



**TECHNICAL AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Eleventh Regular Session**  
23 - 29 September 2015  
Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia

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**WWF Recommendations from the PIRFO Regional Observer Program Review**

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**WCPFC-TCC11-2015-OP05**  
**26 Sept 2015**  
**0940**

Submitted by WWF

## Recommendations from the PIRFO Regional Observer Program Review

1. Convene a workshop (initially, move to a consistent event) to improve communication and create a feedback process on enforcement actions taken using observer data. The workshop would include staff from the MCS enforcement unit, observer staff (trainers and debriefers), observers and possibly CG or Navy. Currently there is a lack of communication, coordination and information between the observers, the observer program and enforcement. This workshop may assist in improving the overall respect of observer programs.
2. Add a day to the observer/debriefers training modules that provide an opportunity to integrate MCS/enforcement experts into the workshops. MCS/enforcement experts to share experiences with observers and vice versa, to encourage a better understanding between them; work to addressing funding constraints that limit the duration of workshops
3. Implement procedures to reduce bribery and connivance and increase professionalism among observers:
  - a. Rotate observers more often from vessel to vessel. Establish a rule that no observer could spend more than two trips/year on board the same vessel. No more than one cruise/campaign per year.
  - b. Once debriefing staff is increased, implement a measure that observers must debrief after serving no more than 2 trips.
  - c. Observer must complete full debriefing before being deployed on their next assignment. Prior to the debriefing, the complete set of data must be submitted by the observer.
  - d. Increase observer pay overall and implement a pay for performance system much like that of PNG.
4. Improve observer reporting of infractions by:
  - a. Implement practices that improve the protections of observers while at sea on board the vessel
  - b. Ensure that employment opportunities are not jeopardized by the reporting of violations; if an observer is unable to perform their duties due to their inability to be placed because of the reporting of infractions, compensation is due
  - c. If required to provide testimony or are required to do additional work related to the reporting of an infraction, compensation is due
  - d. Consider implementing a code system for weekly radio/email/fax reporting to ensure observer is safe or provide additional sensitive information.
5. To increase efficiency in data quality,
  - a. To have a dedicated facility – ideally co-located with the MCS/enforcement group - where the debriefing can take place. In

addition, provision of the tools necessary (computers, fax machine, internet, phone, desk, observer report writing cubicles, etc) that support a debriefing activity.

- b. Continue to improve the use of automated error checking features in the database.
6. There has been considerable discussion about the requirements and the process to hire data entry personnel. Require that steps be taken to improve the understanding of data entry personnel such as sending those without observer experience to observer courses or preferentially hiring those with hands-on experience as an observer. Continued adherence to following data entry and review protocols.
7. The group discussed reasons for the delay in observers' data being entered into the system. While there are many provisions in place that require the timely submission of data, it is recommended that the enforcement of these provisions, by the observer program be improved. One reason was that observers do not always bring their data in for debriefing.
  - a. It is strongly recommended that the data is provided to the debriefer within 7-14 days of arrival in port, depending on gear type. Exception to these rules may be made due to medical and family emergencies. Delays should be formerly communicated to the observer program.
  - b. The group suggested that observers be paid for their time being debriefed.
8. In general the group recommended that observer and debriefer wages be increased by 2-3 times their current level, given the inconsistent nature of the work. This would professionalize the position as well as improve the overall program.
9. Although most debriefers are former observers, the group suggested that there be a very clear rule that all debriefers must be active, competent, and professional observers, no exceptions.
10. There was a recommendation that to improve the observer program, the observer program should be incorporated into the curriculum or supported by the faculty of a maritime/fisheries college. There should be a link between government fisheries agencies and maritime/fisheries colleges in order to strengthen them both and ensure that observer needs are met.
11. Every observer should be issued a valid observer identification card good for one year. The card should contain vital information required such as date of birth, nationality, phone number and contact information of the observer program where he/she is employed.

12. Every observer should have a contract with their employer that clearly states the rules and performance requirements of the position.
13. Every observer deployed should be assisted by an authorized placement officer that assists with an introduction to captain and crew, review of safety equipment, provides assistance with getting sampling gear on board and fully completes the placement worksheet and ensures that captain sign the placement form.
14. Observer programs need to create a permanent placement officer. If an observer placement is not conducted by an authorized placement officer, then the observer should not be deployed.
15. The observer's three most recent trip performances should be reviewed before placement on a new vessel.
16. Most national observer programs hold an annual meeting at the end of the year and before the vessel is licensed/registered for the next fishing year. During that meeting, observer program coordinators and staff should attend the meeting and provide program updates and work together to resolve any problems identified during the previous season.
17. The observer program needs to provide transportation to the vessel at least 4 hours before departure to board the vessel.
18. Observers should not be boarding with, in possession of, or engaged in the distribution of pornographic materials. In many countries, pornography is illegal and a serious offense. Training should be expanded to discuss the complexity and variance of national laws within the region.
19. Clarify that observers should not sign any documents while on board the vessel. Note: Tim/Peter needs to check with WCPFC regarding the catch discard document. Observers are placed in an awkward position if they are required to sign any documents while on board.
20. Recommended change to WCPFC code of conduct.: Replace last sentence to read "until arriving at home port" to ensure that observers maintain a professional demeanor until full completion of the trip.
21. Develop a code of conduct for trainers. The code of conduct should include all elements of the observer code of conduct but with additional rules such as prohibitions against cheating, etc.
22. Add to the WCPFC code of conduct to include gender equality and prohibit discrimination.

23. The code of conduct should be enforced equitably by all programs.
24. If the observer is suspended due to a code of conduct violation and his suspension is overturned within the appeals process (no longer than 14 days of filing the appeal from the time he/she was suspended), then the observer should be compensated for lost wages during his/her time of suspension.
25. Observers are required to report to the port coordinator upon landing in port. Observers must obtain authorization from the observer provider before leaving the vessel and checking into a hotel.
26. Upon completion of an assigned trip, the observer must receive authorization from the observer provider before departing from sea on a new trip.
27. Disregard for the reporting rules is a breach of contract and penalties will be assessed.
28. Develop a procedure where in country enforcement agents notifies the observer program that a vessel carrying an observer is coming in to port. This procedure will corroborate the observer's arrival.
29. Observer coordinator informs other nations that a vessel is in port or coming in to port with the observer on board.
30. Create better communication between the safety authority and the observer program. Establish that the observer coordinator can hold a vessel in port if the safety equipment is expired or deficient.
31. Purchase single person life rafts in key port cities to be deployed with observer if the vessel does not have sufficient life raft capacity on the fishing vessel.
32. Encourage the use of or investigation of a device that can send safety messages in real time. The device will also need 2 way messaging and should have broad coverage.
33. The agency that inspects safety equipment should ensure all equipment is on board before issuing the vessel a license or registration.
34. If safety equipment is not in place, the observer should not be deployed.
35. The placement officer should include inspection of sea safety certificate, certificate of insurance, and master's license.
36. If it is discovered that safety equipment is missing or has expired, the observer shall disembark the vessel at the next port call.

37. Include in training that the observer has the right to refuse to board if the safety equipment is missing, defective, or expired.
38. The placement officer should be familiar with the vessel where he/she is placing observers and shall have reviewed the most recent report.