

Evaluating New Zealand's Fisheries Support In The Pacific



The fisheries sector is a key driver of growth in the Pacific. The New Zealand Aid Programme works with Pacific Island countries to increase returns through the sustainable management of fisheries resources. An independent evaluation found that New Zealand support for regional agencies has produced some good results.

Context

In the nine years to 2012/13, the New Zealand Aid Programme invested NZ\$59.4 million in fisheries. This was 2% of the total Overseas Development Aid budget. The investment focused on support for regional agencies (60% of funding) and institutional strengthening programmes in the Pacific (33% of funding).

Fisheries support in the Pacific is important for two reasons:

- Revenue gained from access fees from foreign fishing vessels and the export of fisheries
- Coastal fisheries provide an important food source for Pacific nations.

The reason for evaluating

In 2013, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade commissioned an evaluation of the New Zealand Aid Programme's fisheries investment in the Pacific from 2003 to 2010. The evaluation assessed what the impacts have been and whether it has achieved its stated objectives. It also provided advice and recommendations on what has worked well and what hasn't, including critical success factors, and lessons to guide our ongoing and future support in this sector.

The evaluation used an impact assessment approach looking at environmental, social, economic, financial and gender analysis. A desk review was undertaken alongside stakeholder interviews and field visits. The Activities in scope were:

- Support for the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and fisheries work of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)
- Solomon Islands and Cook Islands fisheries assistance.

Key points from the evaluation

Two key tuna species are reaching sustainable levels

Our support for FFA tuna management has assisted PICs to increase their revenues from licensing arrangements and SPC's tuna stock assessments are now showing that stocks of two key tuna species are reaching sustainable levels; their services and advice are of high quality and reflect the priorities of Pacific Island countries.

Mixed Results

However, the institutional strengthening programmes in the Solomon and Cook Islands showed more mixed results.

More clarity

New Zealand manages its roles well in the Pacific but there needs to be more clarity about its contribution.

Greater Priority

Coastal fisheries are a significant gap. Its critical role for food security, sustainable livelihoods for locals, as well as economic sectors such as tourism suggests that greater priority on coastal fishery management and sustainable development would be appropriate and timely.

Operational Changes

There are a number of operational changes that the New Zealand Aid Programme needs to make to improve the management, efficiency and effectiveness of our involvement in the Pacific fisheries sector and help deliver more sustainable results for partner countries.

[Click here to access the evaluation report](#)

Evaluation findings

The New Zealand Aid Programme's support for regional agencies (FFA and SPC) has produced some solid results. Our support for these agencies has contributed to the management and assessment of tuna stock, which has assisted PICs to increase their government revenues from licensing arrangements. Our support for tuna tagging was thought to be instrumental in kick-starting SPC's tuna stock assessments, which are now showing that stocks of two key tuna species are reaching sustainable levels. FFA was also widely acknowledged as assisting members to participate more actively and confidently in regional negotiations. Both these agencies continue to provide high quality services and advice that reflect Pacific Island countries' priorities. The evaluation found that our support represented good value for money and presented strong evidence for on-going support for these regional agencies.

The institutional strengthening programmes in the Solomon and Cook Islands provided more mixed results. In the Solomon Islands, the programme supported the development of tuna management and processes leading to a substantial increase in licence fees. On the other hand, the Cook Islands' programme focused largely on coastal water quality and delivered little in the way of oceanic fisheries management outcomes and water quality is yet to improve. Corporate systems introduced did strengthen the organisations but were vulnerable to political and managerial disruption at times.

The evaluation identified coastal fisheries as a significant gap. Its critical role for food security, sustainable livelihoods for locals, as well as economic sectors such as tourism, combined with their fragility, suggests that greater priority on coastal fishery management and sustainable development would be appropriate and timely.

What was recommended?

Going forward, the evaluation recommended that the New Zealand Aid Programme develop a more strategic and coherent approach across the Pacific fisheries sector. This will involve making deliberate, explicit and co-ordinated decisions about what we support. More detailed analysis is also required to select a niche in order match New Zealand's specialisation to the development needs of the Pacific Islands.

The report also suggested the need for more rigorous up-front analysis and planning, including exit strategies as part of Activities, the continued application of best practice for the institutional strengthening programmes and better integration of cross-cutting issues. This will improve the evidence base and the likelihood of successful development outcomes as well as help ensure better value for money. Monitoring and reporting should also be simplified and improved focusing on metrics that matter and are more relevant and realistic.

What are the next steps?

The evaluation is a positive contribution to knowledge about the New Zealand Aid Programme's interventions in the fisheries sector. Recommendations related to business processes have already begun to be addressed through an improvement process introduced in 2011.

Other recommendations have prompted the New Zealand Aid Programme to consider new approaches that could lead to improvements in performance. We see value in improving the oversight and coordination of support in the fisheries sector. The establishment of a fisheries activity monitoring and advisory group will be established. This approach might be extrapolated and implemented across other sectors.