

# REPORT OF THE SIXTH PACIFIC ISLAND REGIONAL FISHERIES OBSERVER COORDINATORS' WORKSHOP

23–26 January 2006  
Held at Pacific Island Forum Fisheries Agency  
Conference Centre, Honiara, Solomon Islands)



Forum Fisheries Agency  
Honiara  
Solomon Islands.



Oceanic Fisheries Program  
Secretariat of the Pacific Community  
Noumea, New Caledonia.



National Marine  
Fisheries Service  
Hawaii, United States



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**PACIFIC ISLAND FORUM FISHERIES AGENCY AND SECRETARIAT OF PACIFIC COMMUNITY**  
**SIXTH OBSERVER COORDINATOR WORKSHOP**

**HONIARA, SOLOMON ISLANDS**

**23-26<sup>th</sup> January**

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Introduction**

1. Representatives from American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Hawaii, Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga participated in the sixth Pacific Island Regional Fisheries Observer Coordinators Workshop. Other participants were from Secretariat of the Pacific Community Oceanic Fisheries Program (SPC OFP) WWF Honiara . During introductions the WWF representative thanked the workshop for the opportunity to participate and the representatives from French Polynesia and New Caledonia thanked SPC for its financial support (through the EU) to enable them to attend. Participants from FSM, RMI, PNG, Fiji, Tonga and Cook Islands also indicated thanks to FFA for their financial assistance. The New Caledonian representative presented the chair with a gift from that country. The FFA secretariat facilitated the workshop a list of participants is appended as **Attachment 1**.

**Opening of Workshop**

2. The Sixth Pacific Island Regional Fisheries Observer Coordinators' Workshop was opened with a welcoming address (**Attachment 2**) from Mr. Feleti P. Teo, Director General of the Pacific Island Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2006 at FFA headquarters in Honiara, Solomon Islands. The Director General praised the efforts of FFA staff along with colleagues from the Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP) of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) to make the workshop possible and especially thanked the United States National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) along with AusAid for their financial support.

**Election of Chairman**

3. Mr Noan Pakop, MCS Manager for the Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority was appointed chairman for the workshop to the unanimous approval of participants.

**Apologies**

4. FFA secretariat presented apologies for three expected participants from Palau, Niue and Kiribati who appeared not to have arrived due to travel difficulties. Mr. John Kelly of the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service apologised that the NMFS Tuna Manager and US Treaty, Pago Pago based, observer liaison officer; Gordon Yamasaki, was unable to attend due to the difficulty in finding appropriate travel. Mr. Dike Poznanski Assistant Observer Coordinator for the Marshall Islands Marine Resource Authority (MIMRA) offered apologies for the expected late arrival of MIMRA's Coordinator, Mr. Manasseh Avicks

## **Adoption of Agenda**

5. A request from SPC to include sessions on observer placements and to review the latest version of observer forms to be included in other matters, was agreed. The agenda with the addition was adopted and is appended as **Attachment 3**.

## **Report of the 5<sup>th</sup> Regional Observer Coordinators' Workshop**

6. Peter Sharples (SPC OFP) presented the report of the 5<sup>th</sup> Regional Observer Coordinator's Workshop with a very brief summary of items discussed and the subsequent developments on those topics. Most of these would be covered in greater depth during the course of this workshop. A question was asked on the subject of TROPIC (a database to assist Observer Coordinators' to track the data they handle and to monitor and manage staff activities) evolving into a larger entity to cover the collection of all types of tuna fisheries data. The SPC OFP assured, upon request that this was now available to all members that wished it installed. There was no other comment on any of the items from the 5<sup>th</sup> Regional Observer Coordinator's Workshop. **Attachment 4**

## **Country and Organisation Reports**

7. Central and Western Pacific National Observer Coordinators, representatives from FFA, SPC and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) presented reports outlining the present status of activities in their countries or organisations. Particular problems and successes are briefly outlined as well as the current status of their activities.

8. American Samoa presented a Statement appended as Attachment 5A
9. Cook Island presented a Statement appended as Attachment 5B
10. Fiji presented a Statement appended as Attachment 5C
11. French Polynesia presented a Statement appended as Attachment 5D
12. FSM presented a Statement appended as Attachment 5E
13. Marshall Islands presented a Statement appended as Attachment 5F
14. New Caledonia presented a Statement appended as Attachment 5G
15. Papua New Guinea presented a Statement appended as Attachment 5H
16. Samoa presented a Statement appended as Attachment 5I
17. Solomon islands presented a Statement appended as Attachment 5J
18. Tonga presented a Statement appended as Attachment 5K
19. Forum Fisheries Agency Observer Program Report appended as Attachment 5L
20. Secretariat Pacific Community Oceanic Fisheries port sampling and Observer Report 5M
21. World Wildlife Fund Report – Solomon Islands .5N

22. *During the country and organisation reports several items in the reports were discussed, with questions and answers to clarify a number of the issues.*

23. The FFA Observer Program Manager (OPM) gave a summary of the status of the regional observer programs, there were questions on the eligibility of different nationalities to work in these programs and how the work is shared out. It was pointed out by the OPM that these would be discussed in more detail in the agenda items on FSMA and the declining US vessel numbers.

24. The SPC Port Sampler and Observer Coordinator outlined the status of the Port Sampling monitoring report noting that much of the material that is in the report comes from country reports and participants were asked to review the sections relevant for each country, and to provide information to correct and update the report wherever possible.

25. SPC Representative pointed out that staff at SPC's OFP to support port sampling and observers had in effect dropped, as one of the three personnel in the team had been given other work tasks. The loss of this staff member to other duties would dilute the amount of time available for supporting port sampling and observer issues. Available staff time to support port sampling and observers would be mostly directed at helping to introduce new debriefing regimes, data quality control processes, associated training needs as well as consolidation of the present ranks of observers with refresher training. Basic training would not be overlooked but Coordinators were urged to consider needs and capabilities carefully, and that if fewer observers were required these may be better trained in sub-regional or regional training sessions, which may prove more cost effective in the long run, even though initial costs of running this type of course are generally higher.

26. Participants asked for a clarification on the SPC collection of stomach samples, SPC OFP representative explained that the collection of stomach samples was currently on hold, as recent staff movements at the OFP have led to a back-up of unprocessed samples in Noumea freezers. It was expected that sampling would restart later in 2006 and National and Regional Coordinators would be advised. Participants were advised that OFP scientist Ms. Valerie Allain would no longer be the contact and that Mr. Bruno Leroy would be the future principal contact person.

27. National coordinators were urged to strive to improve the processes that would speed up delivery of monitoring data to the OFP for processing, and advised that if problems exist the OFP considered assisting in this area a high priority.

28. The Cook Islands indicated that they had a problem identifying suitable nationals to work as observers and advised the workshop that they were exploring the possibility of utilising observers from programs in other countries. There was discussion with representatives of the Hawaii and American Samoa programs on this problem and there was a proposal suggested that US observers from American Samoa could be used to cover US vessels that wish to fish in Cook Island waters. If the proposal was agreed at a higher level, data collected would be available to Cook Islands.

29. Fiji stated their longline observer coverage for 2005 was 4.2% and that they would strive for 6% in 2006. The Fiji representative was asked whether boats that fished in Vanuatu waters but unloaded in Fiji were also covered by observers, Fiji explained that observers were placed on vessels that were licensed to fish in both countries but not on vessels that were Vanuatu licensed only. When on the dual licensed vessels observers collect data for the entire trip so there is some coverage of long liners in Vanuatu waters. Fiji and Vanuatu are still to work out arrangements that may lead to greater coverage. Fiji noted that it was currently unable to conduct proper port sampling of foreign vessels that tranship in Fiji and would appreciate some help to meet this port state

obligation. Participants commended Fiji in their long line coverage and their efforts to increase this coverage.

30. FSM reported that they were down to seven observers, and would like to train up four more during 2006. FFA responded by saying that they would look at the possibility of including the FSM selected observer candidates in the next sub-regional training course.

31. French Polynesia was asked if there was any further news about earlier state government proposals to take over the funding of observers that are currently operating. French Polynesia responded that they could only report that this initiative seems no longer to be talked about.

32. New Caledonia presented a comprehensive report with some interesting statistics about catch break-down shown through monitoring. The report generated some interest from participants and the New Caledonia representative made an undertaking to ensure the report is available as an attachment for the final version of the coordinators workshop record.

33. Papua New Guinea responded to questions about the at-sea transshipments in their country, and advised that those fleets with vessels that off-load catch at sea are required to carry observers at all times. He admitted that although the vessels receiving this fish are then all also supposed to return to a PNG port this is a problem area of uncertainty that fisheries authorities are currently grappling with. Interest was shown in the list of incident that observers have reported and there was discussion around how vessels were dealt in reports of observer harassment. PNG indicated that it very much depended on the severity of the case but investigations were always carried out and any sort of harassment on foreign vessels was raised with DWFN's in future access negotiations. The US delegate asked about the nine records of turtle interactions in the report. PNG said it was interactions with long –line gear and most were reported to have been released alive and healthy.

34. Samoa responded to a question on the Alia Fleet numbers. Samoa reported that a re-awakening of the Alia fleet has come about with the slow return from lean fishing times and that the contribution from the Alia fleet has led to a marked increase in the recent catch rates being reported. The Hawaii/American Samoa representative noted with interest that the Alia fleet in American Samoa was inactive and this was probably due to the rapid rise in fuel prices in that country.

35. Solomon Islands asked what SPC assistance would be available to help restart the port sampling monitoring operations. SPC advised that they were awaiting advice on the new fisheries structure and who they should work through. SPC had noted that some restructuring had already taken place, resulting in the loss of the Observer Coordinator's deputy to another section.

36. The Workshop noted that Solomon Islands Observers had an arrangement with surveillance personnel and the use of patrol vessels to help make random placements. It was also noted that Solomon Island observers also had some powers of arrest if required. The latter is very much a unique situation in this region.

37. Marshall Islands reported that they are experiencing a high turnover of observers. RMI indicated it is very often the better and more experienced observers that resign first as their experience enables them to find other work more readily, RMI explained that recent initiatives to use pre-training testing, and to send prospective trainees to sea before an observer course, this would give an indication as to whether the observer should handle the conditions. The Workshop noted the report and other participants noted similar difficulty's in keeping observers. The constant turnover is a problem and with the high costs associated with recruitment and training of observers it continues to be an expensive process.

38. The US NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service Pacific Islands Office Observer Program reported that they currently have around 60 active observers in Hawaii. In response to a question about qualifications required to work for the Hawaii Observer Program. The US reported that that there were US national standards that required a number of things but principally that observers must have a B.Sc. minimum qualification, preferably with an element of marine science. The only exception to this is with the Alualike Program in Hawaii. A large grant by US government has been provided to indigenous Hawaiians and Native American without tertiary educations. If they want to be fisheries Observers the program screens participants and provides preparation training to indigenous candidates. They are then allowed to go through the standard observer training and assessment processes and be certified. They must attain the same standards as all other successful trainees. The program is having some success and several observers that have passed through the program are sticking with the work longer than the average US observer.

39. The Hawaii Program Manager offered to forward selection and screening tools to the OFP and FFA for their assessment.

40. American Samoa NMFS reported that they hope to have an Observer Coordinator in place by May 2006, and intend to have the first observers heading out as early as mid-March 2006. To assist with the program set up Observers will be drawn from the current Hawaii observer pool for a period of two years. It is anticipated that from five to seven observers will make every effort to attain a starting target of 7% coverage. Eventually the target coverage will be 20% but there are many internal issues needing to be resolved before this can be a reality. The observers will cover a fleet of 65 permitted vessels; four to five of these will most likely fish in Cook Island waters. Only vessels greater than forty feet will be asked to take observers.

41. Pacific Island participants asked whether observers from other Pacific Island countries would be able to find work in this program. American Samoa NMFS suggested that this would be highly unlikely, mainly due to US immigration and work laws.

42. A question was asked on whether NMFS may be able to assist other programs by debriefing other program observers as they pass through Pago Pago. NMFS pointed out that there has been no change to the willingness for NMFS to assist with debriefing observers from other Pacific Island countries as they pass through Pago Pago. However there are technical issues that need to be worked out regarding having someone of suitable expertise available in Pago Pago to carry out FFA/SPC standardised debriefing.

43. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) representative described the project he worked under, which is primarily involved with collating available data about turtle interactions. He understood there to be a component of his project to support national fisheries observer programs, but he would need to explore this further to provide Observer Coordinators information on what capacity there is to do this. He suggested that there may be possible assistance for relocating observers to areas/ports where there were no observers based but had vessels operating in these areas. NMFS, Hawaii Program suggested that if providing guides, de-hooking equipment and the likes was part of this support system then it might be efficient to work in with their program as they have already developed many of these tools and guides.

44. Tonga's presentation focused around "who pays", a question that is further addressed in "Coverage and Budgets" in the work program. Tonga indicated that who funds the payment of observers is a sensitive issue. Previously observer fees were collected from the locally based foreign vessels They have now left, because of low catch rates and the pressures of increased compliance enforcement, including the commencement of a new observer program. The Tongan domestic fleet is reported to be struggling to make any money. Some companies have already

declared bankruptcy and others are on the verge of bankruptcy. This puts the government in a difficult position asking for observer fees and at the same time wishing to try and assist the fleet.

45. Participants noted the difficulties and most were familiar with this situation. It was a general feeling by the participants that these vessels if they couldn't afford to pay the low observer fees as it would put extra burden on them financially, then they probably would not last to much longer any way. There was a strong message by participants to resist the temptation to not impose this real cost of fishing on fishermen as it was not going to go away in the current fisheries management climate.

## **WORK PROGRAM**

### **Observer equipment**

46. SPC and FFA presented an overview of developments in potential new equipment for use in observer activities since the last Workshop was presented. This included electronic callipers and the use of hand-held computers for direct on deck data collection. There has been very little subsequent development; however there has been interest in the possible use of video equipment to monitor catch composition on purse seiners.

47. FFA Program Manager took the opportunity to advise participants that observers in regional programs can expect to be better equipped in the near future with handheld GPS units, digital cameras, video cameras and other equipment being procured and to be distributed to observers within the next six months for assisting in the safe release and identification of Turtles and Marine Mammals, a grant from NMFS Hawaii has made this possible.

### **Video monitoring of purse seine catch**

48. SPC presented the background to the possible use of Video Cameras for species identification on Purse-seine vessels. Observer data presents a different picture of the ratio of yellowfin and bigeye combined compared to skipjack catch on purse seiners than do other sources of data. Whilst observer performance was not being questioned, as this appears to be an across the board phenomena amongst observers, one aspect of observer data collection that should be investigated (and it was stressed that the other sources also need investigating) is the observer sampling protocol. The current protocol is extremely sensitive to bias due to the very small sample size observers have available. Larger sample sizes are unlikely to be available so alternative methods of assessing species composition at time of catch are being investigated. One method is the use of video equipment and SPC has been making preliminary enquiries to arrange experimentation with video equipment on board cooperative purse-seine vessels during this coming year.

49. Participants were informed by those that had attended recent workshops on the use of videos in fisheries monitoring that video technology was a long way short of being able to replace the use of observers on board but it could be a useful tool to assist observers in many of their activities. Video cameras may also provide a useful compliance tool for monitoring effort. .

### **Electronic callipers**

50. SPC reported that no further progress had been made with the development of electronic callipers due to lack of time to do so. Testing of the current models before further development could be made would require a concerted effort. Offers came from Samoa, the Marshall Islands and Tonga to assist with the field trials to support further development. The Cook Islands delegate reported that the electronic calliper set they had been trialling did not work since the previous

Observer Coordinator had moved on. A manual will be forwarded from SPC to see if this can assist the Cook Islands.

51. The Workshop

- a. noted the benefit of equipping observers and observer programs with better equipment,
- b. encouraged the development of video monitoring to assist with species identification on purse-seine vessels; and
- c.. supported further development of electronic measuring callipers.

**Targets and budgeting**

52. FFA Observer Program Manager introduced the item and participants discussed a variety of problems with respect to coverage levels and the costs of meeting expected coverage levels. It was acknowledged that there is an agreed regional target observer coverage level of twenty per cent. The pros and cons of various methods of measuring this coverage – as a percentage of effort (hooks in water, days fishing, days at sea, trips) and catch levels (percentage of catch landed that was monitored) were discussed. It is important for coordinators to understand the differences so they can be aware if their efforts are being manipulated by DWFV's. Example given was if coverage is based on trips then do vessels that have observers have shorter trips so as to off load the observer. This is what happened in the FSMA and the coverage was changed to a minimum of 50 sea days to counteract the shorter trip times vessels were taking in this arrangement when observers where on board. It is also useful to give some thought as to how observer non-fishing sea-time should factor into measurement of coverage levels,

53. A round table discussion took place on the ways in which observer programs are funded a common theme emerged. Coordinators are being presented with coverage levels that superiors have agreed to in regional meetings but are simultaneously presented with funding that severely limits efforts to develop observer programs towards meeting those objectives. In some cases this is due to access agreement negotiators not demanding enough funds from foreign fishers to properly fund full observer programs. In other cases observer fees were negotiated but disappeared into general revenue and not made available for observer activities. In the case of domestic fisheries, legislators are often too timid to impose a fee on fishers that will adequately cover required observer activities. In this latter case the point was made by participants that monitoring is a real cost of fishing and it is wise to ensure fishers realise the cost, learning to work and live with it sooner rather than later. On a positive note it was acknowledged that the Regional Programs and also the PNG Observer program both had good coverage levels, because the budget structure was recognised as being crucial in attaining the required coverage and adequate funds were made available to allow these programs to operate to their required goals.

54. Concerns about insufficient funds being available for several national programs to carry out effective observer coverage of foreign fishing activities was a concern of all national participants all indicated problems with funding to enable them to carry out their expected duties.

55. The works shop noted that:

- a) successful observer programs are an extremely important aspect of fisheries compliance, fisheries science and fisheries management for all member countries and the region.
- b) monitoring is a real cost of fishing and funds for observer budgets should be realistic and be available.

- c) there has to be a complete review of procedures used by member governments in negotiating Observer Fees' and how the national observer programs are included in budgets.
- d) observer budgets should use the 20% coverage target described in the regionally agreed minimum terms and conditions (MTCs) as a minimum starting point to determine the number of observers required and the funds required for operating an observer program.
- e) when budgeting for observer placement programs the “*fisher(user) pay principle*” should apply.

56. Coordinators at the Workshop noted that when access negotiations take place with DWFNs observer programs were often an area of negotiation, usually resulting with a reduction in fees or with some other stipulations that made it impossible to attain regionally approved target coverage.

57. It was agreed by all participants that Observer fees should be non negotiable and to accept with out evidence claims by DWFN's that they cannot afford to fish in coastal state waters because they cannot afford the observer fee, shows irresponsibility on the part of the negotiators. Worksoop participants felt that if DWFN's wish to fish in a country's waters they must recognise this real cost of fishing and countries cannot afford to allow reductions or non payment of observer fees if they wish to operate a proper observer program. Threats of this nature must be ignored. Participants from countries whose negotiators had stood up to these arguments verified that the fishing nations had capitulated in all cases and paid all the required fees. The regional programs were good evidence that vessels will pay fees as stipulated.

58. The workshop recommended:
- a) that during bilateral access negotiations with DWFN's, observer fees that have been determined by the country to operate an observer program to attain the regionally accepted 20% coverage should not be negotiable and
  - b) that the observer placement fee required should be paid in full prior to the vessels being allowed to fish in the member countries waters.

59. Participants noted that some access and observer agreements overlooked the need to ensure vessels properly look after observers that are dropped off in foreign ports. There were many reports of vessels dumping observers in foreign ports with out any money tickets and accommodation. The national programs where the vessel picked the observer up from often did not have sufficient funds or mechanisms in place to assist the observers. This resulted in other local national programs or the regional programs having to try and assist the observer and then having to go through a lengthy process to get funds back from the country where the observer came from. This could easily be addressed if negotiators for access and observer fees included these problems in their discussions with DWFN's and agreed to a mechanism on how this would be addressed. The Workshop agreed that during member country bilateral access negotiations it should be made quite clear and recorded in the agreements that any vessel who drops an observer off outside their home ports are responsible for all the costs and arrangements for the repatriation of the observer back to the home port where he was boarded.

60. The workshop recommended
- a) that negotiations with DWFN's for observer fees should include arrangements at no cost to the program for observers that are dropped off in foreign ports. This would include
  - b) appropriate travel arrangements to the observers home port;

- c) proper arrangements for accommodation for all nights spent on shore and during the passage to the home port.
- d) proper travelling allowance payments of US\$120 per travelling day and arrangement to assist with all visa and airport taxes involved in the travel to the homeport.

61. Particular concern about the tactics used by some DWFNs during negotiations and the subsequent low level of observer coverage that has been carried out on fishing vessels from these DWFNs in the region was also noted. It was noted by some that Japan was particularly difficult, although not the only DWFN that resisted meeting their responsibilities with respect to observers during negotiations. Further discontent about the level of importance that the coastal states own negotiators have shown towards observer programs was expressed.

62. Tonga noted that they no foreign fleet with which to negotiate observer fees and tabled an enquiry whether other fund sources exist to help coverage of domestic fishing fleets.

63. SPC reported that short term assistance was available for countries like Tonga; whilst for longer term assistance it was suggested Tonga and countries like it could try looking at aspects of the new Fisheries Commission's charter that charge it to provide some assistance for fisheries monitoring in small island states. However, it was also noted that Commission funding is limited at this stage.

64. Samoa indicated that the value of setting off on the right foot and extracting such costs from industry was important and that they were also investigating the use of US Treaty project development fund (PDF) funds for observer activities.

65. PNG noted that, despite adequate funding from foreign fishing agreements, they still have low coverage of domestic fleets and there is political reluctance to charge these fleets for adequate coverage.

## **Regional and national operational issues**

### **Behaviour**

66. Using some recent examples of activities that have brought disrepute and great expense to observer programs, creating headaches for National and Regional Observer Coordinators alike, FFA Observer Program Manager proposed adopting a regionally agreed "Harmonised Observers Code of Conduct". (Attachment 6 – Observer Behaviour). Other coordinators related similar experiences and concerns. PNG noted that they already have a code of conduct built into national observer standards. Most participants agreed with the outline in the attachment although some suggested more stringent measurements be used.

67. The Workshop agreed that:

- a) a regionally harmonised observers code of conduct be applied as a minimum standard in all observer programs
- b) the template presented as Attachment 6 be adopted as a minimum standard for the regionally harmonised Code of Conduct.

### ***Harmonised system for advances***

68. FFA Observer Program Manager outlined the process that FFA uses to provide advances to observers within its programs. He noted that observers from time to time end up in ports without

money to cover their expenses and stressed that this often created problems. Attachment 7 that outlines FFA's approach to advances for travel was offered as a model that other programs should consider using if they have not already got an effective system in place.

69. During this discussion it was noted that other travel-related issues such as loss of passport and visa expiries crop up from time to time and that international travel arrangements need careful and thorough thought and planning.

70. The Workshop agreed to adopt the model as a guide that the FFA regional observer programs use for advance payments to observers (Attachment 7)

### **FSM Arrangement (FSMA) Observer Program**

71. RMI asked about whether non FSMA citizens could be used in the FSMA observer program. It noted that the RMI national program has citizens from other countries but residents of RMI working in their program. They were all FFA/SPC Certified.

72. FFA observer program manager explained that although it is generally understood that only observers from FSMA countries would be used in the program. However, if a FSMA member's national observer program nominated an observer from another country then FFA could see no problem in using that observer for the FSMA observer program. In the case of the observers in RMI as they are residents of RMI and are in the RMI national program, he did not see this as a problem.

### **Dropping US vessel numbers**

73. The FFA Observer Program manager indicated that the number of vessels operating under the US Treaty has dropped from a high of 48 in 1995 to the current 14 vessels. He reported that it may be expected to diminish further. Because of the numbers he pointed out that with 16 countries currently in the Treaty who could put observers on these vessels, each member is now only likely to have one observer trip allocated to it a year. He noted that this has created difficulties in active national observer programs that have often used US Treaty trips as a reward for their exceptionally performing observers.

74. RMI suggested that observers for US Treaty trips should only be allocated from the active National Programs.

75. The FFA Observer Manager explained that under the terms of the Treaty he was obliged to share the trips out amongst all the countries signed up to the Treaty, and so this proposal whilst it had merit could not be met. It was noted, that not counting Australia and New Zealand it only involved three FFA member countries who had no observer programs. Participants commented that observers sent from these countries with no observer program and given the time difference between boardings may well lack the necessary experience to be good observers under the current scheme. The Observer Program Manager noted this problem, but assured the workshop that only SPC/FFA Certified observers are used.

### **Emergency observer help scheme**

76. The FFA observer program Manager noted that this issue was raised last year and a paper produced for the MCS Working Group who agreed that the scheme was important to assist stranded observers, unfortunately they did not consider the funding options presented in the paper and instead decided to leave it up to FFC on the funding options. Unfortunately time constraints with the FFC agenda prevented it being presented. So rather than obtaining funds from other sources as suggested by the paper to start an emergency scheme. Because of a few situations that arose with

stranded National observers, the FFA Observer Manager decided that surplus funds from the Regional Programs could be used to assist. These funds when expended must be recovered from the national observer programs involved. In its implementation the following understanding should apply:

77. National programs must make available sufficient funds to a national observer before departure for use if a vessel disembarks the observer in a foreign port.

78. National programs should ensure arrangements are in place to ensure a vessel is responsible for repatriation and all normal sustenance allowances for an observer that they offload in a foreign port (usually arranged through the vessels agents in the port the observer is disembarked). Vessels should be reminded of such arrangements before departure. Arrangements of this nature should include the following:

79. Reasonable hotel accommodation costs or hotels booked and paid for to cover all nights between the time the observer leaves the vessel and the time they return to home port;

- Air tickets booked and paid for all the way to the observers home port;
- Travel allowances of US\$120 per travelling day (defined as any night away from home and vessel), all visa and any airport tax costs for the observer when returning home.

80. If there is a problem, then the emergency scheme may be used with the following understanding:

- The scheme is not to be used for ordinary observer placements or movements.
- Emergency funding is only available in centres where FFA have bank accounts and coordinators who have availability to handle monies from these accounts.
- All emergency funding must be approved by FFA before being issued and the National Program involved must agree in writing (fax or email) before an observer is issued with funds.
- Funding is limited to essentials and is for assistance until funding arrives from National Programs or the observer departs for his home country.
- FFA will invoice National Programs and the National Program Coordinator will organise a full refund of the amount back to FFA as soon as practical.

### **Marine mammal and turtle issues**

81. NMFS Hawaii observer trainer presented Attachment 8 - "Cetacean Depredation in Longline Fisheries and What we've done." This described issues met by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service Pacific Islands Regional Office Observer Program. Additional anecdotal information added by coordinators during discussions included:

82. Samoan fishers report that fibreglass hulled alias suffer more whale depredation of catch than do aluminium hulled alias;

83. In the northern Queensland tuna longline fishery mouth hooked tuna were preyed upon at a higher rate than gut hooked tuna

84. A review of seven years of observer data in SPC's Oceanic Fisheries Programme regional fisheries database showed that about 1.0% of catch was whale damaged whilst about 2.7% of catch was shark damaged. Comments were made by some coordinators that in the earlier years some whale damage may have been mistakenly identified as shark damage;

85. Others Coordinators believed that whale depredation may be a learned behaviour that is being passed from whale to whale and thus the situation is worsening;

86. Samoa reported it has a significant problem with false killer whales preying on longline tuna catch. Early indications are that the depredation problem is not uniformly spread across their region - fishers report that certain areas have more marine mammal predation than others.

### **Training (formalised standards)**

87. The workshop was presented with a FFA/SPC draft paper proposing a way forward to introducing a formalised set of competency based training (CBT) standards (included as Attachment 9). The paper was prepared following recommendations from the 5<sup>th</sup> Regional Observer Coordinators' Workshop. Following this workshop the subject was also discussed in an FFA/SPC colloquium from which there was a directive to ready a paper for the next Forum Fisheries Council (FFC) meeting. Participants at this 6<sup>th</sup> workshop, noting that membership obligations to the new Commission would require greater efforts to train new observers and to ensure those observers can produce quality data, endorsed the paper.

88. During discussion the possibility of the University of the South Pacific (USP) being a potential observer training provider for certain core subjects was used as an example. This raised concern amongst some participants, that USP might take on a role that could possibly exert its own more stringent entry requirements. FFA/SPC explained that the standards would be in place to provide what was needed by observer users and not what might be considered necessary by the training providers. Hence it was essential that such standards be overseen and audited by a body that truly understood the needs of observer users. Training providers may be given the opportunity to train observers only if they meet those observer user standards and not vice versa.

89. The workshop:

- c) noting the preliminary efforts made towards introducing formalised training standards, as recommended at the 5th Regional Observer Coordinators' Workshop;
- d) noting the greater obligations to ensure consistent, quality observer data be provided to the WCPFC; and
- e) noting the need to have auditable standards overseen by competent bodies that understand regional observer requirements and limitations;
- f) recommended that FFA and SPC develop formalised training standards as soon as possible

90. 43 A summary of “Observer Training Courses” to date was distributed by SPC Port Sampling and Observer Trainer, Mr. Siosifa Fukofuka. This is attached as **attachment 10**

### **Certification of observers**

91. Discussion on this subject included topics such as the regional trend towards pre-selection assessment and testing of candidates for basic training. This selection process had been strongly encouraged by FFA and SPC who are called on to carry out CWP national and regional observer training. The process is to ensure that observer data quality is improved, and is useful in effectively utilising current limited training resources where there is an emergent need to increase observer ranks. Training of inappropriate people, leads to a much higher turnover of observers and much greater call on the same training resources to sift out observer data of poor quality.

92. It was noted that observer certification already takes place. FFA and SPC combine to award certificates to those that successfully complete basic training to show that they are eligible to work as observers in the regional observer training programs. National observer programs usually use

these standards and certificates for the same purpose. With institutionalisation of formalised CBT standards (discussed in previous section) this certification process should carry greater weight and provide observers with a more marketable employment qualification.

93. A question was asked on the certification of debriefers. This is an important aspect of the developing regional debriefing policy which will be discussed later in the Workshop. However it was noted that certifying debriefers will help to ensure that observers are given quality post training feedback on their efforts, and will help to ensure that a high standard of data quality control is maintained. It will also provide a mechanism to define who can legitimately be used for carrying out such work. The certification of debriefers will provide substantial opportunities for experienced observers to increase their status on the observer career ladder.

### **Fisheries Commission Observer Programme**

94. The Technical & Compliance Committee (TCC) of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC (commonly referred to as the Commission) held a meeting in December 2005 at which a number of options for the type of observer program that would be adopted by the Commission were discussed. TCC minutes titled Agenda Item 4.2, Monitoring Control and Surveillance components of the regional observer programme indicates that a recommendation was made that the proposed hybrid approach be used. This recommendation was later endorsed by the full Commission meeting. Excerpts from the draft minutes of these meetings were tabled to the 6<sup>th</sup> regional Observer Coordinators Workshop.

95. The Workshop looked at some of the more obvious implications this would have on national and sub-regional observer programs and commented on the following extracts from the minutes:

96. *Commission members are free to choose the source of observers either from the national observer programs of other members or from the existing sub-regional programmes.*

97. The Workshop noted that this wording had many implications for national and sub-regional observer programs and raised the following concerns:

98. DWFNs may choose to only use observers from non FFA member observer programs such as China, Philippines etc and may use observers from just one or two programs.

99. The Commission's intention is to increase observer coverage whereas many national observer programs are stifled by lack of funds and are unable to increase their coverage.

100. To increase observer coverage there has to be a complete rethink of budgeting procedures nationally and better observer agreements between DWFNs and member countries. For example the required observer funds/fees need to be calculated and these fees set, and should not be negotiable; observer fees collected should not be permitted to disappear into general funds and become unavailable for the purpose for which they are intended. If these basic observer budget procedures did not occur, commitments made at the WCP Fisheries Commission by the same member countries recommending more coverage would not be met.

101. The wording seemingly would prevent FFA country national observers boarding their own flagged vessels and domestically licensed vessels that also fish in the high seas, because of the stipulation that an observer has to come from another country (e.g.: a Republic of the Marshall Islands flagged vessel could not place its own national observers on their flagged vessels as a commission observer, an observer from another country would be required before it is determined to be a Commission trip). This would add extra costs to a placement: who would organise these boardings; and who would pay to fly the observer from another country to make the boarding.

102. *The existing sub-regional observer programs may offer their expertise and observers to Commission members other than those they have covered to date, thereby increasing the options for those seeking observer coverage.*

103. Participants were not clear on what this actually meant however the agreed understanding was that vessels currently carrying sub-regional observers could continue to use these observers to fulfil Commission observer requirements; vessels not licensed under the sub-regional programs could use sub-regional programs to offer similar services that are offered to the vessels already under sub-regional programs. It was noted that there is no mention of how this would be funded and who would fund the extra administration costs of placing observers on vessels not under any agreement.

104. *The hybrid approach will incur few costs to the Commission with respect to secretariat resources; the major costs that will occur regardless of the options chosen will be the preparation and printing of standardised materials.*

105. Workshop participants saw the rationale behind this approach but noted that Commission coverage can only be met if member governments increase funding to national programs as outlined earlier. It was also felt that whoever created this statement, took a very simplistic view of observer program budgeting and that they did not have an understanding of the many costs involved in running observer programs. It was noted by many that with current national and regional observer budgeting may not be able to bear the extra costs placed on them by the demands of the Commission.

**Workshop participants also discussed data collection for the Commission.**

106. Participants of the workshop felt that the Commission should adopt the already recognized FFA/SPC harmonised data collection standards and along with this use the same observer data collection formats that have adopted after consultation over the past few years. This would ensure that all observer data for the region remains in standardised formats and would also be cost effective for the Commission, and for national and regional observer programs. To ensure complete harmonisation and standardisation across the FFA and SPC member countries all data is comprehensively discussed and approved at the Data Consultative Committee (DCC) held every two years. It was suggested that the WCP Fisheries Commission be invited to attend this meeting in future.

107. The Workshop recognised that some additions to currently used formats may be required to service the Commission; however there should under no circumstances a decrease in quality of existing standards. Some workshop participants were concerned that there is a potential danger in the Commission making changes to current data collection standards and protocols, as influences from some Commission DWFN members could lead to the Commission using less than current standards and this may put pressure on FFA member countries to lower their standards to conform to the Commission.

108. The Workshop noted that:

- a.) there is an important role for Pacific Island trained observers in the WCP Fisheries Commission.
- b) current formats and standards will have to accommodate the WCP Fisheries Commission.
- c) the present levels of the harmonised formats and observer standards are maintained as a minimum level for the WCP Fisheries Commission program.

- d) there will be many extra costs involved in maintaining a national and regional program to carry out observer work to the levels required by the WCP Fisheries Commission
- b.) it is recommended that the WCP Fisheries Commission be invited to attend the Data Consultative Committee.

### **Quality of data and observers**

109. SPC's Fisheries Monitoring Officer presented a synopsis of data quality trends. On port sampling data the trend since the 5<sup>th</sup> Coordinators' Workshop has been excellent for longline sampling data. However, purse seine port sampling data has just not been coming in for reasons that are varied and are not altogether clear. This will need to be a focus of some attention in the near future.

110. Little was said at this stage on observer data but coverage in this area was essentially wrapped up in the "Training (formalised standards)", "Debriefing" and "Observer behaviour" sections.

111. The latest edition of debriefing forms and the associated "evaluation forms" were made available for appraisal, informal comment during the workshop and post-workshop preparation for future assessment, feedback and training.

112. FFA Data Quality Officer demonstrated innovative mapping software that FFA is currently developing. This software makes it very easy to overlay a vessel's tracks on a computer map, as recorded by vessel logsheet positions, observer recorded positions and VMS tracked positions. This provides an excellent tool for cross-checking for discrepancies reported by different factions. It is also an excellent tool for looking for outliers (positions that are clearly erroneous because they don't stay within a logical pattern – usually because vessels simply cannot travel that fast or over such mountainous terrain). It was noted that similar and more powerful software has been around for some time. However the strength in this package appears to be in its simplicity and ease of use making it a much more widely usable and more affordable tool in-country. The software is currently in a the early stages of development.

113. Tongan participant applauded the initiative to develop this software and noted that it is simply useful for showing fishery stake-holders that data being collected is really being used for a number of purposes.

114. Following a question on how long the data can take from collection to presentation on this software FFA Data Quality Officer advised that it depended on the data source and speed of transmission to FFA from that source, but in theory a map can be generated within an hour or so of the data being presented to a suitable data entry operator.

115. Participant suggestions from the workshop for improvements, included using different coloured crosses to mark different events rather than different coloured dots, so as the event markers don't get lost in the event to event track line. It was suggested that dates and times on the event markers would be helpful, along with different markers for different activities, for example investigating free schools, logs, fads, carrying out vessel sets, etc. The FFA Data Quality Officer advised that all this was possible and would be considered in the development of the software.

### **Debriefing Workshop**

116. A proposed regional debriefing policy was circulated to all participants for review. In an effort to see whether the proposed policy is acceptable to all National Observer Programs, Participants were asked to split into three groups to review the policy under five main topics.

117. The groups consisted of Coordinators from National Programs which regularly board purse-seiners (group one), Coordinators from programs which mainly board longliners (group two) and Coordinators from the regional programs, along with NMFS staff, (group three.)

118. The topics covered were:

- Who should debrief
- When to debrief
- When debriefing is not possible
- Certification
- Payment and who pays

119. These questions and the responses from each group were recorded and are attached as attachment 11 along with the proposed regional debriefing policy attachment 12

120. Participants came together after these group discussions and discussed their ideas on “**Who should debrief**” most groups agreed that experienced observers are the best people to be chosen for certified debriefing training but there was some concern, especially from the smaller programs, that the pool of competent local fisheries personnel should not be overlooked. It was agreed that in very exceptional circumstances, competent fishery personnel could attend debriefing training.

121. The minimum number of observer days needed to attend debriefer training generated some discussion, as trip lengths are not consistent and some observers may have to carry out multiple trips to achieve the minimum number of sea days while others may achieve the minimum amount in only one or two trips. Since observers must also have a minimum of three ‘perfect’ data trips it was thought that generally observers requesting debriefing training and certification will usually already have completed five trips to get there. The proposed observer day requirements in the policy were thought to be acceptable.

122. In ensuing discussion on “**When to debrief**” all groups agreed that debriefing should take place as soon as possible.

123. In ensuing discussion on “**When debriefing is not possible**” it was agreed that data will continue to be checked and feedback given to observers until certified observers are available to do the debriefing. In some cases observers may not be able to be debriefed and their data will continue to be checked and feedback will be sent to them. Intermittent debriefings by regional staff will also be offered.

124. In ensuing discussion on “**Certification**” most groups agreed that SPC/FFA should offer debriefing certification but the idea that the new Fisheries Commission should be asked to participate in debriefing certification was taken onboard.

125. In ensuing discussion on “**Payment and who pays**” while two of the groups would like to look towards SPC/FFA for debriefing payments the regional organisations explained that currently there was no funds identified for such work. FFA will move towards payments for any debriefings carried out for their observer data while SPC will continue to look for funds to support this important work. But ultimately national programs should consider including debriefing fees in their annual observer budgets. The Workshop declined to offer a debriefing rate but noted the guidelines for a debriefing rate that had been included in the proposed policy.

## **OTHER MATTERS**

### **Placement meetings**

126. An introductory discussion brief and copies of both a general Observer Placement Meeting Record and of the FFA Vessel Briefing and Observer Placement Meeting Record were distributed (Attachment 13). The workshop noted the discussion brief on a proposal for the adoption of a common policy for placement procedures for WCP observer programs and discussed methods on how to encourage all observer programs in the WCP region to ensure that they had adequate placement procedures for their observers in place. The Workshop noted that several issues relating to placement had been encountered during development of training sheets being prepared in alliance with debriefing procedures and agreed that a formal placement policy could usefully address some of those issues. The discussion brief listed essential and useful elements of proper placement procedures and the benefits in using these elements. Workshop participants were asked to add to this list and make further comment. A summary of the discussion paper and outcomes is attached as attachment 14

127. Amongst the useful additions by participants were to ensure that locations of safe and unsafe areas and good sampling areas on deck are established. Participants also saw importance in having an agreement with vessels on the observers' accommodation area.

128. The Workshop agreed that where possible placement meetings should take place for every trip, however the question on how to deal with observers boarding in remote ports (e.g.: FSM observers in Guam) complicated the issue.

129. Related issues discussed included: the importance of official ID cards for observers – This was becoming more important as port authorities adopt new internationally required port security procedures; It was seen as important to establish good relationships with authorities in local and foreign ports, ensuring that they know who the observers are and that they understand importance of the work observers carry out. Establishing good relationships with stake-holders generally is a good idea.

130. Following the problem pointed out by FSM with observers boarding vessels in Guam not being able to be briefed, discussion took place between FSM National Oceanic Resource Management Authority, Tuna Biologist (Observer Manager) and NMFS, Hawaii staff with a view to facilitating introductions to appropriate Guam based authorities.

131. The workshop agreed that national and regional coordinators must ensure that observers go on safe and sea worthy vessels and the placement meeting was a method to ensure all safety equipment and vessel safety procedures are checked and understood. It was noted that often vessels are not entirely safe and although it is generally the responsibility of other authorities to be addressing this issue, it is often not properly addressed. Again the importance of developing good relations with other agencies was stressed.

132. The workshop noted that many of the items addressed for notice of the vessel master on the two placement forms could be considered legal requirements for the vessel to maintain, and that having the vessel sign off on this document as proposed could provide a document that is very useful for future monitoring of compliance and enforcement purposes.

133. The workshop noted that harassment of observers is dealt with as an element in the proposed placement documents. Observer Coordinators were advised to encourage observers to always report instances of harassment, no matter how minor, to their Coordinators. The Coordinators must ensure

all instances are fully documented and signed by the observer, even if it is decided to not take matters further at that stage. Some participants felt that there could be a tendency for some observers to not want to cause trouble, and they put up with the problems in order to ensure a better working relationship on the vessel with the aim of getting a better job done. However observers were encouraged to not keep things to themselves and report all forms of harassment. Not reporting these instances of harassment may rebound on future observers boarding the same vessel, and may make life even more difficult for them. Generally participants were in favour of developing a formal placement procedure further.

134. The workshop agreed that;
- a) where possible placement meetings should take place for every trip.
  - b) national and regional coordinators must ensure that observers are placed on safe and sea worthy vessels
  - c) observers should be encouraged to report all instances of harassment, no matter how minor,
  - d) observer coordinators/managers must ensure all instances of harassment are fully documented and signed by the observer
  - e) formal placement procedures should continue to be developed by FFA and SPC.

### **Review of latest version of forms**

135. At the beginning of the workshop participants were given copies of the latest version of the LL and PS series of forms, (Attachment 14) to review at their leisure during the workshop. When distributed it was explained that an opportunity to comment and ask questions about the forms would be given at the end of the agenda in other matters. Before discussion took place on the forms under other matters, the SPC Port Sampling and Observer Coordinator presented each form, pointing out the minor and emphasising to the workshop major changes to the formats or content. It was noted that the forms had been comprehensively discussed at the 2004 Data Consultative Committee and also subsequent discussion on the format and content had taken place between FFA and SPC. There were no questions or comments, and the workshop participants noted the latest forms.

### **Data provision**

136. The FFA observer Program Manager reminded national coordinators that some observers used in the regional programs had not sent full sets of data from trips carried out under the UST or FSMA observer programs to FFA. Often some data was sent but was incomplete; this included completed forms, trip report, observer diary and receipts. FFA OPM pointed all must be sent to FFA.

137. The SPC Port Sampling and Observer coordinator also reminded coordinators that the significant efforts of observers and observer coordinators to gather data were being wasted if that data was not being sent into SPC in a timely fashion for processing. A large amount of observer data is outstanding in some countries. He also reminded that if there are problems in distributing the data efficiently then SPC staff is ready and willing to assist with working out those problems. In particular it was recognised that there may be issues with using new scanners effectively that should be worked out as quickly as possible.

## **Importance of developing relationships**

138. FFA/SPC delegates spoke on the importance of developing good working relationships with each other through workshops like the Observer Coordinator Workshops. FFA and SPC saw this work shop as extremely important to ensure that harmonisation standardisation and the smooth running of WCP observer programs continues in the years to come. FFA and SPC also called on National Observer Coordinators to developing good, respectful relationships with local and foreign fishing companies, other government agencies, vessel agents and NGOs, all who with good working relationships and proper understanding of observer programs can and will contribute immensely to smoother running of observer programs .

## **Distribution of working papers**

139. a recommendation was put forward that working papers for future Observer Coordinators' Workshops be distributed in advance so that participants could arrive better armed with comments and questions. Whilst this was an ideal goal, the merits of which were well recognised, participants were also reminded that this was a workshop of a general nature (not a formal meeting) for Coordinators to come together and all contribute. The agenda is produced from suggestions forwarded to the convenor from member countries and organisations and is a guideline for participants to think about how they can contribute. It is hoped that participants that attend the Observer Coordinators' Workshops should be able to usefully discuss and help contribute to the Agenda items. It was noted that many of the agenda items had come as suggestions from participants themselves and the convenor (FFA) encouraged participants to prepare papers/briefs on their topics and send it for early distribution. The convenor of the Workshop which is usually FFA or SPC or a combination of both would be more than happy to circulate these papers to participants before the workshop.

## **CLOSING**

### **Next workshop**

140. The NOAA representative tentatively offered to host a 7<sup>th</sup> Regional Observer Coordinators' Workshop in Honolulu pending budget appraisal and approval on his return from this workshop. A suggested date for the next workshop is February 2007.

### **Record of proceedings**

141. The record of proceedings for the 6<sup>th</sup> Observer Coordinators Workshop was adopted

### **Close of Workshop**

142. On behalf of the FFA Director General, The FFA observer Program manager thanked participants for taking time out of their busy schedules to participate in the Workshop. He emphasised the great value that FFA and SPC places on this workshop, for harmonisation, standardisation and the general operations of National and Regional programs. He thanked both NMFS and AusAid for there contributions for the Workshop.

143. The Chair Noan Pakop thanked FFA, SPC and participants for their assistance to him as the chair, noting the importance of team work in achieving a desired outcome for the region in the adopting the "Regional Observer Debriefing Policy" He suggested that many of the

recommendations made during the workshop would need to be explained to their superiors, and participants should encourage them to actively pursue these recommendations, if national observer programs were to be able to successfully operate to the standards required in the WCP region. In conclusion the Chair wished participants a safe trip home and encouraged all to keep in touch with each other on Observer related matters.

144. WWF delegate on behalf of all participants congratulated the chair on his excellent work through out the Workshop, including the observer debriefing policy workshop. In concluding the WWF delegate said a closing prayer for the safe return of all to their homes.

145. The Chair then declared the workshop closed.

Whilst it is understood by many who have been at sea for long periods. There is a tendency to want to let the hair down when you arrive back in port. Whilst FFA has no problems with observers having a good time after they have completed their work there is a limit to bad behaviour that will be tolerated.

The following is a guide that should be discussed and adopted by National Programs, as well as the regional programs.

1. Any observer who is drunk or under the influence of any illegal drugs before his boarding of a vessel will be prevented from making the boarding. If an observer fails to meet his obligation by turning up drunk or even smells of alcohol he can be refused boarding by the vessel master. Most of the vessels are under strict instructions by owners to not accept any observer who shows any signs of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
2. If the observer is reported by the vessel to be under the influence and this is confirmed by the coordinator/agent, the observer will be liable for all costs associated with his travel and advances. These will need to be repaid back to the observer program involved.
3. Observers who are sent from their country to make a boarding for FFA are under contract from the day they leave their country. While FFA does not mind if an observer enjoys his travel in a responsible manner; mis-behaviour, drunkenness, failure to pay bills, damaging accommodation or anything else that causes problems will not be tolerated. Observers will be sent home immediately any trouble occurs, and they will be asked to reimburse all costs involved in their travel
4. When on board a vessel in port, and during a trip, observers will not consume alcohol. In some special circumstances when it is authorised by the captain this can be waived, but under no circumstances will drunkenness by an observer on a vessel be tolerated.
5. On return to port at the finish of the trip observers are still under contract until they arrive back in their home country. However letting your hair down a little is acceptable, providing you do not cause any problems or get into any trouble; mis-behaviour, drunkenness, failure to pay bills, damaging accommodation property or anything else that causes problems will not be tolerated and the observers will be charged for any damage.
6. Depending on the circumstances, and after a thorough investigation, the observer if found to be the cause of the problem reported may be suspended from duties for a minimum of 1 year. Second offence if given another chance is automatically life disqualification from being an observer for any national or regional observer program within the FFA area.

Any FFA advance given is reconciled against the trip and is deducted from DSA, Sea allowances and any claims owing. There is no gratis advance for FFA observers.

During the last couple of years we have had numerous observers placed on vessels both by National and Regional programs that have ended up in a foreign port with no money. Where there is a FFA account set up it might take 1 working day to get an advance for other places in the FFA region it may take 2-5 days for money to be available.

The practise of turning up with no funds is not acceptable by FFA standards and all observers where possible should be given a minimum amount of money before departure. An advance of at least US\$100 for their sustenance if dropped of somewhere should be issued. This money must not be used by the observer before a trip, if they spend the money before they leave it will show irresponsibility of the observer, and will cause both them and the program a lot of work and bother. In the case of FFA if this becomes a habit by the observer FFA will have a tendency to not want to use that person

In some cases it is not possible to get an advance to an observer before they leave, in these cases the observer should inform the program well in advance where possible of the port where they are likely to be going to, and this will enable FFA to transfer money to the port for the observer. If the observer leaves the region it is virtually impossible to get any advance to the observer, and they will need to rely on the vessel or agents for assistance

FFA usually advances an amount for travel and other reasons; the \$100 is included in this amount. An advance should never be used to give away to family members before the observer leaves. The advances are for his travel and emergency.

If the observer wants money to be forwarded to a family member while he/she is on a vessel they needs to inform the program before leaving or send a fax/Email to the Coordinator authorising the release of funds to be given to family members. The program will not give money to any family member unless there is a pre authorisation by the observer; therefore, it is no use a family member contacting FFA if there is an emergency and asking for money to assist. We are unable to respond unless authorised by the observer; this can be fixed easily by the observer leaving written and signed instructions before their departure.

FFA observers are currently paid UNDP DSA rates for every night they are waiting in a port, if they board the vessel and stay in a port their DSA is reduced by 50%.

If the observer stays with relatives or cannot produce hotel receipts or confirm where they stayed they may have the DSA reduced by 50%.

Other than food, accommodation and entertainment which are covered by the DSA, some other items are claimable. I.e. Taxis to and from work, Airport Tax, Equipment up to US\$75 per year per observer.

Sea allowance currently range between US\$25-US\$45 per day.