Brief Updates of the International Water (IW) R2R Project Implementation in the Laura Demonstration Site

DISCUSSION PAPER

By

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Purpose:

1. The paper provides an update of the IW R2R project implementation both at the regional and national level. In RMI the IW R2R project demonstration site is located in Laura, Majuro atoll.

2. The RMI IW R2R project aimed at further testing and trialling IWRM[6] project dry-litter technology and with integration and mainstreaming uptake by coastal management and climate change adaptation and resilience. Therefore R2R is a conduit of IWRM experiences linking to ICM planning and investments set out to reduce nutrient offloads and further impacts on land-use and water resources and coastal health.

Introduction:

3. At the outset, the environment threat on waste pollution and water contamination on land-use and water resources and further impacting coastal health remains priority to RMI. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) responded in the past and provided funding support for the implementation of the IWRM project in the Pacific island countries including RMI.

4. Implementing in Laura before the IW R2R project, the IWRM project focused on promoting cost-effective means of addressing waste pollution. This IWRM project constructed three (3) eco-san composite toilets and one (1) commercial piggery farm, and with one (1) Taiwan-funded commercial piggery farm, which was used a reference. The IWRM project results and lessons learned were documented and published.

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5. Effectively, the IWRM project in RMI benefits from experiences elsewhere in the region, and resource persons[7] from abroad and local stakeholders helped with the design and construction of the dry-litter units conducive to local environment. The former R2R Project Manager, Julius Lucky, who is also a resident in Laura plays a central role in the construction of the dry-litter eco-san toilets and commercial pig-pen.

6. The GEF funded IWRM project results generally showed positive interest from local population from the completion of the dry-litter units, and early period of use. However, follow up surveys showed interests from residents in Laura dropping and the units largely un-used. This suggests that the impact of dry-litter technology on improving water quality from waste pollution and water contamination and further influence on coastal health remain challenging, or abandoned altogether.

7. Notwithstanding, the GEF funded IW R2R project is about testing and trialling innovations addressing environmental threats. It rides on the IWRM project experiences and integrating or linking to coastal management and climate change adaptation and resilience. It was apparent that the results from the IWRM project were not conclusive and further testing of the technology may be needed in the outer islands of the country. This also means that there is no reason to upscale and construct more dry-litter units if there is no support and interest from the local populations.

R2R IW Project Renewed Approach

8. The R2R IW project recognises fate of the IWRM project and there may be other plausible reasons contributing to addressing waste pollution. For instance, there is mass out-migration of residents in Laura during this project period therefore indirectly contributing to reduction in nutrient offloads. There is also notable disgust touching compost from eco-san toilets when the chambers are full. These social perceptions over the use and handling of dry-litter eco-san compost toilets are impacting on the social-acceptability by local population.

9. The renewed approach focuses on continued water quality monitoring away from point sources, both dry-litter eco-san toilets and pig-pens and also on-site septic systems. The EPA water quality monitoring program in Laura has sites located haphazardly from land to coastal and marine areas towards the lagoon and open-ocean. The IW R2R project will allocate some resources to continue this monitoring within the project life. The results will be analysed and reported appropriately to Laura communities, R2R Board and RPCU.

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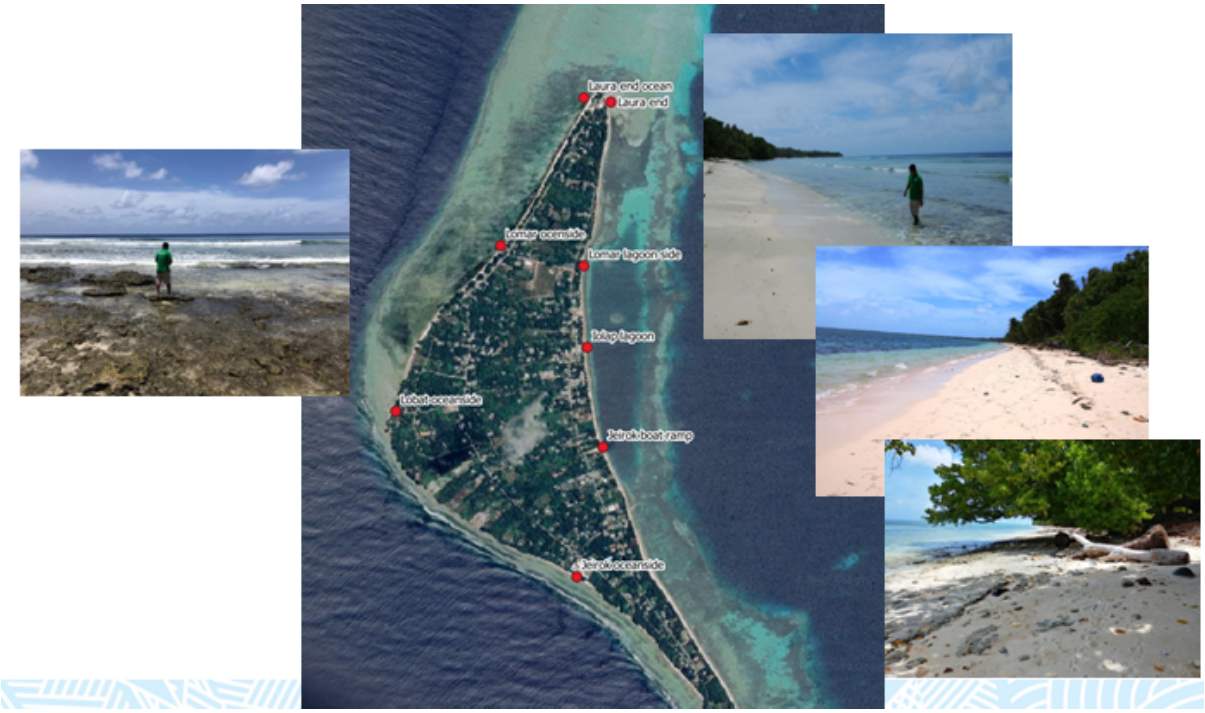

Figure 1. Laura's map showing water quality sampling sites for *Enterococci faecalis,* which measures water contamination from human & animal wastes

10. Moreover, while monitoring continues on land-use and water resources with respect to waste pollution and water contamination, the priority focus now is to use that and integrate with ICM planning and investments. The preparation of a Laura ICM plan is a key deliverable of the project, and with measures therein, if successfully implemented, impacting an estimated area of 255ha in Laura.

11. In order to prepare an ICM plan successfully requires attention completing several other prior outputs. For instance, ICM plan starts as early as collecting baseline secondary and primary data and information. The analyses and reports from targeted scientific and related investigations are useful references including discussion at diagnostic analyses workshops. The diagnostic analyses report also provides useful inputs into the preparation of the ICM plan.

Science-Policy Continuum

12. The regional R2R project requires deliverables on trans-boundary diagnostic analyses reports, State of Coast reports or inputs to reviews of State of Environment reports, Strategic Action Plan or inputs to reviews of high level national development plan or strategy.

13. The regional IW R2R project deliverables outline above are implemented and delivered nationally. The project is implemented nationally in 14-member countries of the SPC. This means the above regional project deliverables are also reflected in national logframes and MYCWPs. That said, the science-policy continuum has eight (8) steps endorsed by the RSC in their 4th session in August 2019. This is now written into the logframe and MYCWP of all participating countries of the IW R2R project.

14. The science-policy continuum allows flexibility for countries to choose if wish to produce SoC, TDA or SAP, or alternatives such as SoE and NSP. The steps on the production of SoC, TDA and SAP depend on R2R STAR project outputs. In the RMI it is immediately unclear on the next course of actions. Notwithstanding, the R2R IW project will progress through baselines collection and reporting, diagnostic analyses and preparation and approval for implementation of Laura ICM plan.

15. It will become clear whether or not to progress national SoCs, TDA and SAP, at later stages of the project implementation using the results of the R2R testing and trialling in Laura. At this time, discussion on this subject will continue with the R2R STAR project and through the R2R Board, along with technical oversight and advice from the RPCU.

GEF Funded IW R2R LogFrame & MYCWP

16. The R2R IW project mid-term review provides eighteen (18) recommendations, which was considered by the RSC-4 formal session in August 2019. On the advice of the RSTC and R2R Program Group largely supporting the MTR recommendations, the RSC approved the MTR recommendations and, on this basis also approved the regional MYCWP.

17. Since the RSC-4 formal session the RPCU has been working closely with project countries to revise their national project logframes and MYCWPs. These are important undertakings requiring approval of national R2R Project Steering Committees or Board to process no cost extensions.

18. The RMI IW R2R project logframe has been revised to reflect slight shift in focus towards preparing ICM plan so that when it is implemented will impact an area estimated at 225ha. The logframe is primarily made up three (3) components with ten (10) outcomes aim to achieve environmental stress reduction targets of the R2R IW project.

19. Generally, the project logframe components set out getting community adoption of waste management systems, support for targeted scientific investigations on land-use and coastal ecosystems, strengthen traditional ecological knowledge for key evidence-based ICM planning and investment. The details are provided below:-

Component 1	**Sustained community adoption of appropriate on-site waste management systems to reduce contaminant impacts on environmental and public health in Laura**
Component 2.	Integrated water quality monitoring and targeted scientific investigation on coastal and land ecosystem or processes, local knowledge and strategic partnerships to strengthen knowledge base for key evidence-based ICM planning and investment
Component 3.	National and local management planning for integrated land, water and coastal management for sustainable livelihoods at Laura

R2R IW Project MYCWP

20. The RMI R2R IW project MYCWP has been revised to incorporate slight shift and changing priorities towards integrating land-use and water resources into ICM planning. There are multiple project activities that will be implemented over the life of the project to deliver on the outputs.

21. The project has been implemented for a while and therefore expenditures already incurred. This also means the indicative budget of the MYCWP is also affected and the latest estimated balance was around US$70,000. There also activities directly related to the regional project therefore funded by the regional project budget. There are also activities funded by RMI as host country to the project. Moreover there are also other projects and partners collaborating and sharing data and information for free that must be acknowledged.

22. The RPCU circulated a MYCWP template for project countries to use in preparing their national MYCWPs. It mirrors the regional MYCWP showing allocation of budgets in accordance to UNDP budget codes, and also showing financial support from different sources such as R2R IW project, R2R STAR project, Government, and other collaborating projects.

23. The programmatic approach underpinning the R2R program plays an important role in the preparation and successful implementation of the MYCWP and indicative budget. Equally, the MYCWP is also dependent on the multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholders approach to deliver on the project outputs and deliver on achieving stress reduction target of 255ha.

R2R IW Project No-Cost Extension

24. The RPCU distributed several circulars to project countries which explain the subject of no cost extension. Accordingly, on July 31, 2019, the Regional Project Steering Committee (RSC) endorsed SPC's request for a 15-month no-cost extension of the Regional International Waters Ridge to Reef Project. In August 25, 2019 another circular went out to IW R2R project managers on Revision of national logframes and MYCWPs (RPCU-SPC, 2019).

25. The IW R2R Projects Guidance Notes to Applying for No-Cost Extension provide clear details and it is important to follow the requirements. The following activities and deadlines are set out in the Guidance Notes (RPCU-SPC, 2019):-

Application of the no-cost extension – process flow

i. National IW R2R projects submit updated national logframes and corresponding MYCWPs indicating the outputs to be delivered during the no-cost extension period for RPCU review and approval.

ii. RPCU notifies national Project Managers (with a copy to the Heads of Agencies) of the approvalof revised logframes and MYCWPs, indicating the precise completion date and the outputs to be delivered by national IW R2R projects.

iii. Letters of request from the national governments (i.e. signed by Agency Head) for a no-cost extension must be submitted to RPCU. The letter should include as attachments, the national PSC-approved logframe, MYCWP and a draft Letter of Variation.

iv. RPCU will review the draft Letters of Variation and the attachments. Once found in order, RPCU will finalise the Letters of Variation and proceed with signing by the designated SPC authority (i.e. Deputy Director General) through the Procurement Unit.

v. SPC-signed Letters of Variation will be sent to the national projects for final/counter signature by the authorised national government representative.

Deadlines	Activity
15 October 2019	Submission of updated logframes and MYCWP by national projects to RPCU
30 November2019	Submission of letter of request for no-cost extension of national projects (including the attachments - Letter of Variation, logframe and MYCWP)
15 December 2019	Submission of the countersigned letter of variation to RPCU.

Conclusions

24. The Regional Steering Committee endorsed the mid-term review management responses and tasked SPC with ensuring that available national IW R2R logframes are submitted to the next Regional Steering Committee for information, when it next sits in August 2020. The revised and latest RMI R2R IW project logframe and MYCWP is now presented to the R2R Board for their consideration.

25. The paper recommends that the R2R JointBoard considers and approves the project logframe and MYCWP. The Board approval is urgently needed in order to qualify for a no cost extension.

References

i. Revised latest RMI IW Project LogFrame, EPA, RMI, October 2019
ii. Revised latest RMI MYCWP & indicative budget, EPA, RMI, October 2019
iii. The IW R2R Projects Guidance Notes to Applying for No-Cost Extension, RPCU, SPC, September 2019
iv. Revision of national logframes and MYCWPs, RPCU, SPC, August 2019.