



## Rapid and preliminary assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on Pacific Island coastal fishing communities

*The Locally Managed Marine Area Network International in collaboration with WorldFish, the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security*

*The global COVID-19 pandemic is having a major impact across the globe and on all segments of the population. The effects on Pacific Island countries and territories have been extremely varied; some countries have had to manage viral infections while others are so far managing to keep the virus entirely from their shores. National responses have many potential implications for coastal communities, but these need to be better understood if international and government responses are to be effective and appropriate for the particular circumstances of different villages and countries.*

As a response, the Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) network and partners such as WorldFish, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS) have been developing a survey tool that aims to gain basic and rapid insights into changes occurring in villages and their fisheries. A joint questionnaire has been developed for a rapid appraisal, and our organisations are at various stages of implementation in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Timor-Leste, with contacts also made in Papua New Guinea, Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Cook Islands, Tonga, Indonesia and the Philippines. The survey, administered to men, women and youth, is intended to be short and simple enough to be asked relatively quickly over the telephone or social media, look at impacts through a gender lens and provide the most important feedback quickly. This is intended as a first step to inform other more elaborate surveys or emergency responses.

This civil society and community-focused survey is not limited to a specific organisation; recipients are free to send the survey on to their partners. Information from local coastal communities is welcome provided the community and partner rights are respected according to the surveyor's own ethics procedures and the LMMA network's Social Contract (ethics agreement). The LMMA network places community

rights and recognition at the centre of all it does, and elements of "Our Promises to Each Other: the Social Contract" are included in the questionnaire.

The following principles from the Social Contract are key to undertaking this work and apply to LMMA's relations with communities and between each other (i.e. LMMA will only share information outside its group that the relevant partner has authorised).

- **Rights:** Communities have the right to information about themselves, which they possess or help generate.
- **Permission:** To use information not previously in the public domain from any site or other partner, Free, Prior, and Informed Consent must be obtained from the project site communities or other rights-holder, in consultation with the relevant project organisation.
- **Return of information:** Results and communication products arising directly from the use of community information will be shared with the participating communities and other stakeholders in a timely and appropriate manner.

Image at the top: Even in remote areas, COVID-19 can have an impact on communities, for example through the closure of sales markets or the need to provide for the needs of people returning to the village after losing their jobs in the city; Fumato'o, Malaita Province, Solomon Islands. (Image: Filip Milovac, WorldFish, Flickr)

The questionnaire is freely available, and we encourage you contact the LMMA network to indicate that you will be undertaking the surveys and to send your survey results, raw or summarised. The LMMA network will compile all information from the region and will provide feedback to partners for them to report to participating communities. Partners will involve national fisheries authorities, as appropriate, in each country.

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**For more information:**

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### LMMA Network and partners (WCS, WorldFish and ANCORS) responses to COVID-19 Community Survey (condensed version)

Respondent information: Village, district, province, gender, age, role in the community (fisher, seller, farmer, committee member, stay at home, other). Name and phone details are confidential.

Prompt: We are just calling to check in with you how life is in your village. If you don't mind, I will ask you some questions, your answers will be anonymous, they won't be shared without your permission and the results of this work that we are undertaking with several communities will be reported back to you. You can also withdraw from the call at any time. Are you OK to participate?

1. Consent:  Y  N
2. Can you explain a bit about what is happening in your village now?
3. Have there been any major national events that have affected the community this year (2020)?  Y  N - Explain.
4. (a) Since mid-February this year, have more people moved to or away from the village?  Same,  Into the village,  Away from the village  
(b) If yes, how many people do you estimate?
5. How many people were living in the village in early February?
6. Do you think there is enough food in the village for every one, compared to normal, for this time of the year?  
 Big problem,  Not enough,  Enough,  More than enough,  Lots - Explain.
7. How are people making sure there is enough food for everyone?
8. What are the main ways people are producing / obtaining food?
9. Are you seeing changes in how people are sharing food?  
 Y  N - Explain.
10. Are people fishing more now compared to in the beginning of February this year?  A lot less,  Less,  Same,  More,  A lot more - Explain.
11. Is everyone that fishes (in your fishing ground) aware of the local and customary practices and rules around fishing?  Less people than before,  Same,  More than before - Explain.
12. Is everyone that fishes (in your fishing ground) aware of the national rules around fishing?  Less people than before,  Same,  More than before - Explain.
13. Are people breaking any fishing rules? -  Y  N -  Less people than before,  Same,  More than before - Explain.
14. (a) Which rules are currently the most common rules being broken?  
(b) Do you know who in the community is breaking the rules?
15. (a) Regarding fisheries management / rules - have those in charge of fishing rules (chief, leaders, clan heads, committee) taken any action? -  Y  N  
(b) What specific actions or advice have the leaders given to the community?
16. Have any of the current rules changed or been removed recently?  Y  N - Explain.
17. Do you think that the management actions implemented before mid-Feb has been beneficial to the community during this current situation? -  None OR List
18. From your recent observations and in conversations around the village, is more fish being caught in total?  
 More,  Less,  Same amount - Explain.
19. Have there been any changes in the sales of fish from the village?  More,  Less,  No change - Explain.
20. Have there been any changes to the price of fish being sold?  Cheaper,  More expensive,  No change - Explain.
21. Has there been any changes to the price of rice people in the village have to pay?  More,  Less,  No change - Explain.
22. Has there been any changes to the price of rice people in the village have to pay?  More,  Less,  No change
23. Which stresses are your family feeling right now?  Stress on physical health,  Stress on mental health,  Food availability,  Financial stress,  Family stress,  Livelihood loss,  Other
24. If you had to ask for any assistance or support (from the government) right now, what would it be?

Thanks a lot for your time and contribution. Do you agree for us to share the information you have kindly provided to compile it with other interviews? As I said earlier this will be anonymous, your name will not appear.