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SUMMARY OF REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAMME AUDITS

WCPFC-SC7-2011/ST-IP-08

Prepared by the Secretariat

The ROP Secretariat commenced its audits of Regional Observer Programme (ROP) interim authorised observer programmes in late 2010 and to date has completed audits on 14 of the 23 countries or organisations that are part of the ROP. The remaining audits will be completed late in 2011 and in early 2012.

The purposes of the audits is to ensure that Commission standards are being applied and/or are being developed and maintained by programmes that wish to gain ROP full authorisation before the due date of June 2012.

In most cases the programmes audited were well developed and were following the agreed Commission standards to the best of their ability. However there were some areas that needed improvement. The following observations are for each standard and note the problems that programmes were having with these standards.

1. Minimum Data Fields

Standard

The standard for “Data Fields, Management, Distribution and Use” will be that CCMs will use existing data field formats collected by their national or sub regional observer programmes and that also they will ensure that the Commission minimum data standard fields for the ROP are included in their data collection formats.

Observation

The FFA/SPC formats which are used by most programmes were changed in 2009 to include all the WCPFC approved data fields. Unfortunately SPC/FFA has not yet released this version of the observer

data collection formats, but has made an undertaking to release the new version containing all the WCPFC approved data fields before the end of 2011.

Observers also collect important information in their journals and written reports, and in some programmes this information is not made available to SPC or the Commission. These reports are an extremely important component of observer trips and are required for many reasons as they often contain important anecdotal technological, science, management and compliance information. The originals should be retained by the programme, but a scanned copy of the written report and daily journal, should be sent with the data collected by the observers to SPC or the Commission Secretariat.

2. Observer Training

Standard

Standard for "Observer Training" is that training programmes should be linked to the Commission's decisions in place, available for review and training programme materials provided to the Secretariat

Observation

The Pacific Island (PI) programmes are all using approved Pacific Island Regional Fisheries Observer (PIRFO) standards developed for observer training by FFA/SPC. Other programmes have their own standards, which are all of a high quality.

There has been an ongoing need for more observers in the PI countries as the programmes are coming to terms with 100% coverage on purse seiners and the 5% long line coverage commencing in 2012. Some of the problems detected during audits included the fact that initially the quality of observer trainees chosen for observer courses in a couple of countries had been poor and many trainees struggled to pass the basic requirements of the course. Selection of observer trainees is extremely important and the entrance criteria used in FFA/SPC courses has improved the quality of observers trained.

3. Observer Trainers

Standard

The ROP standard for the Commission for "Observer for observer Trainers is: "CCMs will use existing national and or sub-regional training standards. CCMs will develop trainer qualifications, available for review by the Secretariat."

Observation

Senior observers from PI and other programmes are generally selected to be taught the techniques used in observer training. In the PI they are currently being trained by FFA/SPC at special sessions, and for practical experience are also being used under guidance of qualified trainers to assist in sub regional and national training sessions. The intention is that programmes will eventually be able to use their own personnel to train their own observers. This is a positive move so the PI programmes can become self sufficient in supplying their own qualified trainers. Other programmes use a similar procedure to train their observer trainers.

4. Code of Conduct

Standard

The agreed standard for “Code of Conduct” is that each CCM should have a Code of Conduct in place, available to each observer, available for review and if not in place, to be developed.

Observation

All programmes audited had a “Code of Conduct” in place, and for the PI programmes most were similar to the guide produced by the Commission ROP. The “Code of Conduct” is explained during training sessions for observers, and includes protocols to investigate complaints or breaches. Depending on the outcome of these investigations, breaches are dealt with by a period of suspension determined by the severity of the incident. It was found in a couple of programmes that observers are only given the code at the beginning of their observer careers, whereas a few programmes re-issue the code when contracts are signed, and one programme gave a copy of the code to each observer as a standard issue for every trip.

5. Sea Safety

Standard

The standard for “Sea - Safety” is that all ROP observers must undergo training in sea safety and emergency procedures to international recognized standards, and that such training procedures be made available to the Secretariat

Observation

In most programmes audited observers were confirmed as having been trained in “Sea Safety” by a qualified lecturer in international “Sea Safety” standards. Training in most cases took place in a fisheries or maritime college. All participants that passed were given “Certificates of Sea Safety” indicating they have completed and passed the course to international standards.

6. Placement /Deployment

Standard

The standard for “Coordinating Placement” is that the

- *WCPFC National Observer Programme Coordinator should be in place,*
- *There should be a system for observer placement administration and that documentation describing observer placement administration should be provided to the Secretariat.*
- *Audit measures to check on deployment procedures will be developed by the Secretariat*

Observation

In all programmes audited there is a WCPFC ROP Coordinator in place. Procedures in some programmes are documented and copies of the procedures were made available to the ROP secretariat; some programmes have not documented their basic system of administration for placing their observers and have all been advised to document the system and procedures they use for placement of observers. The procedures in the documents that were presented were acceptable; however given the situation of 100% observer coverage of purse seiners and 5 % coverage of long liners, the procedures in some cases, will need to be updated to better reflect current day situations.

7. Debriefing & Briefing

Standard

The standard for “Briefing and De-briefing of observers” is that there is a system for briefing and de-briefing of observers in place and documentation describing briefing and de-briefing available to the ROP Secretariat

Observation

The FFA/SPC debriefing format is used during the debriefing of all PI countries; other countries have their own formats. Unfortunately for all PI countries with the exception of two programmes there are only a very small number of debriefers trained and qualified by FFA/SPC; these organisations have the task of certifying debriefers in the FFA/SPC countries. The process of training debriefers is in place and is ongoing for FFA/SPC member country observer programmes. There is a need for a number of dedicated certified debriefers with proper facilities to operate in most PI countries.

It was noted, that the number of debriefers available in most PI countries is inadequate, and it will take time and money to get these programmes up to a respectable level of debriefing. Most countries visited were aware of the needs to have more debriefers, but in most cases had no allocation of space or funds to allow debriefers to operate. There is ongoing training of debriefers to build up capacity and quality in PI countries, but it will take 2-3 years to be able to get the required numbers for comprehensive and accurate debriefing of all observer trips.

It was reported that unqualified debriefers such as senior fisheries observers, the fisheries observer coordinator and others not connected to the programmes were assisting to debrief some of the trips. A couple of programmes audited had only about 20% of trips debriefed, the other 80% were sent to SPC without any prior debriefing.

Comprehensive debriefing requires at least one to two full days to complete. Length of time spent on debriefing depends on how well an observer fills out his/her forms from a trip. Funding for training and setting up facilities is also lacking and unless rectified will hinder this important area of development for the PI programmes.

There are also ramifications on the unavailability of debriefers, as it is proposed elsewhere that vessels have access to information of the observer’s trip aboard their vessel after an observer has been debriefed. This will be difficult to comply with if the observer data and information hasn’t been debriefed and checked for correctness and completeness, due to the lack of available debriefers.

8. Debriefing Training

Standards

The Standard for qualification of observer debriefers is that debriefers will be experienced in observer matters and that CCMs will use existing national and sub-regional programme standards for debriefers. CCMs will prepare qualifications for a debriefer, available for review by the Secretariat.

Observation

Each programme uses their own standards for debriefer trainers, however all the PI programmes use the FFA/SPC debriefing standards developed as part of the FFA/SPC regional harmonization process. Most PI programmes have had a small number of persons trained in the area of debriefing, however these

programmes are currently waiting further training sessions for the selected personnel to complete the FFA/SPC debriefing training programme.

Debriefing training is in the early stages of development with most PI countries; however the ultimate goal of each programme is to have sufficient trained persons to be able to carry out full and comprehensive debriefings of all their observers.

9. Equipment and Materials

Standard

The standard for “Equipment and Materials” is that observers are provided with appropriate equipment, including safety equipment to carry out their roles and tasks on board a vessel.

Observation

All basic equipment is supplied for observers to carry out their tasks; however safety equipment is not distributed by all programmes. Many programmes rely on agreement with vessels to provide observers with safety equipment when they are on board carrying out observer duties.

The standard in some programmes is not entirely complied with for distribution of safety equipment, but it is realized that in many cases some essential safety equipment is being supplied by vessels when observers board their vessels, and therefore observers do have some safety equipment available when carrying out their duties on these vessels.

There is a need for programmes to budget enough funds to fit out all observers with quality safety equipment. This equipment should be properly monitored and maintained by the observers with distribution administered by a member of the observer programme staff. Observers should also take responsibility of the items issued to them, and be expected to compensate the programme for equipment lost or left behind on vessels or during travel.

10. Communications

Standard

The standard for “Communications “ is that observers have access to appropriate communication facilities, including emergency communication facilities while on board a vessel.”

Comment

Regular communications are useful for many purposes, including regular observer reports and the safety and well being of observers. Most observer programmes have no regular voice communications with their head quarters. Sometimes a “Satellite Phone” is used if supplied or available on vessels; however most observers send regular (weekly) Email or fax to their providers. Radio communications is included in the observer training programmes that have been audited so far. It is noted that many long liners do not have any communication facilities another than HF/VHF radio and all observers will need to be refreshed with Radio Communication protocols from time to time.

11. Performance of Observers

Standard

The standard for “Measuring Performance” is a means to report on the performance of the observer programme and a means to report on the performance of individual observers as part of the annual reporting requirements established by the Commission.

Observation

Most programmes use the reports from the debriefing of observers as a means to help determine performance of their observers; these are made available for each trip that is debriefed. SPC looks at the quality of individual observer data from time to time, and can produce if requested a report on the quality of data collected by individual observers. Long term appraisal will rely on the programme being able to debrief the observer properly and an opinion from SPC on the quality of the data collected by the observer. It was noted that observer coordinators interviewed indicated the programme have dismissed and suspended observers for not attaining standards that meet their programme requirements for data collections.

Training or retraining of observers is important to ensure quality data is collected at all times. Ensuring that proper debriefing occurs from qualified debriefers for each observer returning from a trip is extremely important for observer’s development and for the overall quality of the programme.

12. Dispute mechanism

Standard

The standard for “Dispute Settlement” is a dispute resolution mechanism should be in place, and if not in place, to be developed, and a description of the dispute resolution mechanism provided to the Secretariat

Observation

Most programmes audited had as part of their ‘Code of Conduct’ protocols on how to handle disputes and most also have a consultation process and suggested penalties for observer infringements. It was unclear in many programmes, other than a formal letter to the programme Director, whether there is a procedure or mechanism in place for vessels to complain about observer conduct and work ethic.

13. Authorisation process

Standard

The Secretariat will authorize national observer programmes, rather than individual observers; this is consistent with the Convention text. CMM-2007-01 Para 12(b) also states that the Secretariat will authorize observer providers.

Observation

All requirements were found to be adequate for the “Interim Authorisation” of all observer programmes who applied for ROP Interim Authorisation, and therefore all were eligible to apply for full authorisation.

14. Coverage

Standard

Commission determined observer coverage’s are:

- *purse seiners 20N to 20S -100% coverage (start Jan 2010)*

- *outside this area 20% purse seine coverage*
- *long liners coverage is 5% by June 2012*
- *Carriers transshipping at Sea 100% (LL& P&L) (start Jan 2011) – Note that PS must still go to approved areas in Zones or ports to transship and long liners may need exemptions from certain countries to transship on the high seas.*

Observation

Most observer programmes audited were struggling to maintain observer numbers when the 100% observer coverage of purse seiners commenced. They were required to use observers from other programmes to assist with the supply of observers when it got busy in their ports; however with all the extra training, observer numbers for purse seine coverage are adequate in most programmes audited. A number of programmes interviewed stated they still need extra observers for future coverage of long liners, and the carriers, as well as replacements for the attrition of observers.

Most programmes cited different problems they were having with getting extra observers, including scheduling extra training because of lack of funds, lack of commitment by their Fisheries Departments/Divisions and the heavy commitments by FFA/SPC who have limited resources when it comes to supplying trainers. This will be resolved when an adequate number of qualified PI trainers become available for each programme.

15. Vessel Safety Certificate (VSC)

Standard

The interim minimum standard for a Vessel Safety Checklist (VSC) will be that a CCM should have a VSC in place, and to be used prior to an observer boarding a vessel; and if not in place, CCMs may use, as a guideline, the VSC developed by the Commission.

Observation

A few of the programmes audited so far, currently did not use a Vessel Safety Certificate (VSC) when placing an observer. Nor did they check a vessel for safety when an observer is placed on board. However all the PI programmes use the FFA/SPC pre boarding check list which does contain some aspects of vessel safety. A small number of programmes audited had comprehensive vessel safety check lists in place.

Following discussion with the PI Coordinators at the SPC/FFA Regional Observer Coordinators Workshop held recently, it was agreed that the FFA/SPC pre boarding check will be redesigned at the next FFA/SPC Data Consultative Committee to include all aspects of Vessel Safety Checks. It was also agreed that a copy of the pre boarding report should be attached to the observer data and reports along with any briefing or debriefing reports.

16. Insurance

Standard

The Interim Standard for Insurance of Observers for ROP duties is that CCMs will use existing national standards for health and safety insurance. CCM providers of observers will make sure an observer placed on a vessel for ROP duties has health and safety insurance.

Observation

Many programmes had limited insurance coverage for their observers; most observer are covered by national health and insurance schemes when on shore in their home countries, however when on board a vessel, observers are generally limited to the coverage given to them by the vessels insurance. It was found that not all observers were covered for insurance, especially when on long liners or when traveling to or from a vessel.

17. CMM adherence

Standard

The providers are to ensure that all observers fully understand the content of the CMM's especially in relation to their roles and tasks in monitoring the CMM's

Observation

Many programmes interviewed for the audits so far said they had problems with CMM adherence.

The problem - coordinators said they were having, was on learning what has been changed, or what is a new, not only for CMM's but also for other observer requirements and issues. Many said this was caused by the lack of feedback from their senior staff on some of the issues after they attended relevant meetings; also they noted that circulars sent to official contacts on these issues were hardly ever forwarded to them for their information. They not only said this was a problem with WCPFC but was also a problem from other PI regional organisations as well.

Realizing that this an ongoing problem with many programmes, the WCPFC ROP secretariat undertook to ensure all CMM's resolutions or directives that were relevant to observer operations or coverage would be compiled each year, as soon as practical after the WCPFC annual meeting, and would be sent directly to all ROP coordinators, observer trainers and other senior observers. This will commence in early 2012.

18. Summary

Since the introduction of the 100% observer coverage for purse seiners, most observer programmes have coped well in supplying observer numbers , but all programmes have said that they require continual training to upgrade the observers, and to ensure they have enough for all the demands put on them by the WCPFC different gear type coverage requirements.

It was noted, that many programmes (not all) have totally inadequate numbers of debriefers for their debriefing programmes, and this should be a priority to be rectified. This is an area that is developing in many PI countries, but funding and recognition of this important aspect of observing is not forthcoming in many national programmes.

There is a need to increase the number of available observers for most programmes, as this will allow for some attrition of the "not so good" observers, as well as being able to cover the expected increased need for observers to satisfy long line and carrier observer coverage requirements.

The quality of the observers needs to be monitored carefully, as it has been reported that the data collections held by SPC indicated that a percentage of observer data is not useable, because it is collected incorrectly, or is not collected at all. This is clearly a waste of valuable resources, and shows the need for

better trained and qualified observers, it also highlights that a proper debriefing programme needs to be in place for all programmes.

The quality of observers is extremely important and an entrance criteria for training needs to be rigidly applied as does the initial selection process. It was found in a - few programmes that some observer trainees were placed in courses by the hierarchy without going through any criteria, and in many cases these persons failed the courses and took time and effort away from persons who could have passed.

The sending of data to the SPC or WCPFC after each observer trip is extremely important and unfortunately many programmes are not sending data in a timely manner. SPC and WCPFC ROP have been working hard to rectify this problem by supplying equipment, personnel and other means in transferring the data in a quick and timely manner.

There is a need to assure that observers are covered by insurance when travelling, on board vessels, and when working as an observer on shore. Many programmes had some insurance for observers but most observers were not covered for all the periods they worked as observers.

Health checks (Medicals) by programmes on their observers varied from being comprehensive to none at all. The Commission does not have a standard for health checks, however it is recommended given the issues that some programmes have had with observers being unfit to carry out trips on vessels because of health constraints, that all programmes adopt a standard that requires observers to have a full health check (medical) when first trained and then a regular check after this, suggested to be every 18 months to two years.

Most programmes will be authorised as some of the standards required through no fault of the programme are just not available in a timely basis, for example.

- Debriefing and Debriefing training –For PI and some other countries this is under development with the help of FFA, SPC, WCPFC and NMFS and given another couple of years this problem should be rectified. The development of the debriefing should not hinder full authorisation, however a follow up check in a couple of year’s time to ensure the standard has been reached is recommended

The WCPFC ROP has audited 14 programmes and still is to audit 9 programmes before June 2012, a report will be compiled after all the audits have been completed. Table 1 indicates programmes that have been audited up to 1st August 2011. Table 2 indicates tentative dates for programmes still to be audited.

Table 1. Programmes Audited by the ROP Secretariat.

Programme	Audited
Philippines	May 2010
USA	November 2010
Marshall Islands	March 2011
Korea	March 2011
Fiji	March 2011
Tonga	March 2011
Vanuatu	April 2011
Kiribati	May 2011
Solomon Islands	June 2011

US Treaty (FFA)	June 2011
FSM Arrangement (FFA)	June 2011
PNG	June 2011
Nauru	June 2011
FSM	July 2011

Table 2 Programmes still to be audited

Programme	Tentative Audit Dates
China	probably Oct 2011
Chinese Taipei	probably Oct 2011
Cook Islands	Sept 2011
Australia	Feb 2012
New Zealand	Feb 2012
Palau	Dec 2011
New Caledonia	To be organized
Tuvalu	Sept 2011
Japan	To be organized