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Information paper

Outcomes of the LMMA-PEUMP Learning Workshop on scaling-up community-based fisheries management in Melanesia

LMMA Network International

Background

1. The LMMA Network and the Pacific Community (SPC) have partnered to scale-up community-based fisheries management under the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) Programme funded by the European Union and the Government of Sweden. The project works towards implementing their respective policies: the 100 Percent Solution and the Regional Framework on Scaling-Up Community-Based Fisheries Management.This aims to be achieved through piloting cost-effective ways to support as many communities as possible in managing their marine resources.

2. Components of this work include creating opportunities for cross-learning between communities and finding sustainable communication channels for government and communities to share information and feedback on fisheries management including opportunities and challenges from both sides. Currently, the PEUMP Programme is supporting the establishment of community networks, community exchanges, radio programmes, capacity development of local government, information strategies, toolkit development and dissemination through local partners.

The workshop and its objectives

3. The learning workshop took place in the village of Kaselok, home of Ailan Awareness and its Solwara Skul, near Kavieng in the New Ireland Province of Papua New Guinea. The workshop gathered the implementing partners of the PEUMP programme as well as beneficiaries such as provincial fisheries officers and community members. A total of 22 participants shared their experiences over 4 days.

4. The objectives of the workshop were to bring together project partners to:

- learn from three years of activities on scaling up CBFM in the Melanesian countries; and

- identify and develop activities best suited to future scaling up of CBFM in the Melanesian context.

Workshop venue

5. Solwara Skul is a recently built community training centre operated by the local civil society organisation (CSO) Ailan Awareness. John Aini, the founder, has worked for many years to bring forward traditional knowledge and practices in managing the environment instead of adopting foreign practices. Ailan Awareness is supporting communities to manage their environment, and stands or speaks out against harmful practices associated with mining and deforestation.

6. Hosting this workshop at Solwara Skul presented an opportunity for the LMMA Network to not only support but also demonstrate the important work of local CSOs like Ailan Awareness in supporting communities managing their resources and raising their voices.

Setting the scene

What is the scaling challenge?

7. The central question behind scaling CBFM is the following:"How do we support ALL communities in a country to have healthy fisheries and livelihoods?"

8. The key point to understand is that scaling CBFM does not translate to ALL communities setting-up management plans or tabu areas. Rather, that they have access to useful information, so they are aware of the risks to their resources, avoid overharvesting and be able to take management action if necessary.

How can scaling be achieved?

9. There are two dimensions when looking at scaling CBFM: Reaching all communities with at least useful information and sustaining the activities over time. Ways to achieve these dimensions will consider the following factors.

- Cost: Keep the costs low within what may be realistic future budgets;

- Who: work with and strengthen systems/institutions/governance (traditional or government) that work on coastal livelihoods;

- Can they do it themselves? Build capacity among government officers, community champions and communities themselves;

- Social inclusion: information and activities are inclusive so that all stakeholders who depend on coastal resources for their food and livelihoods can be part of the decisions.

The key scaling strategies

10. The regional guidance and experiences point to several cost effective and high impact approaches to supporting communities to exert stewardship over their resources. The suite of approaches or broad themes piloted by partners in the project are:

- disseminating information to communities

- scaling through community champions

- supporting Provincial Fisheries Officers to deliver

- supporting two-way communication between communities and government.

11. The participants explored their experiences in these areas during the workshop.

Lessons learned

On disseminating information to communities

12. A key element of scaling is for all communities to have access to information on their coastal resources and their management. This information should help them to:

- identify issues related to their coastal resources;

- select and implement the most effective management measures to address issues; and

- contact people able to provide extra support.

How do we ensure that the information shared is accurate and relevant?

13. Information is a valuable resource to communities and there is a heavy responsibility to ensure that the most useful information is selected, that it is not misleading for communities and that it reaches them in the best and most useful ways. Some tips include:

- Market test information tools or select existing materials that have been successful (very many exist already).

- Use independent and locally informed technical advisors to ensure correct and accurate information is used (e.g. Technical Advisory Committee in Fiji, PNG and Solomon Is.).

- Government can and should have an information strategy which helps coordinate with partners and ensure regular information reaches all who need it.

How can the information be shared cost-effectively?

14. **Dissemination strategies**: before designing and printing material, it is essential to develop a distribution plan to ensure that materials will be disseminated widely. This plan should include practical touchpoints, partners including government departments, NGOs, CBOs, FBOs, and the private sector to maximise the reach and opportunities for distribution. The plan should outline target audiences, leading partners/champions, information tool and quantities, and where and when.

15. **Social media**: across all countries, social media and especially Facebook and WhatsApp/Messenger are widely used and are a cheap and efficient way not only to disseminate information but also to build commitment towards sustaining coastal resources. Social media is increasingly becoming an effective information tool and budgets should be allocated to maximise reach and engagement.

On community champions

16. Community champions are local volunteers who promote various aspects of CBFM or traditional stewardship. They seem a very promising and rewarding approach but a key aspect of working is to keep their involvement on a voluntary basis but provide them with:

- some minimum funding such as bus/boat fares to help them visit other communities and contact NGOs or PFOs to provide updates;

- information materials that are simple for them to use;

- opportunities to interact with other champions by developing and facilitating networks.

On supporting Provincial Fisheries Officers

17. The remote locations of most communities provide a challenge to people wishing to support them in terms of distance for travel and communications. Strategies for supporting CBFM and coastal fisheries in larger Pacific countries such as those in Melanesia involve decentralised approaches meaning that support staff should be based as near as possible to communities, for example at provincial or district level.

18. Most partners worked towards replacing or positioning PFOs in the CBFM landscape as in most countries they have become invisible due to an absence of funding/support/recognition from central governments which either keeps them inside their offices without the means to work on sustainable resource management or they are burdened only with politically popular projects such as running fisheries stations. As a result of this support, communities received increased level of services from

PFOs through visits that have included material distribution, presentations, community sessions, and support to the establishment/opening of tabus. Attention has been placed on approaches that do not involve direct visits (i.e. indirect reach) where PFOs may reach communities by providing info materials to a community network, to a Ward Officer for then to disseminate. This requires practical tools to be developed, used and sustained where information on community reach, management status and needs are recorded through databases that are easy to operate.

19. Sub-national fisheries officers are key to achieving and sustaining scaled up CBFM but still they remain under-resourced. A good strategy for improving their role and ensuring government adequately supports them should consider 3 steps:

- **Step 1** – Develop and show government a plan where activities are low cost and high value (impact).

- **Step 2** – Position and support PFOs to deliver successfully (workplan, capacity).

- **Step 3** – Capture (document) successful results and celebrate them publicly to ensure government and others appreciate their value.

On supporting 2-way communication between communities and government through community networks

20. Two-way communication is important so that community leaders (men, women and youth) and people fishing for and harvesting marine resources, including marginalised groups, are empowered to meet the following objective: **provide feedback and information to government, raise concerns, contribute to decision-making, inform policy and share experiences with other communities and stakeholders.**

21. Community networks are costly but have several important impacts and deserve support. Experiences with handing over coordination of networks to government have failed, which highlights the need for independent networks that collaborate with government as necessary but are also able to bring issues to government.

22. In order to better disseminate information for maintaining healthy fisheries and implementation of CBFM, the benefits from community networks, if needed, could be improved by:

- carefully selecting the network members using defined criteria

- developing an easy reporting template or mechanisms to track progress by members; and

- ensuring reporting of network meeting discussions by participants to their community.

On the need for monitoring and evaluation

23. The need to track activities and assess if they are meeting expectations was emphasised during the workshop. It is too costly to implement activities that are not leading to any change.

24. It is critical, as a first step, to track where the information is going to see if the dissemination strategies are working. Ultimately, random surveys across countries/provinces will provide data on the impacts of scaling activities on the capacity of each community to identify issues and solutions to implemented including who to contact for support.

Conclusion

25. Scaling CBFM is not an easy task, but this workshop showed that there are many promising ways to contribute to scaling and that the new technologies and the new ways of sharing information they enable, such as smartphones and social media, are a great opportunity to connect people, and share ideas and inspiration to take action where needed while keeping the costs low. In all countries there is a wealth of untapped energy through people and organisations who only need very little support to help spread CBFM in their community, island or province. There are also too many provincial officers who do not have adequate support to be able to assist communities in managing their resources. There are examples of good collaboration between government and communities thanks to active community networks. The workshop showed that all these avenues for scaling need to be trialled and developed in a way that is adapted to each country. Because it is hard to find the perfect mechanism from the outset, scaling requires close tracking of the activities implemented and regular evaluation and adaptation when needed.

Link to full report

https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/parn8