

Basic Manual for Fisheries Observer Debriefers



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Acknowledgment of sources

The material contained in this technical document has been adapted and updated, with revision, simplification and synthesis by the author, from debriefing guidelines and principles contained in the operating documents of the Pacific Islands Regional Fisheries Observer (PIRFO) Programme, the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) Observer Programme, the ICCAT/IOTC/CCBST Observer Manual, the New Zealand Observer Programme, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission Northwest Groundfish Observer Program, and the National Fisheries Authority Observer Programme (Papua New Guinea).

Basic Manual for Fisheries Observer Debriefers

The purpose of this manual is to provide a suggested set of guidelines and standard operating procedures to enable a role of Fisheries Observer Debriefers to be performed on behalf of the KKP Observer Program. The contents are designed to set a basic minimum standard to guide the work of debriefing fisheries observers.

1. Introduction

Debriefers perform a key role supporting the work of Fisheries Observers and should have previous relevant specialist experience. This may include practical experience as an active observer at sea or as an observer coordinator, fisheries data entry operator, fisheries officer or licensing officer. The role requires a thorough understanding of the observers forms & reports, and Indonesian fisheries law as it relates to observer duties, knowledge of the fishery and how it operates, a comprehensive understanding of the role of the observer, active listening and communication skills, and numerical and literacy accuracy to a professional standard.

The debriefer review matrix is primarily based on the observer form, in this context the Fisheries Observer Catch and Transfer form (*borang pemantauan penangkapan ikan dan pengangkutan ikan*) which is the standard observer template contained in Regulation 33/2021

The debriefer is charged with resolving the following tasks:

- Analyze data from observer reports to identify and correct errors in the observer data
- Respond to reported incidents and issues arising from the deployment of the observer
- Collaborate, communicate and advocate with, and on behalf of, the observer to enhance their professional performance and occupational safety.

Debriefing can be regarded as a two-step process, starting with a pre-debriefing session to address higher level issues and concerns, ensure the overall integrity of the data presented, and note any areas for questioning during the full debriefing process. This is followed by a full debrief which examines the data presented and routine issues from the deployment in finer detail to quality assure the final data set for accuracy and completeness, obtaining any missing or incomplete data fields, and information on incidents.

The outcome of the debriefing process is to provide verbal and written feedback to the observer and suggest improvement strategies or remedial actions for professional development, and to present the most accurate and complete data set possible following peer review.

2. Key Steps

The key steps for conducting a successful debriefing are:

1. Preparation for the debriefing
2. Creating a professional and impartial debriefing environment
3. Thorough knowledge of the observer form and use of the data
4. Ensuring the accuracy of the observer dataset
5. Identify errors made by observer when collecting data, and impact on data quality
6. Mentoring the observer (interpersonal skills)
7. Manage incidents and infringements identified during the debriefing process
8. Debriefing Report with evaluation and feedback to the observer

These 8 steps form the basis for Debriefing Competencies and the Standard Operating Procedures to successfully complete debriefing to the requisite professional level.

3. Required knowledge and competencies

Debriefing training should address the following skills and competencies:

- 1) An understanding of the observer forms
- 2) An understanding of Indonesian fisheries law as it relates to observer duties
- 3) Knowledge of the fishery, how it operates, gear & methods, species, and bycatch species
- 4) Understanding of the role of the observer
- 5) Numerical accuracy to validate observer data and confirm calculations.
- 6) Literacy skills for critical assessment and completion of reports to a professional standard.
- 7) Recognizing common data errors and omissions
- 8) An understanding of how data is used by compliance officers
- 9) An understanding how data is used by scientists for scientific analysis
- 10) Recognizing and prioritizing the urgency and importance of compliance issues, safety issues and serious incidents, and understanding how to address these events
- 11) Collegial communication skills to establish professional working relationships
- 12) Observation and interpersonal skills to recognize when the observer may need assistance during the mentoring and assessment processes.

4. Operating Procedures

The following operationalizes the key steps to debriefing, in conjunction with the checklists found in Section 5 of this document.

4.1 Preparation for the debriefing

A first check of the data should be carried out as soon as possible after the observer disembarks from the vessel, ideally before the vessel departs to sea again, so that any urgent issues may be addressed before they are repeated on the next trip.

4.1.1 Meet the Observer on arrival to port

Together in a suitable room or office, pre-debrief the Observer:

- Check that all relevant forms and documents are present
- A surface reading of all documents to check for completion
- Cross-checking all data fields are complete
- Check that all pages are present and correctly numbered
- Highlight for the Observer any incomplete sections
- Inquire as to conditions and issues on board the vessel

4.1.2 Verbal questions should be asked in the initial pre-debriefing stage relating to:

- Compliance issues
- General vessel attitude to the observer
- Any accidents or safety issues
- Any general problems and concerns
- Reasons why it was not possible to collect the required data
- Conditions on board

4.1.3 Arrange a time and place for debriefing to occur. Prepare all materials required to complete a debriefing and advise the observer of the time and place for the debriefing.

4.1.4 Arrange for and provide a suitable working space for the observer to complete remedial work before the final debriefing session.

4.1.5 If there a serious or critical incident has occurred for the observer during the trip, the debriefer should assist the observer to complete all of the data and information about the incident, using the 5WH principle (Who, What, Where, Why, How) to draw up a written statement of the incident (see also 4.7 below).

4.2 Creating a professional and impartial debriefing environment

Debriefing is an important task and should be regarded as a necessary formal step in the data verification process. It is therefore important that the debriefing should be in an office that is cool, comfortable and relatively free from distraction or disruption.

In order to create a professional debriefing environment, the debriefer is required to adopt an impartial approach that is devoid of personal bias. This means setting aside any preconceptions about an observer or the vessel and vessel data, including from any previous interaction, and dealing with each debriefing with an open mind as a fresh slate.

A detailed face to face verbal conversation about the trip can bring to light events and issues that the observer has not covered in the data, or omitted from the data for any reason, and allows errors to be corrected for future reference and increased capacity. It is important that the conversation be conducted in a supportive, non-threatening way, as a collegial dialogue to uncover all relevant aspects of the deployment.

4.3 Thorough knowledge of the observer form and use of the data

Training for debriefers on a standard way to fill in the Observer form can ensure consistency and lessen different interpretations of the form and bad data habits that are not corrected unless there is a consistent approach to debriefing. This includes passing on the knowledge of common mistakes that observers make and how to correct those mistakes. Debriefers and observers take a more consistent approach if they have a thorough understanding of the purpose of the form, and of how the data is subsequently used by ministry officers, including for compliance and science purposes, and as source data for national fisheries reports.

4.4 Ensuring the accuracy of the observer dataset

Even the most efficient staff can make mistakes, many of which could be simple clerical or transcription errors. If a mistake has been made, the debriefer should explain the correct procedure to the observer, by giving clear and precise instructions and clarifications to the observer. In order to correct mistakes and give appropriate feedback the Debriefers can ask effective questions (as in Section 5 below) to draw out the correct information from observers.

Often there is important information that is not contained in the paperwork or only briefly touched on in comments, which may be drawn out with questioning to verify the data, and to address reasons why there may be gaps in the data.

4.5 Identifying data collection errors, and the impact on data quality

Common errors made by observers include falsifying data, miscalculating totals, incorrect species ID codes or misidentification of species, not including discard data for non-commercial species, and transcription errors. It is therefore important that the debriefer should look at any available paperwork made by the observer during the trip to cross-check handwritten calculations and entries; and corroborate the sampling and data collection methodologies used by the observer before final submission of the observer data to KKP.

Observers should be encouraged to keep written notes or a journal to record daily activities on the vessel to help them verify their work. If this is done, the debriefer can also look through these notes to find information that is missing or can be inferred to assist with the completion of the form, or to resolve compliance or Health & Safety issues.

4.6 Mentoring the observer (interpersonal skills)

Pre-debriefing is used to enhance performance through offering the observer a chance for guided self-correction. This is then supplemented with a routine debriefing, which is a methodical check through the data presented using a collaborative peer review and peer learning approach, with the debriefer acting as a second pairs of eyes, asking the right questions to draw out the corrected answers to include in the final report.

4.7 Manage incidents and infringements identified during the debriefing process

Observers encounter a range of challenges when working on vessels because they are sometimes seen by captain and crew as a threat to the operation of the vessel.

Serious issues include (inter alia): threats to the observer, assault and bullying of the observer, preventing the observer from collecting data or otherwise obstructing the work of the observer, misreporting of catch, engaging in IUU fishing, trucking of fish from one fisheries management area to another area, misreporting or mishandling ERS encounters.

If an observer reports any incident or infringement during the debriefing process, the debriefer should work with the observer to assist them in writing down all relevant facts relating to the incident. The debriefer will then contact the Observer Coordinator or Fisheries Officers for advice on how to deal with the incident, whether the matter is to be referred to the vessel operator for an explanation or is subject to further action by fisheries officers or the police.

4.8 Debriefing Evaluation and Feedback to the Observer

The final goal of debriefing is to provide comprehensive feedback to the observer on their performance and, where errors are identified, explaining the correct procedures in a manner that the observer understands.

This can be achieved verbally in context during the debriefing and may be followed up with a written Evaluation Report, summarizing the findings from the debriefing and providing recommendations for any follow up training, remedial action or compliance action required. This report can be shared with the observer and the observer coordinator.

5. Checklists for Debriefers

The debriefer can use checklists of points to be covered and questions to be asked in both the pre-debriefing and debriefing processes in order that a standardized, impartial process is consistently followed by all debriefers.

5.1 General pre-debriefing checklist for the Fisheries Observer Catch & Transportation form (*Borang pemantauan penangkapan ikan dan pengangkutan ikan*)

General Checklist	Y/N/Check
1) Observer name, ID number and signature are completed on all forms	
2) All required fields are filled in and contain sufficient information	
3) Data presentation is direct, clear and legible	
4) All days fished are accounted for in the data	
5) All forms are correctly dated and sequentially numbered	
6) Observer has been advised of work to do to correct or complete the data set	

5.2 Page-specific debriefing checklist

Each page of the observer form must be cross-checked to verify data and ensure that all sections have been fully and correctly filled in. The debriefer should ask questions (section 5.3 below) to ascertain that equipment, species, activities and catch figures are properly reported by the observer, and to learn of any events or incidents that may have affected the collection of the data. It is important that the details of ESR encounters and Catch Transfers are well documented and verified to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations. It is also important that the observer has been able to perform their assigned duties safely, and free from obstruction or coercion.

Lembar 1 - Fishing Vessel Information

- 1) Check Series Number (*No. Seri*) is consistent across all forms
- 2) Check that all General Data (*Data Umum*) fields are correctly filled in
- 3) Check that all fishing equipment, mitigation equipment, hold capacities, FADs and lights are identified correctly, and consistent with the vessel type and previous data from the vessel.

Lembar 2 - Catch Data Summary Sheet API Group 1 and API Group 2

- 1) Check that all dates, positions, weather codes and fisheries management area for setting and hauling are filled in and consistent for each set
- 2) Check that the main catch species are entered and consistent with the fishing method and fisheries management area.
- 3) Check that all skates and rays are entered and summed correctly
- 4) Check species and totals for other fish species are entered, consistent with the fishing method and fisheries management area
- 5) Check that all 'other sea animals' (ERS/ETP) are correctly entered, consistent with the fishing method and fisheries management area
- 6) Ensure that all figures are entered, and all totals are summed correctly

Lembar 3 - Catch Data Summary Sheet API Group 3 (Shrimp)

Not applicable for PS/P&L/LL vessels

Lembar 4 - Individual Catch Data Sheet API Group 1 and Group 2

- 1) Check that the Setting-Hauling Number and vessel position are consistent with *Lembar 2*
- 2) Check that all sampling data is filled in and consistent with usual sampling protocols
- 3) Check any notes associated with the data and ask questions of the observer to clarify any inconsistencies in the data presented.

Lembar 5 - Individual Catch Data Sheet API Group 3 (Shrimp)

Not applicable for PS/P&L/LL vessel

Lembar 6 - Ecologically Related Species (ERS) caught API Group 1 and Group 2

- 1) Check that all header details (Observer name & ID number, Vessel name & fishing license number, trip & set number, date & time, and position) are filled in and consistent with *Lembar 1 & 2*
- 2) Check that species ID data is complete and correctly filled in with correct species code, gender, any photos attached, size data, description, condition codes and descriptions, and any tags found and recorded, consistent with data recorded on *Lembar 2*

Lembar 7 - Ecologically Related Species (ERS) caught API Group 3 (Shrimp)

Not applicable for PS/P&L/LL vessel

Lembar 8 - Fish Transfer at Sea Form

- 1) Check that all data on both catching vessel and receiving vessel are filled in, correct, and verified against available vessel information lists, or copies of license documents sighted and photographed by the observer.
- 2) Check that the time and place data is input and consistent with other information recorded by the observer, or verification by VMS data (if applicable).
- 3) Check that all species, types of product and product weights are entered and consistent with observed catch data, and that all totals are summed correctly.

5.3 List of Questions and Talking Points

The following is a non-exhaustive list of questions and talking points that a debriefer can use to draw out all the appropriate details to ensure accuracy and veracity of the data supplied by the observer, and includes questions about issues on the vessel

5.3.1 Related to the Observer Form and data collection

- Comment on the condition of the fishing gear. Is it new or old, were there any major gear failures or breakdowns during the trip?
- Were there any major issues encountered during setting and hauling?
- Comment on the bycatch mitigation tools on the vessel. Was it deployed effectively?
- Comment on any ERS interactions, including catch, mortality or release.

- Were any ERS noticed before the gear was shot?
- What was the general condition of ERS on landing?
- What species of ERS were caught or encountered?
- Please give a complete and accurate list of all ERS
- How did the crew handle interactions with ERS?
- How many ERS were discarded or retained?
- Did any ERS escape before landing?
- Were any ERS damaged or injured and released? If so, in your opinion, how likely were they to survive?
- Was any setting or hauling time influenced by interactions with ERS?
- Did you have any problems identifying different ERS?
- Did you recover any tags from ESR during the course of the trip?
- Did anyone on the vessel ask you not to document ERS capture?
- Discuss how catch was stored on the vessel. Was there any variation during the trip?
- Were any fish discarded? If so, how was that recorded, and what were the circumstances in which fish was discarded?
- How did the vessel manage offal and waste?
- Was there more than one target species for any of the sets?
- Did target species change between sets on the same day?
- How were fish hauled on board?
- Were all species caught, including bycatch, documented by the correct species and weight in the vessel logbooks?
- Did you have any problem identifying any species of fish caught?
- Comment on how target species were processed, stored and documented.
- Were any target species discarded? If so, what was the reason for the discard?
- Comment on transfer of fish to and from other vessels
- How were weights recorded in the logbooks? Were they recorded as greenweight or processed weights?

5.3.2 Related to working conditions, vessel safety and life aboard the vessel

- Comment on and describe the safety equipment on board the vessel. Was it adequate and in good working order?
- Were you given a safety briefing on boarding the vessel?
- Did you have access to safety equipment, such as lifejackets, helmets, gloves, shoes?
- Were you provided with adequate accommodation and food while onboard the vessel?
- Comment on the working conditions for the observer onboard.
- Were there any issues that prevented you from collecting data?
- Were you obstructed or interfered with in the course of your duties?
- Did the vessel fish in areas where it was not permitted to fish?
- Did any crew member ask you not to record or photograph an event?
- How easy was it to deal with the captain and crew?
- What was your general impression of the trip?
- Are there any other issues that need to be followed up?

Attachments

Attachment 1 KKP Observer Form 2021 (PDF)

Attachment 2 Debriefing and Evaluation Report (XLSX)