

Pacific Ocean Finance Fellowship Program 2019-2020



Final Report





1. Introduction

The Pacific Ocean Finance Fellowship Program is part of the Pacific Ocean Finance Program (POFP), which is Component 3 of the Pacific Regional Oceanscape Program (PROP) - funded by the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility - and implemented through The Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC).

The aim of the Pacific Ocean Finance Program is to improve the amount and efficacy of finance for Pacific Ocean governance. To achieve this goal, the objectives of the 9-month Fellowship Program were to 1) increase individual capacity of Pacific Islanders by providing professional development training in ocean finance and governance, and 2) advance ocean finance initiatives both within institutions and across sectors in the Pacific Islands region through a program of mentored projects in fellows' home countries.

Conservation Strategy Fund (CSF), in partnership with Conservation Finance Alliance (CFA) and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), implemented the POFP Fellowship Program between April 2019 and May 2020. In April 2019, Fellows from 12 nations in the North and South Pacific were chosen via an open call for applications and competitive selection process to be trained and mentored by the Pacific Ocean Finance Fellowship Program. Two training events were carried out, in Solomon Islands in June 2019 and Fiji in November 2019, and Fellows also participated in the Pacific Ocean Finance Conference in Fiji in November 2019. Furthermore, Fellows conceived, designed and conducted individual projects in their home country with support and personalized technical assistance from the team of Mentors.

Through this integrated program of training, financial support and mentoring, the Pacific Ocean Finance Fellowship Program expanded the pool of people in the region knowledgeable and skilled in conservation finance. Fellows now possess a greater knowledge of public and private finance for ocean health, which they can use to design and implement successful business models and market mechanisms, increase

positive and effective investment decisions, and develop better policy and resource mobilisation for ocean health at local and national scales.

2. Deliverables and Achievements

The achievements detailed in this section are based on the updated version of the program deliverables, specified in the contract Variation No. 1 in February 2020, as listed in Table 1.

Table 1. List of deliverables and due dates

| # | Deliverable | Due Date |
|----|--|--|
| 1 | Fellow selection criteria and process; Launch announcement and applications opened (open no later than 15 April and applications close no later than 13 May) | 15 April 2019 |
| 2 | Short list of candidates for POFP approval | 15 May 2019 |
| 3 | Final fellow selection and confirmation; Detailed training agenda for first training week; Administrative guidance manual for fellows; Fellow and mentor project guidance manuals; Define course location and contract local partner | 27 May 2019 |
| 4 | Pre-fellowship and course evaluations; Implement first training course (1 week) | 1 July 2019 |
| 5a | Detailed training agenda for second training week; Define course location and contract local partner; | 30 Sep 2019 |
| 5b | Progress report on individual projects and mentoring | 15 Oct 2019 |
| | PNG, Cook Islands and Niue Fellows program design and project coordination and research grant stipends | Implemented alongside the rest of deliverables |
| 6 | Implement second training course (week of 4 November) and assist fellows in participation in the POFP Conference (11-15 Nov) | 15 November 2019 |
| 7 | Conduct post-evaluations; draft final report including summary of trainings and individual projects | 1 April 2020 |
| 8 | Final Report | 1 June 2020 |



The POFP Fellowship team provided Fellows with in-person training workshops and virtual webinars to impart knowledge and skills related to ocean finance, economic development, and ocean governance. In addition, Fellows were given research support and mentoring guidance to develop their project ideas, define their methodology, plan their activities and budget, collect and analyse data, and develop presentations to share their research results.

A. Deliverables 1 and 2

Announcement, selection criteria and process, and short list of candidates

STATUS: COMPLETED

The Pacific Ocean Finance Fellowship Program announcement (see Appendix 1. Website announcement) was launched on April 16th and closed on May 10, 2019. A total of 70 applications were received (see Table 2). Thirteen of those applicants did not meet Stage 1 criteria (see Appendix 2. Selection criteria), and the remaining were evaluated using Stage 2 criteria. As a result, 28 applicants from the Stage 2 review were shortlisted, and the list was sent to POFP and FFA in mid-May for the final selection stage (see Appendix 3. Shortlisted candidates).

Table 2. Number of applications received by country

| Country | Number of applications |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Fiji | 12 |
| Marshall Islands | 3 |
| Federated States of Micronesia | 4 |
| Kiribati | 4 |
| Palau | 5 |
| Samoa | 2 |
| Solomon Islands | 7 |
| Tonga | 6 |
| Tuvalu | 2 |
| Vanuatu | 3 |
| Cook Islands | 5 |
| Papua New Guinea | 8 |
| Niue | 1 |
| Non-eligible countries | 8 |
| Total applications received | 70 |

B. Deliverable 3

Final fellow selection, training agenda for first training week; program guidance manual; define first course location and contract local partner

STATUS: COMPLETED

The final POFP Fellows selection was returned to the program team on May 21st. The team then sent acceptance letters to selected fellows on May 23rd. Initially, there were 13 selected fellows from 13 Pacific Island countries. However, the participant from Cook Islands had to withdraw from the program due to a change in jobs and time incompatibility; the team then incorporated the next candidate from the waitlist to take her place. Furthermore, the participant from Palau had to withdraw from the program due to personal health problems but this time the program team had to continue with one less Fellow.

Accordingly, the POFP Fellowship Program trained and mentored 12 outstanding Fellows (see Table 3) who are now literate in ocean finance and governance to influence positive investment decisions and promote ocean health.

Table 3. Final selected Fellows

| Name | Last name | Country | Institution | Job Title |
|-----------|--------------|------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Mary Raui | McDonald | Cook Islands | Te Ipukarea Society | Financial Manager |
| Apisalome | Movono | Fiji | The University of the South Pacific/ Massey University | Lecturer |
| Alissa R. | Takesy | FSM | Independent consultant | Consultant |
| Martin | Pine | Kiribati | PIPA Trust | Finance Manager |
| Emma | Kabua-Tibon | Marshall Islands | Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority | Chief of Coastal Fisheries |
| Alana | Richmond-Rex | Niue | Oma Tafua | President |
| Presley | Kokwaiye | Papua New Guinea | National Fisheries Authority | Fisheries Cooperative Coordinator |
| Danita | Strickland | Samoa | Conservation International | |
| Rosalie | Masu | Solomon Islands | Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources | Deputy Director - Inshore Fisheries |

| | | | | |
|--------|---------------|---------|---|------------------------------|
| Amelia | Faotusia | Tonga | Ministry of Finance (MOF), Government of Tonga | Development Aid Economist |
| Fa'au | Ekapale-Telii | Tuvalu | Independent consultant | Consultant |
| Obed | Timakata | Vanuatu | Timakata & Associates | Manager Operations |

On the Program Entry Evaluation (see Deliverable 4 below), Fellows expressed how they felt about having been selected as part of the Fellowship Program. The graphic below shows they felt mainly honoured, excited and grateful.



“Thank you to all fellows, facilitators, organisers, our donors and our organisations and families for giving us this opportunity.”
-Rosalie Masu, Solomon Islands

The first course location was decided by POFP and FFA as Honiara, Solomon Islands. This made it possible for the local partner implementing partner to be FFA, and one person from their staff was assigned to help with the logistics for the event.

The draft training agenda for the Honiara workshop was sent to POFP for their comments on June 2nd and the detailed final agenda was shared with Fellow participants before the training (see Appendix 4. First workshop agenda). A general guidance manual (see Appendix 5. Fellowship guidance manual) was drafted before the workshop and finalized with inputs from the Fellows and POFP team during the training. The final POFP Fellowship manual was shared and delivered after the workshop.

C. Deliverable 4

Pre-fellowship and course evaluations. Implement first training course

STATUS: COMPLETED

The first of two Fellowship program training workshops was held in Honiara, Solomon Islands from June 24 to 28, 2019. A program entry evaluation (see Appendix 6. Program entry evaluation form) was conducted as the first activity of the workshop agenda. It included a pre-fellowship evaluation - with questions about Fellows' expectations for the whole program - and a pre-workshop evaluation to assess perceptions of knowledge about the topics to be covered during the workshop.

The workshop covered a range of topics related to finance solutions, including ocean governance and policy, sustainable ocean economic development, marine spatial planning, natural resource and fisheries economics, valuation of ecosystem services, natural capital accounting, environmental policy and incentives, ocean health indicators, public sector financing and fiscal management, private sector financing, and an overview of finance instruments. Fellows also had the opportunity to learn about current ocean finance projects in the Pacific, and to share and discuss their project ideas and receive feedback from instructors and the group.

At the end of the workshop an exit evaluation (see Appendix 7 and 7.1. First workshop exit evaluation form and results) was conducted to capture Fellows' perceived learning and their satisfaction with the planning, logistics and content of the workshop. Overall, the workshop evaluations were very positive, with 100% of

the Fellows saying they would recommend the training to others, and 100% agreeing or strongly agreeing that it was a valuable training experience. On average, they reported that their knowledge and confidence in the various topics increased from Reasonable/Good to Very Good.

Quotes from Honiara workshop exit evaluations:

“Excellent, very interesting and useful for me. Directly relates to my work especially for looking at sustainable financing in our programs.”

- Rosalie Masu, Solomon Islands

“I believe the course content that was delivered was very informative. Also, future fellows would benefit from this kind of programme that is in a way new to the Pacific. The ocean is an important part of our culture, identity and heritage and it is up to us as Pacific Islanders to ensure we learn ways to ensure best conservation management practices are being carried out.”

Lafala Turepu, Cook Islands

“There's a lot of important content that was shared during this training that could really benefit and inspire other people working in the conservation and fisheries sector.

- Danita Strickland, Samoa

“Thank you kindly for the opportunity to participate in this very first cohort of the Pacific Ocean Finance Fellowship. I have learnt a lot, made new contacts with the Fellows, mentors and coordinators. Look forward to manifesting all this knowledge into concrete actions that will contribute to achieving the POFP programs outcomes.”

- Alissa Takesy, Federated States of Micronesia

During a group meeting on the last day of the first training, the Fellows, mentors and POFP management team discussed implementing some improvements for the second training in November. Primarily, earlier communication about the detailed agenda and travel logistics, single room accommodations for everyone, and more flexibility with meals. Other recommendations from the evaluations included more case studies and examples from the Pacific region, and more interactive sessions and group exercises. All of these recommendations were incorporated into the second workshop preparation and implementation.

D. Deliverable 5a

Second training preparation and coordination

STATUS: COMPLETED

POFP selected Fiji as the location for the second training, to be held the first week of November, 2019, in order to enable Fellows to attend and present during the Pacific Ocean Finance Conference the week following the training.

Fellows were consulted during and after the first workshop to provide input into the agenda for the second workshop. A draft agenda was shared with POFP on September 18th, and a detailed agenda (see Appendix 8. Second workshop detailed agenda) based on input from Fellows and POFP was shared on October 15th.

Other pre-workshop material sent to the Fellows included: travel agreements (see Appendix 9. Second workshop travel agreement) containing all the logistics and expenses specific to each Fellow, general logistical workshop information including workshop venue and accommodation (see Appendix 10. Second workshop logistical information), a packet with the detailed agenda, and presenter and Fellow bios (see Appendix 11. Second workshop information packet).

Parallel to the workshop planning and coordination, the Fellowship program team worked together with the Pacific Ocean Finance Conference team to harmonize all the logistics and expenses for the transition from the Fellows workshop in Nadi (5-9



Nov) to the Conference on the Coral Coast (11-15 Nov), which Fellows and Mentors attended along with the Fellowship Program Coordinator.

E. Deliverable 5b

Progress report on individual projects and mentoring

STATUS: COMPLETED

Proposal Development and Project Mentoring

Between the first and second training workshops, the Fellows and program team also focused on developing individual projects, refining the mentoring process, and providing administrative support. Using the project ideas identified during the first training, one Mentor was assigned to each Fellow (see Table 4) based on the match between his or her expertise and the focus of the Fellow's project idea. Mentors have relevant technical and advising experience, and were committed to both the overarching objectives of the program and the success of each Fellow.

Following the match, Mentors and Fellows worked together via email and teleconference to further develop and refine the project objectives, activities and milestones. For this, the program team provided a project proposal template to support and standardize the process (see Appendix 12. Project proposal template).

Table 4. Mentors of the Pacific Ocean Finance Fellowship program

| Name | Institution | Job Title | Mentee |
|------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Dr. David Meyers | Conservation Finance Alliance, CFA | Executive Director | Apisalome Movono Emma Kabua-Tibon Rosalie Masu Martin Pine |
| Katy Mathias | Wildlife Conservation Society, WCS | Conservation Finance Project Manager | Danita Strickland Obed Timakata Presley Kokwaiye Amelia Faotusia |
| Dr. Rhona Barr | Independent | Consultant in Environmental Economics and Finance in Pacific region | Mary McDonald Alissa Takesy Fiafia Richmond-Rex Fa'au Ekapale-Telii |

Fellowship grant agreements (see Appendix 13. Project grant agreement template) were signed upon approval of the final project proposal by the designated Mentor. Grant agreements included a timeline and budget, and were prepared and approved by the POFP Fellowship Program Manager. Along with the contract, Fellows received the program manual (for a second time), an expense report template and a disbursement request letter (see Appendix 14 Finance expense report template and Appendix 15 Grant disbursement request template).

Emails and calls with mentors, as well as monthly group check-in calls, provided support to the Fellows on any topic related to the Fellowship program whenever guidance or support was needed.

Program Mid-Term Evaluation

During the second training workshop in Fiji, Fellows were asked to fill out a mid-term program evaluation (see Appendix 16. and 16.1. Program mid-term evaluation form and results). The results of the mid-term evaluation were clearly positive, with 90% of Fellows reporting that they felt “great” about: 1) being a part of the program, 2) how the program was meeting their expectations, and 3) how the mentoring process was going.

A few quotes from the mid-term evaluation regarding being a Fellow:

“I’m grateful for the opportunity to be part of the first cohort of fellows, to learn, upskill, and share from our international and regional mentors from CSF, WCS, and CFA on the tools, approaches, and novel finance mechanisms that will enhance positively the impact of our work on ocean health issues and ocean governance.”

-Obad Timakata, Vanuatu

“Personally, I’m enriched with great friendships. Professionally, I’m blessed with a region-wide network of support. I am learning, being inspired, challenged intellectually, and having so much fun with everyone!”

-Danita Strickland, Samoa

The fellowship is strategic, innovative, and adaptive.

-Presley Kokwaiye, Papua New Guinea

During the mid-term evaluation, Fellows had this to say about the mentorship process and administrative support from the Fellowship team:

“Great team of mentors/advisors and a lot of educational materials to help build our knowledge and skills on ocean finance. Also, it was less of an administrative burden on me when reporting templates were provided.”

-Emma Kabua-Tibon from the Marshall Islands

“They genuinely care, they listen, they provide options to solutions, they inspire, and they are nice!”

-Danita Strickland, Samoa

“The privilege of learning from specialist persons is amazing. Great insight, data, and referrals. I also like being advised on how to communicate a project well.”

-Fiafia Rex, Niue

“My sincere and heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to my mentor, Ms Rhona Barr for her time and tireless efforts to read and provide detailed and informative advices for my proposal and questionnaires. Thank you, Ms Kim Bonine for providing mentoring assistance and advices when the need arises. Both their contributions are greatly appreciated.”

-Fa’au Ekapale-Telli, Tuvalu

In addition, Fellows shared their learning from the Program, anticipated impacts of their projects, and inspiration for how they plan to share what they have learned:

“[I have learned] that much more collaboration and coordination is required in the ocean space of development. That more innovative finance mechanisms are required that are tailored and context specific.”

-Amelia Faotusia, Tonga

“Finance is as much about numbers as it is about process and systems and relationships. I'm more confident to discuss or hold conversations around the integral role of finance in natural resource management.”

-Danita Strickland, Samoa

“I will raise awareness and this time, develop community business plans, which should address ocean health, governance, and sustainable financing mechanisms.”

-Presley Kokwaiye, Papua New Guinea

Through the program I'll be able to carry out a project that will greatly benefit my role as we try to set up our protected areas network office in the RMI.”

-Emma Kabua Tibon, Republic of the Marshall Islands

“[My project] will contribute to achieve my government aspirations in terms of ecotourism in Pipa Islands. I need to see it happening in a most strategic and viable manner.”

-Martin Pine, Kiribati

“Better management and development for fisheries in the Solomon Islands.”

-Rosalie Masu, Solomon Islands

Additional Technical Support Via Webinars

Further technical support was also offered to the Fellows, parallel to the mentorship process. The Fellowship program team planned and conducted five webinars on topics of interest to the Fellows (see Table 5). During the mid-term evaluation, Fellows gave positive feedback about the check-in calls and webinars, although some



Fellows reported having difficulty participating due to challenges with internet connections.

“[Webinars and check-in calls were] an excellent way to keep everyone connected throughout the fellowship. It is good to be updated with what is happening with their respective projects. A good learning tool to share ideas, lessons and experiences which are applicable to each and every fellow. However, my apologies for not always being available due to other pressing commitments and the intermittent internet connection in the islands.”

-Fa’au Ekapale-Telli, Tuvalu

“Group calls have been helpful to sort out project and training issues. Webinars have provided in-depth understanding of project ideas. These communication and coordination platforms have provided me with means to engage with my state stakeholders.”

-Alissa Takesy from FSM

Table 5. Webinar dates, topics and presenters

| Date | Topic | Presenter |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| July 17 | Financing Coral Reef Conservation and Management with Tourism-Related Tools | David Meyers, organized by CFA |
| July 22 | Conservation Trust Funds | Kathy Mathias |
| Sep 3 | Ocean Finance Profiles | Melissa Walsh |
| Sep 30 | Financial Mechanisms and implementation | David Meyers |
| Feb 4 | Impact Monitoring Framework | Jan Yoshioka, CI Ventures |
| March 18, 26 April 2, 3, 15, 17, 24, 30 May 8 | Webinar series: sharing project processes and finance | Fellows |

F. Deliverable 6

Implement second training course (4-8 Nov) and assist fellows in participation in the POFP Conference (11-15 Nov)

STATUS: COMPLETED

The second training workshop was held in Nadi, Fiji from 5 to 9, November. It was structured to split time among topical presentations, Pacific case studies, guest speakers, small group discussions, practice for the Pacific Ocean Finance Conference presentations, and one-on-one time with mentors (see Appendix 8. Second workshop detailed agenda).

The workshop focused on themes related to the Fellows' projects, including Pacific Ocean finance and SDGs, Pacific Ocean governance and regional agreements, blue economy and sustainable development, national financial planning, regional finance mechanisms in the Pacific, marine managed areas finance, community livelihoods, tourism economics and finance, marine conservation agreements, conservation trust funds, fisheries management and finance, and business entrepreneurship. The workshop featured topical presentations as well as Pacific case studies and regional examples shared by guest speakers, including from the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), University of the South Pacific (USP), PERL Network, IUCN Oceania Regional Office, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Fiji, and Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA).

During the week following the Fellowship training, Fellows presented their preliminary results to the Pacific Ocean Finance Conference audience. To support the Fellows in this effort, the Fellowship team provided guidelines, a Powerpoint template (see Appendix 17. Conference presentation template), as well as time during the Fellowship workshop to practice and improve presentations with comments from mentors and other Fellows. These efforts were successful, and the Pacific Ocean Finance Fellows Presentations were highly rated by the conference audience¹.

¹ The Conference team used the app Pulse to evaluate presentations. Level of satisfaction was rated from 0 (lower) to 10 (higher). Fellows presentations were rated with 8, 9 and 10.



A program entry evaluation (see Appendix 18. Second workshop entry evaluation form) was conducted at the beginning of the workshop, and included questions about Fellows' expectations for the training as well as a pre-workshop evaluation to assess perceptions of knowledge about the topics to be covered. At the end of the workshop, an exit evaluation (see 18.1 and 18.2. Second workshop evaluation forms and results) was conducted to capture Fellows' perceived learning and their satisfaction with the planning, content and logistics of the workshop.

Overall, the evaluation results were very positive, and 100% of the Fellows reported that they would recommend the training to others. Similarly, 100% agreed or strongly agreed that it was a valuable training experience, with the right combination of sessions, themes and speakers. Satisfaction with travel and on-site logistics was also very high, with 100% of Fellows agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were supported and satisfied with course travel, meals, accommodation and facilities. In terms of learning, 100% of Fellows expressed a perceived increase in knowledge and confidence in all topics between pre- and postworkshop assessments, with the greatest gain being in fisheries management and finance, and communication and presentation skills.

In the evaluations, Fellows mentioned enjoying the guest presentations and small group discussions, and noted appreciation for having peers from diverse backgrounds to help tackle their project challenges and give guidance on project implementation. The workshop also provided a safe space to share experiences and expectations of regional management of ocean resources and seascapes.

Below are selected quotes from the second workshop evaluation:

*"It is thought provoking, innovation options brought/shared in one 'safe space'
The knowledge and connections gained are fundamental and vital to development
and knowledge generation."*

-Danita Strickland, Samoa

“Workshop was very effective as it is a follow-on from the first one in Honiara. Very helpful and productive to our individual projects. Applicable to our varying needs, priorities and circumstances in the region. Most relevant, efficient and effective way to articulate and communicate the finance option initiatives that are available around the region. Views and ideas shared among the fellows is enormous help”

-Fa’auai Ekapale-Telli, Tuvalu

“Logistics and organization of the sessions and time was excellent and allowed for effective learning and optimal use of our time resource.”

-Amelia Faotusi, Tonga

“Having the diverse backgrounds to share and help each other tackle our project challenges or guidance on project implementation.”

-Alissa Takesy, Federated States of Micronesia

“Needless to say, more work is required in our Blue Pacific and our Blue Economy. This is a critical component in championing the cause effectively at grassroots, provincial and national level.”

-Obad Timakata, Vanuatu

“Good to share the knowledge on Ocean Finance to Pacific Islanders that would help promote a healthy ocean.”

-Mary Rauī McDonald, Cook Islands

“Any opportunity for self-enhancement (personally or professionally) and capacity building on knowledge and skills should be shared with others. Despite the fact that the fellowship program will end soon, I know my project will continue on and have a positive impact on my work and the communities that I serve.”

-Emma Kabua-Tibon, Republic of the Marshall Islands

G. Deliverable 7

Conduct post-evaluations; draft final report including summary of trainings and individual projects

Project Summaries

This final report includes summaries of the training workshops and mentoring process. Table 6 lists the Fellows' projects, and a summary of individual projects can be found in Appendix 19. Fellowship project summaries. The Fellowship team provided a final report template (see Appendix 20. Final report guidelines) to assist Fellows in synthesizing their project process and findings.

Table 6. Fellowship project summaries

Alissa Takesy – Federated States of Micronesia

Updating and Aligning the FSM Protected Areas Network's Sustainable Finance Plan to the Micronesia Challenge 2030 Targets

Amelia Faotusia – Tonga

Sustainable financing mechanisms for the implementation of the Special Management Area Programme for community inshore fisheries management in Tonga

Apisalome Movono – Fiji

Pacific Ocean Finance: a pathway towards sustainable marine custodianship through tourism

Danita Strickland – Samoa

Mapping the current status of ocean financing sources in Samoa & evaluating the alignment of their objectives to the prioritised solutions for the Samoa Ocean Strategy, and exploring opportunities to enhance existing Financial Mechanisms for Grassroot Projects

Emma Kabua-Tibon – Republic of the Marshall Islands

Evaluating Ocean Finance Solutions to Sustain RMI's Protected Areas Network

Fa'au Ekapale-Telii – Tuvalu

Assessment of options to strengthen and expand the current model for the Community Vessel Day Scheme (C-VDS) Funds

Fiafia Alana Rex – Niue

Niue Coral Reef Restoration Project

Martin Pine – Republic of Kiribati

Ecotourism in the Phoenix Island Protected Area (PIPA) as a financial strategy to support Marine Protected Areas in Kiribati

Mary Raui McDonald – Cook Islands

A sustainable financial plan for funding “core” cost of an Environmental NGO in the Cook Islands

Obed Timakata – Vanuatu

An economic diversification strategy for the conservation of an organic island’s marine ecosystem, fostered through the successful participatory branding of its marine life sanctuaries and its hatchery developed marine products.

Presley Kokwaiye – Papua New Guinea

Economic diversification of community managed marine protected areas: A Business model for Anagusa Island, Milne Bay Province, Papua New Guinea

Rosalie Masu – Solomon Islands

Improving Management and Development of Sea Cucumber Fishery in Solomon Islands

The final webinar series ***Sharing project process and findings*** was conducted from mid-March to early May 2020 for the closure of the Fellowship program. This series enabled Fellows to share their findings with each other and with a broader audience, serving also as a dissemination activity. The Fellowship team provided a Powerpoint template and guidance for the presentation (see Appendix 21. Final presentation template). All presentations and video recordings of this final series have been shared with FFA and OPOC as of May 15th.

Finally, on May 22nd the Fellowship team conducted an online closing ceremony where Fellows, Mentors, Fellowship team, and the FFA and OPOC team had a chance to meet and share for the last time (see Appendix 22. Closing ceremony program). Program completion certificates were presented virtually, and a video recording of the event was shared with the POFP team, FFA and OPOC on May 29th.

Program Evaluation

A final Fellowship program evaluation was conducted via SurveyMonkey.com by the program team during May 2020 (see Appendix 22. Program exit evaluation form). The objective of the survey was to gather feedback about the key elements of the program including Fellows’ experience with the remote mentoring process and



undertaking their projects, as well as about what Fellows have gained from the program and how they plan to apply what they have learned. In addition, the survey asked for any suggestions for improving the program for future cohorts.

Almost 100% of Fellows responded to the survey (See Appendix 22.1. Program exit evaluation results).

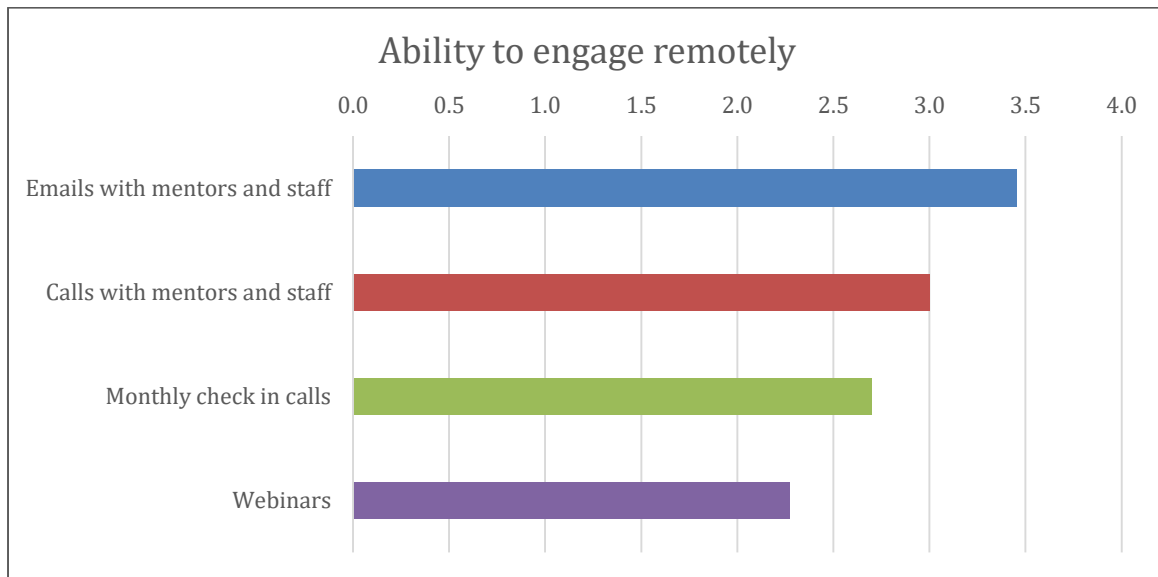
Fellows rated highly all of the various program elements, (training workshops, conference participation, contact with mentors, contact with other fellows, proposal development process, fellowship projects, results presentations), with 92% of responses being “very important”. The training workshops, conference participation, and contact with mentors all rated higher by a slight margin.

Fellows were likewise satisfied with almost all program aspects, with the program length and timeline scoring lower than others.



The survey also asked Fellows how easily they were able to engage in various modes of remote interaction. Emails with mentors and staff were easiest for Fellows to engage in, while webinars were more challenging due to internet connection difficulties and conflicting time commitments. Most Fellows were in contact with

their mentors at least once per month, and the reason most cited for not being in more frequent contact was a lack of project progress or results to share, with a secondary reason being that they were too busy to reach out or reply.



Fellows undertook an ambitious process of conceiving, articulating, planning, implementing, and evaluating an ocean finance project within a short timeframe. When asked about the feasibility of implementing their fellowship projects, about half of Fellows shared that it was feasible or very feasible, while the other half shared that they experienced difficulties implementing their projects. The primary challenges cited were external to the program process, including finding time to do the work, challenges or disruptions in personal lives, national natural disasters or crises, changes in government, and most recently, the global pandemic situation. Given these challenges, most Fellows experienced some difficulty completing program deliverables, most notably their technical project reports.

Challenges



“The information required was not readily available in the context in which I needed it, or it did not exist as it was not collected. The project was on understanding money source and priorities, and this is usually considered a sensitive subject and organisations etc. are not forthcoming with the details. Juggling time to administer this with regular work in an under-staffed office proved challenging.”

-Danita Strickland, Samoa

“Aside from managing my own time to do the work and falling ill with dengue, there were external factors that had an impact on my project including change in government (readjustments/restructuring for some Ministries) and disruptions from Covid-19.”

-Emma Kabua-Tibon, Republic of the Marshall Islands

Given the challenges with competing obligations, over 60% of Fellows reported that a stipend to cover some of their time would have helped them complete their projects. Fellows who indicated the least need for the stipend tended to work in government positions for which their project fit into their current job responsibilities.

When asked what they have gained from the program, Fellows cited knowledge and skills related to ocean finance and governance, a new regional network of colleagues and friends, a greater understanding of the needs, options and challenges for ocean finance in the region, and new awareness of the importance of partnerships between finance and environmental actors.

“I now possess a greater knowledge of public and private finance options for ocean health which I can use both for personal and professional interests in ocean health initiatives.”

-Fa’au Ekapale-Telli, Tuvalu

“I have gained much insight into the importance of the ocean to livelihoods in the Pacific and the variety of options Government could potentially take onboard to finance conservation and ocean health programs to sustain our ocean.”

-Amelia Faotusia, Tonga

Professionally, I have gained invaluable tools to better apply the additional lens that is 'finance' to improve assessment of the viability of projects long term. Personally, I have gained an amazing network of mentors and friends, that in itself is the most value as we will continue to improve on our tools and better contextualise them to our region's needs and capacities.”

-Danita Strickland, Samoa

“Personal & professional development and above all, providing a focus on developing finance mechanisms not just for ocean conservation but for resilience building.”

-Api Movono, Fiji

“Personally, I am grateful to have benefited from the social network of POFP Fellows, expert trainers, inspiring mentors and alumni. Professionally, it has galvanised my understanding that effective governance and partnerships between finance and environmental actors are essential to guarantee the upscaling and

sustainability of our community-based initiatives in contributing to a healthier and stronger blue economy (particularly during this COVID19 pandemic time). These partnerships must tackle incoherence in public policy and market failures, among the major drivers of our marine biodiversity loss, for instance by greening harmful subsidies and making more efficient use of resources already invested in our fisheries and oceans sector.”

-Obed Timakata, Vanuatu

When asked about how they will apply and share what they have learned, Fellows mentioned that they plan to share their project findings via in-person meetings, media outreach and print documents for various colleagues, agencies and stakeholder groups. They further shared that they plan to help improve national policies related to ocean health and fisheries management, influence decisions at the Finance Ministry level, share their knowledge with stakeholders and colleagues at multiple levels, and apply their learning to post-graduate study opportunities.

Some selected quotes regarding sharing and applying what they have learned:

“I shall apply my acquired knowledge in my current postgraduate studies which focus on environment management and development, as well as through my work in the Ministry of Finance of the Government of Tonga upon completion of my studies in support of potential financing mechanisms for ocean management.”

-Amelia Faotusia, Tonga

“Potentially it can be a resource towards my graduate studies research; tap onto my Pacific Fellows to seek their expert advice on key ocean finance and health issues; and advocate this opportunity with other Pacific colleagues to participate in this regional capacity building endeavour.”

-Alissa Takesy, Federated States of Micronesia

“This program will directly relate to my work in managing inshore fisheries.”

-Rosalie Masu, Solomon Islands

“I will share through consultations and making it a public document. Talking about it also in the future with FFA as this was truly a great fellowship. Sending a thank you letter to responsible agencies and supporters as well.”

-Fiafia Rex, Niue

Fellows were also asked about their hopes for the lasting impact of their Fellowship projects. These hoped for impacts include better national policies and finance mechanisms for natural resource management and coastal community development, increased government commitment to ocean finance and health, development of financially sustainable ecologically healthy livelihood initiatives, strengthened ability to communicate and advocate for ocean issues, the capacity and opportunity to collaborate and help other Fellows and colleagues into the future.

“I hope the outcomes of my Fellowship project will put the RMI government in a stronger position to protect our natural resources including our ocean and reefs, which have always been a part of us in terms of culture, livelihood, and survival.”

-Emma Kabua-Tibon, Republic of the Marshall Islands

“1. The development of sustainable, profitable and scalable livelihood initiatives based on sound environmental stewardship as support measures for the MPA’s in place. 2. Community awareness of the conservation of our marine biodiversity and the preservation (and/or enhancement) of our marine life and habitats in a thriving Blue Economy. 3. We transition as a close-knit community from a path of unsustainable use of our ocean resources to a more ecologically balanced and sustainable use, leveraging innovative financing mechanisms and RD&I to scale and replicate for positive impact.”

-Obed Timakata, Vanuatu

“Through a multisectoral approach that integrates the proper analysis and application of ocean financing tools and opportunities, the region can successfully harvest sustainably and protect its marine resources (living and non-living).”

-Danita Strickland, Samoa

“Positive investment decisions are key to making the most of our precious ocean resources. I am looking forward to being a part of a team that contributes to better policies for the development and management of coastal community projects.”

-Fa’au Ekapale-Telli, Tuvalu

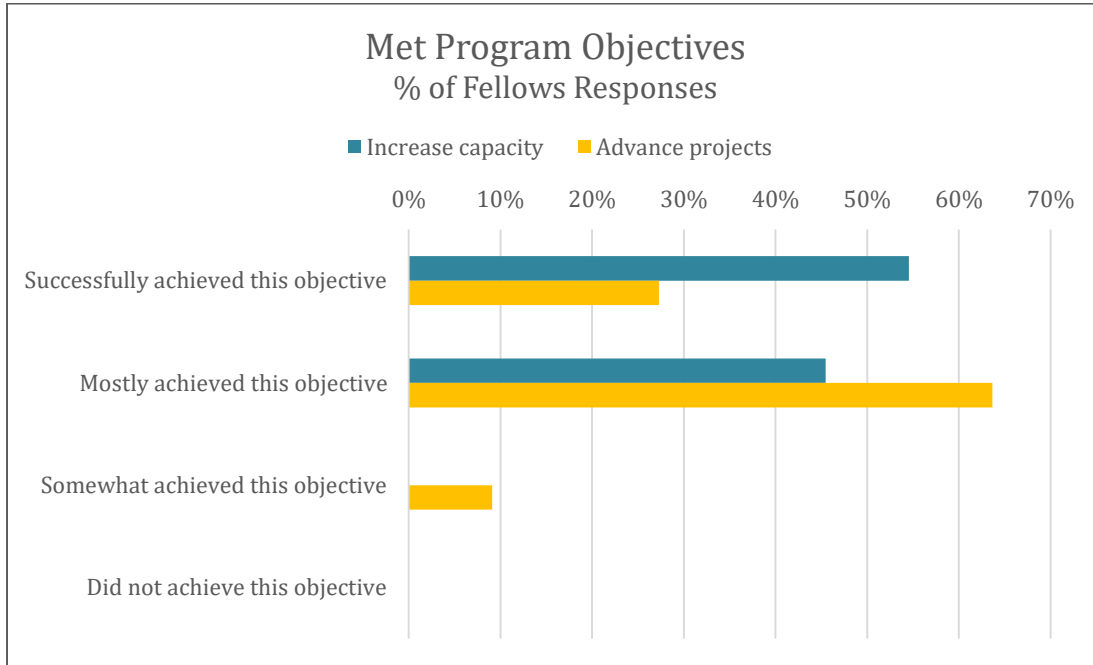
“Knowledge about conservation and starting up a conservation organisation.”

-Presley Kokwaiye, Papua New Guinea

“The knowledge gained, the networks and friendships with fellows and mentors.”

-Rosalie Masu, Solomon Islands

Fellows were also asked their perception of whether the Fellowship program achieved its initial objectives of: 1) increasing individual capacity of Pacific Islanders by providing professional development training in ocean finance and governance, and 2) advancing ocean finance initiatives both within institutions and across sectors in the Pacific Islands region through a program of mentored projects in fellows’ home countries. 100% of Fellows responded that the program mostly or successfully achieved objective 1, and 90% objective 2. The goal of capacity building was perceived to have been achieved more than the goal of project implementation.



“For which my Chief, people and community are sincerely grateful!”

-Obed Timakata, Vanuatu

“I think this Fellowship is a great start to building the much-needed capacity of the Pacific region in ocean financing. We are the blue continent after all.”

-Amelia Faotusia, Tonga

“A lot has been learnt from the training workshops and the conference through the exchange of knowledge and experiences. The mentoring projects allowed us to practically apply the knowledge learnt to our respective projects in our home countries. A brilliant way to learn and apply!”

-Fa’au Ekapale-Telli, Tuvalu

When asked if the Fellowship program should be repeated for future cohorts, 90% of Fellows responded yes, and 10% responded not sure. Fellows were asked for their recommendations for how to improve the program for future cohorts. Common responses included continuing communication and connection among cohorts and



formalizing an alumni network, extending the time of the program, adding a final in-person workshop to share results, adding funds to cover Fellows' time or larger research costs, increasing the number of Pacific Islander mentors and case studies, and running the program via a regional institution such as the University of the South Pacific. Other suggestions included greater interaction with regional Pacific organizations, developing projects with a regional scope, revising the program design to be less ambitious and more suitable for the Pacific context, and connecting the program with opportunities for further capacity-building and funding.

“Firstly, I am grateful and privileged to be part of the first cohort of Pacific Fellows (opportunities of which is limited in the Pacific). In hindsight the length and timeline of the fellowship program could be better served if it were extended from nine to twelve months, as well as the fellowship funding to assist with the achievement of the Program's outcomes.”

-Obed Timakata, Vanuatu

“Overall the mentors and facilitators were awesome. However, aims of the project were a bit too ambitious and a bit rushed. Perhaps a review of the content, delivery and objectives of the program can yield a more robust and realistic design, suitable for the Pacific context.”

-Api Movono, Fiji

“Truly grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this cohort. There is so much value in the fellowship to continue and raise visibility in islands.”

-Danita Strickland, Samoa

Finally, the survey asked Fellows how they felt having been a part of the Fellowship program. Fellows shared that they felt honoured, privileged and grateful for the knowledge and connections gained through the program.

“I was honoured to be part of a regional initiatives, showcase my country's efforts in relations to the initiative, and make new friends and expand my professional network.”

-Alissa Takesy, Federated States of Micronesia

“Honoured and privileged. I have made lifetime connections and networks through this opportunity.”

-Amelia Faotusia, Tonga

“Humbled and blessed.”

-Presley Kokwaiye, Papua New Guinea

Fellow Testimonial

“Useful, insightful, innovative, memorable! a few words that come to mind when reflecting on the Pacific Ocean finance fellowship and I am proud to be a fellow. The fellowship was excellent as an introduction to the field of ocean financing, marrying the necessities of economy and the protection of nature and the various ecosystems. The mentors did a phenomenal job to capture my attention throughout the fellowship by providing techniques, tools and theories that has built my capacity and understanding of the field. The interactive workshops created a safe space for sharing experiences, perceptions and challenges allowing for true growth. The ability to contextualise the content of the workshops improved understanding of the viability of the various techniques and tools to our region.

Ocean financing will play a significant role in the future of sustainable ocean use and protection. It offers another lens to critically analyse opportunities, assess impacts and explore potentials or limitations. The mentors’ willingness to share their expertise and experience to improve our projects is invaluable. The relationships fostered and sustained provides a needed network for the region to advance the opportunities ocean financing has to offer for the region.

Whilst amazing, it has been not without challenges. Fulfilling the commitment to the fellowship requires navigating the balance between work, family and fellowship commitments, which is not always easy and commitment to the fellowship can quickly fall behind. To this it is important to acknowledge that as a full-time employee, this would not have been possible without the backing and support received from my employer, Conservation International, in allowing me to engage fully with the programme. Nonetheless, I cannot recommend this fellowship enough to those interested."

-Danita Strickland, 2019-2020 POFP Fellow, Samoa

III. Challenges and Lessons Learned

A number of challenges and lessons learned occurred during the course of the Fellowship program.

Operational timeline

In hindsight, the program timeline presented challenges in implementing the program, and a longer timeframe was needed. The funding design and timeline of the program were defined before the start of the program due to the timeline of PROP, requirements from the program funders, and existing commitments of the POFP.

This timeline resulted little time for program planning in the weeks between the signing of the contract and the launch of applications, a short application window, and insufficient preparation time between the final selection process and the first workshop. As a result, it was a struggle to adequately coordinate and communicate the complex logistics for the first workshop.

Fellowship project timelines

Given that ocean finance and financing mechanisms are a relatively new topic in the Pacific region, applicants to the program were almost universally inexperienced in



these concepts and did not have a project idea ready to implement. The program, therefore, was tasked with teaching the requisite economic and finance concepts and skills, then guiding Fellows in conceiving, articulating, planning, implementing, and evaluating an ocean finance project within a short 9-month timeframe. Most Fellows needed the time between the first two workshops for finalizing their ideas and objectives, designing their projects and finalizing their project proposals. As a result, most projects did not get started until after the November POFP Conference, and were not completed by the end of February as initially planned.

Fellows' time commitment and funding

In order to be accepted into the program, selected Fellows had to submit explicit support from their employers or advisors to take part in the program, such that both Fellows and employers agreed to commit work time to develop their projects and to participate in the two in-person workshops and Conference. However, once the projects started, most of the Fellows found it difficult to take time for field work and for project activities in general. With their workload and other commitments, Fellows needed either greater incentives or extended project lengths. The constraint that funds could only be used for expenses, but that Fellows could not be expected to spend any money out of pocket, created a challenging situation for the Fellowship management team, and contributed to a lack of incentive and ability for the Fellows to spend time on their projects.

External challenges

Many of the Fellows faced significant challenges beyond their control, such as serious illnesses or injury, travel barriers, natural disasters, changing governments, new job responsibilities, and important family commitments. Additionally, unstable or slow internet connections made participation on webinars and group calls problematic for a number of Fellows. The COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine greatly increased the challenges faced by Fellows to complete their projects, and communicate via email and internet. A more flexible and longer timeline can help account for some of these unexpected challenges.

IV. Key Recommendations

1. Increase program timeline

A longer timeline would be ideal in order to adequately plan and implement a program of capacity building and project mentorship. This could include 3-6 months for planning the program, recruiting mentors, developing the content, preparing the announcement and selection process, and finalizing all administrative templates and manuals, as well as the outreach, application, selection and confirmation process. An additional six months is needed for Fellows to learn concepts and design and plan their projects, including an initial training workshop and a second workshop to finalize project plans. Fellows then need 6-9 months to implement their projects, including time to finalize and write up project results, implement broader communication and outreach, and have a final workshop to share results and close the program. A final 2-3 months would account for any unforeseen delays, and to finalize communications, evaluations and project reporting.

2. Allow greater flexibility in project funding

Fellows were limited in their time to conduct projects, and many had challenges focusing on and finishing projects as compared to other family, community and professional responsibilities. A more flexible project stipend that could cover some costs of time might provide a greater incentive and ability for the Fellows and their organisations to support the projects.

3. Clarify priority objective and target audience

For future programs, it would be helpful to clarify the prioritization of capacity building versus project implementation, particularly in a region where ocean finance concepts may be new. For example, if project implementation is the priority, then selected Fellows might be better positioned to complete projects if they are current graduate students or researchers. If the priority is capacity building and development for Pacific leaders already in important professional positions, then a different project implementation model would be recommended.



4. Clarify program authority

During the program, it was unclear whether the Fellowship team was required to adhere to requests from POFP, FFA, OPOC or World Bank. The indirect and unclear authority over the program and funding decisions created stress, additional administrative and management time, and sub-optimal outcomes for some program components. Future regional programs involving multiple multi-lateral agencies and sub-program management should clarify roles, responsibilities and financial authority at the outset.

5. Design and implement program to fill gap in Pacific mentorship capacity

A sentiment that was clear throughout the program was the desire by Fellows to be mentored by Pacific Islanders, for the program to be run by Pacific Islanders, and for the case studies and examples to be from the Pacific. However, given that ocean finance is relatively new to the Pacific region, all of this is not yet possible, and despite our efforts we were unable to recruit a Pacific mentor during the timeline of the program. Our suggestion would be to create a “Train the Trainers” program as a key step to bridge this gap before launching a future version of the Fellowship program. This program could be housed in a key institution in the region such as USP or SPREP, and could bring together faculty and staff from other universities and organizations in the region who are interested in becoming the leaders and mentors of a future Pacific Ocean Finance Fellowship program. The “Train the Trainers” program would give future mentors key concepts, skills and insights into Ocean finance, help them understand examples from around the world and how they could be applied to the Pacific, and support them in developing and implementing some applied demonstration projects. As part of this process, members of this current POFP Fellowship team could share knowledge, skills and lessons learned from the 2019-2020 Fellowship program. At the conclusion of the process, the graduates of the “Train the Trainers” program would be better positioned to develop and mentor the next cohort of Pacific Finance Fellows, something that clearly seems wanted and needed in the region.

VI. Appendices

- Appendix 1. Website announcement
- Appendix 2. Selection criteria
- Appendix 3. Shortlisted candidates
- Appendix 4. First workshop agenda
- Appendix 5. Fellowship guidance manual
- Appendix 6. Program entry evaluation form
- Appendix 7. First workshop exit evaluation form
- Appendix 7.1 First workshop exit evaluation results
- Appendix 8. Second workshop detailed agenda
- Appendix 9. Second workshop travel agreement
- Appendix 10. Second workshop logistical information
- Appendix 11. Second workshop information packet
- Appendix 12. Project proposal template
- Appendix 13. Project grant agreement template
- Appendix 14. Finance expense report template
- Appendix 15. Grant disbursement request template
- Appendix 16. Program mid-term evaluation form
- Appendix 16.1 Program mid-term evaluation results
- Appendix 17. Conference presentation template
- Appendix 18. Second workshop entry evaluation form
- Appendix 18.2 Second workshop exit evaluation results
- Appendix 19. Fellowship project summaries
- Appendix 20. Final report guidelines
- Appendix 21. Final presentation template
- Appendix 22. Closing ceremony program
- Appendix 23. Program exit evaluation form
- Appendix 23.1 Program exit evaluation results