

Strengthening and scaling community-based approaches to Pacific coastal fisheries management in support of the *New Song (Pathways)*



Catching, trading and eating fish is central to the way of life in the Pacific islands. Most fish eaten by Pacific communities are caught close to shore, but these inshore fisheries face many threats, including overfishing. By 2030, an additional 100,000+ tonnes of fish per year will be needed across the region for good nutrition. Climate change and other external threats increase the risk that coastal fisheries will struggle to provide needed economic, cultural and nutritional benefits into the future.

Securing the sustainable supply of coastal fish is becoming recognised as a critical political priority by national governments and their regional organisations, and many communities recognise the need for change.

Meeting these challenges requires collective action by communities together with innovations in the way governments and development partners provide support and catalyse change. Transformational change requires many pathways for influence, and activities within communities alone are not sufficient. *Pathways* is framed within the Pacific Community-led regional strategy, *A New Song*, and seeks to influence the trajectory of coastal fisheries to a regional scale by building a stronger, coordinated approach to coastal fisheries development and management across the Pacific.

What is community-based fisheries management (CBFM)?

CBFM is based on the recognition that because coastal communities are the ones with the intimate knowledge of the marine resources, on which they rely for food and livelihood every day, they should have an integral role to play in the sustainable management of coastal fisheries. Meaningful CBFM requires collaboration from the whole community – men, women, elders, youth, village council, and church – to collectively identify and address challenges to achieving sustainable fisheries. CBFM empowers communities; it strengthens their sense of ownership and management of their fisheries resources. CBFM facilitates fisheries management and the collective achievement of broader development outcomes through building partnerships and strengthening mutual communication pathways among communities, local, provincial and national government agencies.



Auki market, Malaita Province, Solomon Islands **Photo credit:** Filip Milovac, WorldFish

Pathways to change

Pathways research focuses on understanding, testing and adapting the structures, processes and capacity to implement and sustain national programs of community-based fisheries management in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. We will work directly with men and women from at least 4000 households in 50 communities and aim to reach many more throughout the Pacific using scaling strategies developed under *New Song*. *Pathways* activities are centred around five main objectives:

<i>Strengthen Pacific institutions to implement the New Song for coastal fisheries</i>	We invest in building multi-agency networks and human resources of government and intergovernmental agencies to implement CBFM nationally in support of <i>New Song</i> .
<i>Improve and scale out CBFM in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu</i>	Working with communities in partner countries, we develop strategies to scale CBFM out in partner countries, and find ways to help CBFM continue succeeding when it faces the many external pressures that can erode it.
<i>Improve the opportunities and viability of livelihood diversification to strengthen CBFM initiatives</i>	We work with communities to find ways to maintain and generate livelihoods while they reduce or forego their catch and allow depleted fish stocks to recover.
<i>Increase social and gender equity in coastal fisheries governance, utilisation and benefit distribution</i>	<i>Pathways</i> activities strive towards promoting gender equity and social inclusion as central to achieving development outcomes for society as a whole.
<i>Promote food and nutrition security in the Pacific food system through improved management and use of fish.</i>	We strive to help communities better incorporate fish into their diet to address the double burden of malnutrition (undernutrition and being overweight/obese) encountered in many Pacific islands.

Key partnerships

Pathways is a collaboration between researchers and regional and national networks and agencies in support of their policy objectives. The project brings together the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS) at the University of Wollongong, WorldFish and the Pacific Community (SPC), the project's key regional partner. Fisheries departments for each project country – the Kiribati Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development; the Solomon Islands Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources; and the Vanuatu Fisheries Department – play a key role in the project's implementation and success. Our collaboration extends beyond these partners to non-fisheries agencies, to promote a whole-of-government approach to scaling out CBFM.

