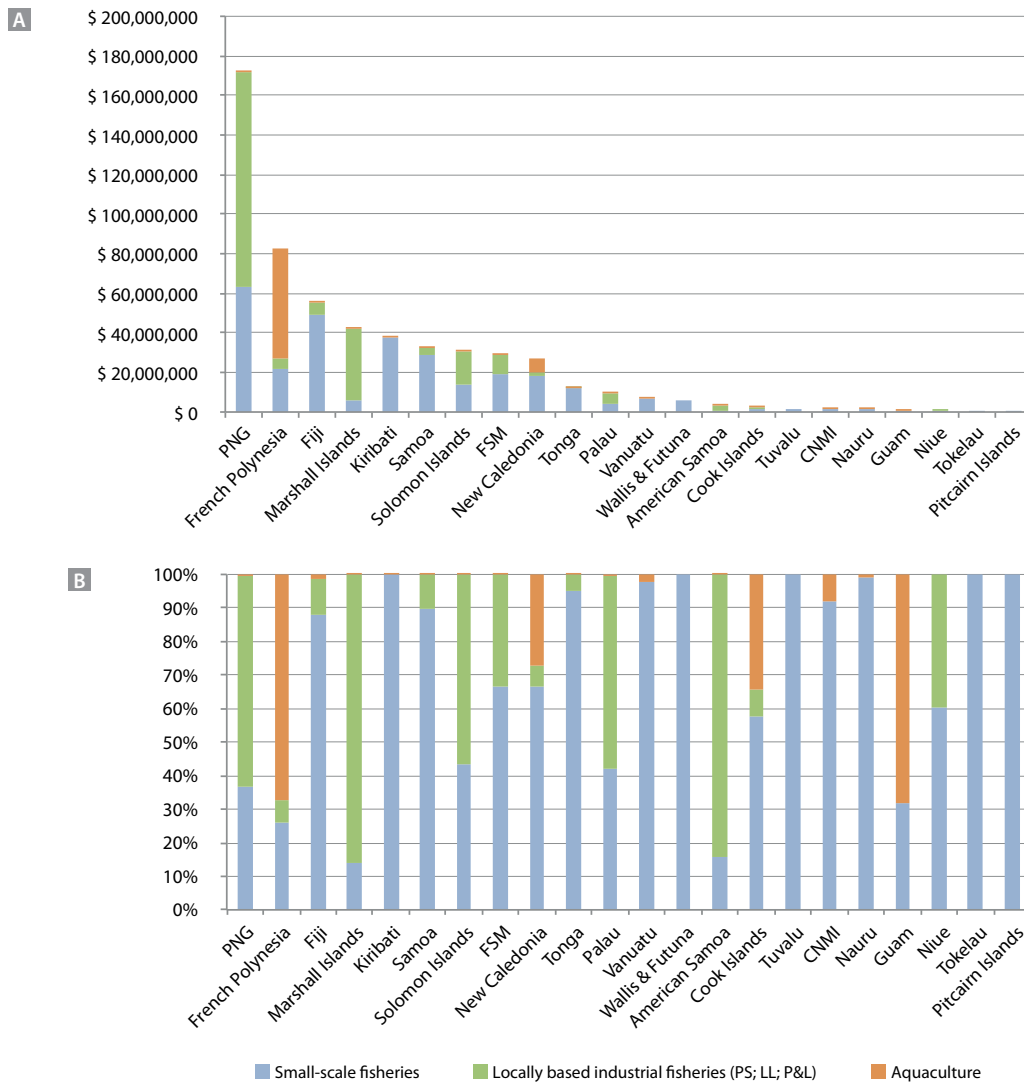


Figure 2. Composition of fisheries sector's contribution to GDP by country (2007).
Source: Gillett (2009).

PNG = Papua New Guinea; FSM = Federated States of Micronesia;
CNMI = Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands;
PS = purse-seine; LL = longline; P&L = pole-and-line.

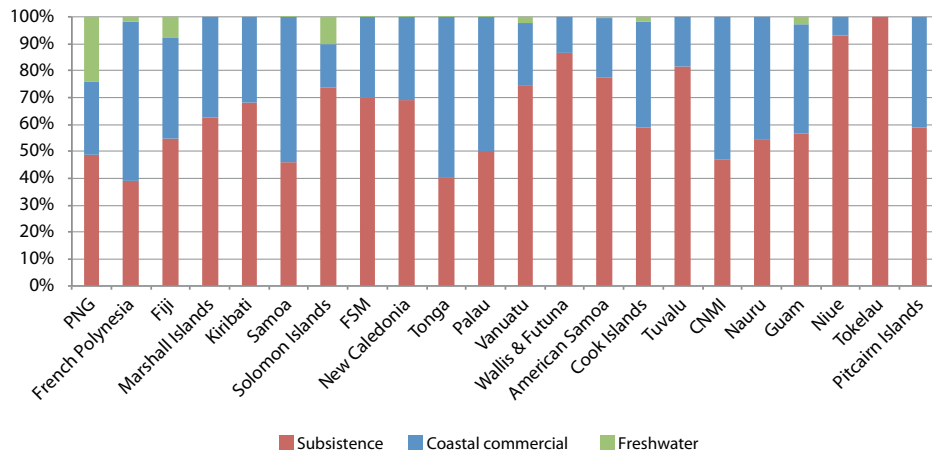


Figure 3. Composition of small-scale fisheries subsectors contribution to GDP by country (2007).
Source: Gillett 2009.

Batty (2012)¹ makes reference to the region's high dependence on fish for food with per capita fish consumption in every PICT being above the global average, and in some cases, amongst the highest in the world. He goes on to say that there are very high levels of participation in fishing in the region, with studies showing that nearly every family residing in a coastal village has someone involved in fishing.

Given the lack of alternative economic activities, the Pacific has a high dependence on SSF and the *Guidelines for Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries* will be an important tool to support the enhancement, governance and development of the sector.

The Pacific Islands Regional Consultation on the development of Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries

The 29th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) recommended that an international instrument, in the form of guidelines, be developed to complement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. The Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries are being developed through a consultative process involving governments, regional organisations, civil society organisations, and small-scale fishers, fish workers and their communities. The negotiated final draft guidelines are to be presented for adoption to the 31st Session of COFI in July 2014.

Accordingly, FAO is currently facilitating a number of activities that will provide important inputs into the guidelines development process and the design of the final instrument. As part of this process, a consultative workshop for the countries of the Pacific region was convened in Noumea, New Caledonia, on 12–14 June 2012: the *Pacific Regional Consultation on the development of Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries*. The event was hosted by SPC with the support of FAO.

Participation and scope

The consultation convened 31 government, industry and civil society representatives from 16 PICTs,² as well as two representatives from Timor Leste. Together with resource persons, the consultation brought together some 53 participants.

The meeting allowed for the sharing of policies and practices in support of small-scale fisheries in the region and thereby contributed to the development of the guidelines.

Objective and expected outputs

The objective of the consultation was to support the development of the guidelines by providing inputs and advice, both with regard to good policies and practices in the region and with respect to overall principles and

contents. The guidelines should become an integral part of ongoing governance and development processes in support of small-scale fisheries and the consultation promoted integration and cross-linkages between the guidelines, regional policy and action.

Outcome of the consultation

The consultation was structured around plenary presentations, discussions and working group sessions.

Participants stressed the importance of small-scale fisheries in the region as a contributor to poverty alleviation, food and nutrition security, and socio-economic development, and emphasised that the guidelines will be an important tool for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries governance and development.

Two working group sessions discussed three topics in parallel; the outcomes are summarised below:

Session 1: Responsible fisheries and sustainable development

1.1 Governance of rights, resource management and stewardship

- Customary right systems are a fundamental part of the fisheries governance system in the region and, in some cases, these rights have been enshrined in legislation to regulate use and management of resources.

¹ Batty M. 2012. Opening remarks to the Consultation on the development of Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries. 12 June 2012, Noumea: Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

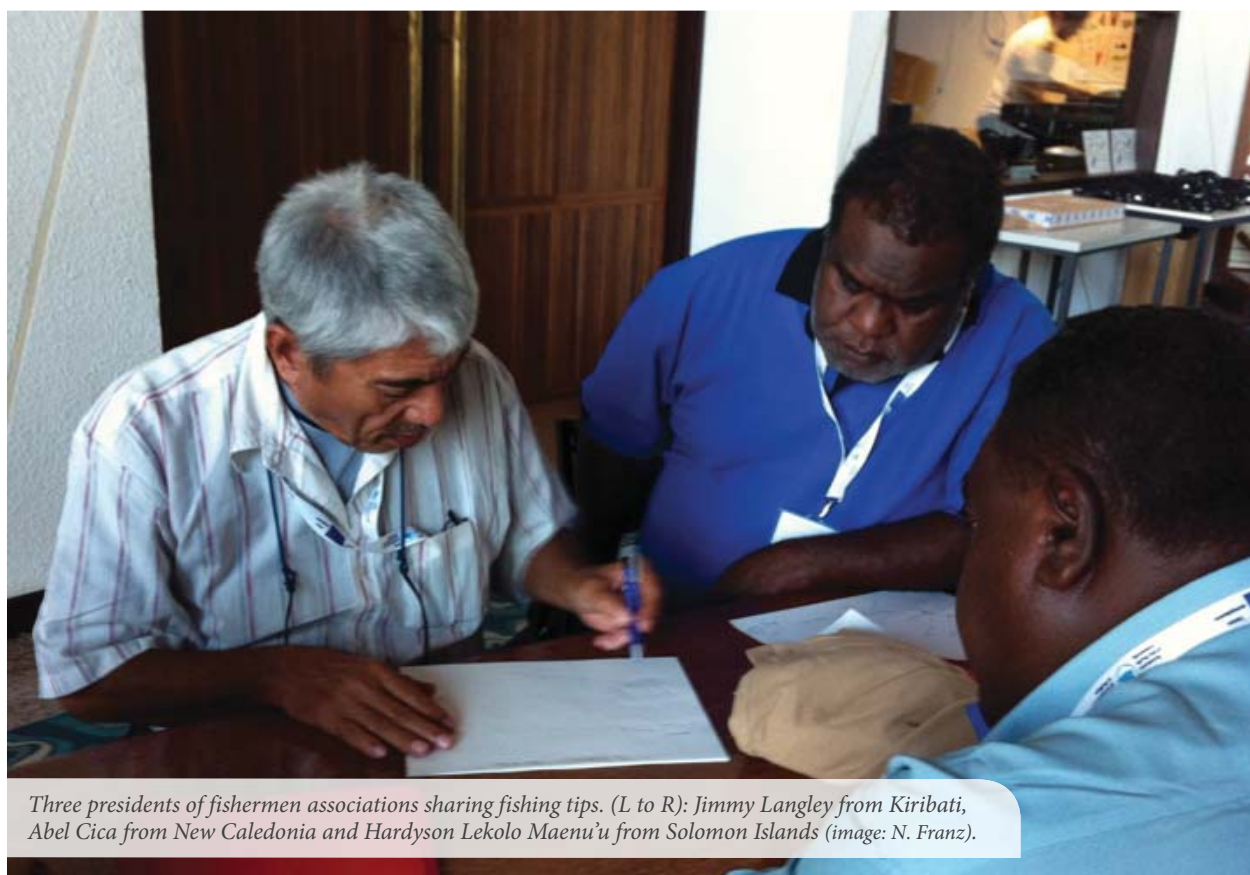
² American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna.

- The concept of “community” is associated with the livelihood dimension of the fishery and community rules are still very strong and respected.
- Two-way communication at all levels of governance and between resource users and fisheries administrations is essential to ensure sustainable fisheries management.
- Government has a role to play in providing infrastructure and enabling enforcement and compliance with certain obligations (e.g. sea safety equipment).
- The region has readily embraced the ecosystem approach to fisheries management and its principles are being applied in community-based management frameworks.
- The role of women and their participation in decision-making should be encouraged and supported.
- There is a need to promote the development of financial services that are tailored to SSF.

1.3 Post-harvest and value chains, decent work and employment

1.2 Social development and gender equality and equity

- In the Pacific region, fishing communities are well integrated and fishing is not considered a “last resort” activity, as it is in many other parts of the world.
- Mechanisms to protect SSF from external shocks should be explored, promoted and implemented (e.g. insurance schemes, disaster risk management and climate change proofing).
- Fishing is a respected and acknowledged profession in the region, not an activity of last resort.
- Fishermen associations, in collaboration with government and regional organisations, should play a proactive role in the commercialisation and marketing of fish that must include promotion of good food safety measures.
- There is a need to promote a “sea safety culture” in the capture sector.
- Elimination of child labour in SSF is important, although child labour is generally absent from SSF in the Pacific.
- Further consideration must be given to the transfer of generational knowledge given the cultural significance of SSF in the region.
- SSF stakeholders should enhance post-harvest technology transfer and seek the opening of new markets.



Three presidents of fishermen associations sharing fishing tips. (L to R): Jimmy Langley from Kiribati, Abel Cica from New Caledonia and Hardyson Lekolo Maenu'u from Solomon Islands (image: N. Franz).

Session 2: Ensuring an enabling environment and supporting implementation

2.1. Policy coherence, institutional coordination and collaboration

- There is a need to encourage the development of policies to protect SSF livelihoods, promote income opportunities and emphasise the socio-economic and cultural importance of SSF.
- SSF actors should develop and/or strengthen SSF associations/cooperatives to contribute to the sustainable management of the resources and strengthen their voice in decision-making.
- It is important to ensure that there is necessary support and capacity to effectively manage and enforce policies at appropriate level.
- The SSF guidelines should make stronger reference to subnational planning processes and legislation.

2.2. Research, information and capacity development

- The role of associations and bottom up-approaches to information and capacity development need to be highlighted.
- Stakeholders must be proactive to ensure that adequate training is tailored to their needs.
- It is important to emphasise and promote the use of technology and alternative methods for information dissemination and capacity development, including the use of mobile phones and the Internet.
- The guidelines should specify the need to create a variety of dissemination channels, including information sharing between non-government stakeholders and the use of training attachments and tutor exchanges between countries.
- Research, information and capacity development should be more prominent in the guidelines, as they are the basis for good management and development plans for SSF.

2.3. Implementation support and monitoring

- It is important to develop an efficient system for monitoring at the international level that avoids over-burdening countries with reporting requirements — regional organisations could play a role in facilitating this.

- Funding opportunities can be explored by building on the different issues included in the SSF guidelines.
- There is a need to identify priorities within the SSF guidelines and define milestones and time frames to achieve them.
- Regional platforms exist (e.g. island councils, Pacific Islands Forum Government Heads, Forum Fisheries Committee Ministers Meeting, SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting) and should be used to build awareness and political support for the SSF guidelines; SPC can play a role in this process.

Acknowledgements

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