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FISHERIES TRAINING REQUIREMENTS IN PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

Paper presented by the Secretariat

INTRODUCTION

1. This paper attempts briefly to outline the requirements for fisheries-oriented training as expressed by Pacific Island countries. This information is presented to assist discussion of priority areas to be addressed by the SPC Regional Fisheries Training Project.

2. Fisheries Training for Pacific Island countries was discussed at length at the 16th SPC Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries in August 1984. As a part of those discussions, the Secretariat outlined a project proposal which aimed "to coordinate existing training expertise both from within and outside the region, and to answer the expressed need for more practical training opportunities in a variety of fisheries-related activities and skills." (Report, SPC 16th Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries). Noting that this proposal was the direct result of many requests already made to SPC for Training support, the meeting recommended acceptance of the proposal and requested the Commission to seek approval and funding for a Regional Fisheries Training Project. This recommendation was endorsed by the 1984 South Pacific Conference, and core funding for a two-year period was subsequently committed by the Australian Government.

3. The Regional Fisheries Training Project is intended to act as a vehicle whereby short-term vocational or specialised training activities can be developed which are tailor-made to the specific requirements of individual countries or groups of countries. Its aim is not to duplicate the efforts of established training or educational establishments within or outside the region, but rather to provide training opportunities that were not previously available: in particular, in specific vocational subject areas not normally addressed by established training programmes; in providing 'one-off' training activities where trainee numbers would be inadequate to support repeat courses; and in the provision of non-formal or 'hands-on' training to individuals who may not have extensive educational backgrounds. Wherever possible or feasible, it is envisaged that the cooperation or assistance of training institutions from within or outside the region will be sought.

II. BACKGROUND

4. An extensive review of opportunities for participation in supporting South Pacific fisheries development by international organisations was carried out in 1984 by consultants M.P. Shepard and L.G. Clark for FAO/UNDP Project RAS/73/025. The report of the review, entitled 'South Pacific Fisheries Development Assistance Needs,' addresses training requirements in some detail, and briefly cites the extent of training constraints in 13 countries of the region (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa) and goes on to list some of the fisheries training opportunities available to South Pacific islanders. These are listed in Appendix 1.

5. Shepard and Clark had the following to say of fisheries training in general:

"Fisheries administrations in island countries regard the available training opportunities highly but there are concerns that present efforts are too fragmented and do not offer a sufficiently comprehensive range of courses to cover existing needs. On the other hand, there seem to be 'booms and busts' in demand for training of different types, at different levels of complexity. For example, the USP Diplomat Course was popular for a number of years but demand declined when Fiji's active recruitment programme for fisheries officers tapered off. It can be anticipated that needs for specific types of training will fluctuate significantly as island fisheries administrations mature. It might be anticipated that after demands for fisheries extension officers (needed now in most countries) are met, training in other fields (e.g., processing, marketing and resource management) may increase. In the long term, there would seem to be a need to be able to project future requirements for trained personnel in various skills and at various levels in order to anticipate and plan future training activities."

6. The report goes on to recommend a detailed review of the training needs of Pacific Island countries covering future national manpower requirements in the fisheries field, the most appropriate form of training required to produce needed skills, and an evaluation of existing training arrangements available to Pacific Islanders. The information thus obtained is to be used to draw up a perspective report of future training needs in the South Pacific and to identify areas where existing arrangements could be improved.

7. The need for a review of training requirements and opportunities received further attention at the 16th SPC Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries, which accepted this as a priority activity of the SPC Regional Fisheries Training Project, and also drew attention to the need to avoid overlap or duplication of effort by training institutions. The report of the meeting states:

"In response to concern expressed by several representatives about the role of this [Regional Fisheries Training] project, considering the programmes already existing in training institutions, it was pointed out that this project was to complement these courses and that it should be better adapted to specific regional and national training needs. Observers from the Institute of Marine Resources (USP, Suva), the Nelson Polytechnic (New Zealand), and the representative of the United Kingdom expressed their willingness to co-operate with SPC in reviewing existing training opportunities and arrangements both within and (where relevant) outside the region."

The meeting also requested the SPC to initiate a dialogue with the Australian Maritime College to study the possibility for the countries of the region to utilise this training centre.

III. ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE ON FISHERIES TRAINING

8. In order to gather basic background information on specific fisheries training needs in SPC member countries, a questionnaire was circulated during and after the 16th SPC Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries. This constituted part of a formal evaluation of the SPC/Nelson Polytechnic Pacific Island Fisheries Officer Course, which was carried out in cooperation with the New Zealand Department of Foreign Affairs. However the questionnaire also addressed fisheries training needs in a broader sense, and the 12 responses received provide useful insights into fisheries training priorities as viewed by some states.

9. Regarding the SPC/Nelson Polytechnic Pacific Fisheries Officer Course, questionnaire responses noted a number of subject areas as being of particular value, notably: fishing business practice or economics; refrigeration engineering, installation, maintenance and repair; marine diesel or petrol inboard engine installation, maintenance and repair; and on-shore handling, processing and storage of fish. No subjects emerged as being unimportant to member countries; if any subjects needed to be de-emphasised to enable expansion of other parts of the syllabus, questionnaire responses suggest that these should be: fibreglassing; and net repair and construction, reading net plans, ordering netting material, and rope work. One subject area, that of communication skills to enable trainees to act more effectively as extension officers on their return home, was suggested for inclusion in the course.

10. The Secretariats position regarding the Nelson course is that this is a broad foundation course which aims to cover a wide range of practical skills at a fairly basic level. Continuous review procedures have resulted in the development of a balanced syllabus to which we would be reluctant to make major changes unless SPC member countries were dissatisfied with the present course, which does not appear to be the case. The course is not intended to meet requirements for in-depth training in the subject areas covered by the syllabus. We would prefer to design specialised training activities to meet these requirements.

11. As regards such training requirements, the questionnaire responses indicated a broad range of subjects that could be met by specialised short-term training activities as indicated in the list below. These topics are selected from those identified in questionnaire responses, and are not presented in any order of priority. Numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries who indicated the need for training opportunities in each field.

12. Training needs specified in questionnaire responses from 12 SPC member countries:

- a) Engineering
 - Marine engineering (6)
 - Marine engineering (workshop practice) (2)
 - Diesel generators (1)
 - Refrigeration (5)
 - Outboards (6)
 - Welding (2)
- b) Vessels
 - Boat building (1)
 - Sails (1)
 - Maintenance (2)
 - Fibreglassing (1)
- c) Fishing subjects
 - Vessel handling/operation (2)
 - Navigation and chartwork (3)
 - Safety (1)
 - Fishing operations (4)
 - Gear design and development (3)
 - Fishing economics (2)
 - Business management (7)

- d) Post-harvest
 - Fish handling and processing (7)
 - Fish handling and processing (factory experience) (1)
 - Fish quality control (4)
 - Fish marketing (3)
- e) Communications
 - Extension service management (1)
 - Communication skills (6)
- f) Research/management
 - Data collection and recording (1)
 - Statistics (2)
 - Stock management (1)
 - Fisheries planning (1)
- g) Other
 - Selection of equipment (1)

13. Some of these subject areas are of interest to only a small number of countries and would probably be best addressed by training activities organised at a national or sub-regional level. Others are of a wider concern, as indicated by the number of countries referring to them in the questionnaire responses. These have been assigned to first and second priority categories on this basis, as follows. Subjects not included in this list are assumed to be third priority on a regional basis (though not necessarily for individual countries).

First priority

- a) Marine engineering
- b) Outboard engineering
- c) Refrigeration engineering
- d) Business management
- e) Fish handling and processing
- f) Communication skills

Second priority

- g) Navigation and chartwork
- h) Fishing operations
- i) Fishing gear design and development
- j) Fish quality control
- k) Fish marketing

14. No clear indications emerged as to the means of training considered best suited to these subject areas. Some countries considered overseas training courses most appropriate, some in-country courses, and others on-the-job training, depending on specific requirements.

15. The priorities emerging from this survey are consistent with those identified during previous SPC Regional Technical Meetings on Fisheries, and at other gatherings of fisheries personnel from the region. Consequently, training activities to address some of these priority training requirements are already established, or are being developed. The 20-week SPC/UNDP Regional Refrigeration Training Course held in Rarotonga addressed item (c), while the new post of Fish Handling and Processing Officer is designed to enable development of training programs relating to items (e), (j) and (k). Some inter-country study visits, involving attachment of trainees to master fishermen of the Deep Sea Fisheries Development Project, have already taken place, and these variously address items (i) and (j).

IV. SUMMARY

16. In summary, recent efforts to document the regions fisheries training requirements indicate the following priority activities:

First Priority

A comprehensive review of existing fisheries training opportunities available to Pacific Island countries and territories, and the dissemination of this information among them;

A more in-depth assessment of the current and projected fisheries training requirements of individual SPC member countries and territories; and

Development of training programmes in marine engineering, outboard engineering, refrigeration, business management, fish handling and processing, and communication skills.

Second Priority

Development of training programmes in navigation and chartwork, fishing operations, fishing gear design and development, fish quality control, and fish marketing; and

Development of training programmes in other areas as identified by SPC member countries.

17. The extent to which additional attention is directed towards these priority areas, and to other subject fields, by the SPC Regional Fisheries Training Project, will be largely determined by the recommendations arising from this meeting.

APPENDIX 1

PARTIAL LIST OF FISHERIES TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES
AVAILABLE TO SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDERS

(Reference: Shepard and Clark, 1984)

- (i) SPC/Nelson Polytechnic Pacific Island Fisheries Officer Course, Nelson, N.Z.;
- (ii) IMR/USP Diploma in Tropical Fisheries, Suva, Fiji;
- (iii) National training courses in navigation, seamanship, marine engineering and technology at colleges in Honiara, Solomon Islands; Suva, Fiji; and Lae, Papua New Guinea;
- (iv) Overseas practical fisheries courses, including those offered by Japan, U.K., and Korea;
- (v) Overseas degree courses available at USP in Suva, Fiji, and in many non-regional countries including New Zealand, Australia, Japan, U.K., and U.S.A. (These may not necessarily be specific to the fisheries field.);
- (vi) Workshops sponsored, usually as 'one-off' activities, by organisations such as SPC and FFA (with financial support from organisations such as UNDP/FAD).
- (vii) Short-term training courses, e.g. the SPC/UNDP Regional Refrigeration Course;
- (viii) On-site training such as that provided by the master fishermen of the SPC Deep Sea Fisheries Development Project;
- (ix) A further category, not specifically referred to in the report, is that of inter-country study visits whereby trainees travel to other countries of the region for on-the-job training or experience in established activities. This type of study visit is funded by a variety of aid donors, including SPC, FAO/UNDP, and SPEC.