

November 2004



SEVENTH SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

MAHÉ, SEYCHELLES, 8-12 NOVEMBER 2004

Progress Report on the IOTC-OFCF Project to improve statistical systems in Indian Ocean coastal countries

THE JOINT IOTC-OFCF PROJECT

1. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between IOTC and the Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation of Japan (OFCF) for the implementation of a project to assist developing countries of the region to improve their fisheries data collection and statistics was signed during a visit of the Executive Secretary in January 2002 at the OFCF headquarters. This project is funded by OFCF and involves the participation of staff from the Secretariat, working in conjunction with two OFCF experts attached to the Secretariat. The MOU is reviewed and agreed to annually, the latest MOU was signed on 01 March 2004.
2. The project embodies three main principles:
 - The activities undertaken under the project will follow the recommendations of the Commission and its relevant subsidiary bodies: the WPDCS and the Scientific Committee;
 - There will be no direct financial implications for IOTC Member countries.
 - The activities of the project should be directed towards reinforcing the statistical systems of developing countries from the region.
3. The current report covers for the activities of the third year (April 2004-March 2005), but continuation of the project is envisaged for up to two additional years at an annual funding level of about US\$500 000.

Priority Areas

4. The Secretariat identified the following three main areas of concern regarding tuna statistics in the region. The criteria used in this selection are that the fisheries concerned must be of sufficient size to affect stock assessment or future management measures or must catch fish at sizes not well represented from other fisheries. However, some of the planned activities will also benefit developing countries in the region that have not been identified by the criteria.
 - **Statistics from Indonesia:** Indonesia is a major tuna-fishing nation in the region. However, the data available from Indonesia is, in general, of uncertain accuracy and incomplete. Of particular concern is the large fleet of fresh-tuna longliners (of < 200 GRT) now under the Indonesian flag. This fleet is known to catch yellowfin, bigeye and southern bluefin tunas, swordfish and sharks but overall the fishery is poorly understood. Catches of other tunas such as skipjack and seerfish species by gears other than longline are also important but not well known.
 - **Improving data collection systems in developing coastal countries:** The collection of high quality fisheries statistics in developing countries is an important prerequisite for further development of their fisheries, and greatly assists in the assessment of the status of tuna stocks by regional bodies such as IOTC. In addition to **Indonesia**, countries under this category include **India, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and South Africa.**

- **Statistics from gillnet fisheries:** These fisheries operate primarily from Iran, Oman, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and are an important component of the fisheries for tropical tunas, as they catch a range of sizes that are not usually available to other gears during the same seasons and areas.

PROGRESS DURING 2004

5. In March, a Regional Workshop on Data Collection and Statistical Systems was held in Seychelles. The main objective of this Workshop was to provide a forum for sharing experiences and ideas about fisheries statistical systems. About 30 people from 12 countries participated in the workshop.
6. The official report on this workshop and a summary of country reports were published in September and will be distributed to institutions and libraries in the region. The report of the workshop provides guidelines on the design and implementation of effective fisheries data systems, and the country reports provide guidance on how to best maximize the benefit of the IOTC-OFCF supported activities.
7. On 14 May 2004, the second IOTC/OFCF Joint Committee meeting was held in Jakarta. Mr. Shunji Fujiwara was appointed as a Fishery Technical Expert to the Project in April 2004. His presence, together with Mr. Koichi Sakonju, the Project Manager, has greatly increased OFCF's technical capabilities. The Joint Committee expressed its support for the work plan proposed for the third year, in particular for the sampling and training activities.
8. In the third year of the Project, important advances were achieved in the Indonesian sampling programmes through collaboration between the IOTC-OFCF project, National Indonesian institutions (DGCF¹, RCCF² and RIMF³) and the ACIAR⁴-CSIRO⁵ project. This collaboration resulted in sampling in the main three landing ports and the collection of data on vessel activities by port authorities; thereby greatly improving the information necessary to estimate catches of the large fleet of fresh-tuna longliners.
9. The sampling coverage throughout the year was around 30-40% of the fishing trips, except in Cilacap where coverage is almost 100%. A relatively uniform coverage of the various processing plants was achieved thanks to the cooperation from all the commercial operators in each port.
10. To date, a total of 663 570 fish have been measured as part of the Indonesia sampling programme. With 286 542 fish (85 174 length measurements) collected in Jakarta and 55 544 fish (53 726 length measurements) in Cilacap. This represents a sampling coverage of approximately 30% of the fishing trips for the period September 2003 – September 2004. These data will be later combined with those collected at Benoa (where 321 484 fish measurements have been recorded with 32 128 length measurements) to obtain estimates of total catch.
11. The third meeting of the Steering Committee was held in May prior to the IOTC/OFCF Joint Committee meeting. During this meeting, progress reports on sampling activities, terms of reference for the institutions and persons involved in the programme, and current issues were reconfirmed. The successful implementation of activities in Indonesia was highlighted, and it was agreed that the IOTC-OFCF Project would continue to phase out its involvement in Indonesia during 2004-2005, transferring responsibilities to the Indonesian authorities.
12. The IOTC-OFCF project continued funding and technical assistance for the sampling programme in Phuket, Thailand during 2004. This was implemented through a new MOU between the DOF⁶, IOTC and OFCF signed in April, and will continue until March 2005. To date 308 542 fish have been weighed and 18 584 fish have been measured in Thailand.
13. An agreement with the Marine Research Centre of Maldives to provide support for extending the coverage of their size-frequency sampling of tuna from April 2004 to March 2005 was signed by MRC, IOTC and OFCF. This includes support for additional staff, travel costs for supervision and training, and consumables. The size-frequency sampling has been extended to 11 locations from seven atolls, and this is expected to greatly improve the coverage of this important artisanal fishery. To date more than 250 000 fish have been measured in Maldives.
14. In 2003, the IOTC Working Party on Billfish, through the Scientific Committee, reiterated its support for the IOTC-OFCF Project and recommended that priority be given to countries with substantial catches of swordfish and billfishes which are not adequately monitored or are reported as aggregates (e.g. Sri Lanka gillnet fisheries). In June 2004 the Project sent a technical mission to Sri Lanka to assess ways to support the existing sampling program

¹ Directorate General for Capture Fisheries

² Research Centre for Capture Fisheries

³ Research Institute for Marine Fisheries

⁴ Australian Council for Industrial and Agricultural Research

⁵ Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (Australia)

⁶ Department of Fisheries in Thailand

conducted by NARA⁷, and improve catch estimates of individual species. A MOU (between NARA, IOTC and OFCF) is currently being prepared as a result of the mission. The activities include size frequency sampling of tuna and billfish at three sites.

15. In November 2004, a group of four Government Officers and Scientists from India, Iran, Seychelles and Mauritius will attend a “Fishery Resources Management Course (FRMC)” sponsored and organised by OFCF Headquarters, to learn about fishery resource management, the fisheries statistical system used in Japan, and sampling methods; and to visit fishery related institutions and laboratories under the supervision of NRIFSF⁸. This course is funded by a source different from the IOTC-OCF Project.

16. Based on the deliberations of the Regional Workshop on Data collection and Statistical Systems (held in March 2004) that emphasised the importance of training for staff involved in the statistical systems, a training exercise in Indonesia was planned initially for September 2004. However due to several constraints (including translation of the textbook into Indonesian-Bahasa, selection of tutors, time schedule in the site etc.) the program was postponed to early December 2004, in Jakarta. The training programme will cover collection of fisheries data, collection of data for the estimation of catches on tuna and tuna like fisheries, FINSS⁹ (formerly known as ‘WINTUNA’), data transfer and validation tools and extracting data from FINSS. The training course is expected to last seven days.

17. The User’s Manual of FINSS was completed by September, and a printed version will be provided in December just before the beginning of the training course in Jakarta. An electronic version is now provided as help files in FINSS.

18. In February 2005, a training course on data processing and database management will be held in Seychelles.

19. A fact finding trip to Yemen is planned for late 2004 - early 2005. The major aims of the mission will be to verify reports of large catches of tropical tunas (reported to be over 40,000 t by FAO), and collect information on Yemen’s fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species.

PRELIMINARY PLAN OF WORK FOR APRIL 2005 – MARCH 2006

20. Given the importance of the catches from Indonesia, it is expected that the Indonesian project will still receive significant support in 2005-06. However, special emphasis will be placed in the gradual transfer of the activities to Indonesian authorities.

21. It is also expected that support will continue to be given to the (Phuket) Thailand, and Sri Lankan sampling programmes.

22. In the Maldives, MRC has committed to carry on the sampling from 2005, independent of the IOTC-OCF Programme.

23. Thailand authorities have also requested assistance in reviewing and improving the current system for collecting data from its artisanal fisheries. This could involve additional missions to Thailand.

24. The following ‘suggested’ activities will also be considered in the development of the final work plan. These include: providing specific training for capacity building, increasing contact with decision makers (to ensure continuity of programmes that are implemented), enhancing sampling programs and uptake of data collection and processing tools (such as FINSS) as a means for improving the quality and management of fisheries statistics.

25. The final work plan for April 2005 – March 2006 will be determined by IOTC and OFCF in the Joint Committee Meeting to be held in April 2005.

Action by the Scientific Committee

26. The Scientific Committee is invited to comment on the progress of the Project.

⁷ National Aquatic Resources Research & Development Agency

⁸ National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries in Japan

⁹ Fisheries Integrated Statistical System