

## Monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement training for community-based authorised fisheries officers in Vanuatu

*During the second half of 2021, community-based authorised officers from several provinces in Vanuatu attended three training workshops in coastal fisheries monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement (MCS&E). The workshops were held in Tanna (Tafea Province), Luganville (Sanma Province) and Port Vila (Shefa Province), Vanuatu's capital.*

Funded by the Pacific Community (SPC), the training workshops were conducted by Jeff Dunlop from the New Zealand Ministry of Primary Industries Te Pātuitanga Ahumoana a Kiwa (Partnerships in the Pacific) programme, with support from SPC's Coastal Fisheries MCS&E Adviser, Ian Freeman. Due to region-wide COVID-19-related travel restrictions, all three workshops were conducted virtually, using Zoom.

Two senior fisheries officers from the Vanuatu Fisheries Department (VFD) Compliance Section, Yakar Silas and Joby Siba, were on the ground to facilitate the training and practical exercises conducted during the workshop.

Several other members of VFD, along with members of the Vanuatu police force were also involved to support the training.

In-country, face-to-face capacity building is always the preferred approach for this type of training but due to COVID-related travel restrictions this has not been possible over the past two years. Being able to deliver such training virtually,

with the strong support of local facilitators, has provided very positive outcomes with some interesting lessons learned along the way (see Box 1 for additional information).

The community-based authorised officer (CBAO) training focused on improving officers' understanding of the current Vanuatu Fisheries Act and regulations, their powers as authorised officers under the act, and how enforcing regulations will help to conserve and manage Vanuatu's coastal marine resources.

During the training, practical exercises included undertaking market and fish vendor inspections so that CBAOs received genuine workplace experience, along with structured learning lessons in basic MCS&E requirements. The training also included the use of the Authorised Officer Incident Report Book for fisheries-related inspections. This incident book was developed by the New Zealand Te Pātuitanga Ahumoana a Kiwa programme and the Pacific Community's Coastal Fisheries team for the Pacific Islands region. It provides a step-by-step guide for officers

Some of the AFO participants during the training at the Vanuatu Fisheries Training Centre in Luganville, Santo. (Image: ©Yakar Silas)



in the field, and ensures essential information and evidence is recorded to support a case file when an offence has been detected. Recording relevant information related to the offence then enables senior management officials to make an informed decision as to an appropriate enforcement outcome. This could include issuing a warning, fixed penalty notice, or even prosecution.

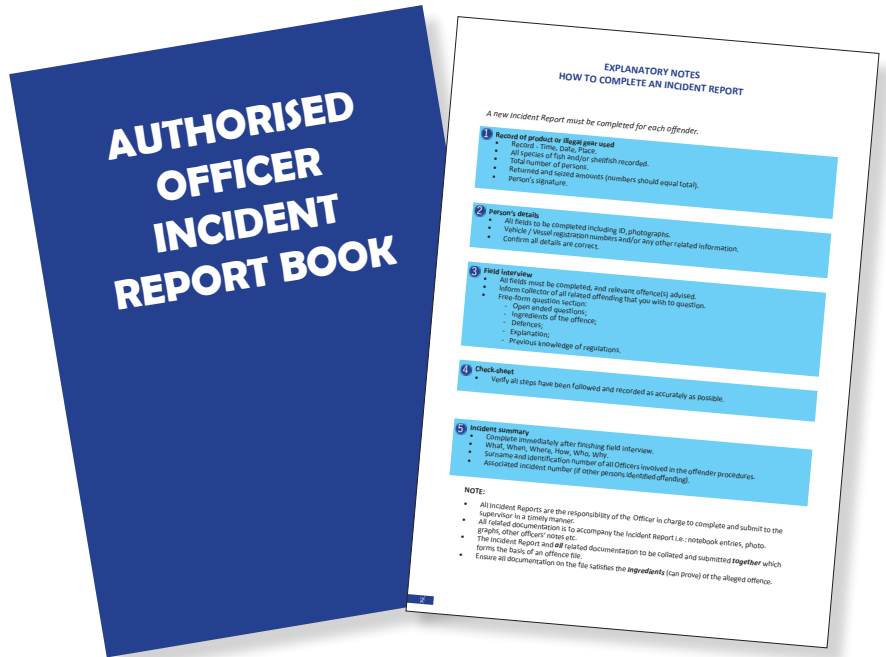
The incident book has proven popular with fisheries officers in several Pacific Island countries for its ease of use, and has given them confidence when dealing with minor offences detected under their coastal fisheries laws.

As part of the training sessions, the incident book was loaded onto computer tablets and given to each CBAO, along with instructions on how to enter the incident book steps directly into the tablets. This will ultimately enable CBAOs to conduct their inspection work with confidence, record the required information, and send the report directly to senior management in VFD.

Elsie Jimmy, a participant from Luganville said, “The KoBo Collect Application installed on the tablet that we have received during training will make life easier for us.<sup>1</sup> Once we can collect data outside in the field, we can send it directly on the spot to the office in Port Vila, breaking down that distance barrier. Making use of technology with what



Illegal confiscated product taken from markets in Port Vila. (Image: ©Yakar Silas)



The Authorised Officer Incident Report book and its explanatory notes.

we already have, such as tablets and android mobile phones, is the way forward in conserving and preserving our marine resources.”

CBAOs learned a lot about how the current Fisheries Act and regulations will help them conserve and preserve the currently endangered marine species in their communities, such as green snail, trochus, sea turtles, dolphins, rock lobsters, coconut crabs, conch shell and many more.

“The Authorized Fisheries Officer training this year will help me and my community, village and island to conserve and preserve our turtles, trochus and fish stocks in the years to come, as I now know that there are laws that prohibit the killing of turtles and harvesting of conch and trochus, which are prevalent in my community.”

“After this training I will go back and make sure that everyone is aware of the regulations and penalties involved if anyone decides to look over the regulations,” Wanga Taliban said. Wanga is from Craig Cove on Ambrym Island.

Vanuatu has 72 area councils, and the current government policy is to decentralise its services to all area councils. The appointment of CBAOs comes as part of this decentralisation policy and provides a way forward for managing and monitoring marine resources in communities or area councils.

“The government, through the VFD, will continue to train and appoint more community-based authorised officers throughout Vanuatu to work under the area councils, to make sure that we have good management and monitoring of our marine and coastal resources for us to enjoy, now

<sup>1</sup> A web application developed in Vanuatu, which allows the incident book to be used on a tablet or smartphone..





Field work included visits and controls at fish selling locations. (All images: ©Yakar Silas)



## Box 1: Tips for virtual training workshops

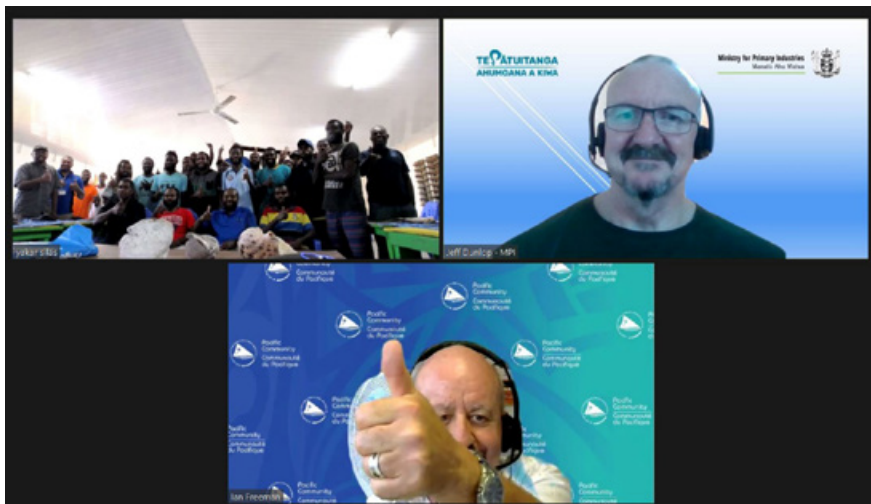
- Having in-country-based “on-the-ground” facilitators was a huge help in the training process, and produced some interesting learning outcomes as we progressed over the many days of training. Following the steps below will assist with the virtual training process.
- Make sure facilitators have a Zoom licence, otherwise you have to reconnect to a new Zoom link every 45 minutes.
- If the training is being conducted in a local language, make sure you have translators available, particularly if you are expected to provide feedback on general comments.
- Some basic training in facilitating a Zoom meeting may be useful for facilitators, such as aligning the camera, so that it shows external participants what is being presented, or a view of participants in the training room.
- Ensure that all participants are aware that many external sounds are transmitted via the microphone so the sounds of dogs barking, or roosters crowing can be very distracting.

and for our kids to enjoy in the future,” said VFD’s Principal Monitoring, Control and Surveillance officer, Yakar Silas.

“Community-based AFOs, basically are the eyes and ears of the Vanuatu government in the islands, and they make sure that all the marine-regulated species, like sea turtles, sea cucumbers, rock lobsters, coconut crabs and trochus shells are harvested according to the regulated size limits and quotas. Not only that, they represent VFD in their community,” Silas added.

Currently, CBAOs are located in 29 council areas in the provinces of Tafea, Shefa, Malampa, Sanma, Penama and Torba. These CBAOs have all participated in MCS&E training. In 2022, SPC and Te Pātuitanga will continue the CBAO training for an additional 22 council areas located in these same provinces, and Efate. The ultimate target is for there to be three CBAOs for each council area, and this is planned to happen by the end of 2022.

SPC will also provide high-visibility vests and caps to CBAOs, along with copies of the incident report book for new CBAOs to record the details of their inspections. The delivery of these items to Vanuatu has been delayed due to COVID-19-related issues, although delivery is expected to occur in January 2022.



Tanna training participants and the trainers. (Zoom screenshots by Jeff Dunlop)

### For more information or to request similar training for your country:

**Ian Freeman** Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Monitoring and Surveillance Specialist, SPC  
[ianf@spc.int](mailto:ianf@spc.int)

**Jeff Dunlop** Pacific Advisor – Fisheries MCS and Enforcement, NZMPI  
[jeff.dunlop@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:jeff.dunlop@mpi.govt.nz)