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Government of Germany and partners assist Samoa Fisheries

Posted by: [admin](#) Posted date: **May 15, 2014** In: [News](#), [Pacific](#) | comment : 0



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The German Government is supporting Pacific Island countries to increase their resilience and adaptive capacity in the face of the impacts of climate change. The support focuses on five important development sectors in the Pacific Island region: land use (agriculture, forestry and land use planning), fisheries, education, energy and tourism. It is jointly implemented in collaboration with regional partners like the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) in a project entitled SPC/GIZ Coping with Climate Change in the Pacific Islands Region (CCCPIR).

In Samoa, the SPC/GIZ CCCPIR is working with the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries on climate change adaptations in coastal fisheries. As a major component of the CCCPIR project, the Fisheries Division is implementing a fish aggregating devices (FADs) project this week and in collaboration with the EU-funded DevFish 2 project.

SPC Fisheries Development Officer and FAD expert, William Sokimi explained that FADs enhances the food chain by attracting baitfish such as anchovies, sardines and scads, leading to the aggregation of larger pelagic species such as skipjack, yellowfin, billfish, wahoo and mahimahi. Nearshore FADs directly impact local communities by providing easy access to these species and can be reached by canoe users. They also give community fishers a safer environment to carry out their fishing activities at a central location.

The project started with training for trainers on rope work, rigging, basic principles on maintenance and deploying FADs. This initial workshop will be followed by similar training for the village communities on constructing and deploying their own FADs.

Coastal fisheries play an integral part in the livelihoods of Samoan communities as well as supporting their dietary needs. Fish consumption in 2007 was estimated at 59 kg per capita per annum, with higher consumption in rural villages than in towns. With the pressures resulting from a growing population and the shift from a subsistence lifestyle to a cash economy, compounded by rapid development, uncontrolled harvesting of fish and wildlife, natural disasters and impacts of climate change, these areas are under threat.

In an effort to manage coastal fisheries, Samoa has implemented a community-based fisheries management programme since 1995. The programme empowers local communities, as resource users with sole responsibility for the management of their resources, thus enabling them to be included in decision-making. Management actions are identified by the communities themselves,

with the government playing an advisory role in proposed management initiatives. The programme has worked in more than 90 coastal villages and communities in Samoa.

As explained by Magele Etuati Ropeti of the SPC/GIZ project: 'Many village communities are managing their coastal fisheries resources; however, this project brings another element into the overall management of fisheries and that is working with those communities at improving awareness on adverse impacts of climate change to assist in maximising opportunities for communities to adapt to social, economic and environmental changes. This will strengthen the capacity of local communities to respond to climate change impacts through the application of integrated coastal management and conservation based adaptation measures to improve resilience of marine ecosystems and the livelihoods of people depending on them.'

DevFish 2 is a regional project that encourages sustainable development of tuna fisheries to alleviate poverty, create local jobs and other economic benefits for the Pacific ACP countries and Timor Leste. DevFish 2 project undertakes a range of activities to make it easier for the local fishing industry and communities (including small scale tuna fisheries sector) to grow and profit from the sustainable development of their tuna fisheries.

Mr Jonathan Manieva of the SPC DevFish 2 project said that 'One focus area of the DevFish 2 is supporting artisanal tuna development in the Pacific Island countries, and this project fits in well with the objectives of the SPC/GIZ CCCPIR.'

The EU-DevFish2 project is jointly implemented by Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and SPC.

The ACEO Fisheries Division said that the aim of the project is to support village communities as well as an adaptive mechanism towards projected impacts of climate change. "The impacts of climate change on the marine resources are projected to put more pressure on the fisheries resources. These changes coupled with on-going fishing pressure around the country continue to present a challenge for fisheries managers. Alternative livelihood and adaptation activities should be developed especially those that reduce risks and present opportunities for local communities. FADs is one of those highlighted by communities during consultations conducted by the Fisheries Division" said ACEO Joyce Samuelu Ah Leong.

"The idea of having communities' involvement is to ensure sustainability by giving community members the skills and know-how on FADs so they can perform their own maintenance as well as constructing their own when needed" said Magele Etuati Ropeti of SPC. "Furthermore, the FADs provide not only adaptations but supporting food security and alternative livelihood for local communities" concluded Magele.

The project will undertake community training in 4 sites in Upolu and Savaii covering 18 selected village communities.

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