

Workshop Information Paper 3

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MCS&E data collection and storage

The Workshop on
Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Monitoring, Control, Surveillance and Enforcement
is organised with the support of the Government of Australia and
the New Zealand-funded Coastal Fisheries Governance Project.



Background

1. Under the project “Improving fisheries food security and sustainable livelihoods for Pacific Island communities” funded by New Zealand Government MFAT the Pacific Community is to develop a dedicated database for Monitoring Control, Surveillance and Enforcement (MCS&E) activities in the world of coastal fisheries and aquaculture.
2. Good quality data and a reliable recording and storage system are fundamental for effective MCS&E activities in coastal fisheries and aquaculture. While some countries and territories undertake MCS&E activities these are generally not well recorded or reported¹ and this is an area where Pacific Community members could improve.
3. 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. Indeed, data from past boat and market inspections, creel surveys and other monitoring activities are amongst the key information required when planning future MCS&E activity.
4. The following information and activities are examples of data that are helpful to record on a regular basis at the national level:
 - a. **A register of vessels and licenses issued by the national government, provincial government or island council** including details of who the license or permit is issued to, what it enables the licensee to do and vessel details if applicable. Ideally, if the license or permit is linked to a vessel or a particular fishing ground or method this could be recorded as well.
 - b. **Boat, creel, fish vendor, market and export shipment inspections** – including when, where and the name of the fisheries officer who did the inspection. Systematic and thorough shipment inspection are required as part of CITES requirements for CITES listed species (e.g. corals, giant clams, some sea cucumbers species)
 - c. **Any warnings that may have arisen as a result of the inspection** – including the name of the person who is warned and, some detail on of 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**
5. Once there is a record of MCS&E inspections and information the fisheries agency is able to track the effectiveness of its MCS and enforcement activities. The agency can then focus future

¹ Coastal fisheries Report Cards in 2017 & 2018 highlighted that evidence of MCS&E activity in coastal fisheries management measures is a data gap at the regional level.

MCS activity to where it is most required and also prioritise inspection points to maximise the use of limited resources.

6. At the regional level a “**Persons of interest**” register could be developed that can be shared across those members of the Pacific Community who enter into a data sharing agreement. Such an agreement already exists in the Niue Treaty Subsidy Agreement to which several Pacific community members are signatories².
7. Several coastal fisheries resources have become more valuable with increasing demand from Asia for use in traditional medicine and as a delicacy for the growing middle-class population. As 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 license or permit in another country, they are not anonymous and their past records are revealed.

Key Issues

8. A key component of any MCS&E data collection is to undertake awareness building and education at the community and political levels. Coastal fisheries management is about managing people and their expectations; therefore communities should be involved. 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.
9. A key issue with recording and reporting MCS activity is to ensure it is ongoing and stored in a manner that is available to MCS&E 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.
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 sharing agreement with other countries was established and a reporting facility would be included. This would enable officers to print a list of prior warnings or arrests and would improve MCS&E efforts in each country significantly.
11. The Pacific Community can assist with training on how to improve MCS&E data collection and how best to interpret the data to maximise the effectiveness of future MCS&E operations.

Progress to date

² The Niue Treaty Subsidy Agreement is designed to enhance active participation by signatory countries in cooperative surveillance and enforcement activities, thereby significantly assisting in combatting IUU fishing.

12. In 2018, SPC sent out a survey to ascertain how many Pacific Community members collect coastal fisheries and aquaculture (CFA) MCS&E data and what type is collected. The survey also asked how many Pacific community members would utilise a regional database for MCS data should one be developed in the near future.
13. Seven (7) countries replied to the survey and the responses varied on the amount of MCS&E data that is collected, ranging from none to comprehensive data collection systems. Respondents generally did not have electronic data storage systems and were unanimous in their support for a regional MCS&E database.
14. SPC is currently working with Tonga to progress the development of a regional database along with how it should be developed to maximise its usefulness to individual countries and across the wider region.

Summary

15. The collection and storage of MCS&E data is fundamental to sound coastal fisheries and aquaculture management and required if the goals of the “New Song for coastal fisheries” are to be achieved. SPC would welcome the opportunity to commence work with other countries that may be interested in participating in a trial database development pilot study.