



RSTC-TC-S1 WP.01
Date: 5 February 2020
Original: English

First Series Technical Consultation of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee for the GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme

Nadi, Fiji 5th February 2020

Session 1, Topic 1 - Overview

Where Are We in R2R?

Summary:

The paper provides brief background on where we are in the GEF-funded Pacific Regional Ridge to Reef Program. The focus would be more generally on the Pacific Regional International Waters Ridge to Reef Project (IW R2R), and highlighting specific details and key points on the progress (or lack) of implementation. The paper also suggests several options to consider progressing implementation and most importantly future directions beyond the current life of the project.

Recommendations:

The R2R Technical Consultation is invited to:-

- (i) Consider and reflect on key points on where we are in R2R in order to understand progress progressing implementation of the project, and
- (ii) Discuss and agree on the options to progress implementation and the role of the RSTC play moving things forward.

Introduction:

1. Where exactly we are in the R2R program is intrinsically linked to and measured by how far we have progressed achieving its primary goal and objective, which is:-

“ . . . maintain and enhance Pacific Island countries ecosystems goods and services (provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural) through integrated approaches to land, water, forest, biodiversity and coastal resource management that contribute to poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience.”

2. Accordingly the R2R program is supported by its two child projects, STAR and IW, designed to implement separately but remain interlinked with respect to exchanging relevant information and experiences thereby reciprocally supporting national implementation. Notably, the R2R promotes the “programmatically approach” which should be integrated into planning and implementation of R2R STAR and IW projects.

3. Effectively, the Regional GEF Pacific R2R Program is implemented by STAR and IW projects and supported by UN agencies, national governments and SPC as follows:-

- National STAR funded R2R projects;
- National IW funded R2R projects; and
- Regional IW funded Pacific R2R Programme

4. Also note that the R2R program objective is also reflected in the R2R projects, which are driven largely by GEF thematic areas which includes land degradation, climate change, biodiversity conservation, sustainable forests management and international waters.

5. The Regional R2R Program Unit (RPCU) uses the R2R program and projects tracking tools, indicator framework and other supporting documentations to assess progress of implementation. The RPCU also works with project countries and with implementing agencies to identify and manage emerging challenges hindering progress of implementation.

6. This paper provides updates of where we are in R2R, but specifically covering the following:-

- Role of SPC-RPCU & Implementing Agencies
- Role of RSTC and its TOR
- RSC-4 approved workplan & budget
- Communication of lessons learned
- National R2R demonstrations
- Science-policy strategic policy framework

Where we are in R2R:

The SPC-RPCU

7. The RPCU and its secretariat functions to the R2R program and child projects of STAR and IW continue despite setbacks in staffs turn-over. The current team of 7 staffs jointly work towards performing the functions of the RPCU, and implementing the Regional IW funded Pacific R2R programme multi-year costed workplan as approved by the RSC. Two interns will commence work this month and, soon start work on the recruitment for a new Science Officer.

8. The focus in the remaining period of the project is to implement the RSC-approved multi-year costed workplan with fundamental considerations on implementing the MTR recommendations, particularly on:-

Heightened support of 14 national projects and stakeholders for the R2R approach
Safeguard linkages with other national activities and processes through science to policy action
Pursue ecosystems goods and services as foundation for scientific and technical approach
Improved technical information sharing and reporting based on agreed R2R knowledge products framework and communication strategy

R2R Implementing Agencies

9. The implementing agencies of the Pacific R2R Program are important partners in progressing implementation. The Regional Programme Coordination Group (RPCG) of the Pacific R2R Program in particular serves as the umbrella decision making body and oversight of the program and its two child projects of STAR and IW. In their last meeting, the RPCG reported their response to the MTR recommendations highlighting their support of all the recommendations. However, that group advised that additional work that the MTR will detail should not be at the expense of the main deliverables of the IW R2R project.

10. This means that the IW R2R project is focused on deliverables articulated within the project document with due considerations of (and without mandatory obligations on) the MTR recommendations.

Role of RSTC and its TOR

11. Last year the RSTC was unable to unanimously agree on the suggested amendments agreed and recommended to the RSC to approve in order to tighten the RSTC TORs. These changes support the programmatic approach and the role of RSTC set out in the program and project document already agreed and approved by GEF and project countries.

12. The key issue of disagreement is the jurisdiction and scope of the RSTC, which currently covers the R2R program and the child projects of STAR and IW. The RSTC determined that its advice on the IW R2R project can be shared with the STAR projects, but that the RSTC does not have oversight of STAR R2R projects. Does this mean that there can be no direct interactions between RSTC and STAR R2R projects, and that the RSTC scientific and technical advice can be only communicated and shared with STAR R2R projects through the IW R2R projects?

13. The discussion at the RSC proper evolved largely on the question of opening up the meetings of the RSTC to include interested person(s) from project countries. Capacity building and enhancing leadership skills of national scientists and experts were contributing aspects of the argument. This is particularly the case when delegates to RSC meetings can also participate in RSTC meetings, which often arranged back to back. The RSC endorsed the RSTC report and agreed to discuss further these issues and reported back through post-session meetings.

14. There are implications on outcomes of discussion at the RSTC and RSC meetings. Firstly, the RSC discussion predominantly centered on the question of participation at RSTC meetings, and none on the suggested amendments to the RSTC TORs and advice stemming from it. This matter remains outstanding for another day. Participants may revisit these discussions and consider the implications and suggest best ways forward.

RSC-4 approved workplan & budget

15. The RSC-4 approved a multi-year costed workplan (MYCWP) for the regional IW funded Pacific R2R programme. The MYCWP generally contains the intended project outputs and

outcomes as amended, taking account of the findings and recommendations of the mid-term review including recommendation 12 on a no-cost extension. It therefore incorporates an extension period to December 2021 with a genuine commitment by the SPC RPCU to support all countries (leaving no one behind) right through to implementation, including those that have just commenced on national activities.

16. There were key challenges in the RSC discussion of the MYCWP, largely due to concerns that it links and references to START R2R projects. The RPCG advised that STAR R2R projects discuss the implications of the MTR recommendations at the next STAR R2R project board meeting. The final decision rests with the project boards and not with the GEF Implementing Agencies. The budget was presented in anticipation of a positive outcome of continuing dialogue between the RPCU, the Implementing Agencies and the STAR R2R projects.

17. The RSC endorsed the workplan and budget on the presumption that the 'no-cost extension' is approved. This gives the project justifications on the recommendation of 'no-cost extension' to the regional component. While the IW R2R regional project awaits the decision from the GEF, project countries can in parallel pursue discussions at the local level on MOA extensions, and update the deliverables indicated in the logframes and reflect the outputs to be completed during the no-cost extension period.

18. The approved MYCWP now forms the basis for preparing quarterly and annual workplans and budgets both by regional and national IW R2R projects. The adjustments and approval of revised logframes and MYCWPs are important requirements to complete for the no cost extensions. This process is currently underway and close to completion.

Improved communication of lessons learned within the Pacific R2R network

19. Improved communications in the IW R2R project was one of the recommendations of the mid-term review. SPC agrees with the MTR recommendation, and recognizes the broader project and communications goals to empower national level stakeholders to support the project/ programme and the adoption of R2R approaches through strategic planning, capacity building and coordinated local actions to sustain livelihoods and preserve ecosystems services.

20. This can be realized through the achievement of national and regional project outcomes, and the communications of lessons at local, national and global levels. An update on these efforts is contained in working paper 17.

National R2R demonstrations

21. The progress of national R2R demonstrations varies recognising several countries have just started implementation this year. Other countries have completed their major activities requiring field work including ongoing monitoring, training and awareness raising, and writing up on lessons learned and experiences. Table 1 appended to this provides a summary of national demonstrations and associated timelines.

Science-policy strategic policy framework

22. The science-policy framework is a regionally-led activity but implemented nationally. This means the RPCI and national PMUs work closely for timely implementation and fast the turn-around time for requests. It also means that nothing can be done without if no due consideration of domestic processes, and the willingness, interest and commitment to support the project.

23. Rolling out the science-policy framework took a turn omitting the recruitment of international consultants instead, use local expertise and consultants to progress implementation specific work on Step 1 to Step 6. It is expected that project countries are to nominate national consultants with the expertise that will support with the projects to achieve the milestone indicators.

Future Opportunities & Directions

24. At the last RSTC meeting, it was clear that more work is needed to progress R2R implementation and that RSTC is not seen to be doing enough to support progress. The Committee considered that the work of the RSTC should stay engaged and active supporting practical action-oriented activities like this first series of R2R technical consultation. The RSTC has historically been sidelined, process focused and failed to deliver on its TOR efficiently. The meeting recommended support for opportunities for more active and relevant action-oriented efforts.

25. There is opportunity for collaborations between STAR and IW R2R projects to support, engage and contribute to other existing scientific platforms and forums like the STAR R2R Conference and Network. This is consistent with the RSTC decision to be more active and support action-oriented activities to progress R2R implementation. The series of R2R Technical Consultations planned for the remaining life of the IW R2R project, respond to that same RSTC decision.

26. There is a need for forward looking and identify prospects beyond the current life of the Regional IW funded Pacific R2R program and national IW funded R2R projects. This future looking assessment should focus on the outcomes and lessons learned from national R2R demonstrations and testing the following concepts:-

- innovative technologies and related solutions that mainstream and integrate R2R concept across water, land, forest and coastal areas of 14 PICs; and
- Resource governance dimensions in mainstreaming R2R aligned with the community to cabinet approach in planning and policy.

27. In this connection, there are probably adequate reasons to justify the need for a follow up R2R related project perhaps changing focus to priority actions agreed and documented following preparing of the strategic action plans and frameworks (SAPs/ SAFs). Some of these strategic areas may include, but not limited to the following:-

- (i) R2R teaching program – support for the continuation of the R2R courses with James Cook University (JCU) formally introducing the courses as their own. There remain opportunities to reassess the details of the teaching program to respond to changing needs such as mainstreaming ecosystem goods and services. The relevance and practical application of certain aspects of the program can be revisited or improved given changing situations and priorities in PICs. This paper encourages research topics that are relevant to addressing R2R challenges in the islands.
- (ii) Research and development – understanding ecological systems and relationships between species and their habitats throughout the continuum from reef or source to reef and beyond continues to be relevant for policy and future R2R investments and planning. Similarly, research into innovative technologies stretching understanding of why issues on waste and pollution and others associated with water and sanitation continue to be prevalent and priority in this region.
- (iii) Monitoring and Evaluation – the current R2R projects have established several plans and protocols that allow tracking of indicators and targets through environmental monitoring

into the future, at least in several watershed catchments and demonstration sites. This requires further investments to enable resources are adequate to continue participatory environmental monitoring on water quality, revegetation & habitat restorations, eco-sanitation and innovative technologies, and others.

- (iv) Concepts can be developed to progress these thoughts however more strategic thinking is needed on the modalities and scope particularly if current approach is acceptable. The alternative would be a more streamlined and focused R2R program that can be developed but implemented in groups of countries that share similar characteristics in land-sea scapes, environmental threats, and possibly management approaches addressing such threats.

Table 1. National demonstrations and progress of implementation

	Vanuatu	Tuvalu	Tonga	Solomon Islands	Samoa	BM	PNG	Palau	Niue	Nauru	Kiribati	Fiji	FSM	Cook Islands	
18	8	18	12	18	18	12	12	18	18	18	18	12	2		Required time (mths) to complete outputs (indicative)
															Revegetation program
															Constructed program
															Constructed wetland feasibility studies
															Septic System Upgrade
															Eco-sanitation Toilets
															Pig Waste Management
															Solid Waste Feasibility Studies
															Water Use Efficiency Plan
															Guidelines for Infrastructure Development etc.
															Guidelines for Public Partnerships (tourism)
															Sustainable Land Use Management
															Integrated Coastal Management Plan
															Integrated Catchment Management Plan
															Integrated Freshwater Management Plan
															Mangrove management plan
															Revised Sector Plans, SoEs, National Development Strategies or Plans
															New Regulations related to Water, Waste/Pollution and General Environment
															Amendments to current Regulations related to Water, Waste, Pollution and General Environment
															Amendments to principle Acts on Water, Pollution, and General Environment
															Community bye-laws (MPAs, etc.)
															Baselines
															RapCA
															Site Diagnostic Analyses report
															National Diagnostic Analyses report
															Procedures for identification & prioritization of coastal areas
															State of Coast report (Country or State level)
															Strategic Action Framework
															Strategic Action Plan
															Lessons Learned/ Knowledge Products
															Revised Logframe
															Revised MYCWP
															Quarterly & Annual reports
															Cash Advance request
															Consultancy - EIA
															Consultancy - Integrated Catchment Manag. Plan
															Consultancy - Integrated Coastal Manag. Plan
															Consultancy - RapCA
															Consultancy - Diagnostic
															Consultancy - SOC
															PSC/ Board meeting Updates