

Public expenditure of Pacific Island countries and territories fisheries agencies

The sustainability of inshore fisheries resources is of vital concern to the 22 Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) as they are fundamental to people's livelihood and food security (Fig.1). Inshore resources are increasingly under threat due to population growth and increasing commercialisation. Improving the management of small-scale fisheries, based on co-management approaches, is recognised as a regional policy priority (e.g. FFA and SPC 2015; SPC 2015; MSG 2015). The important role of community-based management has been established and it is now essential to explore and clarify the role of government agencies within these approaches. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) was funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to commission a study of the elaboration of the Noumea Coastal Fisheries Strategy and, specifically, to review national coastal fisheries policies, staffing and budgets in relation to the potential task of sustainably managing coastal fisheries. The main findings of this study are summarised below.

In the Pacific Islands (as a whole), there are:

- exclusive economic zones (EEZs) covering 29,000,000 km² and 22 fisheries agencies with 1,277 staff and USD 72,000,000 budget for operations; and
- inshore fishing areas covering 350,000 km² with 614 staff (dedicating at least 25% of their time to inshore fisheries issues) and USD 11,900,000 budget for operations.

The value of fisheries production (2007) was over USD 2,000,000,000

In the Pacific Island countries (excluding dependent territories and PNG), there are:

- EEZs covering 17,500,000 km² and 13 fisheries agencies with 836 staff and USD 15,600,000 budget for operations; and
- inshore fishing areas covering 141,000 km² with 399 staff (dedicating at least 25% of their time to inshore fisheries issues) and USD 3,500,000 budget for operations.

The value of fisheries production (2007) was over USD 1,100,000,000 (Govan 2015, p. 25).

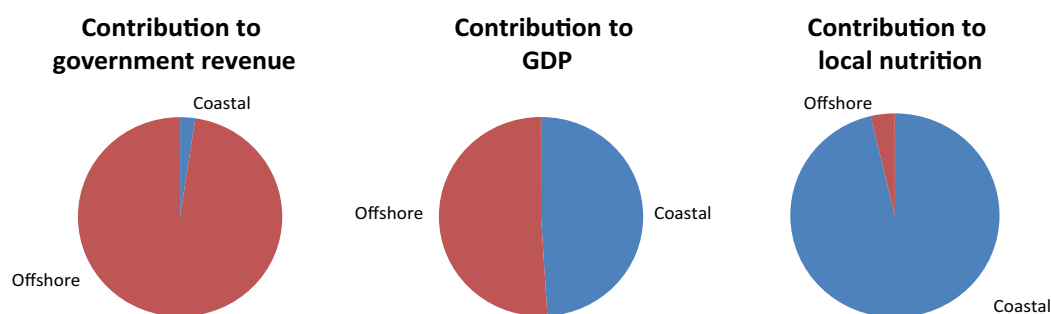


Figure 1. Relative importance of offshore and coastal fisheries in terms of types of benefits in the Pacific Islands Region (data from Gillett 2009).

Findings and recommendations

Coastal and inshore fisheries policies do not adequately support sustainable management

- The majority of PICTs do not have coastal fisheries policies; however, three PICTs do, four are in the process of drafting them, and two may be adequately covered in other policy.
- The lack of coastal fisheries policies is compounded by their low likelihood of resulting in improved fisheries management, according to current experiences.
- **Improving coastal fisheries management in the short term should be better addressed through improved drafting of work plans, staff job descriptions and allocation of increased and decentralised budgets.**

Governments are not allocating adequate operational resources for coastal fisheries management

- Most fisheries agencies usually do not clearly distinguish budget lines or staffing between coastal fisheries management and other functions. Aid projects and funding for fisheries development do not make up for the lack of investment in routine resource management and may actually have negative impacts.
- This is of particular concern given the low levels of budgetary and staff support relative to the massive coastal and oceanic resources for which the PICTs are responsible and upon which they are highly dependent.
- **National fisheries agencies should be encouraged to specify and report budgetary and labour allocations for sustainable coastal fisheries management.**
- **National coastal fisheries management allocations can be used as an indicator against aspirational targets such as investment per value of production or the area managed.**

Low resourcing of sustainable management is particularly alarming in the lesser developed countries with projected near-term deficits in coastal fish production

- More than 84% of the region's population reside in countries that are projected to experience a deficit in the supply of coastal fish for food security, and a further 11% reside in countries projected to experience problems with this supply.
- The lack of sustainable management investment gives rise to grave concerns when the impact of projected deficits in fish supply on predominantly

fisheries dependent subsistence populations in lesser developed countries.

- **Adequate support for sustainable coastal fisheries management must be ensured in lesser developed countries and requires particularly urgent attention from donors and political leaders**

Despite encouraging progress in community-based fisheries management (CBFM) there is a long way to go

- More than 900 communities are documented as implementing CBFM; however, over half of those are Fiji and Samoa alone.
- It is unclear to what extent CBFM occurs in villages that have not been surveyed by government or non-governmental organisations, but more than 90% of the 11,422 coastal villages do not appear to be receiving support to implement CBFM.
- There is not sufficient information available to determine the effectiveness of most reported sites or the extent to which CBFM occurs autonomously in the remaining villages.
- **Governments should ascertain the extent to which CBFM effectively occurs and determine the most cost-effective strategies to support, extend and sustain these practices.**

References

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