

A pathway to effective regional ocean governance in the Pacific region:

Integrated ocean management



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Executive summary

There is a growing wave of newly developed national ocean policies in the Pacific region. These policies demonstrate a move to overhaul ocean governance and better coordinate and harmonise the management of ocean activities across multiple sectors. The development of these policies is a response to the growing recognition that the existing state of the oceans is a result of sectoral management that has failed to account for the cumulative impacts of a plethora of competing and overlapping ocean activities. The recognition of this under international and regional ocean policies has seeped down into national policies. At the international level, this includes the *United Nations Law of the Sea Convention*, *Agenda 2030*, especially *Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water*, and the *UN Decade for Ocean Science*. At the regional level, this is linked to the *Pacific Island Regional Ocean Policy* and the *Framework for the Pacific Oceanscape (FPO)*.

One key theme identified in reviewing and analysing these national ocean policies is a growing move towards integrated ocean management (IOM). IOM is a holistic, ecosystem-based and knowledge-based approach to planning and managing the use of ocean space, with the goal of balancing various uses and needs to achieve a sustainable ocean economy, along with healthy ecosystems. IOM moves away from prevailing norms of siloed and sectoral ocean governance systems and instead looks to a more coordinated and harmonised approach to ocean management. At the regional level, the FPO has been the primary policy proponent of IOM, where it was seen as a key objective to achieve the goal for a Pacific oceanscape.

The FPO's emphasis on IOM has filtered down to national ocean policies, and the necessary ingredients for successful IOM implementation have accompanied this. These include:

- institutional structures to support IOM;
- ocean data and the use of science; and
- stakeholder and community engagement.

The national ocean policies analysed for this report all feature the above elements in varying degrees of robustness, as well as implementation status. The first of these policies was launched in 2016, with a spate of new policies developed over just the past two years. These new policies are still being reviewed and implemented and there is a real opportunity to support the implementation process of IOM. These growing developments in ocean governance across the Pacific region also suggest an opportunity to build regional architecture to connect national ocean policy focal points and institutional capacity to strengthen national ocean policy implementation across the region and connect the Blue Pacific.

Background

This report is a product of a consultancy that undertook an analysis of global, regional and national ocean policies and marine management plans of relevance to the Pacific Island region. This analysis feeds into the work of the Pacific Community Centre of Ocean Science (PCCOS) in two key areas.

Key area 1: Support the development of a flagship programme of ocean science for the Pacific region under the UN Decade for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021–2030.

Key area 2: Identify opportunities for a joint approach to integrated regional ocean management in the Pacific region.

Key Area 1 involved analysing national ocean policies in the region and developing a concept programme for submission to the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) in support of its *UN Decade of Ocean Science* initiative that reflected the needs and objectives demonstrated in these policies. This submission was ultimately successful and is currently undergoing implementation and deployment.

The focus of this report is Key Area 2 and identifying opportunities for a joint approach to integrated ocean management in the Pacific region. Two key resources referred to for this purpose are the *Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape*¹ (FPO) and the Blue Paper *Integrated ocean management*.²

This report focuses on two ideas that were selected, in coordination with PCCOS, from five ideas for effective ocean governance in the Pacific Island region.

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- 1 Pratt, C. & Govan, H. (2010). *Our sea of islands our livelihoods our Oceania: Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape: A catalyst for implementation of ocean policy*. <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Framework-for-a-Pacific-Oceanscape-2010.pdf>
 - 2 Winther, J-G. et al. (2020) *Integrated ocean management*. www.oceanpanel.org/blue-papers/integrated-ocean-management

Introduction

Pacific Island countries (PICs) are inextricably linked to the ocean for their livelihoods, economies and Pasifika identities. For centuries, the ocean is what linked Pacific peoples and it is still a central part of their way of life. PICs are blessed with an abundance of marine resources that contribute substantially to their livelihoods, culture and economies, so the protection of these resources is a central part of national and regional policies and also drives the region's international political engagement, such as the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030.

There has been growing rhetoric about the blue economy in the Pacific. While this concept is mired in some confusion, it does provide some opportunities to build a solid foundation. In this report, we look at opportunities for building on this foundation through integrated ocean management, which is featured in existing regional and national ocean policies in the Pacific region.³ Ultimately the work of PCCOS is guided by SPC member states and the findings here are derived from the analysis of national ocean policies in the Pacific region and the trends that follow.

Ocean governance in the Pacific region

Ocean governance in the Pacific region begins with the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS). UNCLOS gives states sovereignty and sovereign rights to manage their 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone. This international agreement forms the backbone of ocean policies by creating the framework for ocean governance, maritime jurisdiction and management. Subsequent implementation agreements, such as the 1994 Agreement on the Implementation of Part XI of UNCLOS and the 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, led to the expansion of UNCLOS to regulate deep-sea mining activities and fisheries management in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The current negotiations on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity are a further expansion of regulation of such activities, with a focus on area-based management tools, environmental impact assessments, marine genetic resources, capacity building and technology transfer.

While UNCLOS provides a global architecture and general framework to which countries of the world adhere, either directly through ratification, international customary law, or implemented via national law, PICs have developed their own regional ocean policies. These include the *Pacific Island Regional Ocean Policy* (PIROP) and the *Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape* (FPO).

³ Pratt, C. & Govan, H. (2010). *Our sea of islands our livelihoods our Oceania: Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape: A catalyst for implementation of ocean policy*. <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Framework-for-a-Pacific-Oceanscape-2010.pdf>

PIROP was endorsed by Pacific Island Forum Leaders in 2002. Its focus is the sustainable use of ocean resources and it was envisioned as a template for PICs to adopt and adapt for their national purposes and context and feed it into their national ocean policies. There was a subsequent framework to assist with implementation, PIROP-ISA but this was replaced with the FPO in 2010. The FPO was seen to work in conjunction with PIROP, and its purpose was to catalyse action and political will to ensure the sustainable development, management and conservation of the diverse ocean and ecosystems within the region. FPO was developed by the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) Marine Sector Working Group (MSWG).

PICs are also supported by a range of regional organisations that serve various functions, from promoting cooperation, trade, and economic development to fisheries management and science. Regional organisations, groupings and entities that make significant contributions to the advancement of regional ocean priorities and the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 include those listed below.

Pacific Islands Forum

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is the region's principal political and economic grouping established in 1971. Its membership comprises the 18 nations of Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

PIF is committed to regionalism and the principal objectives of sustainable development: inclusive and equitable economic growth; strengthened governance, legal, financial and administrative systems; and peace and security for all, as set out by the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.⁴ PIF convenes the annual Pacific leaders' retreat to develop collective responses to regional issues. Decisions by the leaders are outlined in a Forum Communiqué, from which policies are developed and a work programme is prepared.

Pacific Community

The Pacific Community (SPC) is the principal scientific and technical organisation in the Pacific region, supporting development in the region since 1947. SPC is owned and governed by its 26 country and territory members, including Australia, France, and New Zealand. SPC works across more than 20 sectors and includes cross-cutting issues on climate change, disaster risk management, food security, and ocean management.

Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency

The Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) was established in 1979 to help countries sustainably manage their fishery resources. FFA is based in Honiara, Solomon Islands, and

⁴ PIF. (2014). *The Framework for Pacific Regionalism*. <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Framework-for-Pacific-Regionalism.pdf>

is an advisory body providing expertise, technical assistance and other support to its 17 members, who make sovereign decisions about their tuna resources and participate in regional decision-making on tuna management through agencies such as the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) was established in 1993. It promotes cooperation in the Pacific region and provides assistance in order to protect and conserve the environment and to ensure sustainable development for present and future generations. Based in Samoa, SPREP has 26 member governments, including 21 Pacific island countries and territories.

Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific

The Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) was established to improve cooperation, coordination, and collaboration among the various intergovernmental regional organisations and work towards achieving the common goal of sustainable development in the Pacific region. It comprises the above-mentioned regional organisations, amongst others, with the PIF Secretariat as the permanent chair of CROP, as well as its main secretariat support.

The scope of CROP is to provide high-level policy advice and be a forum to collectively respond to and follow up on regional priorities that are prepared from the Forum Communiqué. The annual CROP strategic work agenda sets out how CROP will work together to deliver on Forum Leaders' decisions. The 2021 CROP priorities include sustainable ocean (advocacy and implementation), sea-level rise and maritime zones. Progress is monitored by the CROP heads through quarterly meetings and they provide a progress report to the Forum Leaders at their annual meetings.





The CROP coordination arrangements include task forces and working groups. The four task forces are formal, result-oriented and time-bound and the current architecture includes a task force on international engagement and advocacy for ocean events. The existing eight working groups are informal and ongoing and include the Marine Sector Working Group (MSWG). The MSWG was established in 1997 to facilitate the coordination of regional activities in the development of a regional strategy for the marine sector. This resulted in the Pacific Islands Regional Oceans Policy (PIROP) in 2002⁵ and the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape (FPO) in 2010.⁶ Regional and institutional frameworks and cross-cutting issues touching on the marine sector continue to develop considerably, and current discussions are converging on the development of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner

The Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC) was established under the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and is tasked with supporting the Pacific Ocean Commissioner in its role to strengthen ocean governance, coordination and collaboration among stakeholders. This role also includes tracking progress made with respect to the FPO and regional ocean priorities, the product of which can be found in the 2021 Blue Pacific Ocean Report.⁷ The Pacific Ocean Alliance (POA) was established under OPOC to further improve ocean governance by connecting all ocean players, coordinating the implementation of integrated ocean management and cross-sectoral ocean discussions, and providing high-level attention to ocean priorities and processes in the Pacific region.

Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science

SPC established the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science (PCCOS) in 2017 to provide members with excellence in ocean science, knowledge and innovation and to support the conservation and sustainable use of the Blue Pacific Continent. The PCCOS mission is to be the platform for coordination of ocean science, knowledge and innovation. It will also deliver multi-disciplinary multi-sectoral integrated programming to assist the Pacific Community in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14 and contributing to other SDGs in the emerging framework of the Blue Pacific Continent. In particular, PCCOS aims to deliver integrated scientific services supporting ocean management, governance and observations.

5 PIF. (2005). *Pacific Islands - Regional ocean policy and framework for integrated strategic action*. <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Pacific-Islands-Regional-Ocean-Policy-2002.pdf>

6 Pratt, C. & Govan, H. (2010). *Our Sea of Islands Our Livelihoods Our Oceania: Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape: A catalyst for implementation of ocean policy*. <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Framework-for-a-Pacific-Oceanscape-2010.pdf>

7 OPOC. (2021). *Blue Pacific Ocean Report: A report by the Pacific Ocean Commissioner to the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders*. <https://opocbluepacific.net/publications/#blue-pacific-ocean-report>

National ocean policies

The FPO was a success in that it led to several national ocean policies being developed in the region. These include the policies described below.

1. Vanuatu's *National Ocean Policy*

Vanuatu's *National Ocean Policy: Our ocean, our culture, our people* was launched in May 2016 and was the first of its kind in the region. This policy seeks to achieve an ocean governance framework that supports traditional marine resource management practices and knowledge and manages all agencies with responsibility for maritime and ocean affairs. The three pillars of this policy are ocean values, integration and culture.

2. The *Marae Moana Policy 2016–2020* and the *Marae Moana Act 2017*

In 2016, the *Marae Moana Policy 2016–2020* was launched and in 2017 the *Marae Moana Act* was passed, reinforcing the policy and setting forth supporting structures and mandates. This included the establishment of the Marae Moana Council and the Marae Moana Coordination Office.

Marae Moana is a multiple-use marine park which extends over the entire exclusive economic zone of Cook Islands, an area of 1.9 million square kilometres. It is one of the largest commitments by a single country for integrated management and conservation from ridge to reef and from reef to ocean. Marae Moana was legally designated on 12 July 2017 by the *Marae Moana Act 2017* with the primary purpose of protecting and conserving the "ecological, biodiversity and heritage values of the Cook Islands marine environment."⁸

3. Solomon Islands *National Ocean Policy*

In November 2018, Solomon Islands launched its *Solomon Islands National Ocean Policy* with the aim of defining and strengthening integrated ocean governance at various levels, and across sectors, to achieve national, regional and global ocean-related sustainable development goals on socio-economic development, food security, climate change resilience and adaptation, environmental protection and conservation of biodiversity, protection from natural disasters, and national security.

4. Samoa *Ocean Strategy 2020–2030*

The *Samoa Ocean Strategy 2020–2030* was launched in 2020 and aims to foster a long-term vision to guide the sustainable and integrated management of Samoa's ocean and its resources. It serves as a guiding framework and tool for integrated management of its sovereign waters and all marine resources. It also embraces global and regional initiatives, science-based knowledge and traditional knowledge as key management tools and resources.

⁸ §3(1) *Marae Moana Act 2017*, Cook Islands

5. Papua New Guinea *National Oceans Policy 2020–2030*

In 2020 Papua New Guinea launched its *National Oceans Policy 2020–2030*. This policy is geared to be a framework that develops and establishes an integrated ocean management system nationally. It also seeks to develop regional and international cooperation and collaboration in areas beyond national jurisdiction. It further notes opportunities for PNG to link to the UN Ocean Decade and become a key stakeholder of the ocean decade within the Pacific region.

6. Republic of Fiji *National Ocean Policy 2020–2030*

In 2021, Fiji finalised the *Republic of Fiji National Ocean Policy 2020–2030*. Following the launch of the *policy*, the *Climate Change Act* was enacted into law to support the implementation of the policy and any subsequent review and updates. The policy aims to support, synergise, promote and establish best practice standards for ocean management within the government and all relevant stakeholder groups, including community groups, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

Overview of Pacific Ocean governance and policies

Figure 1 describes the broader Pacific Ocean governance framework.

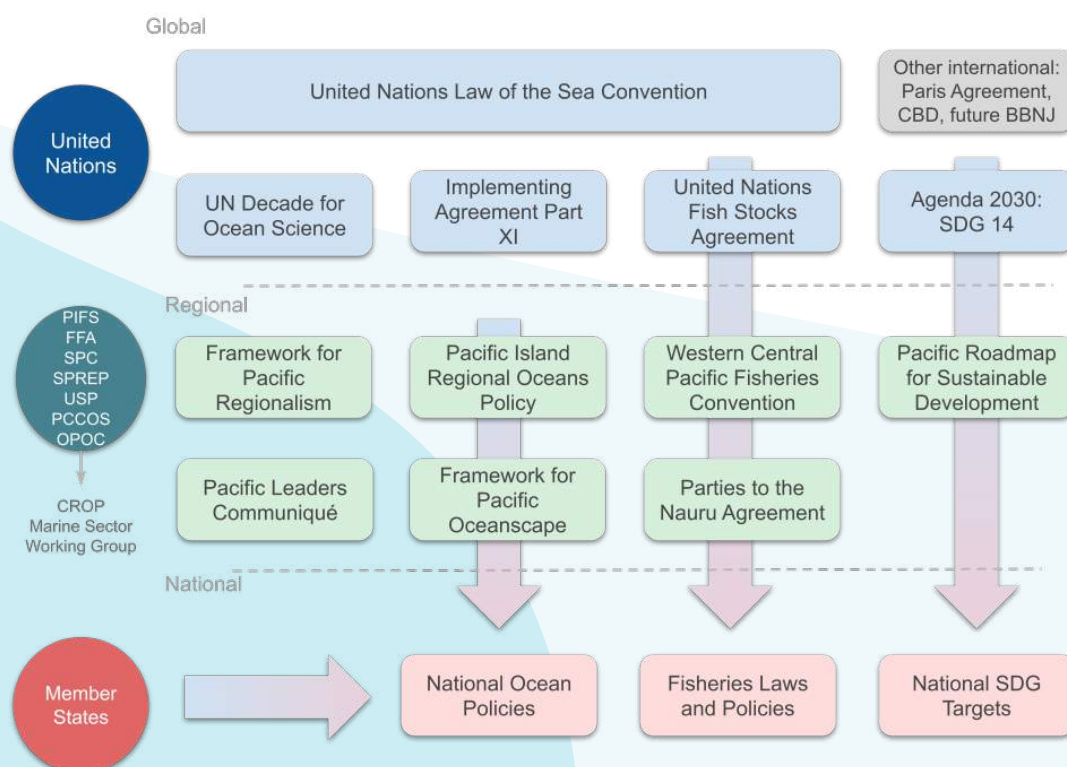


Figure 1. Pacific Ocean governance framework

Integrated ocean management and the blue economy

There has been a myriad of development terms and concepts related to the ocean in the Pacific region. The focus of this report is on integrated ocean management (IOM) and the blue economy and their links to regional frameworks and how they might work within the Pacific context. Ultimately, the goal should be looking at the needs of the Pacific people and relevant contexts and see if these concepts are suitable and fit for purpose.

Our oceans, and the communities that rely on them, are facing diverse, interconnected, and cumulative threats, such as climate change, overfishing and pollution. IOM is a form of ocean governance that is designed to address these threats in a coordinated and harmonised way, while ensuring equitable distribution of resources and resolving conflicts between stakeholders.

IOM “is a holistic, ecosystem-based and knowledge-based approach to planning and managing the use of ocean space, with the goal of balancing various uses and needs to achieve a sustainable ocean economy along with healthy ecosystems.”⁹ IOM moves away from prevailing norms of siloed and sectoral ocean governance systems. For example, when Solomon Islands was planning its national ocean policy, it convened officers from 12 national ministries who formed a working group dubbed “Ocean12” to develop the *Solomon Islands National Ocean Policy* with a view to building on existing policies and sectoral priorities, including those of fisheries, the environment, and development planning.¹⁰ This convening of multi-sectoral government officials was a move towards breaking down silos and working across ministries and agencies with the vision of integrating ocean management.

Through the Pacific Islands Forum, the Pacific region already has a collaborative and integrated ocean management system in place. The *Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy* (PIROP) promotes “sustainable development, management and conservation of marine and coastal resources in the Pacific region” through five guiding principles based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Subsequent strategies to operationalise PIROP, such as the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Framework for Integrated Strategic Action (PIROF-ISA), have stressed that implementation should occur through ecosystem-based and integrated approaches to management, and through the application of marine spatial planning tools. Principle 2 of PIROF-ISA focuses on sustainably developing and managing the ocean resources and outlines a specific strategic action that includes adopting “an integrated transboundary



⁹ Winther, J-G., M. Dai, et al. (2020). *Integrated ocean management*. World Resources Institute. <https://oceanpanel.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/BP14%20IOM%20Full%20Paper%20Final%20Web.pdf>

¹⁰ Keen, M. and Masu, R. (2019) ‘The Blue Pacific in Action: Solomon Islands’ National Ocean Policy’.



approach, through harmonised institutional arrangements, including existing international and regional agreements, to managing marine ecosystems for long-term sustainable benefit”.

The *Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape* (FPO), which effectively replaced PIROF-ISA, works to strengthen PIROP, particularly through stronger provisions in the areas of coordination, resourcing and implementation. One of the FPO’s three objectives is “integrated ocean management that responds to nations’ aspirations and priorities.” The FPO does not, however, demonstrate how to implement integrated ocean management, and this report suggests some ways to do this.

It is clear that national ocean policies should not exist in a vacuum. Rather, there should be some level of coordination and cross-pollination of ideas. This touches on broader Pacific goals attributed to Pacific regionalism but also the need to listen and learn from each other. In reviewing national ocean policies from across the region, a clear theme emerged and that was a growing indication that there was a desire to apply an integrated approach to ocean management.

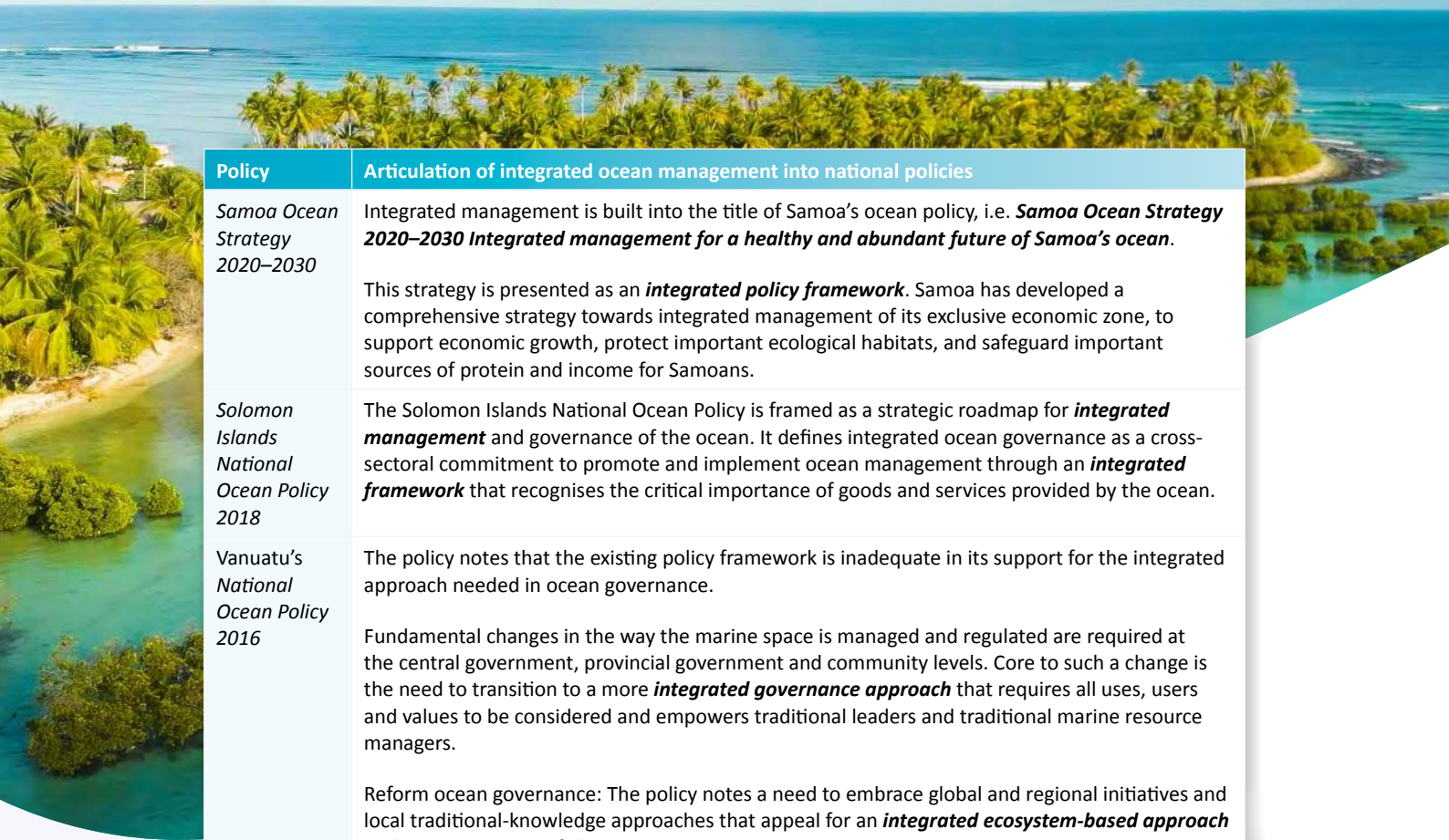
Integrated ocean management in Pacific national ocean policies

Each of the national ocean policies explicitly mentions integrated ocean management. Table 1 shows where these policies highlight it.

Table 1. Ocean management integration in national ocean policies

Policy	Articulation of integrated ocean management into national policies
Cook Islands <i>Marae Moana Policy 2016–2020</i>	<p>Integrated management is noted as a principle. Principles in the Marae Moana Policy are stated to be applied to all decisions and actions relating to the Marae Moana.</p> <p>Principle 6. Integrated Management: The integration of decision-making across all relevant stakeholders (government, non-government and external partners) should be pursued in the operationalisation of the Marae Moana.</p>
Fiji’s <i>National Ocean Policy 2020–2030</i>	<p>Fiji is committed to the integrated management of its ocean and marine resources. The policy provides a holistic framework for integrated action and partnerships on all Fiji’s national, regional and global commitments relating to the ocean. The policy frames a progression to the integrated management of all Fiji’s ocean by 2030, to ensure the resilience and sustainability of marine ecosystems while maximising opportunities for socio-economic benefits.</p>
PNG’s <i>National Ocean Policy 2020–2030</i>	<p>The NOP framework is based on the principle of integrated ocean management (IOM). There is now consensus amongst the mainline organisations in different government ministries for a paradigm shift to embrace a national oceans policy based on the IOM concept. The implementation of programmes and activities under the principles of good governance for an IOM policy must include traditional ocean communities and strive for gender, inter-generational and geographic diversity amongst stakeholders. An IOM policy is a national strategic policy document that sets out a planned-system wide approach to ocean management; and covers all sectors and all levels of government in an integrated mode of planning, developing, and implementation of policies.</p> <p>An IOM policy is not confined to the country’s EEZ but also extends beyond its jurisdiction.</p>

Continued on next page...




Policy	Articulation of integrated ocean management into national policies
<i>Samoa Ocean Strategy 2020–2030</i>	<p>Integrated management is built into the title of Samoa’s ocean policy, i.e. <i>Samoa Ocean Strategy 2020–2030 Integrated management for a healthy and abundant future of Samoa’s ocean.</i></p> <p>This strategy is presented as an <i>integrated policy framework</i>. Samoa has developed a comprehensive strategy towards integrated management of its exclusive economic zone, to support economic growth, protect important ecological habitats, and safeguard important sources of protein and income for Samoans.</p>
<i>Solomon Islands National Ocean Policy 2018</i>	<p>The Solomon Islands National Ocean Policy is framed as a strategic roadmap for <i>integrated management</i> and governance of the ocean. It defines integrated ocean governance as a cross-sectoral commitment to promote and implement ocean management through an <i>integrated framework</i> that recognises the critical importance of goods and services provided by the ocean.</p>
<i>Vanuatu’s National Ocean Policy 2016</i>	<p>The policy notes that the existing policy framework is inadequate in its support for the integrated approach needed in ocean governance.</p> <p>Fundamental changes in the way the marine space is managed and regulated are required at the central government, provincial government and community levels. Core to such a change is the need to transition to a more <i>integrated governance approach</i> that requires all uses, users and values to be considered and empowers traditional leaders and traditional marine resource managers.</p> <p>Reform ocean governance: The policy notes a need to embrace global and regional initiatives and local traditional-knowledge approaches that appeal for an <i>integrated ecosystem-based approach</i> to the management of the ocean.</p>

The advent of national ocean policies across the Pacific region reflects the growing adoption of the *Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape* (FPO). When the FPO came out in 2010 it had the following to say about national ocean policies: «At the national level, little progress has been made in respect of embracing an integrated approach to ocean governance, with no Pacific Island country considering development of a national ocean policy and no national institutions or agencies dedicated to coordinating ocean affairs.” While the advent of national ocean policies is a definitive step in the right direction, implementation is still slow, especially as it relates to integrated ocean management. It should be noted that many of these national ocean policies were developed only in the last few years and therefore perhaps it is a matter of time before implementation takes root.

The blue economy

There has been growing rhetoric of the blue economy globally, and there is often confusion around what it means and how it might work. Central to this confusion is the many ways in which it is employed. Broadly speaking, the blue economy is the balance of three key elements: societal and cultural equity, ecological sustainability and resilience, and economic development. It is economic development that appears to be the primary draw for many policymakers, although some scholars have astutely noted that this is not the defining feature of what the blue economy means to PICs.

For PICs, the blue economy refers to the sustainable management of ocean resources to support livelihoods, more equitable benefit-sharing, and ecosystem resilience in the face of climate change, destructive fishing practices, and pressures from sources external to the fisheries sector. In the Pacific region, elements of the blue economy are already featured



in traditional forms of marine management, as well as regional policies such as PIROP and the FPO. A key feature of the blue economy in the context of the Pacific region is the substantial deference to social and cultural sustainability. This is seen through prevalent customary marine tenure systems and strong traditional ties to the marine environment. Traditional knowledge is also seen as a key feature to weave into the Pacific region's blue economy.

Furthermore, it is important to balance the “economy” in the blue economy against sustainability, which is a key function of the Pacific region's commitment under UNCLOS, SDG 14, the SAMOA Pathway and the FPO.

Where integrated ocean management and the blue economy intersect

IOM and the blue economy are not competing development terms but rather they are complementary. IOM is the broader governance framework with the goal of preserving the long-term health and resilience of marine ecosystems while improving livelihoods and supporting the blue economy by managing ocean resources in an integrated way.

The goal of IOM is to integrate and balance various ocean uses and environmental aspects to obtain a healthy and wealthy ocean, while the blue economy goal is sustainable use of ocean resources to deliver sustainable livelihoods and an economy that is in synergy with the ocean's resources. A foundation for a blue economy is healthy, productive and resilient ocean and marine ecosystems – and integrated ocean management works to achieve this.

Therefore, as PICs discuss incorporating the blue economy into their policy discussions, they should also acknowledge that their policies demonstrate an opportunity to set a foundation via IOM and its implementation.

It should be noted that Pacific Islands Forum members are currently developing the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*, which is envisioned as a policy framework that is ocean-centric and recognises the need to move away from working in silos and move towards an integrated approach that takes into account the links across the various pillars of development policies to enhance growth, well-being and sustainable development.¹¹ The *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* is positioned as an instrumental policy tool for the next two decades and will play a role in guiding the regional agenda.

¹¹ PIF (2021) *Forum Leaders ocean statement 2021*. Available at: https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Oceans-Statement_v8.pdf

Implementing integrated ocean management

Implementing IOM is specific to the region, country and context in which it is situated but lessons can be drawn from existing examples. The recent High Level Blue Paper on Integrated Ocean Management undertook an analysis of several IOM case studies and synthesised their results into a succinct list of the components that defined success.¹² These components include:

- institutional structures;
- ocean and coastal data and use of science; and
- engaging stakeholders and local communities.

1. Institutional structures

Legal institutional and governance structures are important for providing direction for IOM within a nation and its implementation across multiple sectors such as fisheries, the environment and mining. The absence of clearly legislated roles in the implementation of IOM can lead to conflict, uncertainty and low implementation. National ocean policies in the Pacific region have recognised the need for strong cross-sectoral institutions with the mandate to implement IOM. For example, Vanuatu's *National Ocean Policy* notes that the existing policy framework is inadequate for supporting the integrated approach needed for ocean governance. It further adds that fundamental changes are required in the way the marine space is managed and regulated and that, central to this, is the need to transition to a more integrated governance approach that supports traditional marine resource management, as well as government-led management that requires all uses, users and values to be considered.

Anecdotal evidence of institutional structures within the governments interviewed indicates a need for clear funding streams and legal mandates. Some countries are working towards reforming their ocean sectors and drafting legislation to reorganise and harmonise fisheries and environment ministries into a consolidated ministry of oceans. However, this is limited to one or two PICs and the timeline for these changes is unclear.

Fiji's *National Ocean Policy* for example established its National Ocean Policy Steering Committee (NOPSC) under the policy. The NOPSC has oversight responsibilities but, while the policy provides the role and function of the NOPSC, this was not effective until the *Climate Change Act 2021* legislated and empowered it to fill its mandate role and function. For many other NOPs across the region, this is a gap that still exists.

Table 2 captures the institutional components of the analysed national ocean policies.

¹² Winther, J-G. *et al.* (2020) *Integrated ocean management*. www.oceanpanel.org/blue-papers/integrated-ocean-management

Table 2. Institutional structures

Policy	Institutional structures in the policies
Cook Islands <i>Marae Moana Policy 2016–2020</i>	<p>The policy identifies the Marae Moana Coordination Office within the Office of the Prime Minister and the Marae Moana Council as a key institution with policy mandates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Marae Moana Council ensures that the policy is achieving its objectives and may establish committees to address specific issues. • The Marae Moana Coordination Office is responsible for the implementation of the policy and the development of the action plan and delivering progress reports.
Fiji's National Ocean Policy 2020–2030	<p>The NOP will be managed and administered by the Climate Change and International Cooperation Division of the Ministry of Economy. Oversight responsibilities ensuring general support of the NOP and providing insight into policy reform processes will fall under the purview of the National Ocean Policy Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from ministries, NGOs, the private sector and agencies.</p> <p>Fiji's <i>Climate Change Act</i> launched in 2021 legislated the official establishment of the NOPSC, its composition, powers and responsibilities.</p>
PNG National Ocean Policy 2020–2030	<p>The National Ocean Office is identified as the institution that monitors and coordinates stakeholder activities and competing interests. The NOP proposes three governance committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Ministerial Oceans Committee (MOC) (political oversight) will make overall decisions on policy development; • the National Oceans Committee (NOC) (steering committee) will be in an advisory role to the MOC and will establish subcommittees to work on specific technical issues as and when required; and • the Technical Working Group (cross-cutting and competing interests) will deal specifically with technical cross-cutting issues, enforcement powers and compliance matters. It is envisaged that most of the cooperative mechanisms and processes will be developed by the Coral Triangle Center with appropriate recommendations to the NOC for endorsement.
Samoa Ocean Strategy 2020–2030	<p>The strategy sets the creation of a national ocean steering committee (NOSC) as key implementation. The NOSC responsibilities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordinating, monitoring and evaluating implementation; • identifying and supporting lead agencies responsible for the various aspects of implementation, including planning, consultation, monitoring, compliance, enforcement and review; • establishing clear lines of communication to support coordination and engagement of all stakeholders at all levels; • clarifying, where necessary, responsibilities that are attributed to the different agencies dealing with ocean affairs; and • encouraging participation of both public and private institutions, non-governmental and governmental organisations, and civil societies in implementation.
Solomon Islands <i>National Ocean Policy 2018</i>	<p>The Ocean 12 is the national steering committee for the Solomon Islands' integrated ocean governance efforts. The Ocean12 is a permanent secretary-level steering committee and comprises the twelve ministries with the most direct influence in the use and management of the Solomon Islands' ocean.</p> <p>The policy prescribes further institutional development through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing an overarching national legal framework with an appropriate institutional body for integrated ocean governance; and • harmonising existing legislation to effectively implement integrated ocean governance.
Vanuatu's <i>National Ocean Policy 2016</i>	<p>The Vanuatu NOP identifies the National Ocean Council as the agency responsible for the coordination role among all national agencies, with a responsibility for the management of ocean space and resources. There is at present an Oceans Office that is the Secretariat for the NOP.</p>

2. Ocean and coastal data and use of science.

A key tool for policy making is having the right science and data in a suitable format for making decisions. The resources and capacity for this component are sorely lacking in many of these policies and demonstrate a clear opportunity for development across the region. The UN Decade for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) demonstrates an opportunity to accelerate the use of ocean science and deliver capacity-building to achieve sustained action. SPC’s Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science has a linked project for this purpose and would be an integral conduit to support members implementing IOM as espoused by their national ocean policies.

The table below captures the ocean data and science components of the analyzed national ocean policies.

Table 3. Ocean data and science in national ocean policies

Policy	Ocean data and use of science
Cook Islands <i>Marae Moana Policy 2016–2020</i>	The policy acknowledges that there is limited understanding of the marine environment and inadequate focus of resources on marine research in general. Research and monitoring are identified as key objectives that will foster a culture of investigation and science.
Fiji’s <i>National Ocean Policy 2020–2030</i>	Sound science and evidence-based decision-making are principles of the NOP. It notes that decision-making will use the best available data, research and analysis. Best available data refers to the most accurate and up-to-date data available to decision-makers in Fiji. Relevant information will range from traditional and women’s community knowledge to modern or innovative mapping technologies.
PNG’s <i>National Ocean Policy 2020–2030</i>	The NOP acknowledges that improving the knowledge and understanding of marine and coastal processes as a prerequisite for protecting the marine environment and ecosystems and for supporting sustainable economic opportunities from ocean resources. Science will provide the input for policy makers in pursuing development options, and will benefit society in terms of weather forecasting, climate change and prevention of natural disasters. The NOP notes the need for a concerted effort to develop and apply ocean science and marine technology in PNG in order to support evidence-based decisions and actions in the sustainable use of the ocean and its resources.
<i>Samoa Ocean Strategy 2020–2030</i>	Limited knowledge and data are identified as threats, specifically linked to the integration of traditional knowledge (TK) and modern ocean science. The strategy provides that knowledge and data are fundamental for informing management decisions. The strategy identifies objectives to increase awareness and capacity-building, that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> by 2023, all communities and nationally based academic institutions are involved in TK and contemporary marine science data acquisition and analysis; by 2027, 100% of students in primary and secondary schools have engaged in TK and contemporary marine science education; by 2028, 100% of students and youth of schools have deeper knowledge, connection and respect for Samoa’s marine environment; and by 2028, 100% of communities have increased understanding of traditional knowledge and modern marine ecology.
<i>Solomon Islands National Ocean Policy 2018</i>	A key guiding principle of the policy is the need for science and research. It provides that decision-making is to be supported by best available scientific evidence for proper, effective and efficient management of resources. Another related guiding principle is ecosystem-based management. The policy notes that, to achieve sustainable development, there is a need to balance ecological, economic and social priorities and objectives, with a primary focus on maintaining ecosystem structure and functioning.
Vanuatu’s <i>National Ocean Policy 2016</i>	The Vanuatu NOP is built on a foundation of ecosystem-based management. It notes that decision-makers should be able to obtain and understand relevant science and traditional information in a way that facilitates sustainable use of marine resources. It further notes a policy action of promoting formal and informal training and capacity building for scientists, technicians, professionals and school students at various levels in marine science, marine affairs and related disciplines.

3. Stakeholder and community engagement

In developing integrated ocean management, it is key to engage with local communities and stakeholders. The ocean is a central fixture of Pacific culture and livelihoods and therefore co-designing ocean solutions and opportunities is key for successful implementation.

In the Pacific national ocean policies, there is a strong cultural and traditional element that reflects the importance of this in ocean management. In the *Solomon Islands National Ocean Policy*, culture and tradition are enshrined in several principles. It notes: *“Respect and acknowledge customary rights and traditional knowledge and decision-making structures: This policy aims to uphold and reinforce traditional owners’ values, knowledge and management systems.”*



Table 4 captures the stakeholder and community components of the analysed national ocean policies.

Table 4. Stakeholder and community engagement in policies

Policy	Stakeholder and community engagement
Cook Islands <i>Marae Moana Policy 2016–2020</i>	Community participation is a highlighted principle within the policy. The policy further notes the participation by all stakeholders in the planning and implementation processes, which incorporate information exchange, consultation, respect for differing points of view, recognition of culture and traditions, equitable access to opportunities, easily understood and openly justified processes and the shared ownership of responsibility.
Fiji's <i>National Ocean Policy 2020–2030</i>	The NOP identifies meaningful public participation and transparent, accountable and integrated government decision-making, as two key principles. For the former, it provides that the knowledge, skills, perspectives, and needs of ocean stakeholders will be included fairly in decision-making processes. For the latter, it notes that government decision-making processes will feature meaningful, informed and participative input from a range of stakeholders.
PNG <i>National Ocean Policy 2020–2030</i>	An overarching objective of the NOP is to strengthen cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders in its implementation. Stakeholders are included in planning processes and decision-making for marine spatial planning. Strategic actions for governance and management include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of the stakeholders in ocean governance with an emphasis on an inclusive rights-based and generational approach as the underlying or foundation of the NOP; • identification of the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in ocean governance; • identification of the mechanism for coordination, communication and cooperation among stakeholders; and • noting that, within the national legal context, there is recognition of custom and traditional knowledge.
<i>Samoa Ocean Strategy 2020–2030</i>	The policy is intended to support Samoan stakeholders to effectively manage, conserve and ensure long-standing economic, subsistence and cultural benefits from the ocean into the future. The policy notes that, for it to be a success, it will require collaboration and partnership across all government ministries, districts and communities, NGOs, development partners, as well as key private sector stakeholders.
Solomon Islands <i>National Ocean Policy 2018</i>	Transparency, public participation and public trust are guiding principles. The policy notes that processes in decision-making shall be accountable, transparent, easily understood and shall include public participation in, and influence over, planning and decisions as far as possible. The policy acknowledges that marine resources, including marine space, belong to the people and are held in trust by the government for present and future generations. The policy acknowledges customary rights, traditional knowledge and decision-making structures. The policy aims to uphold and reinforce traditional owners' values, knowledge and management systems.
Vanuatu's <i>National Ocean Policy 2016</i>	The NOP recognises the need for stakeholder engagement. It provides that the National Ocean Council shall establish lines of communication and consultation with stakeholders. Chiefs and traditional leaders are acknowledged as having the most direct control over the use and management of nearshore resources. Local communities are encouraged to participate in planning and management. Civil society and the private sector are also noted as key stakeholders.

The above tables demonstrate that the national ocean policies in the Pacific region have, at least on paper, the features needed to achieve successful integrated ocean management. It is always important, however, to link this to practice and how these policies are being implemented and what gaps are presenting themselves during implementation.

Associated needs, gaps and opportunities

Pacific Island countries are largely dependent on the ocean for their livelihoods and economic growth and the ocean is also a central feature of their cultural identities. The ocean faces stresses, however, driven by our need for food, energy, transportation and recreation, and this has led to unprecedented pressures on the ocean that are further amplified by climate change, loss of biodiversity and pollution. The need for better governance of human activities in the ocean has been widely recognised for years.

1. The lack of science and knowledge in decision-making and capacity-building

PICs are blessed with a wealth of ocean resources, but large maritime jurisdictions with conversely low levels of resources and science make science-based decision-making almost impossible.

Given the holistic, multi-sectoral and cumulative nature of IOM, there needs to be a corresponding level of science and data to guide decision-making. For example, designing a management plan for a reef system will require an understanding of the state of the reef systems, who the stakeholders are, what stressors affect the reef, how these all interact and the cumulative effect of the users and stressors on the ecosystem.

A gap at many national levels is the lack of coordination within agencies, as well as the requisite departmental lead and science personnel to undertake these types of studies.

A common refrain from many government agencies is a lack of resources, including capacity. With a growing move towards IOM, PICs require more capacity to undertake the science and implementation of their national ocean policies.

The UN Decade for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) demonstrates an opportunity to accelerate the use of ocean science and deliver capacity-building to achieve sustained action. SPC's Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science has a linked project for this purpose and would be an integral conduit to support members implementing IOM as espoused by their national ocean policies by supporting the development of science and data products for decision-making, as well as capacity-building training for government officials. Efforts to enhance scientific and regulatory proficiency, as well as institutional and collaborative capability, is key for the successful implementation of IOM.

2. Develop regulatory frameworks

National ocean policies provide a policy framework with which to begin efforts toward achieving IOM. In some jurisdictions, however, the lack of clear institutional appointment and mandate makes it difficult to work across sectors that are likely to have well established institutions and a clear hierarchy. Furthermore, policy frameworks can often fail to clearly allocate funds with which to commence implementation and organisation.

A gap that is clearly emergent is the lack of legislative mandates for IOM that appoints a legally recognised entity to support the coordination and implementation of IOM activities. Developing regulatory and legislative support for IOM and its implementing agencies would provide the impetus and mandate to accelerate IOM deployment.

3. Engaging stakeholders

A solely top-down approach to IOM has been shown to be ineffective. There is a need to actively engage communities and leverage local and traditional knowledge in building projects and achieving IOM. Working collaboratively with both a top-down and bottom-up approach achieves an equitable solution and community buy-in.

To achieve sustainability in the uses of the ocean, including the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, it is critical to incorporate the insights, ownership and engagement of local stakeholders. National ocean policies that feature IOM will not work without implementing sustainable projects at the community level.

4. Promoting public private partnerships

To achieve IOM, there is a need to promote public private partnerships. With the emergent blue economy, there is a need to leverage these relationships, while ensuring the balance between societal and cultural equity, ecological sustainability and resilience, and economic development.

These partnerships can also promote sustainable ocean-centric businesses that demonstrate the promised benefits of IOM, i.e. healthy, productive and resilient marine ecosystems.

5. Develop adaptive solutions

The ocean is dynamic in nature and this dynamism is further amplified by climate change. Many parts of the Pacific region are already suffering from the effects of climate change, especially low-lying atoll states, where coastal communities and even entire populations are threatened. Climate projections suggest that forward-looking, adaptive solutions, where risk is explicitly considered, will become an even more important element of IOM.

Programme identification

In reviewing Pacific regional and national ocean policies and literature related to IOM, the Pacific Integrated Ocean Management Programme was developed. Its goals, strategic objectives and component projects and outputs are shown in Table 5.



Table 5. The Pacific Integrated Ocean Management Programme

Pacific Integrated Ocean Management Programme			
Goals	<p>1. Implementation of integrated ocean management (including frameworks such as the blue economy) that has been featured in the FPO and NOPs</p> <p>2. Reinvigorate the CROP Marine Sector Working Group to develop a regional integrated ocean management harmonisation and implementation strategy</p>		
Strategic objectives	<i>Institutional structures: Supporting the strengthening of institutional structures for the purpose of IOM</i>	<i>Ocean and coastal data and use of science: Supporting capacity-building for IOM</i>	<i>Stakeholder and community engagement: Need assessments and co-developing community initiatives</i>
Activities	<p>Identify and analyse institutional arrangements within NOP and support member states to strengthen institutional structures, e.g. support legal mandates and funding of institutions</p> <p>Reinvigorate the MSWG of CROP to support the development of a regional IOM strategy</p> <p>Explore opportunities for integrating the blue economy as a tool within IOM</p>	<p>Link the UN Decade for Ocean Science activity with IOM projects.</p> <p>Identify science needs of members and opportunities to package science products for policy makers</p> <p>Develop science products for policy makers, for example, cumulative impacts case study, deep-sea mining impacts.</p>	<p>Identify community sites for case study</p> <p>Community workshops identifying opportunities for community integration into IOM projects</p> <p>Preliminary findings on integrating traditional knowledge into IOM activities/ MSP</p>
Component projects and outputs	<p>Case study: Vanuatu IOM implementation: Strengthening the Oceans Affairs Office.</p> <p>IOM implementation strategy in the context of SDG 14, the UN Decade for Ocean Science and the blue Pacific continent</p> <p>Regional IOM harmonisation workshop and development of regional IOM strategy</p> <p>Blue economy project: Supporting members implement a blue economy project</p>	<p>Study: Identifying member science needs and opportunities for science policy interface</p> <p>Prioritising and consolidating science needs</p> <p>Demonstrate PCCOS' role in delivering IOM science products for member states</p> <p>Deepening member states' monitoring and evaluation of NOP/IOM implementation</p> <p>Blue economy: Using science and data, identify opportunities for blue economy activities.</p> <p>Approaching countries with innovative nature-based solutions.</p>	<p>Study on leveraging and integrating traditional knowledge for IOM. This can include traditional fisheries management such as <i>tabu</i> areas.</p> <p>Develop a mechanism for community-led IOM initiative</p> <p>Blue economy: Support and finance selected community IOM project. Seyccat model.</p> <p>Integrating traditional knowledge and practices</p>

Three broad goals of the Pacific integrated ocean management programme are described below.

1. Lead the implementation of IOM featured in the FPO and NOPs.

This goal was selected because, while the FPO and NOPs note a need for IOM, there is no evidence that there has been successful deployment of IOM. This goal follows a strategic objective that is a key ingredient for IOM success, i.e. robust institutional structures and support need to be in place before leaning on science and engaging the community.

2. Coordinate CROP MSWG on a regional IOM harmonisation and implementation strategy.

In addition to national efforts for national IOM, there is a need for collective action at the regional level. The CROP MSWG was instrumental in guiding the development of the FPO and, while it has lain dormant in recent years, it serves a valuable function in developing policy objectives. The role of the MSWG needs to be reinvigorated to work towards developing regional strategies for IOM harmonisation.

3. Opportunities for further study

In-depth analysis of NOP implementation and tracking against metrics for IOM success. Identifying governance, institutional and resource limitations that prevent successful implementation.

Conclusion

The regional trends in ocean policy development are an encouraging sign, demonstrating a regional commitment to effective ocean management. With many of these policies being developed in just the last two years, there is still a lag in implementation. Indeed, some elements are extremely complex to implement. Integrated ocean management in particular requires an overhauled governance structure across sectors and innovation in institutional arrangements.

However, a successful implementation of integrated ocean management sets a foundation for a blue economy. The blue economy and integrated ocean management are conceptual frameworks and tools that can be incorporated into the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and its implementation.

Additionally, developing strong regional mechanisms via CROP agencies and national governments can lead to robust tracking of national IOM progress, as well as opportunities for a regional IOM architecture. Ultimately, the goal should be incorporating Pacific-driven IOM into national and regional mechanisms. The emergence of the region's blue Pacific continent may be the suitable vehicle for this purpose.

Appendix I. Case study: Vanuatu's National Ocean Policy

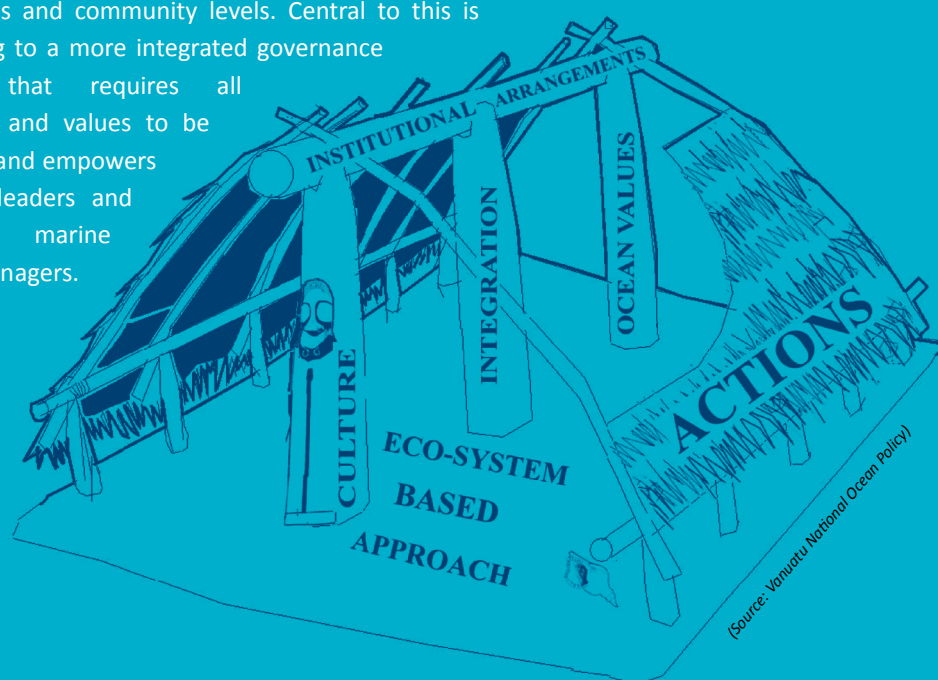
Vanuatu's *National Ocean Policy* was launched in 2016 and was the first of its kind in the region. The policy's vision is "To conserve and sustain a healthy and wealthy ocean for the people and culture of Vanuatu, today and tomorrow."

Its stated purpose is to achieve an ocean governance framework that supports traditional marine resource management practices and knowledge, manages all line agencies with responsibility for maritime and ocean affairs, and harmonises national actions in relation to the marine resources of the Republic of Vanuatu.

This policy builds upon and complements important sectoral-level management plans, policies and strategies. It introduces a new coordination mechanism to assist departments, ministries, users and communities to better work together and complement, versus contradict, each other's efforts. This policy makes a strong acknowledgement of the cultural connection of the ocean to Vanuatu's people.

Vanuatu's policy indicates that the best approach is to support traditional marine resource management and coordinate this management across sectors and resources, while integrating environmental management directly with economic development, fiscal policy and social goals. It does acknowledge that the integration of environmental management is a challenge, because such an approach requires a change in perspective towards valuing the environment as a fundamental input to economic development – and one that must be protected. The NOP observes that building the ocean's resilience increases its ability to withstand negative impacts arising from, for example, climate change and natural disasters.

The NOP notes that fundamental changes in the way Vanuatu's marine space is managed and regulated are required at the central government, provincial governments and community levels. Central to this is transitioning to a more integrated governance approach that requires all uses, users and values to be considered and empowers traditional leaders and traditional marine resource managers.



Vanuatu's NOP's overarching structure for the management of its oceans is framed around the *Nakamal*¹. It forms the framework for this NOP as illustrated in the diagram below.

- The foundation is an ecosystem-based approach to management as envisaged and implemented by our forefathers, using traditional marine resource management systems.
- Three pillars rise from the foundation: (i) the multi-dimensional value of the ocean; (ii) the integration across uses, boundaries, sectors and governance structures; and (iii) Vanuatu's resilient and intrinsic ocean culture.
- The supporting beam across the *Nakamal* carries the overarching institutional arrangements.
- The thatched roof is emblematic of the sectoral and cross-sectoral policy actions that will protect the *Nakamal*.

In implementing its *National Ocean Policy*, Vanuatu has:

- established a National Ocean Office that seeks to focus on integrating efforts of various line ministries under the NOP and whose primary mandate is implementing the NPO;
- committed to a Marine Spatial Plan that is being guided by the Ocean Policy Implementation Sub-Committee – a multi-ministerial sub-committee under to the National Committee on Maritime Boundary Delimitation which reports directly to the Council of Ministers, and is co-chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade and the Ministry for Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology, Geohazards, Environment and Energy and the National Disaster Management Office;
- developed a draft communications plan to demonstrate the progress of the National Ocean Policy; and
- undertaken a stock-take of the implementation of the NOP to gather insights on what is done and what is yet to be done.

Some areas where the NOP could be strengthened are listed below.

- A clear legal framework that outlines the legal mandates and roles of the various ministries in realising the “integrated approach” the NOP sets out
- Ongoing capacity development of staff in implementing the NOP
- Marine spatial planning
- Sustainable financing
- Multi-sectoral decision-making systems and defined institutional arrangements
- Enforcement and compliance
- Stakeholder engagement

PCCOS has begun engagement with the Government of Vanuatu in support of its implementation of the NOP and is undertaking a preliminary assessment of priority needs and resources.

¹ The *Nakamal* is an institution for traditional custom governing systems for Vanuatu
(Source: Vanuatu National Ocean Policy)



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