



ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE TUNA FISHERIES AND CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY IN THE HIGH SEAS

Tuna and tuna-like species account for 20 percent of the entire value of the world's marine capture fisheries. The total amount generated by these fish is estimated at over USD 10 billion annually, which supports the livelihoods of thousands of communities worldwide.

Tunas travel vast distances, passing through both exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of coastal developing states and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the so-called "high seas", also known as areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ). The strong demand for tuna, combined with excessive fishing, is one of the reasons that have caused stocks to decline and have left fisheries unable to reach optimal catches. This creates a challenge for the 85 countries that fish for tuna and jointly manage these fisheries through tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (t-RFMOs).

The main objective of this project – one of four projects making up the Global Environment Facility-financed Program on Global Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation in ABNJ – was to achieve sustainable and efficient tuna fisheries production and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ by targeting three specific issues: (i) declines in tuna fisheries resources due to insufficient use of robust conservation and management measures; (ii) illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing undermining the effectiveness of measures; and (iii) negative impacts from tuna fishing on ecosystems and biological diversity.



WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

Under the first area of work, the project promoted the sustainable management of tuna fisheries through support to the development of tuna harvest strategies (also known as management procedures) in each of the t-RFMOs, with pre agreed catch limits designed to be conservative and robust to uncertainties for all major tuna stocks. As a result, the number of stocks experiencing overfishing decreased. The project also supported the development of long-term plans for more effective operationalization of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) in the t-RFMOs.

Under the second area of work, the project contributed to strengthened and harmonized monitoring, control and surveillance efforts to address IUU fishing. The ability of t RFMO members to fully implement adopted regulations was strengthened through new training opportunities and new tools to combat IUU fishing were explored and developed, including innovative technologies and processes to support improved compliance by t RFMO members.

Under the third and final area of work, the project focused on reducing ecosystem impacts from tuna fishing, which led to the development of conservation and management measures for sharks in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. New fishing techniques, hands-on training and awareness raising on threatened species reduced the number of dolphins, sharks and sea turtles killed in tuna gillnet fisheries, as well as the bycatch of small tunas and sharks in purse seiners and incidental seabird mortality in tuna longline fleets. In addition, bycatch and marine pollution were decreased through the uptake of non-entangling and biodegradable Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs).

KEY FACTS

Latest Approved Budget
USD 27 172 934

Duration
January 2014 – June 2022

Resource Partner
Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Beneficiaries
Tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-contracting Parties, fisheries and compliance officers, inter-governmental institutions, Non-governmental Organizations and private sector entities dealing with tuna fisheries and biodiversity conservation, fishers and tuna value chain actors

IMPACT

This project built capacity among t-RFMOs to sustainably and efficiently manage tuna fisheries and conserve biodiversity through the implementation of the EAFM. This project also contributed to the achievement of SDG 14 by: (i) reducing the overfishing of tuna stocks; (ii) building capacity and developing tools to fight IUU fishing; (iii) establishing new conservation and management measures to better manage sharks and turtles; (iv) reducing bycatch and marine pollution through the use of non-entangling and biodegradable FADs; (v) carrying out new assessments of vulnerable shark populations; and (iv) reducing impacts on bycatch and associated species. The success of this project led to the development of a follow-up project, which was included in GEF's May 2020 Work Program.

ACTIVITIES

Under Component 1, the development of harvest strategies was supported through capacity building and the provision of technical expertise. A multistakeholder forum for discussing the implementation of the EAFM was organized. Roadmaps were designed to operationalize the EAFM in t-RFMOs.

Under Component 2, a university-certified course on enforcement and compliance for fisheries officers in Pacific Island countries was developed. A total of 70 male and female officers completed the course, which is now being replicated in other regions. Compliance support missions to strengthen compliance with regulations at national level were carried out in IOTC member countries. The first global Tuna Compliance Network for information-sharing and cooperation between officers responsible for compliance in the t RFMOs and experts in compliance and monitoring, control and surveillance, was established. The use of electronic monitoring systems in compliance improvement was trialled in tuna fisheries in Fiji and Ghana. A legal template to facilitate the implementation of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement was authored and published, and a Consolidated List of Authorized Vessels (CLAV) targeting tuna was created and continuously updated in real time. Design options for tuna catch documentation schemes were developed.

Under Component 3, assessments of vulnerable shark populations in the Pacific Ocean were carried out. Ways to reduce turtle entanglement were explored, and proposed mitigation measures to reduce turtle deaths were adopted by WCPFC. Hands-on training, awareness-raising on threatened species and best practices on safe-release at sea were delivered to crew on gillnet fishing vessels in Pakistan. The uptake of more ocean-friendly FADs was supported, and the use of biodegradable materials was being tested at the time of project completion. Guidelines on non-entangling FADs to reduce catches of non-targeted species and undersized tuna were developed and adopted by all t RFMOs. The first global estimate on seabird bycatch in tuna longline fishing in the Southern Hemisphere was calculated.

Partners

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), BirdLife International (BLI), Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), European Commission, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Fiji Fisheries Industry Association (FFIA), Fiji Tuna Boat Owners Association (FTBOA), Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Organization of the Central American Isthmus (OSPESCA), Pacific Islands Fisheries Forum Agency (FFA), Government of Fiji, Government of Ghana, Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), International Seafood Sustainability Association (ISSA), International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Organization of Associated Producers of Large Tuna Freezers (OPAGAC), Pacific Community (SPC), Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA), United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

Project Code

FAO: GCP/GLO/365/GFF
Donor: 4581

Project Title

Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond Natural Jurisdiction (ABNJ)

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Partnerships and Outreach

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