Is this going somewhere? Using evaluations to broker organisational change

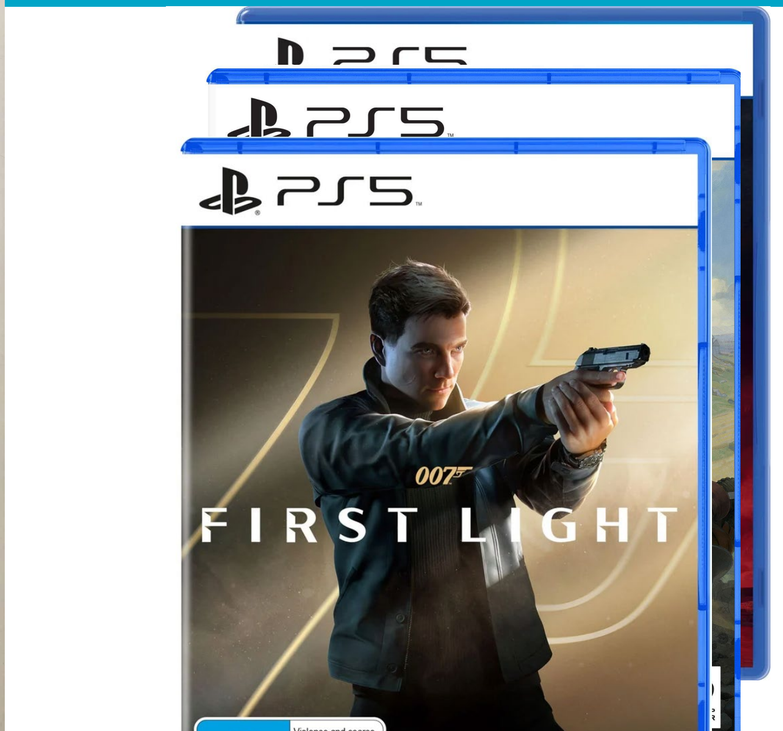
India Lynn & Victoria Pilbeam

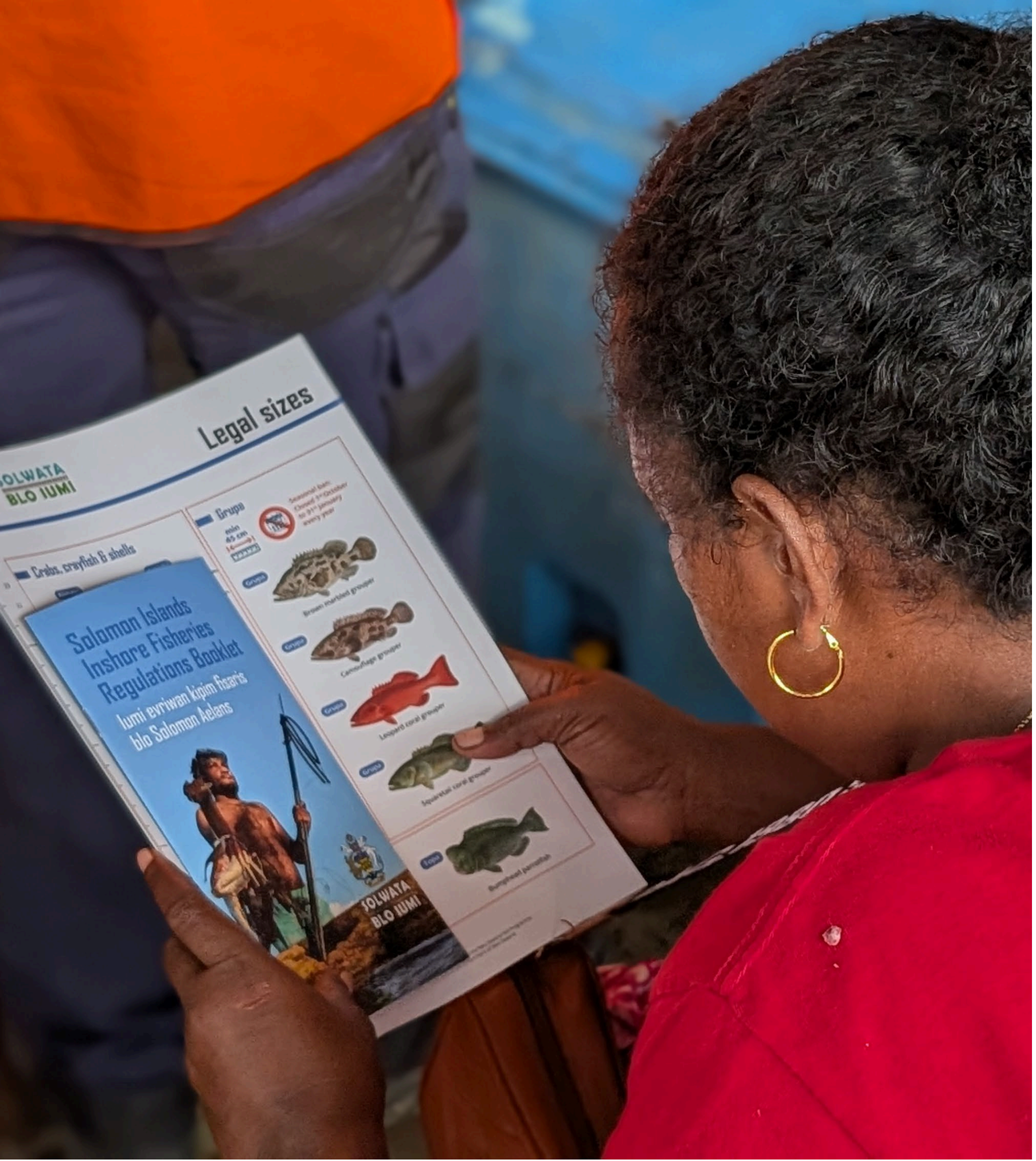
The pile of shame

A stack of things that you have bought out of genuine interest/love but left untouched…









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Make a choice

Address the pile. Find a way to use it.



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The Pacific Community (SPC) is the principal scientific and technical organisation in the Pacific region, proudly supporting development since 1947. We are an international development organisation owned and governed by our 27 country and territory members.

The **Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems** is (currently) the largest division of SPC.



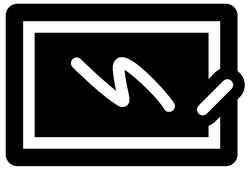
Quick fish facts

- **Fish are a big deal** (culturally, for food security, economically)
- **Managing fish is hard** (complex ecosystems in a changing climate)
- **Capacity is one of the biggest constraints** to good management and equitable outcomes (Haas, Aqorau & Lennan,2026)

Since 2016, SPC-FAME has…



12,490 training participants



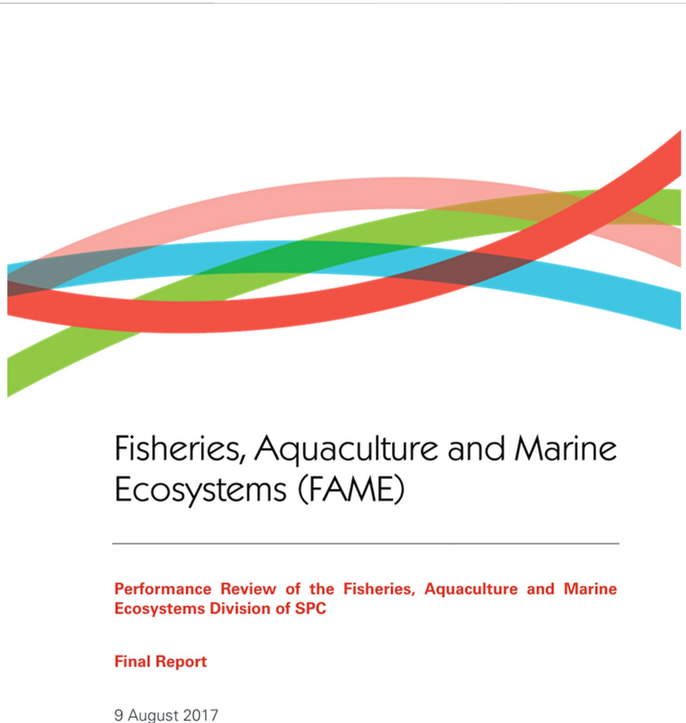
912 trainings delivered

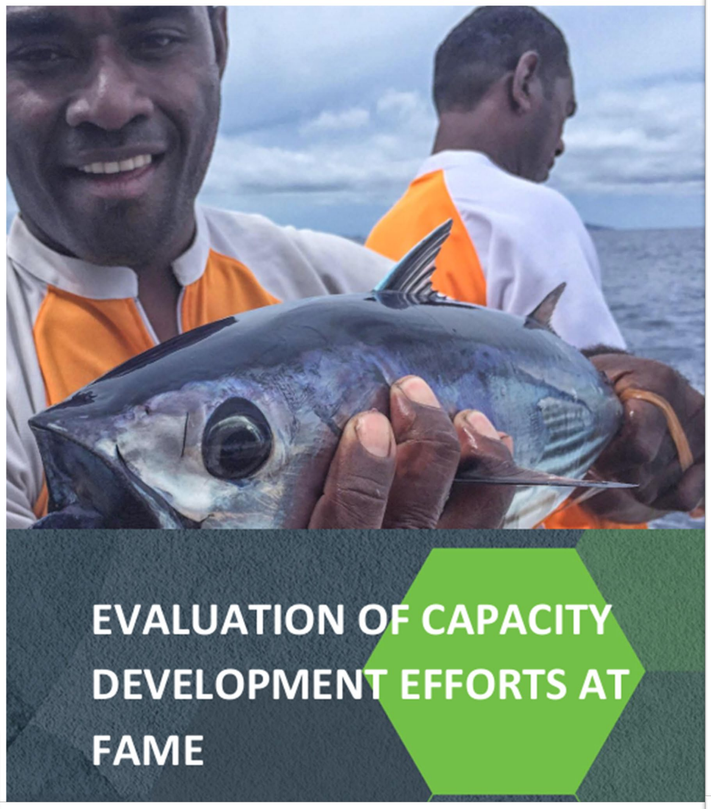


78,212 days spent training

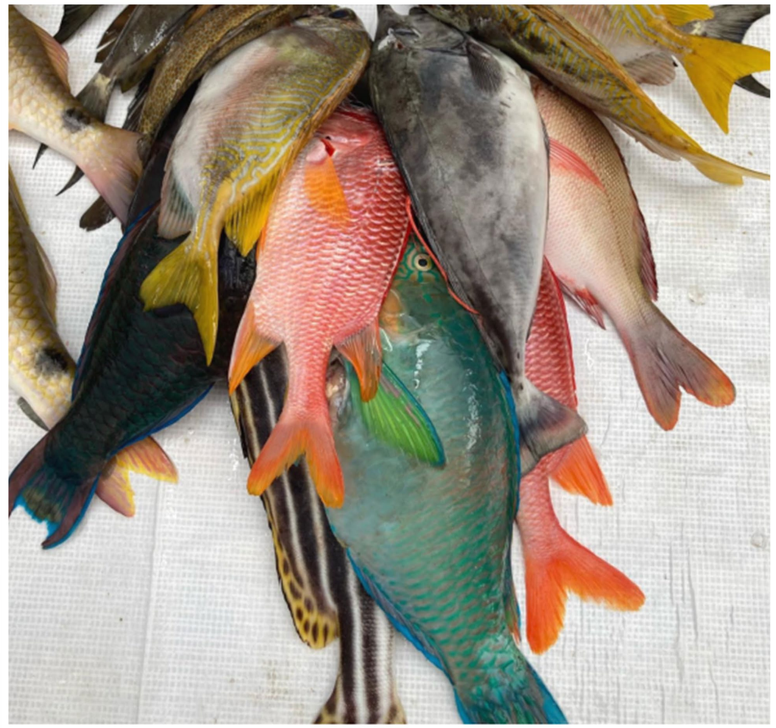
Capacity Building has been a major focus of recent evaluations.

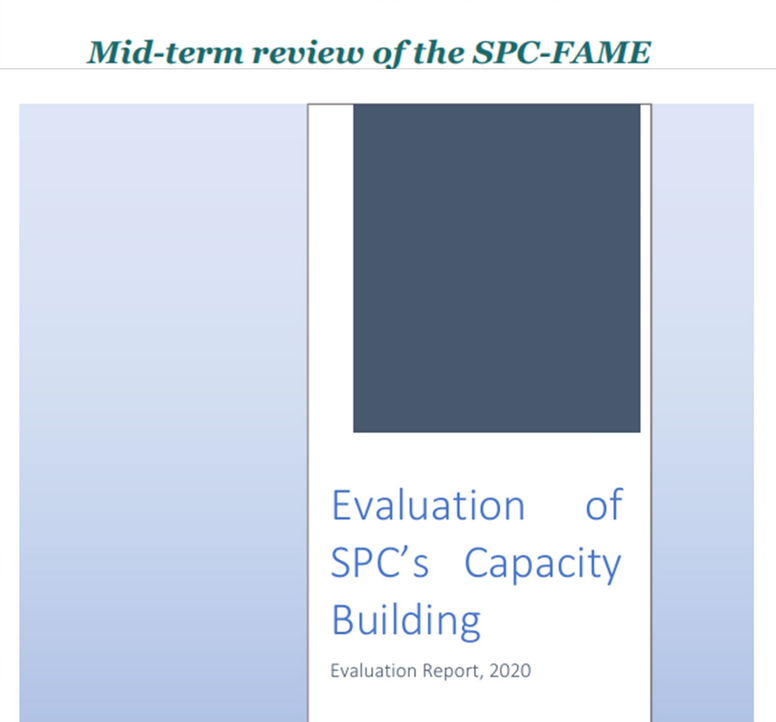














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What did they tell us?

Current approaches are effective and sustainable for **building individual capacity**, but long-term sustainability depends on stronger institutional ownership, organisational systems, leadership support, follow-up mechanisms, and **regional peer-learning networks**.

What were the recommendations?

1. Measure long-term outcomes
2. Strengthen organisational/system capacity
3. Improve participant selection (i.e. nomination process) and follow-up support (including the inclusion of women, youth and other marginalised groups)
4. Expand peer-to-peer and regional learning approaches

Why do you think these evaluations didn’t get used?

Why did the evaluations get shelved?



Resources; “we had a big budget deficit and staff cuts that year” ; “the MEL person left’

Stakeholder characteristics “there weren’t strong relationships with the MEL team”; “people didn’t know much about evaluation”

Evaluation characteristics; “they didn’t show us the evidence ”; “they didn’t tell us anything which we didn’t already know”

Social and political environment; “some of these things are beyond our control”

Evaluators characteristics. ”the evaluator was clearly ‘biased against fisheries’”;

(Expanded on Searle et al., 2024)



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Read the signs

Understand the enabling environment and use it to your advantage.



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Finding a way together

Acknowledging our limitations - take it to members, leadership, project managers, colleagues.

We are taking Strategic Focus on Capacity Building...

1

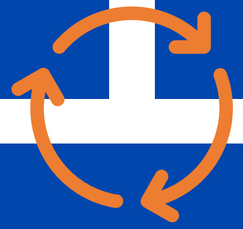
Guidance and Resources

- Research, training trainers and strategic workforce planning (for the entire sector).

2

Testing with Teams

- Supporting teams to develop new modalities (eg: peer 2 peer, attachments) and refine existing delivery (eg: Observer training program)



3

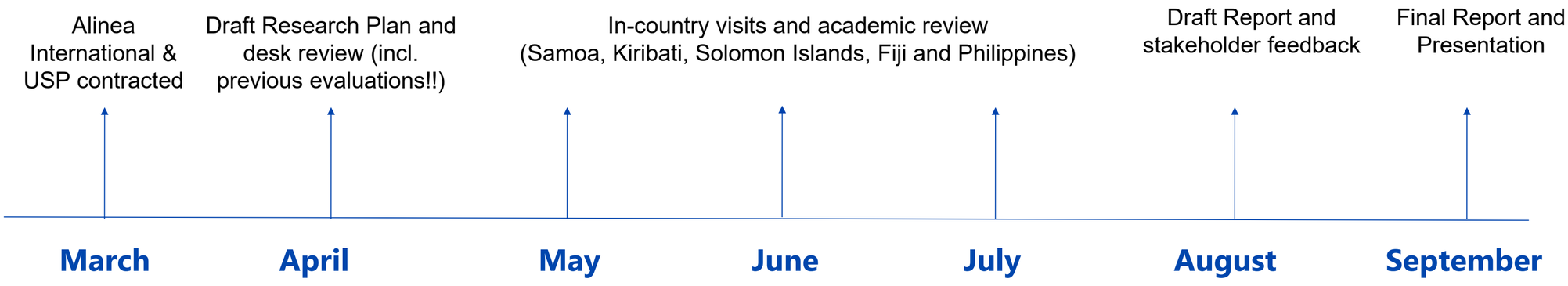
Strategic Learning

Documenting insights; working with decision-makers; connecting across the Org; reviewing what we did.

Q4 2025 to Q1 2027

Capacity Building Research

Identify barriers and enablers to capacity building and provide suggestions of how to change current approaches to become more effective at generating behaviour change.



2026

What did we learn?

- How to assess and identify levels of behaviour change
- What supports/prevents behaviour change
- Which training methods are most effective for our context (learning transfer model)
- How to refine a nomination process largely dictated by Members
- How to move towards organisational rather than individual change
- How to align regional capacity building initiatives with national planning and fisheries ministries

Learning transfer pathway: the ideal scenario

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Proposed pathway

1. **Priority and readiness**
   Define the intended behaviour and check whether the organisation and operating system are ready
2. **Right learner and role**
   Clarify prerequisites, role fit, intended use and who provides backup
3. **Practical, Pacific-centred learning**
   Use local examples, accessible language, hands-on practice and corrective feedback
4. **Authentic work product**
   Produce or rehearse a dataset, report, briefing, SOP, field task or team practice
5. **Reinforcement at first use**
   Schedule a clinic, coach, peer review or reflection near the real application point
6. **Team and system uptake**
   Embed roles, authority, procedures, backups, quality controls and resourcing

In-practice: e-Reporting

1. **Priority and readiness**
   SPG countries have committed to transitioning to 100% e-Reporting: Fiji has made this commitment for 2026
2. **Right learner and role**
   Clear audience for training with strong relevance to their work: Observers and observer coordinators
3. **Practical, Pacific-centred learning**
   Country-level trainings, delivered online and in-person with dedicated follow-up sessions
4. **Authentic work product**
   Practical, hands-on training with tablets where participants learn how to use e-Reporting applications
5. **Reinforcement at first use**
   Dedicated follow-up and error checking post-trip. Allows space to correct the data and respond to questions.
6. **Team and system uptake**
   Tablets funded through SPC and FFA. Technology developed by and maintained by SPC with regular updates. Country-government commitment and strong buy-in.

Learning transfer pathway: real life

Application: e-Reporting

1. **Priority and readiness**
   SPG countries have committed to transitioning to 100% e-Reporting: Fiji has made this commitment for 2026
2. **Right learner and role**
   Clear audience for training with strong relevance to their work: Observers and observer coordinators
3. **Practical, Pacific-centred learning**
   Country-level trainings, delivered online and in-person with follow-up sessions available upon request
4. **Authentic work product**
   Practical, hands-on training with tablets where participants learn how to use e-Reporting applications
5. **Reinforcement at first use**
   Dedicated follow-up and error checking post-trip. Allows space to correct the data and respond to questions.
6. **Team and system uptake**
   Tablets funded through SPC and FFA. Technology developed by and maintained by SPC with regular updates. Country-government commitment and strong buy-in.

Ongoing challenges

- Some Observers are reticent to change and fear technology taking their jobs
- Reliance on Members to request further training/support Digital literacy
- Observers may have to wait months or even years to go on a trip
- Many countries rely on tablets to be provided and struggle to maintain them

Within SPC's control/influence





Key messages

If you have a **pile of shame** – you are not alone.

Make a choice – what are you going to do about it?

Read the signs - understand the enabling environment

Find a way forward together – don’t go it alone.

Questions? Thoughts? Feelings?

More fish facts available upon request.



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Thank you!

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References

Haas, B., Aqorau. T, and Lennan. M. 2026. “ Lack of Capacity: The Not-So-Hidden Factor Undermining Fisheries Governance.” *Fish and Fisheries* 1–10.

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Searle, M., Cooper, A., Worthington, P., Hughes, J., Gokiert, R., & Poth, C. (2024). Mapping Evaluation Use: A Scoping Review of Extant Literature (2005–2022). *American Journal of Evaluation*, *45*(3), 341-360.