

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

EIGHTEENTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES
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PROPOSAL FOR AN INTEGRATED SPC INSHORE RESOURCE ASSESSMENT PROJECT

(Paper prepared by the Secretariat)

INTRODUCTION

Fisheries in South Pacific island countries are experiencing an unusual period of rapid growth stimulated by the twin forces of accelerating economic development and increasing local consumption. As a result, officials responsible for management and development of fisheries are faced with difficult problems of resource assessment. Solutions are required, both to plan future development and to evaluate the status of existing fisheries. The potential yield of new fisheries must be estimated and expansion of existing fisheries must be balanced against the imperative of stock conservation. If the full economic benefits of fisheries development are to be comprehensively evaluated, impacts of increased commercial fishing pressure on stocks supporting subsistence fishermen must also be predicted. In short, fisheries development has advanced beyond the point of simply increasing capabilities for harvesting and processing.

Fisheries officers often find themselves unable to resolve these problems because they lack basic fisheries data. Furthermore, reliable advice on resource assessment is often nonexistent or inaccessible. Paradoxically, there is also a bewildering proliferation of information from other parts of the world, a confusing range of methods with varying applicability for evaluating fisheries resources, and a number of institutions prepared to undertake field research projects in the SPC region.

PROPOSAL

To establish an Inshore Resource Evaluation Project which will assist countries in developing national capability in the general area of coastal fisheries resource evaluation. As proposed, the project will draw on the considerable scientific and technical expertise of the Coastal Fisheries Programme and the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme to meet its objectives.

OBJECTIVES

The general objectives of this project will be: (1) co-ordination and liaison between national officials, SPC staff and outside research organisations; (2) evaluation, summarization and communication of relevant fisheries information from within and outside of the region; (3) assistance in design and implementation of appropriate programmes of resource surveys, fisheries data collection, and data analysis; (4) training in survey design, data collection and analysis.

IMPLEMENTATION

The SPC currently provides services in all of these areas, and the proposed project will create the necessary framework for increased levels of activity and more complete integration. Implementation will occur rapidly and without major staff increases by redeployment of existing staff, recruitment of staff to existing vacancies, and the creation of two new posts. For instance, recruitment of a Fisheries Communication Officer will enable the SPC to provide more services in dissemination of information, including an improved Fisheries Newsletter, thereby creating the opportunity for the Assistant Fisheries Officer to address problems of liaison and co-ordination. Similarly, immediate recruitment of a Field Statistical Officer to a vacant TBAP post will enable the SPC to meet the several outstanding requests for assistance in developing appropriate small scale fisheries data collection systems, and also allow existing staff to address problems of appropriate methods of resource assessment.

The attached diagram illustrates the functions within the Inshore Resource Assessment Project and the relationship between existing SPC Programmes and co-operating outside organisations. Functions within the Project are presented in more detail below.

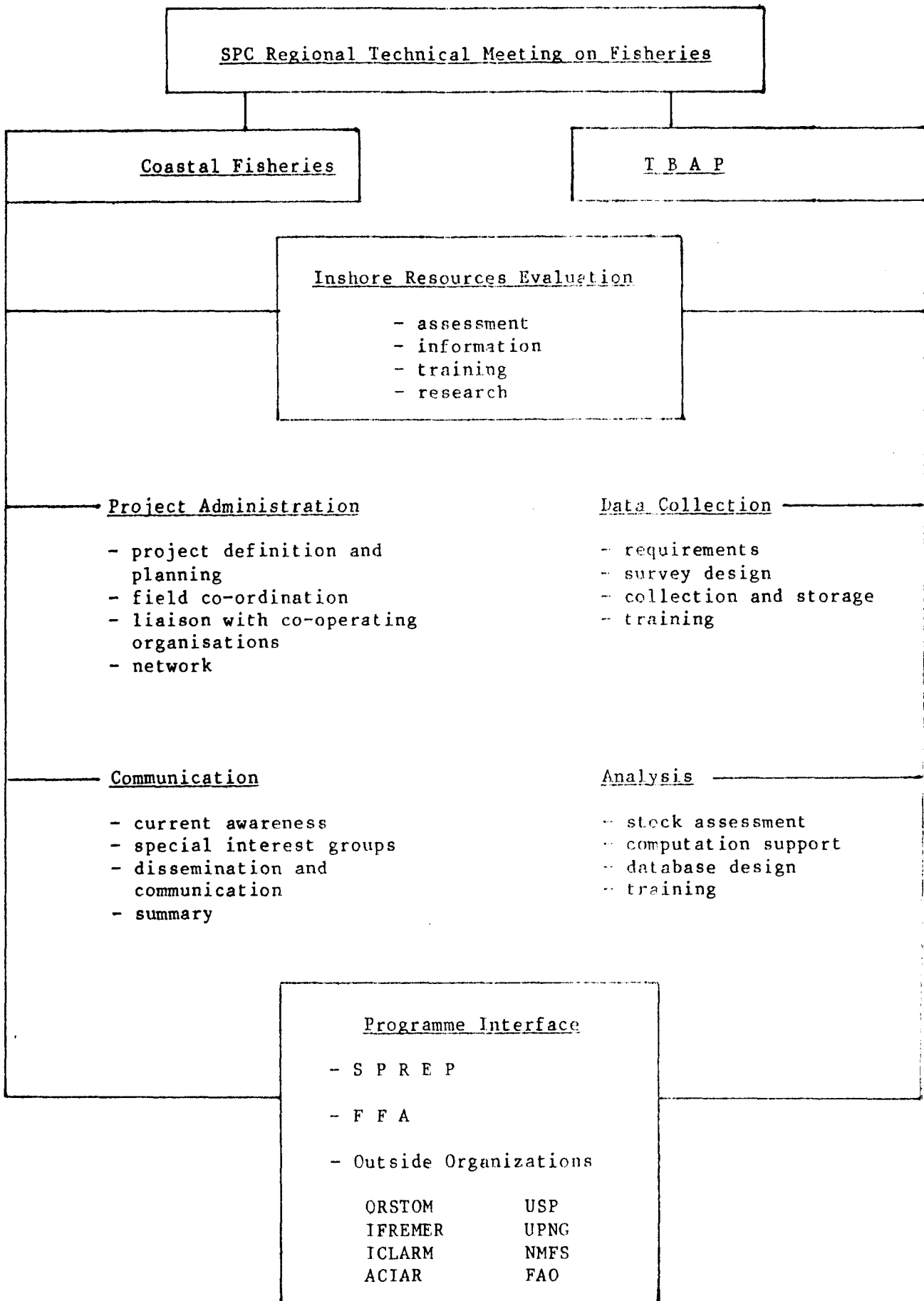
OUTLINE OF FUNCTIONS

A. Project Administration (AFO)

- (1) Together with national fisheries officers, identify national priorities for the assessment of inshore fisheries resources.
- (2) In collaboration with national fisheries officers, other SPC staff, and co-operating organisations, develop an appropriate programme of field and advisory activities to address established priorities.
- (3) Advise fisheries officers on appropriate role of stock assessment in fisheries management.
- (4) Co-ordinate training in fisheries stock assessment.
- (5) Liaise with organisations within and outside the region which are involved in tropical fisheries assessment.

B. Communication (new post)

- (1) In co-operation with SPC Library staff, develop and operate a micro-computer based document cataloguing and retrieval service for marine resource information.
- (2) In collaboration with SPC Fisheries and Library staff, selectively assess, abstract and catalogue documents and other information sources relevant to marine resource development in Pacific Island countries; prepare and regularly update information summaries on topics of special regional or national interest, and disseminate this information on a routine basis.



- (3) Identify information sources and collaborate with SPC Fisheries staff in responding to requests from SPC member countries for detailed technical information.
- (4) Locate and solicit material for, and edit and publish the SPC Fisheries Newsletter.
- (5) Consult with PIC, specialist fisheries institutions, fisheries officers, libraries, museums, colleges, universities and other relevant organisations producing or making available relevant marine resource information.

C. Data Collection (recruit to vacant TBAP post)

- (1) In collaboration with national fisheries staff, analyse fisheries data requirements.
- (2) Design appropriate field programmes for data collection.
- (3) Participate in field surveys and other data collection activities and train local staff in data collection procedures.
- (4) Train local staff in the proper methods of storing and maintaining statistical records.
- (5) Provide follow-up support and assistance as required to ensure that activities continue at a high standard.

D. Analysis (new post within TBAP)

- (1) Work closely with field statistical officer and national fisheries staff to design appropriate procedures for analysis of fisheries data.
- (2) Evaluate resource evaluation methods currently in use and adapt appropriate methods for use in local situations.
- (3) Participate in selection and development of computer software for analysis of fisheries data.
- (4) Train local staff in the analysis of fisheries data.