

## 10<sup>th</sup> SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting

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### Working Paper 2

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## **Enabling government - empowering communities National implementation of the New Song**

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### **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this paper is to:
  - promote discussion of national implementation challenges to community-based ecosystem approaches to fisheries management (CEAFM); and
  - suggest a potential pathway to strengthening national capacity to support and empower communities to sustainably manage their coastal fisheries to provide a solid foundation for development aspirations and resilience.

### **Background**

2. Coastal and lagoon fisheries are critically important to many Pacific Island States with few other sources of protein. Fish provide 50–90% of animal protein intake in rural areas and 40–80% in urban areas. Worryingly, it is estimated that 75% of Pacific island coastal fisheries will not meet food security needs by 2030 due to a forecast 50% growth in population, limited productivity of coastal fisheries (exacerbated by overfishing, pollution, poor land management practices leading to marine habitat degradation etc.) and inadequate national distribution networks.

3. In this context, the 46<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Forum in 2015 reaffirmed the importance of fisheries, and endorsed the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries. The coastal fisheries components of the roadmap built on the 'New Song for Coastal Fisheries - Pathways to Change: The Noumea Strategy'. This was an important shift away from centralised models of coastal fisheries management towards a greater focus on community based approaches that empower and support communities to manage their marine resources within national legislative and policy frameworks.
4. The strategy was developed by regional stakeholders, experts and governments at the Ninth SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting in March 2015, and recognised that sustainable and productive coastal fisheries required fundamental changes in approach, increased prioritisation of coastal fisheries, and political will:

Improvements to coastal fisheries will require significant commitment in terms of resources and support at all levels – local, national and regional. The issue of fisheries decline and the dire consequences arising need to be elevated to the highest political levels and beyond the fisheries sector. This is essential if hard decisions are to be made and real change occurs on a meaningful scale.

5. The New Song recognised that a new approach was required that empowered communities, strengthened informal and formal governance frameworks, and supported a coordinated approach that brought together communities, governments, regional agencies and other relevant stakeholders.
6. Government fisheries agencies across the region have traditionally focused their resources and political attention on their oceanic tuna fisheries. However, the increasing urgency around climate change impacts, looming food security challenges, and the declining state of many of the region's coastal fisheries, require a far greater prioritisation on coastal fisheries – the bread basket for the region's population.

... it is time for governments to ensure an appropriate level of resources to secure the considerable benefits that flow from the sustainable management of coastal fisheries. Ad-hoc funding from donors and NGOs is valuable for short-term, project-based initiatives, but is no substitute for the allocation of long-term funding support for coastal fisheries management from government budgets. .... scaling up is a key need: Small pockets of effective coastal fisheries management will not be adequate to address the problem. Ways must be found of building on successes and expanding them to meaningful proportions of the coastal environment.

7. The Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries and the New Song both set out goals and strategies for Coastal Fisheries. The Regional Roadmap drives towards empowering communities, strengthening resilience and developing livelihoods, while the New Song pursues a vision of sustainable well-managed inshore fisheries, underpinned by community-based approaches that provide food security, and long-term economic, social and ecological benefits to communities.

8. Achieving these goals requires comprehensive and effective engagement by both national and subnational levels of government. In many Pacific Island States, fisheries ministries have jurisdiction over oceanic waters while island councils or provincial government have jurisdiction over near-shore waters. Very often the subnational level fisheries functions are poorly financed and staffed, with weak coordination and integration with national levels of government. In these circumstances, there are likely to be complicated institutional and regulatory challenges to the implementation of sustainable management for non-export fisheries. These fisheries are often the bedrock for local food security.
9. Coastal fisheries are managed under a loose framework of informal and formal governance arrangements. Customary marine tenure provides many communities with rights or tenure over reefs and habitats, which provides a critical foundation for communities to determine and enforce sustainable management measures, and avoid the tragedy of the commons that occurs in open-access fisheries. However, in some cases, these forms of customary marine tenure are weakened or were destroyed by colonial governments, or undermined by overpopulation and migration. These breakdowns can pose significant challenges to communities and governments as they attempt to respond to overfishing, habitat degradation poor land management causing siltation and pollution, and destructive fishing activities.

### **National Implementation Challenges - Regional Roadmap – A New Song**

10. In September 2016, the Forum Leaders highlighted the plight of coastal fisheries and the need for strengthening coastal fisheries management: ‘In noting that coastal fisheries management continues to receive inadequate attention at the national level, Leaders agreed to expand the broad heading of ‘fisheries’ to include coastal fisheries, noting links to communities, food security, health issues and in particular, non-communicable diseases. Leaders also noted the need to ensure ecosystem integrity to address issues such as ciguatera outbreaks and to sustainably manage beche-de-mer. To that end, Leaders tasked SPC to coordinate with National Fisheries Agencies, CROP agencies and regional and national community groups, to strengthen support and resourcing for coastal fisheries management.’
11. The Regional Roadmap, Leader’s decision and the New Song all recognise that urgent action is required to reverse declining fisheries and strengthen the capacity of communities, stakeholders and governments to sustainably manage coastal fisheries. This has resulted in significant attention at the regional level, and a greater focus on coastal fisheries by donors, CROP agencies and NGO partners. However, the key need for capacity building and successful engagement is not at the regional level – but at national, provincial/island and community levels.

12. This prompts important questions for national governments...
- A. The New Song identifies eight outcomes that need to be achieved for the region to improve the wellbeing of coastal communities and ensure productive health ecosystems and fish stocks. These include:
- i. Informed, empowered coastal communities with clearly defined user rights.
  - ii. Adequate and relevant information to inform management and policy.
  - iii. Recognition of, and strong political commitment and support for, coastal fisheries management on a national and sub-national scale.
  - iv. Re-focused fisheries agencies that are transparent, accountable and adequately resourced, supporting coastal fisheries management and sustainable development underpinned by CEAFM.
  - v. Strong and up-to-date management policy, legislation and planning.
  - vi. Effective collaboration and coordination among stakeholders and key sectors of influence.
  - vii. More equitable access to benefits and decision making within communities, including women, youth and marginalised groups.
  - viii. Diverse livelihoods reducing pressure on fisheries resources, enhancing community incomes and contributing to improved fisheries management.
- What capacity needs to be developed at the national and sub-national level in order to achieve these outcomes?
- B. How can the region collectively focus its efforts and resources to build national and sub-national capacity and better enable national governments themselves to empower communities and achieve the goals of the Regional Roadmap and the New Song? For example, should SPC members develop some form of National Implementation or Co-management<sup>1</sup> Framework that could inform and guide the design of national government implementation and relevant coastal policies and work plans, and guide donors, CROP agencies and NGO partners.
- C. What is being done at the national level to address these challenges and support the goals of the Regional Roadmap and the New Song?
- D. What further can be done to address these challenges so as to enable all relevant levels of government to engage with and empower community based ecosystem approaches to fisheries management?
- E. How can communities be better represented at the Provincial/Island, National and Regional levels so that progress can be measured and communities have a stronger voice?

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<sup>1</sup> The Locally-Managed Marine Area (LMMA) Network has done some work in this area and this could be used as a starting point if this approach is to be taken.

## Recommendations

13. The Heads of Fisheries are invited to:

- Discuss the national implementation challenges in supporting community-based ecosystems approach to fisheries management (CEAFM);
- Discuss the possible development of a national implementation or co-management framework that could be used to inform and guide the design of national and sub-national implementation of CEAFM and supporting policies and work plans, plus guide donors, CROP agencies and NGO partners; and
- Provide guidance to SPC on the approach to strengthen CEAFM in support of the implementing the New Song and Regional Roadmap.