



CBRM Scaling and Networking Community Forum

Epanga Island, Western Province, Solomon Islands
25–28 July 2023



INITIATIVE ON
Aquatic Foods

CBRM Scaling and Networking Community Forum

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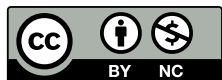
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Kilupania Resort, Epanga Island, Western Province

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Table of contents

Summary	4
Background	4
Purpose of the forum and this brief	5
Summary of forum discussions	5
Session 1: Understanding and scaling up CBRM	5
Session 2: Sharing CBRM experiences	6
Session 3: Effective scaling and networking	6
Session 4: Experiences with introducing CBRM (community talks)	7
Session 5: Making CBRM sustainable through networking	7
Session 6: Information needs and two-way exchange	7
Session 7: Gender and social inclusion	7
Session 8: Monitoring and enforcement	8
Session 9: Addressing threats	8
Lessons from the forum	9
1. Several organizations have made progress in various aspects of CBRM	9
2. There are several ways to plan for dissemination of CBRM information and awareness-raising	9
3. There is evidence of progress in learning and planning for inclusive CBRM scaling	9
4. Sustainable and long-term monitoring and enforcement face several challenges	10
5. Some major threats to environmental health remain outside of what CBRM can effectively influence	10

Summary

- Scaling up community-based resource management (CBRM) in Pacific Island countries is a regional priority for sustainable development and food security.
- A forum with community members, provincial fisheries officers, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources' CBRM Section officers and several national and regional partners working with CBRM discussed experiences and summarized lessons to support programs for national scaling up in Solomon Islands.
- Discussions from the forum sessions are summarized in this brief together with five highlighted lessons emerging from the discussions.

Background

Over the past decade, there has been a growing emphasis on community-based resource management (CBRM) in regional and national coastal fisheries policies. This shift is mirrored by a growing interest in learning from what has been done before to help these policy ambitions find a practical footing. How to scale up CBRM – from few and scattered initiatives to national programs with broad coverage – is one area of priority where there is still much to learn. This was the focus of an international workshop hosted in Solomon Islands.

The forum brought together community participants and provincial fisheries officers (PFOs) from Malaita, Isabel and Western Provinces, and representatives from international and local organizations active in Western Province, including the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). The forum was hosted by the WorldFish Nusatupe innovation hub, in collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) and the Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA) Network, on 25–28 July 2023, and utilized the venue at the Kilupania Resort on Epanga Island, near Gizo, Western Province, Solomon Islands.

Purpose of the forum and this brief

In 2022, the MFMR and the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM) in Solomon Islands launched a national CBRM strategy. The strategy encompasses several programmatic areas to scale up and improve services for CBRM in Solomon Islands. Additionally, the strategy is aligned with the Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling up Community Based Fisheries Management: 2021–2025 led by the Pacific Community (SPC), which together provide the basis for CBRM implementation in Solomon Islands.

The purpose of the forum was to bring together practitioners and researchers working in partnership to scale up CBRM. It included 34

participants from island communities, national and regional agencies and organizations with the aim to share their experiences of CBRM, the challenges they have faced, and the lessons they have learned. Additionally, the forum sought to explore possible ways forward to scale up CBRM in Solomon Islands. The four-day forum included presentations and interactive group discussions and activities that helped the participants to not only share experiences but also learn from each other.

In this brief, we summarize the forum sessions to share what was discussed in broad terms. We also synthesize five lessons learned from these discussions that can help guide continued learning and planning for scaling up CBRM.

Summary of forum discussions

Session 1: Understanding and scaling up CBRM

The session highlighted the need for an increased focus on scaling up CBRM. Discussions centered on cost-effective scaling-up strategies and how to reach communities with information and awareness. This remains a significant challenge. Regional differences in the scale of the challenge were discussed. For example, Solomon Islands has more than 3,000 coastal communities compared with Tonga which has about 500–600. The Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling up Community Based Fisheries Management: 2021–2025 by SPC was discussed as a guide for planning at both regional and national levels. Solomon Islands is one of the first countries in the region to have endorsed a national CBRM scaling-up strategy. The session considered the effectiveness of two activities that have been conducted to support the national strategy in Solomon Islands and, in effect, also the regional framework for action.

First, WorldFish and the MFMR have completed an assessment of coverage and gaps in CBRM across the nine provinces of Solomon Islands with the objective to help identify areas of future priority and investment for reaching communities with information and awareness. This report – known as “Community Based Resource Management in Solomon Islands: Provincial CBRM Snapshots 2022” was launched together with the CBRM scaling-up strategy in 2022. National agencies, CBRM partners and donors should follow the advice given in the report.

Second, the cChange program was introduced under the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP). The program focuses on outreach and communication, supporting the MFMR national information strategy through the Solwata Blo lumi radio campaign (see summary of Session 6 for more information). The program also assists communities to elevate their voices in provincial- and national-level affairs on coastal fisheries through social media, such as a Facebook page. The program exemplifies novel ways to spread information and awareness in support of scaling up CBRM.

Session 2: Sharing CBRM experiences

The forum provided a space for sharing CBRM experiences across the represented groups and organizations. The discussions involved members of island communities from several locations in Western Province, Isabel and Malaita who shared what they have experienced through their involvement in CBRM. The discussions touched on diverse subjects relating to how CBRM takes shape and can play a meaningful role in community governance. Here we summarised the discussions under three themes.

Mapping and demarcation of managed areas

– Drafting of management plans often includes mapping areas of use or concern, and consequently demarcating areas where there is to be some level of control or management for marine conservation. This theme emerged both in the sense of the value of spatial organization for management and the practical element of using boundary markers to alert fishers to the protected areas. Challenges highlighted included a lack of equipment for use by management committees, and lack of rangers to safely monitor the managed areas.

Compliance and enforcement – Some cases were discussed where, even though the community has a management plan, it lacks the capacity to implement that plan. For example, one community mentioned that poaching often occurs by members of nearby communities. In addition, sometimes there is not enough consultation between community members and the management committee, which can lead to misunderstanding or people mistakenly entering the managed area. Another community shared stories about the managed sites along the coast being enforced by the chiefs and elders in the villages where the practice has been passed on from one generation to the next through traditional practices in protected sites. These stories illustrate how different community institutions can play a role in compliance and enforcement. But there are limits to this, as exemplified in relation to beche-de-mer. This particular fishery presents a unique challenge as almost all members of the community participate in harvesting this species for commercial use. Managed areas offer

ideal habitat for high abundance of beche-de-mer species so people usually harvest within the managed area, although a “no-go-zone” rule is applied at other times of the year.

Examples of management tools and activities

– Management and associated activities discussed included: establishing management committees; mapping fish-spawning aggregation through a monitoring calendar to identify times and places for fishing to allow protection during spawning; seasonal open and closed areas, including permanently closed areas; the role of ranger monitoring; the utility of community and schools awareness-raising programs for sharing management plans and environmental education; and partnerships with communities, government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to help install and maintain fish-aggregating devices, which help to reduce harvesting of reef fish. The discussions revealed that some communities have longer experience with CBRM than others and have made meaningful progress on collective management. Some communities had active management committees that were functioning well. Their work included networking across several adjacent communities to enable participation in meetings and share experiences of conserving their marine resources.

Session 3: Effective scaling and networking

The third forum session explored some of the cost-effective ways CBRM information can reach other communities. It has been a long-standing challenge in the framing of CBRM as to how it can be spread in ways that do not cost a lot of money, but still reach the target audience.

Understanding of what is meant by “cost-effectiveness” was shared among workshop groups and discussed both in conceptual terms – “cost-effectiveness means reaching more communities with information and services at with less cost” – as well as in practical terms – “using social gatherings and events as opportunities to share information and awareness”. Church gatherings and football tournaments were given as examples of opportunities for CBRM awareness-raising to be conducted. Using such events to deliver CBRM education is an efficient way to reach many people at once.

Session 4: Experiences with introducing CBRM (community talks)

In this session, participants were split into groups of four and asked to discuss their experiences of introducing CBRM to their community. They were also asked to share how they respond to their community's reactions and questions when conducting CBRM awareness-raising activities. Each group then shared its main points with the larger group.

The highlight of this session was hearing participants share how CBRM is being appreciated by communities as a positive way forward to managing their coastal resources. All group presenters mentioned that through CBRM awareness-raising, people came to realize the reasons for their declining resources and the importance of managing and restoring them.

Session 5: Making CBRM sustainable through networking

This session focused on the importance of networking in making CBRM sustainable. Given the forum's mix of participants from provincial government, NGOs and communities, the session deliberately emphasized "connecting the dots" as to how they can work together to ensure CBRM sustainability – for example, by sharing plans and resources to co-implement CBRM. Participants shared their experiences of working with other partners to achieve CBRM. For example, the PFOs highlighted that through partnership with WorldFish, they can implement their CBRM workplans. In addition, community representatives mentioned that through their partnership with their PFOs, they can develop management plans for their communities and managed areas. The session highlighted the value of links between agencies and organizations for continuity and national support. Through deliberate planning and networking, they can support each other to make CBRM sustainable.

Session 6: Information needs and two-way exchange

This session focused on information flows and gaps that persist in the CBRM space. The organization cChange has worked with the MFMR's CBRM Section to implement actions

from the national information strategy to support spreading CBRM information to communities across Solomon Islands. The main program is the Solwata Blo lumi radio campaign which is broadcast once a month by the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC). The radio program provides important information on how communities can sustainably look after their marine resources, and each broadcast includes a talkback session where listeners can comment and ask questions. A "tool kit" booklet is being developed on resource management to be distributed to the communities when it is finalized.

In the context of reaching people with information and awareness, it becomes important to look at the types of information that communities are requesting. MFMR and WorldFish have analyzed questions that are frequently asked by community members during the CBRM awareness-raising meetings. These questions are recorded in standardized trip reports. The session's presentation highlighted the gaps in understanding of CBRM as evidenced by these questions. The presentation also highlighted the reach of CBRM awareness by province. The data showed that communities reached with CBRM information numbered 258 in Malaita, 98 in Guadalcanal, 74 in Temotu, 58 in Isabel, 55 in Choiseul, 43 in Central Province, 32 in Makira and Ulawa, 17 in Western Province and one in Rennell and Bellona ("Renbel" for short).

Session 7: Gender and social inclusion

Recognizing the need for equal participation in CBRM activities, this session discussed ways in which marginalized groups are often left out and how this can be rectified. Participants were divided into provincial groups for this session to identify the approaches taken by each province to ensure equal participation in CBRM activities.

Participants were asked to share their experiences on: the participation of different groups of people when they implement CBRM activities; which groups are often left out of information flows; ways in which this occurs; and how it can be rectified.

Marginalized groups are defined as a minority group of people that is historically disempowered and oppressed by influential and biased groups. These marginalized groups include women,

people with disabilities, people of a low socio-economic status, youths, children and so forth. Participants highlighted that some of the common groups of people often left out of participation and discussions are: people with special needs; the illiterate (mostly older people); the elderly; youths, who are often labelled as drunkards; and females, who are often told to do catering during meetings but are otherwise not involved. Participants shared that marginalized groups are most often left out because there is no proper strategy in place to include them in CBRM activities. They added that sometimes the elders and chiefs in the community do not realize the importance of including the marginalized group. Hence, when they call for a meeting in the community, they often overlook that group.

The discussion led participants to agree that to ensure equal participation in CBRM activities, community leaders and CBRM practitioners need to be empowered and trained on how they can actively ensure inclusion in CBRM activities.

Session 8: Monitoring and enforcement

Monitoring and enforcement are key components of CBRM for ensuring that managed areas are thoroughly protected for the maintenance and restoration of marine resources. In this session, participants were asked to share examples of: monitoring activities undertaken in their CBRM areas; knowledge and skills needed to monitor and understand what is happening in CBRM areas; and how communities enforce the rules and the penalties that apply for breaking them.

Participants shared that most of their managed areas have CBRM plans to protect them. Many mentioned that they imposed an SBD50 fine as penalty for poaching in managed areas. However, one of the challenges is that there is weak enforcement of the management plans. This is because they do not have proper equipment in place to monitor their managed areas. For example, in Kmaga in Isabel, the community representative mentioned that there is no outboard motor to monitor the managed area to avoid poaching. Additionally, they mentioned that financial support to employ people as security at their managed sites is lacking.

Participants highlighted that to ensure effective monitoring, the communities should be trained on how to conduct monitoring in their managed areas and be supplied with the proper monitoring equipment required to do this. Another suggestion is to strengthen community governance to ensure that all community members take responsibility in monitoring the protected areas.

Session 9: Addressing threats

Participants were again divided into provincial groups for the final session of the CBRM forum. The groups were tasked with identifying the major threats to fisheries and marine resources in their areas and what information and tools help them to understand the threats. The groups were also asked to identify the best management solutions for tackling these threats.

Population growth, which continues to increase demand for marine resources, was seen as a major threat. Additionally, pollution from rubbish and other waste is becoming common in communities across Solomon Islands. There was also a mention of logging and mining activities. Participants emphasized that heightened awareness, such as provided by CBRM activities, helps the community to understand better that some activities of humans are damaging to the environment, and consequently reduce some of these practices. However, it is difficult to overcome external national challenges at the local level.

Before this session concluded, there was a presentation by a representative of Plastic Wise Gizo – a locally formed initiative by the women of Gizo town to reduce plastic bottles and related waste in the environment. The presenter explained how rubbish disposal can be better managed through creative and innovative ideas for re-use. In addition, Plastic Wise Gizo purchases used cans and plastics from the community to be exported for recycling. The presentation stirred a lot of good discussion and participants were inspired to return to their communities and incorporate these ideas into their management committees' work and plans to reduce pollution.

Lessons from the forum

1. Several organizations have made progress in various aspects of CBRM

The discussions on CBRM experiences among forum participants indicated that there has been increasing spread of CBRM activities implemented in Solomon Islands. These activities are done in collaboration with the MFMR and NGOs, such as the World Conservation Society (WCS), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). For example, in Western Province, WWF and WCS work directly with communities, and update PFOs and the MFMR during project workshops and meetings. In Malaita and Isabel, WorldFish has an established working arrangement with PFOs and the MFMR's CBRM Section, and PFOs and the MFMR take the lead in facilitating community meetings and developing and reviewing CBRM plans. They have also led trainings to integrate gender consideration into CBRM activities in several communities. Besides those provinces represented at the forum, the MFMR has direct CBRM engagements and has been disseminating information in certain parts of Choiseul, Guadalcanal, Central Province, Renbel, Makira and Temotu.

2. There are several ways to plan for dissemination of CBRM information and awareness-raising

Information dissemination is implemented through face-to-face CBRM awareness-raising activities in communities, walk-ins into offices, printed materials, learning exchange events (look-and-learn exchange), social media platforms and radio broadcasts.

Among the challenges linked with information dissemination, especially with costs and reach, some immediate analysis recognized that face-to-face CBRM awareness-raising activities and printed materials are very effective, but also very costly. While radio shows are low cost, their reach is limited to urban centers and only certain rural

areas. As many communities have poor to no radio and mobile phone coverage, information dissemination reach is difficult to measure.

According to recommendations and ongoing discussions about scaling up CBRM, there is need for the dissemination of printed materials and face-to-face awareness-raising to be implemented. To keep costs down, it is prudent to work with existing structures and networks, including PFOs, partners (local and international NGOs) and government ministries networks, civil society groups, community facilitators and champions, churches, schools, and so forth. In addition, emphasis was also placed on disseminating information during mass gatherings such as church programs, sporting tournaments, festivals and other events.

3. There is evidence of progress in learning and planning for inclusive CBRM scaling

There are indications of changes being made in learning and planning processes resulting in inclusive CBRM knowledge. Consider the work of cChange and the MFMR's CBRM Section, for example: the radio show started by introducing CBRM and, over time, it has adopted the approach of building key messages around feedback provided by listeners at appropriate times. For example, Solwata Blo lumi Radio Series 2, Episode 3, about the role of church and kastoms in influencing how people manage marine resources, was broadcast in April during Easter.

By including and promoting a question-and-answer (Q&A) session at the end of each episode, the radio program has established an engaging two-way communication between the general public and MFMR-cChange. Similarly, face-to-face CBRM awareness-raising activities also include a Q&A component to answer questions and obtain feedback from communities. Such exchanges validate people's understanding of information shared during awareness-raising programs.

4. Sustainable and long-term monitoring and enforcement face several challenges

To sustain a CBRM plan, there is a need to focus on compliance with CBRM rules and penalties for breaking those rules. For example, only a handful of communities are monitoring their CBRM plans; that is, have monitors to perform reef checks, record catches and watch over the managed area. On the contrary, most communities focus only on the enforcement of rules and penalties in their community plans. Hence, the scenario of the same offenders committing offences on multiple occasions continues across many communities.

In such cases, the common response by CBRM committees is to file legal action with the police. In certain Malaita communities, the committee has reported poor compliance cases directly to PFOs and the MFMR in the hope that PFOs will take legal action to have offenders arrested. Unfortunately, this has never been undertaken to deal with repeat offenders due to reasons unknown to those communities. Monitoring and enforcement of CBRM plans remain an area for study in the future.

5. Some major threats to environmental health remain outside of what CBRM can effectively influence

There is a need to monitor wider threats to the marine environment that are not directly related to CBRM and often emerge from outside the community as one activity in the environment indirectly impacts another. Environmental issues such as rubbish pollution, mining and logging impacts directly affect the marine ecosystem. Some of these threats remain a challenge for communities undertaking CBRM as there are no governance at the community level that is responsible for the management of wastes and marine pollution. Also, increasing population growth is putting more pressure on marine resources due to high demand for supply of these resources for consumption.

Currently, awareness-raising materials already capture messages on the impacts of waste disposal at sea to enable communities to make the connection between waste disposal practices, management and long-term deterioration of ecosystems and declining resources. It is notable that behavioural change in the community is yet to be seen, implying the need for continuous education and development of some governance mechanisms to better address waste disposal practices.



About WorldFish

WorldFish is a leading international research organization working to transform aquatic food systems to reduce hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. It collaborates with international, regional, and national partners to co-develop and deliver scientific innovations, evidence for policy, and knowledge to enable equitable and inclusive impact for millions who depend on fish for their livelihoods. As a member of CGIAR, WorldFish contributes to building a food- and nutrition-secure future and restoring natural resources. Headquartered in Penang, Malaysia, with country offices across Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, WorldFish strives to create resilient and inclusive food systems for shared prosperity.

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