

*Society for the Conservation of Reef Fish Aggregations - fisher interview survey:
guidelines for interviews – updated Sadovy, November 21st, 2003*

Fisher Survey Interview Format General Guidelines



Interviewing fisher in Fiji

Interview Number

Date

Place (village region and country details)

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Interviewee Name and Interviewer Name

How long have you been fishing?

What percentage of living comes from fishing?

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Main fishing gear/fishing method (number of trips per week, boat and engine size, fishes alone or with others, other relevant details on fishing practices including changes in those practices over time and the reasons for such changes).

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Main fishing area – to be marked on a detailed map – any obvious changes in fishing area over time should be explained

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Main species taken with the main fishing gear (if there is time and several gears are used extensively, questions can be separated into main gear types and can document any changing gear use over time). Species list should be English common names or Latin names.

NOTE: any fishery questions should try to include an indication of effort, the aim being to standardize numbers over time. Examples include catch rates in fish per day, per

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fishing trip, per net haul, etc. at different points in time during the fisherman's fishing career.

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Once the species composition of the catches have been established, ask whether any of the species are caught in particularly large numbers at certain times of the year only **OR** whether the fisherman recalls any of the species with lots of eggs at certain times of the year. The **KEY** here is to establish both reproductive activity and some kind of seasonality or change in fish behaviour during the reproductive period.

For each species identified as a likely aggregation spawner, several details are needed and this is the most important part of the interview. Much will depend on what the interviewee remembers and, if you are not clear on information provided or if information is not consistent, then it will be important to return to the same point(s) later in the same interview, in a different form, to clarify or check the information initially provided.

In general what you want to know is which species show clear evidence of forming spawning aggregations, what that evidence actually is (i.e. why fishers think there is both aggregation and spawning), where the aggregations form (marked clearly on a map), what are the months during which aggregations form, moon phase, depth, etc. i.e. any information about the aggregation site and timing. Also, ask when the site was first discovered or first known to the interviewee and how they found out.

Also very important, is to get some idea of how catches may have changed over time. For example, if the interviewee has fished for 20 years, then ask about catches (per trip, day, or whatever) when he/she first fished the site, then 10 years later, or whatever, and then in the most recent fishing trip to the site. Also, ask how many other boats were at the site in the early days and then more recently. What you are aiming for is some indication of catch per unit of effort and fishing effort over time.

What fishing gear was used, what other species were at the site (the interviewee may give you the above information for several species) and what was/is the most common of all the species fished at the site? Have sizes of fish (by species) changed over time? Has the fishing gear changed over time. Did the fishery become more commercially, rather than subsistence oriented over time, etc. You need to consider what factors could have accounted for any changes in fishing practices and landings volumes.

If the interviewee is a diver, you can also ask what they see underwater when they dive over the aggregation site and what the substrate is where the fish are assembled.

Ask whether the interviewee is concerned if he/she has noted declines in numbers or sizes of fish, and, if changes are noted, ask why the interviewee thinks that those changes might have occurred and what could be done about them. If relevant, a whether the community discusses the situation and what they would like to do, if anything.

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Ask then about patterns in ALL CATCHES over time – i.e. not just in aggregating species. If there have been declines in fish sizes or numbers, ask which species have declined most and why the declines have occurred. Ask if the interviewee is concerned and what measures might be taken to improve the situation.

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Ask if there are any regulations of any sort in effect for the fishery/if so, are they enforced?

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ALSO, it is important that the interviews are an opportunity for you to explain the importance and significance of aggregations, i.e., to give something back.

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FINALLY, be sure to ask whether the interviewee has any questions for you or about the project. **The aim of the interview is also to provide information.** Remember that project reports will go to the cooperating NGO/government so will be available in-country.

NOTE: it is good to note on the bottom of the form whether the interview was done through a translator and whether you had a lot of confidence in the answers of the interviewee. Always include a few questions in the interview that you know the answer(s) to in order to help you evaluate the interviewee.



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