



<b>Agenda Item:</b>	5.b
<b>Paper No:</b>	WP3
<b>Title:</b>	Progress on Scaling-up of Community-Based Fisheries Management in the Pacific

**Summary:**

At the Third Regional Fisheries Ministerial Meeting in August 2022<sup>1</sup>, the Pacific Community (SPC) was tasked with providing annual updates on the implementation of the Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling-up CBFM (2021-2025), through the Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting (RFMM).

Next year (2025) marks the final year of the current CBFM Framework for Action, aligned to the New Song for Coastal Fisheries. This paper provides an update on the implementation of the Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling-up CBFM (2021-2025) over the 3-year period since its inception, and sets out recommendations to Ministers for future work based on the high demands expressed by member countries and territories.

**Recommendations:**

Ministers are invited to:

- i. Note and acknowledge the considerable progress made in the three years of implementing the Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling-up CBFM (2021-2025) by member countries, territories and partners.
- ii. Note and acknowledge the lessons learned, challenges still faced, and progress still required, with the implementation of the Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling-up CBFM (2021-2025).
- iii. Endorse the extension of the implementation of the Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling-up CBFM for another five years (2026-2030) to continue critical technical support to member agencies, complete outstanding tasks, and address emerging demands on scaling up CBFM.
- iv. Call on development partners to continue and increase funding for the scaling-up of CBFM in the Pacific, recognising it as fundamental and the most viable means to improve coastal fisheries sustainability, strengthen fish-based

<sup>1</sup>[Statement of Outcomes from the RFMM3 \(Outcome 18\)](#)

livelihoods and food security, and achieve international conservation commitments.

- v. Call on members, development partners and CBFM practitioners to accelerate progress on GEDSI in CBFM.
- vi. Task SPC to work with members, local communities, civil society organisations, and other non-state actors actively involved in the scaling-up of CBFM to review the Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling-up CBFM in 2026, with the outcome of the review to be presented back to RFMM.

## Background

1. For Pacific people, the coastal food system is fundamental for supporting their livelihoods, nutrition and health, culture, and economies. Coastal fisheries are at the heart of the coastal food system along with locally grown Pacific fruits and vegetables. However, it is only in the last 30 years or so that fisheries policies in the Pacific Islands region have come to explicitly recognise the significant contributions of coastal fisheries, and only in the last decade has this translated to the need for a different approach to management, underpinned by community-based fisheries management (CBFM).
2. The Future of Fisheries Roadmap<sup>2</sup> and the New Song for Coastal Fisheries<sup>3</sup> provide the regional context for managing coastal resources in ways that are underpinned by CBFM. The need to scale-up CBFM has led to the development and subsequent approval and endorsement of the Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling up CBFM: 2021 – 2025<sup>4</sup> (*hereafter referred to as CBFM Framework for Action*) by the Heads of Fisheries and Fisheries Ministers, respectively. At the Third Regional Fisheries Ministerial Meeting in August 2022<sup>5</sup>, the Pacific Community (SPC) was tasked with providing annual updates on the implementation of the CBFM Framework for Action to the Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting.
3. Next year (2025) marks the final year of the current CBFM Framework for Action. It is therefore timely to now share with the Regional Fisheries Ministers the Pacific Islanders' experiences in CBFM that was shared by the CBFM practitioners from across the region at the 'Regional CBFM Scaling-up workshop' held in Nadi in April 2024. The workshop's main objective was to report, reflect on, and learn from the diverse implementation experiences thus far of the CBFM Framework for Action, and to look forward to what is needed into the future. The workshop involved over 60 PICTs participants including representatives from local communities, member fisheries agencies, civil society, universities, donors and non-government organizations; all of whom had in common a close involvement in implementing the CBFM Framework for Action.

## Progress on implementation of the CBFM Framework for Action

4. The CBFM Framework for Action has effectively guided and coordinated appropriate and tailored support to member countries and territories (PICTs), taking into account the very different contexts of each and the disparity in 'maturity' of member CBFM programmes between them. Progress overall has been notable, and numerous lessons learned, though significant gaps still remain.

### a) Objective 1: Information and awareness

*The availability of information to local communities and other decision-makers is key to management decision-making. Members have been supported to develop information strategies where those are lacking.*

- Three (Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna) have completed and trialled information strategies in the past three years and four more are imminent or in progress.
- Several members have dedicated information or communications staff, a recommended approach.

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

<sup>3</sup> <https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/q4ntz>

<sup>4</sup> <https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/yr5yv>

<sup>5</sup> [Statement of Outcomes from the RFMM3 \(Outcome 18\)](#)

- Mechanisms exist in most members for ensuring feedback from fishing communities and input into policy development, but require further development in more than half of the members.
- Member forums for community representatives to share experiences and interact with government and other stakeholders have been a successful approach in two members (Tonga, Vanuatu), and need to be explored by the other members. Networks are also very important, if strategic.
- Engaging provincial fisheries staff has been integral to distributing information and raising awareness in larger members. Being more directly involved in collaborations with communities, provincial fisheries staff are important connection points between communities and member agencies; a critical mechanism for larger members with hundreds or thousands of communities, rather than tens.
- Trials are underway in several members to track the delivery of information programmes and tools as well as find and monitor indicators of positive impact.
- Traditional environmental, social, and fisheries knowledge has been shown to be very important and complements traditional governance processes that contribute to sustainable fisheries practices and management. This community strength should be increasingly considered in management.
- Development of classic (radio, posters, pamphlets, theatre) and new (social media, mobile phones) tools are under way and solutions have been demonstrated that can suit the prevailing diversity of contexts.

**b) Objective 2: CBFM Site coverage**

*Supporting individual or clusters of communities to carry out structured management planning and implementation is an optimum approach where members have adequate resources and relatively small or logistically accessible geographies. More than 600 communities are documented to be actively receiving such support.*

- Certain PICTs have made notable progress in reaching the majority of communities to support village-based management, resulting in locally driven and legally supported management plans. Samoa and Tonga are two examples, while others, such as Tuvalu, Republic of Marshall Islands have strategies in place that may achieve this within the next 2-3 years.
- Larger members have had mixed progress. Some have made substantial progress (Kiribati, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and the Cook Islands) but even so, they and the rest are still challenged to facilitate and maintain meaningful numbers of village-based management plans. The creation of appropriate enabling environments—provision of information to all, strengthening grassroot networks, and ensuring customary tenure is protected—remain critical.
- Data from two of the largest members (Vanuatu and Solomon Islands) suggests that communities have been implementing their own fisheries management rules based on traditional knowledge, tenure and governance without direct support. Maximizing the opportunities that tenure rights afford communities to define local rules and exclude external threats and destructive fishing is a very important strategy.
- For most members, site-based CBFM contributes to the international conservation targets to achieve 30% of effectively conserved coastal areas by 2030. To achieve and secure this

target, the conservation sector (domestically and internationally) should be encouraged to support these efforts.

**c) Objective 3: Policy and legislation**

*The Framework calls for enabling legislation that recognises and protects inshore fisher user rights and promotes CBFM, as well as relevant policies on CBFM-scaling and information strategies.*

- A majority of members have at least basic legislation to support coastal fisheries management including community approaches, and the few that do not have been encouraged to perform reviews of laws and regulations, or have recognised non-legal frameworks.
- Two (Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) members have endorsed and are implementing a CBFM strategy. While five (Tuvalu, Tonga, Nauru, Fiji, Samoa) members will have completed strategies that support scaling of CBFM by the end of 2024 and a similar number are interested in developing or adapting existing strategies within the next few years. Three members (Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Wallis and Futuna) have developed and tested information strategies and two members (Tonga, Tuvalu) are in progress. In some members such strategies or basic action plans will need to be developed at the local government level (e.g., provinces, states).
- The approaches to monitoring, control and surveillance were highlighted as needing increased attention and where necessary, legal support for the development and implementation of local and member legislation or policy.

**d) Objective 4: Organisational and individual capacity**

*Funding, staffing and the capabilities of the staff and communities involved are central to the success of coastal fisheries management and CBFM support.*

- At least five PICTs have increased numbers of full-time staff working on CBFM and an additional three PICTs have allocated more part-time staff. In the larger members provincial or island staff are not increasing. Remaining PICTs should consider increasing their staffing dedicated to coastal fisheries management/CBFM, particularly at the provincial or island level.
- Funding for CBFM at all levels continues to be inadequate in most PICTs and this is of particular concern in the very largest members that have thousands of coastal communities.
- Some progress has been shown on monitoring and tracking of CBFM implementation and impact, but needs to be further reviewed and supported.
- Members have identified a range of key capacity needs, seven PICTs stated MCS and enforcement as a priority and five prioritised support for information and awareness. Other priorities included policy, site-based planning, and provincial capacity and inclusivity assessments.

**e) Objective 5: Ecosystem and inclusive approaches**

*Communities face a number of threats that are outside of their control, and quite often outside of the control of fisheries agencies as well. Aside from the consensus on the existential threat posed by climate change other major threats have been identified that require whole of government consideration and action.*

- With coastal fisheries an essential part of the coastal food system, taking an ecosystem approach to managing local fisheries is essential. Community-based management has benefits across the coastal food system, not just for coastal fisheries.
- Members face a number of threats to the coastal ecosystem, but the nature of these depends on the member and geographical circumstances. Impacts from land-based activities, such as mining and logging, are severe in the larger islands and run-off of sewage, nutrients and pollutants is a widespread issue.
- Destruction of habitats (coral, mangroves) as well as unsustainable development of infrastructure in coastal areas need better collaboration with other government ministries and stakeholders.
- Garbage and rubbish entering the sea from outside the region, and at lower levels from coastal communities and through rivers are an issue across the region.
- Progress with social inclusion and gender are slow, but improving, but only three members have completed assessments and strategies so far, although most PICTs have implemented some approaches that increase the participation and role of women, youth, people living with disabilities and other marginalised group.

#### **Continued relevance of the CBFM Framework for Action**

5. The broad range of CBFM practitioners and member representatives who participated in the regional CBFM workshop in April 2024, expressed unanimous support to continue using the CBFM Framework for Action as the prime reference document guiding CBFM scaling work across the Pacific into the next 5 years (2026-2030). The CBFM Framework for Action, in its current form, was assessed to be fit-for-purpose in its function to support the diverse range of CBFM member programmes in the region, both new and well-established programmes, those serving a handful of communities, or those serving thousands. Ensuring long-term and further spread of sustainable practices, was noted to be contingent on continued resourcing, widespread and consistent information dissemination, appropriate technical support, and enabling policy environments; all of which are outlined as core elements in the CBFM Framework for Action. It was agreed that amendment to the CBFM Framework for Action could be considered following a proposed review in 2026, allowing for sufficient experience and time in implementation to meaningfully inform that review.