

Supporting fishers' mechanical skills in Tuvalu

In December 2015, 24 members of the Funafuti Fishermen's Association participated in the Outboard Motors Servicing and Maintenance Training Workshop in Funafuti, Tuvalu. The workshop was jointly organised by the Tuvaluan government and the European Union (EU)-funded Development of Tuna Fisheries in the Pacific (DevFish2) project, which is implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC).



“The Tuvalu National Master Plan for Fisheries Development identifies training in outboard maintenance for local artisanal fishers to be a priority. It is very welcoming that the EU DevFish project can offer support in implementing this priority in the 2015 annual work plan,” remarked the Acting Director of Fisheries, Fulitua Tealei, at the workshop's opening.

Ms Tealei stated that small-scale fisheries is a lifeline for local communities in Tuvalu. “Artisanal fishermen provide much of the fish supply for food security for the island population. Further, the artisanal fisheries sector is the predominant sector in which most of the locals on atolls like Funafuti engage in self-employment, and such training ensures the sector is self-sustainable”.

The two-week training began with three days of classroom sessions that covered topics such as safety at sea, outboard motor operations, troubleshooting, and maintenance. These were then followed up with practical sessions.

The training was led by Ioapo Tapu, the Yamaha outboard motor engine dealer in Tuvalu, who is a certified marine engineer whose business includes outboard engine repairs and maintenance. Ioapo conducted the training in the local language to ensure that all participants could easily understand and “digest” the information in the training.

However, a major problem is the short supply of engine parts in Tuvalu. Anticipating this, some spare parts were bought at ASCO Motors in Suva, Fiji, and brought to the workshop.

“The local population on Funafuti relies on these fishermen for food, and for most of these fishermen, fishing is their primary source of income. Therefore, their safety when going out to sea is critical,” explained SPC's DevFish2 Officer, Jonathan Manieva. Manieva added that in the Pacific, “Many lives have been lost at sea in small fishing craft, and very often due to engine malfunctions. The mechanical skills that trainees have acquired will enable them to undertake regular servicing and minor repairs to their outboard engines, which will help them return safely from their fishing trips.”

To further reinforce safety-at-sea practices, 30 emergency grab bags were provided to the Funafuti Fishermen's Association. The emergency grab bag concept ensures that fishers and small craft operators have convenient access to basic sea safety equipment that is easy to carry and transport onto small vessels. Each bag contains a personal locator beacon, strobe light with batteries, compact medical kit, a signalling mirror and whistle, a rescue laser and sea rescue streamer, a marine radio with support pack, a sea anchor, two manual inflatable lifejackets, a directional compass and two emergency thermal blankets.

For more information:

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