

**Commonwealth Blue Economy Volume 3, Capture Fisheries, Extended abstract**

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**Abstract**

This research is part of a UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office initiative to develop a roadmap for the Blue Economy in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The research first considers the unique characteristics of SIDS and the continuing difficulties and challenges of traditional methods of capture fisheries management. The key features of a blue economy approach to fisheries management are then articulated, highlighting what is ‘new’ about the blue economy approach to management. The potential benefits that could result from adopting such an approach are considered. Case studies of the Maldives, Seychelles and Fiji show how these SIDS have adopted many blue economy strategies and associated activities. The research argues that in order for capture fisheries to contribute to enhanced economic and social benefits, while minimising environmental degradation and adapting to climate change, three mutually reinforcing and linked blue economy strategies should be:

1. A more integrated approach by increasing participation, transparency, and partnerships both within the sector, and with other sectors.
2. Minimising negative environmental impacts and carbon footprint of the fisheries by improving waste management, reduced emissions and a shift from harmful subsidies towards sustainability incentives.
3. Increased value addition through technical and other innovations that increase business productivity, reduce waste, and get more from a limited resource.

A wide range of activities and outputs are proposed, which when coupled with capacity development and additional support to ensure enabling conditions, will deliver these ‘blue economy’ strategies.

**Below appear the conclusions and recommendations from a lengthier report. To download the full report (free of charge), visit:**

<https://library.commonwealth.int/Catalogues/CatView.aspx?id=44902>

**5.1 Conclusions**

With improved management and development, capture fisheries can deliver a wide range of benefits for SIDS. However, developing and maintaining a robust capture fisheries economy involves many challenges that can be difficult for SIDS to address.

Global challenges include climate change and poor international management of some fish stocks. SIDS must recognise and take account of these when developing capture fisheries strategies as part of their blue economy.

Ineffective fisheries management leads to over-fishing, which results in lower catches than where stocks are allowed to rebuild and are maintained at sustainable levels. Over-exploitation also increases the volatility of catches and the risk that stocks will suddenly decline or collapse, creating a risk to food security.

Many valuable fisheries resources (e.g. tuna) are transboundary and therefore need to be managed at regional level. This requires SIDS to be active participants in RFMOs and to implement regional agreements at national level. However, ensuring adequate governance, control and research capacity can be a challenge for SIDS.

There are also challenges related to environmental management (habitat damage, waste and localised pollution) and social and economic development (limited infrastructure, additional costs and inefficiencies) that affect capture fisheries. Many of these challenges are exacerbated by a failure to adopt an integrated approach to capture fisheries development and management. Better integration is often required within the sector and, in addition, links with other sectors are often unrecognised or underdeveloped. Capture fisheries therefore need to be better integrated with all marine activities as a full partner in the blue economy.

Sustainable development objectives can be achieved for capture fisheries through three strategies that, when supported by appropriate activities and outputs, represent the fundamental approach for fisheries in a blue economy framework:

1. a more integrated approach through increased participation, transparency and partnerships both within the sector and with other sectors;
2. a reduced environmental footprint, including minimized negative environmental impacts and the removal of harmful subsidies; and
3. increased value addition through technical and other innovations that increase business productivity and reduce waste.

## **5.2 Recommendations for fostering the development of capture fisheries as an integrated part of the blue economy**

The following recommendations for developing capture fisheries within the blue economy are made:

### **5.2.1 Fisheries sector profile and needs assessment**

It is important to fully understand the specific needs of the fisheries sector and how it relates to other sectors in the blue economy. A sector profile should be created and an associated needs assessment conducted; these should take into account the following elements:

- resource assessment (detailing the type, extent and (where possible) the status of the fishery resources);
- fleet characteristics (numbers, gear types, capacity in relation to resources);
- social characteristics and structures;
- current legislation, regulation and control;
- port and post-harvest infrastructure;
- value-chain analysis (for key supply chains); and
- key links both with other fisheries institutions at regional and global levels and with other sectors and institutions in the national economy.

The fisheries department itself could undertake this exercise or, to better enable benchmarking and international comparison, it could be completed by external experts. The profile and needs assessment should involve consultation with as wide a range of fisheries and non-fisheries sector stakeholders as possible.

### **5.2.2 Blue economy fisheries development strategy**

Based on the findings of the profile and needs assessment, a blue economy fisheries sector development strategy should be drafted to prioritise and refine the menu of activities and outputs available in support of blue economy strategies (see Chapter 3 of this report) so that they are appropriate to the context and characteristics of the SIDS in question. It is important to note that this is largely a restatement and slight widening of the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management, with the addition of economic tools and considerations. Many of the tools and approaches used in EBFM, including co-management arrangements, fisheries plans and marine plans, can also contribute towards a blue economy fisheries development strategy. In a blue economy framework, it is essential that links between sectors are identified and that sectors' development strategies are integrated with one another. This involves adequate engagement with ministries and stakeholders representing other sectors of the blue economy at every stage of the process. Examples might include fishery conflicts and synergies with planned marine renewable energy, use of fishery by-products for local aquaculture operations, co-development of tourist and recreational fishing businesses, co-development of port facilities to service multiple sectors, etc. Working with sectors beyond fisheries also enables potential synergies, partnerships and appropriate timings to be identified that will help to shape the fisheries strategy, making it more achievable and effective.

### **5.2.3 Capacity needs assessment**

A blue economy fisheries sector development strategy alone will not result in benefits: it has to be implemented. The lead partner in delivering the strategy would often be the fisheries ministry/department, supported by other stakeholders. A capacity needs assessment can identify the various dimensions of capacity that are in place and those that need to be enhanced for successful implementation of the development strategy. A series of actions to deal with such needs should emerge from the assessment, which may include institutional restructuring and capacity development (United Nations Development Programme, 2009). With those capacity needs addressed, and with political, institutional and stakeholder support, there is a greater likelihood that the emerging fisheries strategy will be implemented successfully.