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**SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION**

**TWENTY-FIFTH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES**  
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 14-18 March 1994)

**TOWARDS THE INTRODUCTION OF A REGIONAL STANDARD  
FOR PACIFIC ISLAND QUALIFIED FISHING DECKHAND CERTIFICATE TRAINING**

**A REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES AND PROGRESS AUGUST 1992 - AUGUST 1993  
AND PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

(Paper prepared by the Secretariat)

**Towards the Introduction of a Regional Standard  
for  
Pacific Island Qualified Fishing Deckhand  
Certificate Training**

**A review of activities and progress August 1992 - August 1993  
and proposals for future developments**

## **1. Introduction**

Following the presentation of a Secretariat working paper (WP.7), RTMF 24 made the following recommendation:

In acknowledgement of the potential for the increased employment of Pacific Island nationals in the industrial sector, the meeting recommended that SPC undertakes a study of the feasibility of introducing standardised fishing deckhand certification in the region with the proviso that such a study should not be prioritised over existing SPC training related activities.

In responding to this recommendation, the Commission has undertaken opportunistic consultation with senior personnel in training schools, fisheries administrations, the fishing industry in general and the donor community. Discussions have centred on existing opportunities for deckhand training available in the region, initial activities in the implementation of a Pacific Island Qualified Fishing Deckhand (PIQFD) programme, the required steps for implementation, and the follow-up required to ensure employment of persons qualifying for the certificate.

This paper summarises developments in relation to the possible introduction of a PIQFD certificate and outlines a draft implementation scenario.

## **2. Deckhand Training - an overview**

There are six national institutions already training for fishing industry deckhands. Existing opportunities specific to fishing crew training can be generally summarised as follows:

- \* Institutions with fishing crew certification programmes for national fleets:  
School of Maritime and Fisheries Studies (Solomon Islands), Micronesian Maritime and Fisheries Academy (Federated States of Micronesia), Ecole des Métiers de la Mer (New Caledonia).
- \* Institutions with fishing crew certification programmes for national and foreign fleets:  
Fisheries Training Centre (Marshall Islands), Fisheries Training Centre (Vanuatu).
- \* Institutions with fishing crew certification programmes for foreign fleets:  
Marine Training Centre (Kiribati).
- \* Overseas programmes for fishing crew training for foreign vessels: Micronesian Maritime and Fisheries Academy (Federated States of Micronesia).

While five countries (PNG, Tuvalu, Tonga, Western Samoa and Fiji) appear to rely on maritime training opportunities to meet fisheries sector needs, several institutions (Fiji School of Maritime Studies, Tuvalu Maritime School) are considering or planning the introduction of fisheries specific programmes, including deckhand training.

The duration of the existing programmes varies from 9 weeks (with a twelve month sea time pre-requisite) for the Solomon Islands Advanced Fishing Techniques Course, to 11 months (including 9.5 hours weekly for language training) for the Kiribati-based Federation of Japan Tuna Fisheries Cooperative Associations (Japan Tuna) course.

The content of existing programmes has been based variously on the South Pacific Maritime Code (SPMC), the international Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) series of Model Course Manuals, and needs specific to national legislation.

There is considerable diversity in the range of deckhand training opportunities presently open to the fisheries sector. However, the basic requirements of seamanship, safety, and fisheries technology are common to most programmes. The specific needs of language training or specialised equipment handling do not preclude a common minimum standard and it is the development and promotion of this standard which is of interest.

### **3. Activities to date**

#### **3.1 Pilot scheme for Vanuatu and Solomon Islands**

Following a suggestion in the RTMF 24 Secretariat working paper (WP 7, p3.) that it may be appropriate to initiate a pilot scheme for standardised fishing deckhand training in two or three countries, the Vanuatu Fisheries Training Centre and the Solomon Islands School of Maritime and Fisheries have agreed to cooperate in the delivery of a pilot course programme. As a result of consultation between the directors of these institutions, a draft curriculum has been prepared and both institutions are planning to offer courses in 1994. Preparation for the course has already commenced with the development of teaching resource material and enquiries with vessel operators as to employment opportunities for course graduates. Following the training, the course will be reviewed by both institutions in association with SPC to determine further needs for teaching resource development and examine trainee skill acquisition in the three main areas of instruction, seamanship, safety, and fishing technology.

It is envisaged that the pilot course will subsequently be refined and developed and considerable effort accorded the further development of teaching resource materials. In this manner, the course can be offered to other training institutions as a fully developed programme with a range of teaching resources supplied.

The draft curriculum for the course has been circulated to an additional 7 training institutions requesting comment as to content and the possibility of the programme being offered at those institutions.

#### **3.2 Regional Maritime Training Plan**

During 1992, the Maritime Division of the Forum Secretariat commissioned a consultancy report on the development of a Regional Maritime Training Plan. SPC was able to address the aspects of fisheries sector training through a paper delivered to the 3rd Forum for Maritime Education and Training Institutions in the Asia Pacific Region (Suva, Fiji, December 1992).

In considering the fisheries sector, the draft consultants' report made no specific reference to the training of deck-crew but referred primarily to the more general training needs of fishing vessels and the development of fishing vessel certification standards for watchkeepers, mates, engineers and masters. The consultant suggested that advanced fishery certification should be based on SPMC standards and noted:

Certification (for the fishing industry) must be introduced as soon as possible before too many untrained people get entrenched. The dangers inherent in the industry, the increasing size and complexity of the vessels and equipment involved, the remote locations of operations and the hazards to navigation in the region require this matter to be addressed.

In discussing the fisheries potential of the region, the consultant acknowledged the potential for the fishing industry to provide viable employment and income to indigenous populations for an extended period of time but noted that most forum countries do not have the expertise to operate modern fishing vessels, and that the displacement of crews on foreign vessels was a logical path to the development of national fishing capabilities.

### 3.3 Assessment of Institutional, Organisational, and National Perspectives

During the past year, SPC staff have visited 8 of the region's maritime and fisheries training schools. All but one of these already offer certificate or diploma programmes in aspects of fisheries. While institute directors responded positively to the concept of a regional standard programme, it was generally noted that the institutions provided training as directed by Governments or benefactors and if directed to participate in a regional programme, they would respond accordingly.

The Forum Fisheries Agency has informally offered support in principle to the adoption of a base qualification for commercial fishermen employed in foreign flag and national vessels operating in Pacific Islands EEZ's. The Agency noted that the negotiation of employment opportunities for persons trained under such a programme was a matter subject to the conditions of access arrangement between each member country and the Foreign Vessel operators.

Discussion of the proposed standardised programme with Government representatives has been opportunistic and informal. Whilst no formal requests have been received for the implementation of a regional programme, the Government of Vanuatu has endorsed the pilot course planned for 1994 and the major employment agent for ni-Vanuatu seamen (South Pacific Fishing Co) has offered full support to the introduction of the course, stating a belief that crew employment prospects will be considerably strengthened by the programme.

### 3.4 Assessment of Vessel Owner/Operator Perspectives

The support of vessel owners is of obvious importance to the implementation of a PIQFD programme in terms of ensuring employment for trainees. Although it could be argued that employment opportunities should be mandatory under access agreements, it is obviously preferable for training to be supported by FFV owners and operators and copies of the draft PIQFD curriculum have been circulated to a number of national and foreign flag fishing vessel operators. Positive responses have been received from Fiji, Taiwan, and US interests although most persons contacted have not replied. There is some possibility that employers may view the introduction of standardised training as a precursor to demands for increased remuneration to crews and improvements in terms and conditions of employment.

Although greater consultation with FFV operators is required, it is difficult to imagine substantive objection to what is essentially a programme to raise skill and safety standards on board vessels and provide quality trained crew for the regions fishing industry.

### 3.5 Employment opportunities

The possibility of using a Register system, similar to that used by existing crew placement services in the maritime sector, has been promoted and discussed in the course of consultations. It has been suggested that a register system could fulfil a range of tasks, including, but not limited to the following:

- \* maintain lists of qualified personnel seeking employment
- \* secure contracts for provision of crew
- \* negotiate terms and conditions of employment
- \* establish mechanisms for crew delivery to and from joining ports

There has been limited discussion as to the possible mechanisms for establishment of such a register. Questions such as funding, links to organisations, and whether the Registry should be nationally or regionally based, have yet to be considered in detail. However, there is a general acknowledgement that some type of crew placement and liaison service will be required to support the PIQFD programme.

### 3.6 Funding

Strategic support for the development of a standardised regionally and internationally accepted syllabus and certification system for fishery deckhand training has been outlined for inclusion in the joint SPC/FFA Regional Fisheries Capacity Building Project. Under this proposed UNDP project, SPC/FFA have requested financial assistance to support the PIQFD initiative through consultation with national fisheries institutions active in fishery deckhand training, review of existing teaching resource material, organisation of a regional workshop in support of the programme, promotion of the adoption of the programme by appropriate training institutions, and assistance to PIQFD graduates in finding employment.

## 4. Conclusion

Review of perspectives and opinions obtained during the past 12 months suggests general support for the development and implementation of a PIQFD certificate programme. Despite the apparent variation in content and duration of existing courses for deckhand training, it is possible that promotion of the programme as a minimum qualification will allow institutions the flexibility to continue to offer more specialised training (such as the language programme offered in Kiribati) with graduates still qualifying for the PIQFD certificate.

The justification for establishing a PIQFD certificate programme as a means of promoting employment, increasing returns to the region from FFV activities, and developing local skills in FV operation has been endorsed by the draft Regional Maritime Training Plan. However, there is still a need for substantive ongoing consultation with training institutions, governments, and potential employers (both national and FFV fleets).

The pilot scheme planned in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands provides an opportunity to review and develop the draft curriculum. Continuing liaison and consultation with interest groups prior to the offering of the pilot courses should allow for more substantive planning of an implementation scenario.

Although the present report is limited to review of opportunistic consultations, there has been sufficient support and interest in the programme to date to suggest adoption of a more comprehensive preliminary development and review strategy.

## 5. Strategies for further implementation

The ultimate success of a PIQFD certificate programme will depend on the recognition and support of governments, national fishing industries, and FFV operators. With the potentially large number of interest groups, the establishment of the programme as a regional standard is likely to be gradual. The necessity for coordinated consultation, liaison, and review of progress and problems suggests that the following activities are required for the further short term development of the programme:

### \* Pilot Project

The planned Pilot Courses will be offered in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands early in 1994. The pilot courses will subsequently be reviewed in terms of content, resources, skill acquisition and job placement.

### \* Liaison/Consultation

The draft curriculum for the course will continue to be widely circulated to fisheries interest groups. Consultations with government, training providers and potential employers will continue. Opportunities for potential employment of graduates will be reviewed as will national circumstance pertaining to crew placement services.

### \* Workshop

A regional workshop with representation from training institutions, governments, and potential employers will be organised. The general objectives of the workshop will be:

- review pilot programme results
- review and if necessary develop the curriculum
- assess results of liaison/consultation
- review mechanisms for project coordination
- review institutional capabilities to offer the programme and consider potential institutional enhancement requirements where necessary
- consider the need for consultative tutor support
- consider national regulatory requirements to establish the programme
- establish examination and quality control standards for the programme
- develop models for industry funded training
- examine mechanisms for trainee employment placement
- document national strategies for programme implementation
- determine the future strategies for project implementation

### \* Coordination

The major initiatives in developing the pilot programme have come from national institutions which have been loosely coordinated by SPC. In the short term, the Training Section is well placed to continue in this role although future deliberations would no doubt benefit from the formation of a small working group to continue coordination of the programme. Such a group, comprising institutional representatives, fisheries administration representatives, and SPC/FFA should be established as soon as practicable.