



Training For Local Fishermen To Supply Kiribati's New Tuna Plant

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The EU-funded, SPC-implemented, DevFish2 project funded a training workshop on small tuna fishing operations (SFO) from 11 to 20 September 2012 in Kiribati.

The training was facilitated by William Sokimi of SPC and Samol Kanawi from the PNG National Fisheries College. They used the SFO curriculum taught at PNG's Fisheries College. The two-week intensive training focused specifically on mid-water tuna fishing techniques, fishing gear construction, onboard tuna handling, preservation skills, basic sea safety, and basic awareness about fishing as a business.

Acting Director of Fisheries, Raikon Tumo, said, "This is very important training. It will have a tremendous positive impact on the way our fishermen catch and process tuna - more efficient and effective - which will lead to good quality products that meet Competent Authority requirements for export."

The training was based on a needs assessment for small-scale artisanal tuna fisheries capacity development in light of the onshore development in Betio by Kiribati Fish Limited (KFL). It was agreed by local stakeholders (the Kiribati Fish Limited, the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development, the Ministry of Labor, fishermen's associations) that this was an opportunity for local participation in the joint venture shore-based project. At the same time, KFL was concerned about the fishermen's ability, their awareness regarding catching target size tunas (ten kilograms and up), and their knowledge of post-harvest requirements, particularly proper fish handling and preservation on board.

The training was held at the Fisheries Training Center (FTC) in Bikenibei. Participants were 21 selected representatives from three local fishermen's associations (Causeway, Bairiki and Betio), three training officers from the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development, two lecturers from the Fisheries Training Center, and representatives from KFL's quality control unit, including the KFL Operation Manager, Mr. Li Changhong.

The sessions include presentations on the focus areas, which were translated into I-Kiribati, so that the local fishermen association representatives could fully understand. In the practical sessions, the participants undertook construction of tuna fishing gear for vertical long line and drifting deep-water lines.

The training also included two days of practical fishing using the gear the participants had constructed. Whilst at sea, fish handling techniques (gutting, killing, spiking, bleeding, and gilling and gutting) were demonstrated on the fish they caught.

After the practical fishing, there was an excursion to the KFL plant, where the fish they had caught were loined and the tuna quality displayed, showing the effects of good and bad handling on board the vessel. This exercise enabled the fishermen to understand how handling affects the quality.

The practical sessions also included the use of the sea safety grab bags and the tools and equipment contained in them.

During the practical fishing trip, the fishermen were told to observe how they could improve the layout of their boats to meet the standards expected by KFL. Mr. Changhong made the fishing trip with them in order to understand the fishermen's situation and to assess how KFL could help them improve their boats' conditions to meet the expectations of KFL.

At the end of the training, the facilitators concluded that the training had:

- * enhanced the fishermen's fishing techniques and post-harvest fish handling;
- * improved their awareness of sea safety and tools;
- * satisfied KFL such that the company engaged the trained/certified fishermen to supply tuna;
- * facilitated the training template to be adapted by the Fisheries Training Center for use in regular training programs.

The Fisheries Training Center now has first-hand experience of how to conduct the SFO course and they hope to adapt and contextualize the National Fisheries College's SFO curriculum to suit their situation. The facilitators proposed that Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development liaises closely with the Fisheries Training Center in the regular delivery of this SFO training including on outer islands.

After the training, Kintoba Tearo of KFL management said, "The training was very useful and the timing was perfect, as the factory is now operating. KFL has arranged for more than fifteen small fishing boats to supply fish to the factory, and a further 150 fishermen came to KFL, expressing an interest in supplying fish to the plant."