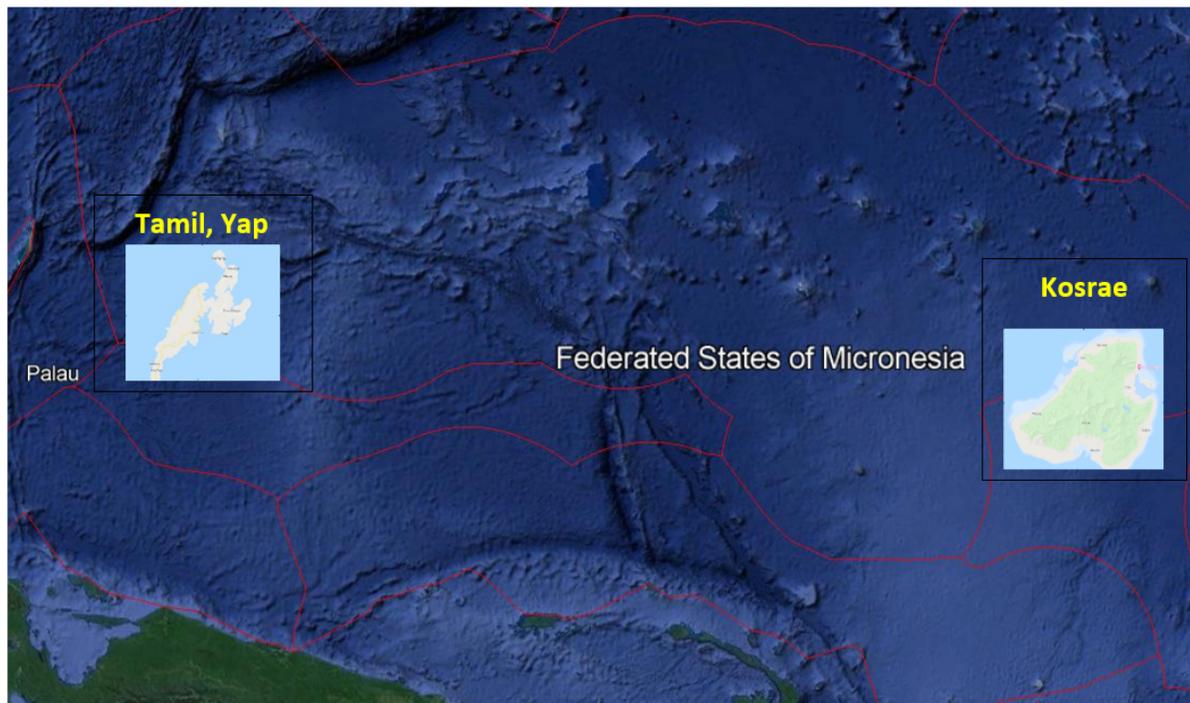


COVID-19 IMPACTS ON FISHING AND COASTAL COMMUNITIES



Update #3: Federated States of Micronesia

15 June 2020

Summary

Twenty-one respondents from five municipalities on Kosrae Island, and twenty respondents from ten villages in Tamil Municipality on Yap Island, in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) were interviewed to establish the immediate effects of the COVID-19 situation on coastal and island communities. Results from the surveys have indicated:

- There is negligible migration around the main communities of Kosrae (Malem, Utwe, Lelu, Tafunsak, and Walung) and within Tamil Municipality, Yap;
- Impacts of COVID-19 most widely reported include the closing of schools, movement restrictions, and the interruption of flights and shipping;
- Villages are starting to plant more gardens and taro patches,
- Moderate to no increase in people fishing is reported and little increase in breaking of fisheries rules,

- The cost of staple food items, rice and tinned fish, was reported to increase by a third of respondents particularly in Yap,
- Financial stress is commonly reported and over half propose various financial measures as government support.

Introduction

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 has had far reaching effects across the Pacific, including isolated island nations like the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), population 112,000. The national government closed international borders and state governments imposed a country-wide travel ban, which has been rewarded with no recorded cases of the virus. Knock-on effects have been reported and this survey is intended to gain rapid impressions of these effects from the urban municipalities of Kosrae (popn. 6,600) and the more remote island of Yap (popn. 11,400).

What did we do?

Rapid response survey questionnaires designed to determine the immediate effects of the pandemic and the closing of international borders were



conducted on Kosrae Island at a municipal level from 19 May to 5 June, 2020, and at a village level in Tamil Municipality on Yap Island from 3 June to 6 June, 2020.

Staff from the Kosrae Conservation and Safety Organisation (KCSO) on Kosrae Island and staff from the Tamil Resources Conservation Trust (TRCT) on Yap Island conducted interviews with key informants of both genders to gather more information on the impacts of the COVID-19 situation on coastal communities in FSM.

Kosrae

21 respondents from all 5 municipalities were interviewed: Lelu (n=8), Utwe (n=4), Malem (n=5), Tafunsak (n=3), and Walung (n=1). Respondents from all age groups were targeted as well as both women (n=6) and men (n=15).

Our Findings

Major events

Event	Female (F)	Male (M)	Total
COVID-19	3	10	13
None	3	5	8
Total	6	15	21

More than half (62%) of the respondents mentioned COVID-19 as a major national event which affected the community, and eight respondents (38%) specifically added the closing of schools, and the cancelling of events and flights.

“Regarding COVID-19, it’s been quite unusual as citizens are more aware of their health that they have responded positively to the rules that the COVID-19 Task Force disseminated around the island.”

Migration in villages has been minimal, twelve respondents (57%) believe that population numbers have stayed the same; three (14%) stated that slight migration had occurred in to the villages, and five respondents (24%) indicated that slight migration had occurred out of the villages.

Food Security

The majority of respondents felt there was enough or more than enough food available (86%). Most respondents (62%) reported increased agricultural production while (38%) indicated an increase in

fishing as well. One respondent raised the importance of food preservation techniques.

Food available in village	F	M	Tot.	%
Not enough	1	2	3	14.5%
Enough	4	11	15	71%
More than enough	1	2	3	14.5%
Total	6	15	21	100%

“There’s a shortage in store supplies; however, local food (fish, taro, breadfruit) were highly consumed.”

It has been reported that in two villages, stores have started running low on supplies. Around a third of respondents reported that prices of rice and tinned fish had increased.

Price of rice	Resp.	Price of tinned fish	Resp.
Increased	8	Increased	7
Decreased	0	Decreased	0
No change in price	11	No change in price	12
No answer	2	No answer	2
Total	21	Total	21

Fishing Pressure

It is not clear that fishing pressure has increased - 8 respondents note more people fishing and 6 report less. More than half the female respondents believed that less people are fishing now, whilst nearly half of males thought that fishing pressure had increased.

No. of people fishing now	F	M	Total	%
A lot less	1	0	1	4%
Less	3	2	5	24%
Same	1	6	7	33%
More	1	5	6	29%
A lot more	0	2	2	10%
Total	6	15	21	100%

Resource Management

Three quarters of respondents reported that fishing rules were being broken but the majority felt that less people were involved than before. Overall, half gave indications that there had been proactive management by community leaders, including by raising awareness within the communities and through information sharing. Ten respondents (47%) specifically mention illegal harvesting.

No. of people breaking mgmt. rules	Total	%
None	5	24%
Less people than before	12	57%
Same	1	5%
More than before	3	14%
Total	21	100%

Potential support required

Half those responding suggested the need for government support (financial assistance, job support, salary increase, improved infrastructure, lower taxes, and price control measures) and about a third proposed strengthening or maintaining COVID-19 measures. About half the respondents mention financial and family stress at the present time.

Yap

20 respondents from 10 villages in Tamil Municipality were interviewed: Aff (n=2), Girgey (n=2), Thol (n=2), Maa (n=2), Doomchuy (n=2), Dechmur (n=2), Teb (n=2), Bugol (n=2), and Meerur (n=2). The respondents included 12 men and 8 women.

Our Findings

Major events

The majority (80%) mention the pandemic as the major event of 2020. There are concerns of outbreaks of dengue and leptospirosis from one village.

Event	Female (F)	Male (M)	Total
COVID-19	6	10	16
None	2	2	4
Total	8	12	20

There is minimal migration within Tamil Municipality, with 70% of respondents reporting no changes in population numbers and the rest distributed between immigration and out migration.

Food Security

Food available in village	F	M	Total	%
Not enough	2	2	4	20%
Enough	5	7	12	60%
More than enough	1	3	4	20%
Total	8	12	20	100%

The majority of respondents felt there was enough or more than enough food available (80%).

Three quarters of the respondents reported an increase in farming activity. A further 20% indicated an increase in fishing as well. There is one report that there are not enough gardens.

"Biggest role for us women is to make sure there is enough food by gardening and taro patching."

Most respondents (65%) reported no changes in the sharing of food; some of those that did experience changes in the sharing of food stated that this was specifically due to the current COVID-19 situation (20%).

There are additional reports of a lack of stock in the stores. The majority of respondents indicated that there was an increase in the price of rice (65%) and the price of tinned fish (95%).

Price of rice	Resp.	Price of tinned fish	Resp.
Increased	13	Increased	19
Decreased	2	Decreased	0
No change	5	No change	1
Total	20	Total	20

Fishing Pressure

There are indications of an increase in numbers of people fishing. Nearly half of respondents believed that there was no change in the number of people fishing but a third reported more or a lot more people fishing.

No. of people fishing now	F	M	Total	%
A lot less	0	1	1	5%
Less	1	2	3	15%
Same	5	4	9	45%
More	0	3	3	15%
A lot more	2	2	4	20%
Total	8	12	20	100%

Resource Management

Just under half the respondents (45%) reported fisheries rule breaking during this time. Those that did report incidents of rule breaking noticed that this was by less people than usual.

No. of people breaking mgmt. rules	Total	%
None	12	60%
Less people than before	6	30%
Same	2	10%
More than before	0	0%
Total	20	100%

The most common rule being broken is illegal fishing (40%). No women reported management action being undertaken, and only two women (10%) reported being aware of the occurrence of any rule breaking. Most people suggested there was no local management response (75%) but where there had been proactive management, this coincided with areas where there had been no rule breaking (20%).

Acknowledgements: Work in Kosrae was carried out by the Kosrae Conservation and Safety Organisation (KCSO) who should be contacted for further detail (Contact: kcsodirector@mail.fm). Work in Yap was conducted by the Tamil Resources Conservation Trust (TRCT) who should be contacted for further detail (Contact: emailtrct@gmail.com). This is part of a regional initiative led by the LMMA Network (Contact: teri@lmmanetwork.org) and adapted from a survey developed by WorldFish in the Solomon Islands. This update is available at <https://lmmanetwork.org/resources/covid/> and a condensed version of the survey is available at <https://bit.ly/LMMAcovQ>. To be cited as: LMMA Network, KCSO and TRCT. 2020. COVID19 Update #3: FSM. 15 June 2020. LMMA Network.

Potential support required

Over half those responding suggested the need for government support (financial and infrastructure assistance). The majority of respondents (85%) stated that financial worry was the biggest stress in their life currently.

Conclusion

As the COVID-19 situation continues, the survey results from Kosrae and Yap have indicated:

- So far, a major increase in migration to Kosrae or Tamil in Yap is not reported.
- Most report that enough food is available on Kosrae and Yap, but with limited flights and shipping, there is a possibility of a shortage of stock in the stores;
- Most villagers report an increase in agricultural production, more so in Kosrae, planting more gardens and taro patching,
- There are mixed indications of an increase in people fishing (20% of respondents in Yap and 38% in Kosrae).
- There is no evidence of an increase in fisheries rule breaking, on the contrary, less people are reported to be breaking rules which may in part be due to proactive local management.
- There are some reports of increases in the prices of tinned fish and rice, particularly noticeable in Yap. It is worth considering options for price control.
- Most respondents mention financial stress and over half propose government take financial measures in support.

