



Australian Government

Australian Centre for  
International Agricultural Research

Fisheries

# Innovating fish-based livelihoods in the community economies of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands



## Overview

In the Solomon Islands, extreme poverty affects approximately one quarter of all Solomon Islanders. This figure is expected to rise by 2-12 percent because of COVID-19. Timor Leste is the second most malnourished country and sliding further down the global scale because of the limited progress it has made to address poverty as well as food and nutrition security.

It is widely acknowledged that fish and aquatic foods must play a central role in addressing the urgent challenges of poverty and malnutrition. In both these island states, fish-based livelihoods and other aquatic foods can make a major contribution to addressing these challenges.

Almost everyone in the Pacific eats fish regularly, and fish and fish-based livelihoods play an important role in the resilience of community economies. However, not everyone is a fisher. Improving the livelihoods of people who catch, process or trade fish is a critical pathway out of poverty and towards food and nutrition security for these countries.

## KEY FACTS

**ACIAR Project No.** FIS/2019/124

**Duration:** September 2021 to March 2025

**Target areas:** Timor Leste, Solomon Islands

**Budget:** A\$2,444,000

### Project Leader

Ass Prof Hampus Eriksson, University of Wollongong

### Key partners

- University of Wollongong
- University of Canberra
- Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Timor-Leste
- Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resource, Solomon Islands
- WorldFish

### ACIAR Research Program Manager

Prof Ann Fleming

## Objective

**This project aims to support women and men in rural Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste to develop and share innovative solutions for sustainable fish-based livelihoods. It also aims to increase the capacity of national agencies to support community-based initiatives and ensure equitable rural fisheries development investments.**

It will:

- Improve community understanding of current fish distribution practices and opportunities for livelihood innovation along the supply chains.
- Build on existing initiatives for rural fish-based livelihoods and local capacity for innovation.
- Facilitate upskilling to enable improvements in livelihoods and access to safe and healthy aquatic foods.
- Build capacity of national agencies to support community-identified and led development pathways for fish-based community economies.

## Expected scientific results

- Improved knowledge of how fish-based activities and products shape local livelihoods and how both formal, informal, and non-market exchanges spread benefits at the community level through:
  - cash income, gained through both formal and informal market transactions
  - improvement in non-cash livelihoods, through bartering and exchange of goods and services
  - health and wellbeing through improved food security and nutrition for households
  - strength of reciprocal networks and community bonds.
- Improved understandings of how local livelihoods and associated gender roles and responsibilities are shifting with the adoption of new innovations and identify common traits that enable fish-based livelihoods innovation in diverse community economies.
- Development of place-based understanding of what training is needed for safe fish handling, and how it is best delivered to be appropriate for local contexts.

## Expected impact/outcomes

- Increased knowledge of fish-based livelihoods and improved opportunities for community-led innovation through tools and techniques to share successful practices
- Increased capacity of community members to pursue place-based innovations that will lead to sustainable livelihood improvement
- Enablement of community members to ensure fish-based products are safe for consumers and the nutritional benefits of aquatic foods is widely available
- Enablement of partner organisations and national governments to design programs that meet national development goals building on community strengths and leadership.

