

# **THE MINISTRY OF FISHERIES AND MARINE RESOURCES COASTAL COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

Discussion Document

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By  
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## INTRODUCTION

The Solomon Islands Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) has prepared this discussion document for consultation with coastal communities and all other individuals and organisations that have an interest in coastal and inshore fisheries. This discussion document<sup>1</sup> is about our new Coastal Community Strategy but also looks at the changes needed to fisheries and marine legislation, policy, institutions and governance arrangements. Without these changes the success of our Coastal Community Strategy will be limited, as will our ability to meaningfully support coastal communities.

## BACKGROUND

The people of the Solomon Islands are heavily reliant on their fisheries, especially coastal and inshore, as a source of food security and poverty alleviation. Coastal and inshore fisheries are best known for their artisanal, subsistence and small scale commercial fishing activities and opportunities. This is especially true in the Solomon Islands. The current population of the Solomon Islands is approximately between 550,000 to 580,000<sup>2</sup> people with over a third of the population being under 15. At 2.7% per annum the population growth rate is one of the highest in the world. Over 80% of Solomon Island people live in rural areas and approximately 75% rely on subsistence farming and fishing for their livelihoods<sup>3</sup>.

The rate at which the population is growing and the high dependence on fish and marine resources for food, poverty alleviation, livelihoods<sup>4</sup> and national income poses challenges to fisheries managers about long term ecological and economic sustainability. The immediate questions we need to be asking and seeking answers for are:

- How much fish is needed to feed our people?
- How do we catch and supply it most responsibly?
- How many livelihoods can be supported sustainably from the fisheries sector?
- How do we optimise the contributions of fisheries to economic growth?
- What role does the Government play?
- Is there a need to strengthen fisheries governance, policy and institutions?
- What is the role of the private sector?

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<sup>1</sup> Please note this discussion document has been written to stimulate discussion on high level issues. It is not a technical working paper and therefore does not provide substantive details.

<sup>2</sup> NZAID website has a figure of 550,000 and the CIA: World Factbook has an estimate of 581,318 for July 2008 - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bp.html>

<sup>3</sup> Statistics sourced from NZAID web site - <http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/library/docs/factsheet-solomon-islands-1276920-oct07.pdf> and <http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/programmes/c-solomon-islands.html>

<sup>4</sup> In 1999 fisheries contributed 12.8% to Solomon Islands GDP and were 20% of all exports – Commonwealth of Australia. *Pacific 2020: Challenges and Opportunities for Growth*, May 2006; table 9.2, p.g. 109

## **Our Thinking**

MFMR has been thinking about these questions and the range of possible solutions. Our initial thoughts are outlined in this paper and we would like to work with Solomon Island coastal communities and other key stakeholders to identify agreed solutions. The Coastal Community Strategy is also one of the tools we are using to meet the focus areas<sup>5</sup> and initiatives outlined in our new Strategic Plan – *Stat Niu*. We also have responsibilities under our new Corporate Plan which must be met.

MFMR believes that coastal communities are the best managers of their fisheries and marine resources. It is part of our role to guarantee that coastal communities' experiences and knowledge are incorporated into the daily management of fisheries and marine resources. This requires MFMR to provide a range of tools that facilitate active participation. This is across all levels of local, provincial and national management. Collectively we can successfully reduce poverty, ensure food security, optimise livelihood opportunities, implement sound environmental practises and promote sustainable economic development for the benefit of all Solomon Islanders.

## **THE BIG PICTURE**

When we began thinking about coastal and inshore fisheries it became clear that there was an urgent need for a suitable national framework for fisheries and marine resource management that supported our work. Without it MFMR would continue to make minimal contributions to coastal and inshore fisheries management. There has been a lot of debate about how to improve fisheries and marine resource management in the Solomon Islands. Especially around accountability and transparency in decision-making, surveillance, compliance and enforcement, robust policy development and strengthening fisheries institutions. The challenge for MFMR was to develop workable solutions.

## **Our Recommendation**

To begin addressing these problems MFMR made a recommendation to the Solomon Island's Government to support the development of a Government National Strategy for Fisheries and Marine Resources management<sup>6</sup> (national strategy). With the main goal of the national strategy being to increase the benefits of sustainable managed fisheries for all Solomon Islanders, now and into the future. The Government acknowledged there were governance, legislative, institutional and policy deficiencies which required immediate attention. They agreed to support<sup>7</sup> MFMR to develop a comprehensive national strategy which aimed to:

- improve governance and regulation;

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<sup>5</sup> The three high level Strategic Plan focus areas are: rebuilding the organisation, meeting our commitments and responsibilities and facilitating participation.

<sup>6</sup> See Table 1: National Strategy for Fisheries and Marine Resources Management.

<sup>7</sup> Cabinet agreed on 22 April 2008 to support the MFMR proposed policy framework.

- strengthen and build the capacity of institutions - in particular MFMR and Provincial Government;
- enhance legal frameworks and compliance; and
- counter corruption.

Increasing the benefits from sustainable fisheries for all Solomon Islanders offers one of the best opportunities to address some of the key economic issues facing the country. Food harvested from coastal and inshore fisheries is a critical source of nutrition for local people with subsistence fisheries making important contributions to overall food security and the informal economy. Private sector growth from locally or foreign owned fishing businesses are also important because they create direct and indirect employment of local people.

The fisheries sector also offers a valuable source of income for woman and children through inshore processing plants and the collection of species from shallow reef, mangrove and lagoon areas. The potential of the aquaculture industry in the Solomon Islands is yet to be fully explored. However, anecdotal evidence suggests it could make significant contributions to local and national economies.

## **THE MINISTRY OF FISHERIES AND MARINE RESOURCES ROLE**

As the Government's lead advisor on fisheries and marine resource management we are primarily responsible for:

- ensuring that those who use our marine resources comply with legislation and regulations;
- the management process for access or allocation of fisheries; and
- researching fisheries.

### **Meeting our Responsibilities**

To help us meet our responsibilities to coastal communities we are developing a Coastal Community Strategy that supports and recognises the valuable contributions of communities to decision making processes, policy instruments, regulation making and legal frameworks. To achieve this MFMR is implementing a community-based or co-management<sup>8</sup> approach which emphasises fisher participation and the sharing of management authority and responsibility. We

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<sup>8</sup> Co-management is defined as "fisheries co-management can be defined as a partnership in which government, the community of local resource users (fishers), external agents (non-governmental organisations, academic, and research institutions), and other fisheries and coastal resource stakeholders (boat owners, fish traders, money lenders, tourism establishments, etc.) share the responsibility and authority for making decisions about the management of a fishery" Fikret Berkes; Robin Mahon; Patrick McConney; Richard Pollnac; Robert Pomeroy: *Managing Small Scale Fisheries, Alternative Directions and Methods* - 2001.

believe this is the most effective way to meet our responsibilities and obligations to coastal communities and other key stakeholders.

## **NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR FISHERIES AND MARINE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

As previously stated, the success of the Coastal Community Strategy is partially reliant on appropriate changes to national laws, governance, policies and institutions. Currently there is little national direction or leadership for fisheries or marine resources management. During the process to develop the Coastal Community Strategy it became obvious that improvements could only be made through substantive changes to the current fisheries management regime.

So, in parallel to its Coastal Community Strategy MFMR began working on the development of a comprehensive national strategy for fisheries and marine resources. The Coastal Community Strategy is one part of the Government's national strategy.

The main components of the national strategy are:

- a MFMR institutional strengthening programme;
- a review of the Fisheries Act 1998;
- the development of a Government National Policy Statement on Fisheries and Marine Resources;
- a review of current policy initiatives;
- a review of governance arrangements;
- the requirement for a State of the Oceans/Fisheries report every 2 years;
- and
- processes for working with Provincial Government and other key sector stakeholders.

In the absence of clear and targeted national direction the fisheries sector has suffered from inefficiencies with limited benefits flowing to the people of the Solomon Islands. Most Solomon Island coastal communities have dealt with their coastal and inshore fisheries management challenges alone, with limited assistance in a few parts of the country from a variety of local, regional and international organisations. These organisations have provided valuable assistance. However, their assistance has been constrained because they are not mandated by the Government to discharge the powers and functions of the Minister of Fisheries under the Fisheries Act 1998. This is clearly the responsibility of MFMR and we want to do this in partnership with coastal communities and other key stakeholders.

## **THE MFMR COASTAL COMMUNITY, COMMERCIAL AND CONSERVATION AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

Fisheries and marine resources need to be well managed in order to maintain their social, cultural, environmental and economic values. If they are not there is little incentive for people to think of future generations or consider the damage they may be doing to the marine environment. In order to enhance its participation and contributions to fisheries and marine resources management MFMR is developing three strategies. The three strategies are:

- **the Coastal Community Strategy** – facilitating coastal community participation in fisheries and marine resources management;
- **the Commercial Strategy** - enabling people to get the best value from the sustainable and efficient use of fisheries resources; and
- **the Conservation and Fisheries Management Strategy** – developing sound conservation and ecosystems based management practices to guide fisheries activities.

These strategies play a fundamental role in MFMR's developing approach to managing fisheries. They also provide a mechanism for MFMR to meet the three high level focus areas in its new Strategic Plan – *Stat Niu* and its Corporate Plan outcomes. The duty to sustain fisheries and conserve the marine environment is not MFMR's alone. Its role is to work with all stakeholders and relevant agencies to protect this resource for present and future generations. This includes all those who derive value from the marine environment, including recreational, tourism, artisanal, subsistence, commercial and industrial fishers. MFMR sees its role as enabling those who utilise fisheries resources to get the best value from those resources within an appropriate regulatory and policy framework.

### **THE COASTAL COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

Through its Coastal Community Strategy MFMR is seeking to better facilitate coastal community participation in fisheries and marine resources management across local, provincial and national levels. The focus of the Coastal Community Strategy is coastal and inshore fisheries but MFMR acknowledges that coastal communities have a role to play across the entire fisheries sector.

#### **Partnership Approach**

MFMR recognises the valuable contributions coastal communities can, and do make, to fisheries and marine resources management. It also recognises that improvements to fisheries management must aim to optimise the contributions of coastal and inshore fisheries to food and nutrition, while carefully finding opportunities to increase incomes from local or specialist export market opportunities.

MFMR wants to work with coastal communities to identify their fisheries needs and to make sure that fisheries legislation and rules are enabling rather than

restrictive. Community-based management, which can draw on the strengths of kastom systems, is becoming more important and desirable. This is particularly the case in remote coastal areas and other circumstances where centralised controls are sometimes ineffective.

MFMR also wants to work with Provincial Government to increase their institutional capacity to manage coastal and inshore fisheries resources. Where appropriate, MFMR will seek to preserve and strengthen traditional management systems. Otherwise, MFMR will assist coastal communities to identify and develop alternative management options and plans. NGO's, CBO's, donors, regional organisations and other key stakeholders also have an important role in this work. MFMR wants to continue working with them and developing methods which better coordinate and optimise their and MFMR's assistance to coastal communities. However, this will occur in the context of the Government's national fisheries and marine resources strategy and compliance with national legislation and regulations.

## **NEW POLICY DIRECTION**

The key component of the Coastal Community Strategy is the development of new policies which guide the work of MFMR and its assistance to coastal communities. Each of MFMR's new strategies will have a number of policies which support it. All policies will complement each other and care will be taken to ensure they do not conflict or contradict each other. Listed below are the draft Coastal Community Strategy policies which MFMR is seeking feedback on.

### **Draft Coastal Community Strategy Policies**

MFMR will provide leadership and responsibility for:

- working with stakeholders<sup>9</sup> to develop clear coastal and inshore fisheries objectives, management tools, monitoring and reporting measures and access to information;
- coordinating and providing clear direction to all stakeholders involved in coastal and inshore fisheries management, activities and projects in the Solomon Islands;
- providing enabling, transparent and enforceable fisheries legislation for coastal and inshore fisheries management which includes recognition of coastal community fishing rights and defines their responsibilities and authority;
- supporting coastal communities to identify their fisheries and marine resources management requirements and options. This includes the use

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<sup>9</sup> Stakeholders refers to coastal communities, other Government Ministries and Departments, Provincial Governments, commercial interests, NGO's, CBO's, donors, regional organisations and other interested or affected parties.

- of legislative tools such as the writing and implementation of fisheries management plans or coastal community based management plans;
- working with coastal communities to develop and implement enforceable compliance measures and surveillance techniques;
  - supporting Provincial Government to identify issues and options relating to the management of their provincial fisheries including the development of provincial fisheries management plans and ordinances;
  - developing information, education and awareness programmes so that coastal communities are well informed of their rights and obligations;
  - supporting a coastal community fishers network which provides the basis for communities to share information and enter into dialogue with Government and other key sector stakeholders;
  - adopting a “whole of government” approach to Solomon Islands fisheries management;
  - providing advice to the Minister of Fisheries on the management of coastal and inshore fisheries;
  - providing accessible scientific information to help coastal communities understand and meet the requirements of the community, commercial and conservation strategies; and
  - working with coastal communities to develop and implement food security and sustainable livelihood projects.

### **Monitoring of Policies**

MFMR will monitor policies against its Strategic Plan focus area initiatives and its Corporate Plan outcomes. Specifically we will:

- evaluate the effectiveness of the Coastal Community Strategy and its policies;
- evaluate the effectiveness of MFMR’s assistance, communications and support to coastal communities;
- monitor the views of coastal communities and other stakeholders regarding MFMR performance;
- evaluate the involvement of stakeholders and other interested parties in fisheries management;
- monitor the effectiveness, efficiency and compliance of processes, systems and information;



- evaluate and monitor the quality of advice to Ministers and other Government Ministries and Departments; and
- monitor staff performance and effectiveness.

### **2008 – 2011 Initiatives**

In order to begin meeting its responsibilities under the Coastal Community Strategy Policies MFMR will:

- finalise the Coastal Community Strategy by the end of August 2008;
- establish the MFMR Community and Inshore fisheries team;
- produce a series of public information and awareness tools about fisheries laws, regulations, processes and penalties, the role of MFMR, sources of assistance for community fisheries projects, species information and fishing techniques;
- host the first MFMR Coastal Community Participation Forum, and if successful, host at least another 4 coastal community participation forums by the end of 2011;
- review assistance for coastal community based management programmes in order to better support carefully designed sustainable livelihood and food security initiatives;
- review the MFMR Extension Services Programme to better support coastal, inshore and provincial fisheries;
- review MFMR sources of fisheries development funding with an increased emphasis on coastal community initiatives;
- work with at least 10 coastal communities to identify the issues and options for managing their coastal and inshore resources;
- work with at least 5 Provinces to identify the issues and options associated with managing their provincial fisheries; and
- progress the review of coastal fisheries stations.

### **Implementation**

Implementation is just as important as developing fisheries strategies and policies. MFMR intends to follow a participatory process with key NGOs and coastal communities to finalise and implement the Coastal Community Strategy<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Please note the content of the Community Strategy will form the basis of the new inshore and community teams work programme for 2008/2009 and out years.

MFMR is currently developing an implementation strategy but the basis of it will be:

- presentation of the Community Strategy and its policies for consultation at the July 2008 Community Participation Forum;
- development of a Cabinet paper for Ministers' approval following the Coastal Community Participation Forum<sup>11</sup>;
- discussions with the Fisheries Advisory Council in August 2008;
- discussions with other relevant Government Ministries and Departments;
- meetings with NGOs and donors to discuss their work programmes and synergies or overlaps with MFMR work programme;
- regular staff updates and opportunities to participate; and
- consultation with Provincial Government councillors and/or senior officials.

**Indirectly related, but still important to the success of the Coastal Community Strategy MFMR will:**

- complete the MFMR institutional strengthening programme by 2011;
- enact the new Fisheries Act by the end of 2009;
- complete the development of a Government National Policy Statement on Fisheries and Marine Resources by the end of 2008;
- finish the coastal community, fisheries management and conservation and commercial strategies by the end of 2008; and
- finish the first State of the Oceans/Fisheries Report by the end of 2009 and produce subsequent reports every 2 years.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion the Coastal Community Strategy is one part of a comprehensive reform designed to improve the performance, integrity and transparency of the fisheries and marine sector. The Coastal Community Strategy is dependent on appropriate legislative, policy, governance and institutional changes which provide direction and cohesiveness across this valuable sector. It is also dependent on MFMR becoming a performing organisation that places great emphasis on meeting its obligations and responsibilities.

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<sup>11</sup> On 22 April 2008, Cabinet supported the MFMR recommendation for a national fisheries and marine resources strategy.

The Coastal Community Strategy places strong emphasis on developing mechanisms for Government to support appropriate traditional resource management techniques, building coastal community capacity for effective management of coastal and inshore resources, applying a legal framework that suitably shares fisheries management authority, and provides direction and leadership through a national fisheries and marine resources strategy. This is all within the context of a precautionary approach that includes eco-systems based fisheries management.

MFMR is seeking to implement the Coastal Community Strategy in partnership with key stakeholders. It is widely acknowledged that gains can only be made by improving management and increasing capabilities across three levels - local, provincial and national. MFMR wants the benefits of the Coastal Community Strategy to be enduring and has taken this into account in the design and implementation of the Coastal Community Strategy. MFMR looks forward to working with you.

Thank you for taking the time to read this paper. If you would like to make comments please send them by 30 July 2008 to:

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**Table 1: National Strategy for Fisheries and Marine Resources Management**

