

NINTH SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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

The joint IOTC-OFCE project

1. The IOTC and the Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation of Japan (OFCE) have been working collaboratively since 2002 to assist developing countries of the region to improve their fisheries data collection and statistics. The IOTC-OFCE Project is funded by OFCE and involves the participation of staff from the IOTC Secretariat, working in conjunction with two OFCE experts attached to the Secretariat. A MOU is reviewed and agreed to annually, the latest MOU was signed on 15 March 2006.
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 Working Parties 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 fifth year (April 2006-March 2007). This is the final year of the project and an annual funding level of about US\$500,000 is maintained same as previous years.

Priority Areas

4. The Secretariat identified the following four main areas of concern relating to tuna statistics in the region. The fisheries targeted by the project are those that are of sufficient size to influence stock assessments or future management measures, or catch fish at sizes not well represented in 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 was, in general, of uncertain accuracy and incomplete until 2002. Of particular concern was the large fleet of Indonesian fresh-tuna longliners. This fleet is catching yellowfin, bigeye and southern bluefin tunas, swordfish and sharks. 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 participating under this category include **India, Kenya, Oman, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, and Yemen**.
 - **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.
 - **Statistics from new longline and purse seine industrial fisheries:** These fisheries currently operate from Iran, South Africa, Thailand, Malaysia and Seychelles and are of major importance in terms of the volumes of tropical tunas they catch.

Progress during 2006

5. In February and March 2006, fact finding missions were dispatched to Kenya and Tanzania to compile country reports (in collaboration with country counterparts) and collect information on the fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species. Based on the information collected during the mission to Kenya a new program which aims to collect historical data on sport fishing and enter them into a database was initiated in August 2006. Furthermore, a proposal to supply additional equipment for data collection and processing to Tanzania and Zanzibar is currently being considered.

6. On 26 April 2006, the 4th IOTC/OFCF Joint Committee meeting was held in Jakarta. The Joint Committee expressed its support for the work plan proposed for the fifth year, in particular for the sampling and training activities. The continuation of the sampling programs after the termination of the Project and the contents of the comprehensive report on the Project Activities were also discussed. These issues will be continued during this year.

7. In 2006, the fifth 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 (Jakarta, Cilacap and Benoa) 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. A total of 260,002 fish have been weighed and 36,549 fish have been measured as part of the Indonesia sampling programme. This represents a sampling coverage of approximately 40% of the fishing trips for the period January - December 2005.

8. The fifth meeting of the Steering Committee was held in April 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 transfer responsibilities to the Indonesian authorities. The duration of the program was specified as April to December 2006 in the current MOU.. In the meeting, Indonesian authorities committed to continue the sampling program by themselves after the termination of the programme and presented a plan to achieve this from January 2007.

9. The IOTC-OFCF Project continued funding and providing technical assistance for the fresh tuna longline sampling programme in Phuket, Thailand during 2006. This was implemented through a new MOU between the DOF⁶, IOTC and OFCF signed in April, and will continue until December 2006. A total of 63,393 fish were weighed between January and December 2005.

10. The IOTC-OFCF Project also continued funding and providing technical assistance for the sampling programme for collecting data from its coastal purse seine fisheries during 2006 based on the request made by Thailand authorities. A MOU (between DOF, IOTC and OFCF) was signed in April and the programme will continue until October 2006. This effectively increased the sampling period from five months (the duration of the original programme in 2005) to one year. The activities include size frequency sampling of neritic tunas at one site.

11. The IOTC-OFCF Project continued funding and technical assistance for the sampling programme in Sri Lanka during 2006. This was implemented through a new MOU between the NARA⁷, IOTC and OFCF signed in April, and will continue until December 2006. A total of 1,044 fish have been weighed and 20,585 fish have been measured for the period January - December 2005. The activities include size frequency sampling of tuna and billfish at three sites in support of an existing sampling program conducted by NARA in order to improve catch estimates of individual species.

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

⁷ National Aquatic Resources Research & Development Agency

12. At the IOTC Working Party on Billfishes (WPB) in March and Tropical Tuna (WPTT) in July, Sri Lankan representatives made presentations of the results from the offshore and coastal catch monitoring programme (the Sri Lanka sampling programme) and provided the catch estimates for Sri Lanka vessels during 2005.

13. In August the IOTC-OFCF Project commenced funding and providing technical assistance for the sampling programme in Mombasa, Kenya during 2006. This new programme, which aims to collect and computerize historical data on sport fishing vessels operating in Malindi and Watam, including CPUE data, was implemented through a new MOU between the Department of Fisheries, IOTC and OFCF signed in August, and will continue until December 2006.

14. The publication of the User's Manual of FINSS was completed in March 2005 and distribution of the manual to relevant institutions is being carried out throughout 2005 and 2006.

15. To date the manuscript of IOTC Field Manual has been drafted. Printing is planned for January and February 2007, subject to the final compilation of the manual.

16. The final compilation of the comprehensive report on IOTC-OFCF Project is also scheduled for January and February 2007.

17. In March 2007, two OFCF experts of the IOTC-OFCF Project will return to Japan due to the termination of the Project. Budgets for the activities for Phase II of the IOTC-OFCF Project are currently being considered by the Japanese Government on an annual contract basis.

18. In November 2006, a participant from each of Tanzania, Zanzibar, Kenya, Indonesia and China will attend a "Fishery Resources Management Course (FRMC)" sponsored and organised by OFCF Headquarters. Attendees will learn about fishery resource management, the fisheries statistical system used in Japan, and sampling methods. They will also visit fishery related institutions and laboratories under the supervision of NRIFSF⁸. This course is not funded by the IOTC-OFCF Project.

Brief assessment of activities initiated for April 2002 – March 2007

19. A brief assessment of the Project activities is described in Annex-1 and a chronogram of the IOTC-OFCF Project is shown in Annex-2. Fact finding activities were conducted in 13 countries (Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Oman, Maldives, Seychelles, Mozambique, Mauritius, Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa) and country reports were compiled. The country reports written in cooperation with scientists in each country contributed greatly to the exchange of technical information and advice and the Regional Workshop on Data Collection and Statistical Systems provided the opportunity to review problem areas in each country and increase awareness of importance on Fisheries statistics.

20. In Collection Statistics activities, sampling programmes have been implemented in six countries (Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Oman, Maldives and Kenya) and new catch monitoring activities were successfully implemented in each case.

21. In Database Management activities, Capacity building through training and technical advice on database design and/or database management was achieved among the participants from 11 countries (Mauritius, Thailand, Seychelles, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Maldives, India, Australia, Reunion and Iran). Fair knowledge on database design, database management, data handling and data processing was transferred to the participants appropriately. FINSS user's manual was published and copies distributed to relevant institutions were useful for its practical operation.

22. Training activities on statistical systems and database management were held six times in Seychelles and once in Indonesia. In addition, in each of the countries conducting field sampling programmes, the transfer of technical skills relevant to these programmes was conducted successfully by IOTC-OFCF technical experts.

23. Several Publications such as the Regional Workshop Report on Data Collection and Statistical Systems, the FINSS user's manual and a range of sampling manuals or training materials relating to specific fisheries were completed. Other publications such as the IOTC Field Manual are still in preparation.

Action by the Scientific Committee

24. The Ninth meeting of the IOTC Scientific Committee is invited to comment on the progress of the IOTC-OFCF Project.

⁸ National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries in Japan