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Title:	Scaling-up community-based fisheries management in a COVID-19 context
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Summary:

The purpose of this Working Paper (WP) is to prompt discussions around Scaling-up Community-Based Fisheries Management (CBFM), which was selected as one of the emerging priority issues for discussion for the 12th Heads of Fisheries (HoF12) meeting after a survey conducted by FAME with SPC members and partners.

Recognising that the various national responses to COVID-19 are resulting in a significant increase in reliance on community-based fisheries for both food security and livelihoods, the focus of this WP has been adjusted for consideration of the highest priority short- and medium-term needs for member fisheries agencies to support the scaling-up of CBFM in a COVID-19 context.

This paper uses the outcomes of the ‘Scaling-up of Community-Based Fisheries Management’ Session during the 3rd SPC Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries (5–8 November 2019), together with information from members, to identify priorities for consideration by HoF12.

Recommendations:

Members and partners are invited to:

- i. Discuss the immediate challenges faced and ways forward for scaling-up of Community-Based Fisheries Management in the Pacific region in a COVID-19 context;
- ii. Agree on priority actions to be taken at the national level; and
- iii. Advise FAME on priority short-term support needs to assist with scaling-up CBFM in a COVID-19 context.

Introduction

1. In January 2020, SPC FAME circulated a survey inviting SPC members and partners to identify priority topics for the 12th Heads of Fisheries (HoF12) meeting. *Scaling-up Community-Based Fisheries Management (CBFM)* was selected as an emerging priority for discussion at HoF12.
2. ‘Scaling-up’, ‘scaling-out’ or more simply ‘scaling’ CBFM is an umbrella term that captures an ambition to move from relatively few communities implementing CBFM to national programmes. We recognize CBFM and how it is scaled-up will differ among members, and that it is not appropriate for all places and contexts.
3. CBFM was one of the topics of the 3rd RTMCF held in Noumea from the 5th to 8th November 2019. An extract of the recommended actions on CBFM scaling-up is appended to this working paper (Appendix 1).
4. Scaling-up of CBFM is a medium- to long-term initiative that SPC FAME and partners have put much effort into progressing to maximise widespread and positive impacts; it focuses on developing livelihoods, building capacity and designing tools and cross-sectoral approaches to service delivery.
5. Recognising that national responses to COVID-19 are resulting in a significant increase in reliance on coastal fisheries for both food security and livelihoods, the focus of this WP has been adjusted for consideration of priority needs for member fisheries agencies to support scaling CBFM in a COVID-19 context.

Key challenges to scaling-up CBFM

6. Although traditional forms of fisheries management are practiced in the majority of communities in the region, CBFM as a form of co-management with national agencies or other external partners remains uncommon¹. In areas where viable CBFM systems are in place, there are only small pockets of effective coastal fisheries management. This patchy approach to CBFM is not enough to address wider national problems of coastal fisheries resource decline, therefore ways must be found to build on successes and expand them to meaningful proportions of coastal environments.
7. While acknowledging and recognising the current and past efforts in implementing CBFM, further efforts are needed in providing adequate legal or regulatory frameworks that recognise and enable community empowerment, even where legislation is already partly in place to that effect. This is a crucial steppingstone in the endeavour to scale-up successful CBFM experiences at national and sub-national levels.
8. Often there is inadequate human and financial capacity to support implementation of CBFM at national and sub-national levels. CBFM can be costly and difficult to implement adequately for countries with long coastlines or scattered islands and reef systems.

¹ [A new song for coastal fisheries – pathways to change: The Noumea Strategy](#)

The impacts of COVID-19 responses on community-based fisheries

9. Stringent international border controls and restrictions on internal public movement to contain and prevent COVID-19 spread among and within PICTs continue to have significant socioeconomic impacts. Media and anecdotal information sources report:

- de-urbanisation as large numbers of people leave urban centres to return to rural areas;
- disruptions in food commodity supply chains and domestic economies;
- disruptions to movement of people, including fisheries officers and community members;
- significant loss of employment in tourism and other service sectors.

These events have caused loss of income and livelihoods, leading to disruptions to food security and ways of working.

10. The effects on existing CBFM systems will include dramatically increased stresses on local-level community resource management, enforcement and compliance. These stresses will also impact at the sub-national (provincial/state, island/area councils) and national levels; but will have the greatest impact in areas without resource management systems in place.

11. The cumulative impacts of the COVID-19 situation, when combined with population growth, development, natural disasters and climate change, is escalating the urgent need for sustainable fisheries management through community-driven approaches. This will not be a short-term problem; therefore, it is more relevant now than ever to scale-up effective CBFM. There is also greater need for a fundamental shift in our approaches to CBFM to encourage more effective collaboration by all stakeholders, at all levels.

Priority short-term considerations to support CBFM scaling

12. Building on the outcomes of the 3rd RTMCF, and based on further consultation, high priority activities for member fisheries agencies and partners to fast-track the scaling-up of CBFM in a COVID-19 context may be recognized. The following are suggested priority issues and actions for the HoF12 to consider:

- a. Improve effective collaboration between communities, local and central governments and fully involve non-governmental organisations, civil society partners and other institutions in supporting the scaling-up of CBFM activities;
- b. Develop relevant awareness materials and outreach activities to empower communities in making informed decisions on resource management. Post-COVID-19 will require more innovative use of communication pathways, including social and broadcast media; and
- c. Work with communities to identify appropriate and realistic alternative and supplementary livelihood options such as marine/fisheries-based activities, aquaculture, agriculture (horticulture / livestock), handy-craft (artisan), etc.;

- d. With increased community-based fishing of often already heavily fished coastal resources, community-based monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement (MCS&E) will be essential for sustainability; and
- e. Provide training and authority to empower community officers to effectively perform those activities.

13. Members and partners are invited to:

- a. Discuss the immediate challenges faced and ways forward for scaling-up of CBFM in the Pacific region in a COVID-19 context;
- b. Agree on priority actions to be taken at the national level; and
- c. Advise FAME on priority short-term support needs to assist with scaling-up CBFM in a COVID-19 context.

Appendix 1: Recommended actions on CBFM scaling-up –[extract from Outcomes and agreed Action Plan from the 3rd SPC Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries²]

14. CBFM is being implemented in PICTs in line with the *New Song for Coastal Fisheries*, but faces several barriers to scaling up. Currently, it is estimated that 90% of coastal communities in the Pacific Islands region do not have CBFM regimes, despite many PICT governments and administrations having policies in support of CBFM regimes. CBFM regimes are important for food security and livelihoods especially in the context of the increasing human populations across the Pacific Islands region. These populations are dispersed over fragmented geographies. There are many partner agencies and organisations in the Pacific Islands region supporting CBFM regimes. [Information Paper #6](#) outlines the challenges of scaling-up CBFM in the region.
15. PICTs have made great strides in establishing CBFM in a number of local communities, including the adoption of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. While these initiatives continue to progress, there is still room for improvement. This session involved sharing experiences, what has and has not worked, success stories and lessons learnt with sustainably implementing and scaling-up of CBFM to ensure a wider impact of the CBFM approaches.
- **Action 18** Members agree on the need to address existing gaps in legislation in order to support CBFM and enforcement of community management plans;
 - a. RTMCF requests HoF to recognise the importance of CBFM and to encourage the adoption of adequate legislation and policies to up-scale CBFM in each country or territory, with the participation of provincial and local governments.
 - **Action 19** Members call for SPC to support further south-south exchange programmes on community-based management, assist with the development of appropriate awareness materials/media including a training toolbox, and facilitate various stakeholders to develop appropriate monitoring and evaluation processes.
 - a. RTMCF requests HoF to endorse the development of national programmes to address the need for alternative livelihoods for communities when implementing management strategies that leads to restriction of their catches.
 - **Action 20** RTMCF requests members to clearly identify roles of different stakeholders involved in the establishment of CBFM programmes and ensure allocation of funding to support those programmes.
 - a. RTMCF requests HoF to support the clear identification of roles of different stakeholders involved in the establishment of CBFM programmes and ensure allocation of funding to support those programmes.

² http://www.spc.int/DigitalLibrary/Doc/FAME/Meetings/RTMCF/3/RTMCF3_Outcomes_Action_Plan.pdf

- **Action 21** Members call for donor partners to ensure funding flexibility in the implementation of CBFM programmes in order to allow programmes to adapt to stakeholder needs.
- **Action 22** RTMCF requests members, SPC and partners to prioritise a collaborative, coordinated, gender-sensitive and holistic multi-stakeholder approach to CBFM.
- **Action 23** RTMCF requests members and partners to prioritise the implementation of CBFM, addressing the need for increased resources for existing CBFM programmes, as well as new CBFM programmes.
 - a. RTMCF requests HoF to support members and partners to prioritise the implementation of CBFM, addressing the need for increased resources for existing CBFM programmes, as well as new CBFM programmes.
- **Action 24** Members request SPC to undertake a review of CBFM experiences in the Pacific region and identify lessons learnt.