



GEF IW R2R/ RSC.5 / WP03

Date: October 19, 2020

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**Fifth Regional Steering Committee Meeting (Virtual) for the
GEF Pacific International Waters Ridge to Reef Project entitled:**

*Ridge to Reef – Testing the Integration of Water, Land, Forest &
Coastal Management to Preserve Ecosystem Services, Store Carbon,
Improve Climate Resilience and Sustain Livelihoods in Pacific Island Countries*

Suva, Fiji, October 22nd – 23rd, 2020

Country Reporting – Panel Recommendations

The Committee is invited to consider outcomes and recommendations set out in this paper in making your decision related to this meeting theme.

Pre-RSC SESSION 2 – GEF Focal Areas and Lessons Learned from Programmatic Implementation

Outcome Document

Background

1. Veering away from the usual country reporting format, session 2 is aimed at providing the opportunity for the member child projects of the GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme to report on its contributions to the (i) GEF focal areas, (ii) share strategic issues and remedial measures, and (iii) using the simple framework¹ share experience from the national implementation of programmatic approach.
2. A unified reporting template was provided by the SPC Regional Programme Coordination Committee (RPCU) together with the initial consolidated matrix indicating the expected contributions of each child projects to the GEF Focal Areas. This template tailored towards or based on the Harmonized Results Reporting (HRR) tool that was developed and presented in 2018 (RSC – Townsville, Australia).
3. Also, the GEF implementing agencies (UNDP, UN Environment, and FAO) were given the opportunity to advocate to their respective projects to participate in this session by reporting their project contributions to the overall GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme.
4. There are 35 individuals representing STAR R2R and IW R2R stakeholders, UNDP, FAO, and SPC attended this session. Contrary to the original design – this is only intended for STAR R2R project, IW R2R project managers also attended.
5. Of the seven presentations received by RPCU, only six² child projects were able to present and elaborate the context of their projects' contribution to the Programme. One³ child project was unable to present due to internet connectivity issue.
6. Guide questions were provided to ensure focus in the entire session. Participants were asked to (i) deliberate on the success rate of project contributions to the overall GEF Pacific R2R Programme, (ii) discuss lessons learned from programmatic implementation, and (iii) identify thematic areas emerging from lessons learned presented that could be consolidated and further explored as regional strategic lessons useful in the considerations of upscaling future R2R investments.

¹ Success factors of the capacity works – strategy, steering, cooperation, and processes

² Fiji, Nauru, Palau, RMI, Regional IW R2R project, and Tuvalu

³ Kiribati

Highlights

On success rate: Implementation progress are varied among the child projects.

7. All child projects are in various stages in delivering outputs and achieving outcomes. None of the child projects was able to achieve all expected outputs and outcomes as indicated in their respective project document.
8. Level of delivery is influenced and/or hampered by either strategic issues and/or operational limitations.
9. Poor project design, ambitious targets, change in political atmosphere resulting in change of priorities, ineffective project governance, turfing and competing interest among stakeholders, and difficulty in enforcing processes among implementing partners-UNDP and government requirements, were regarded as strategic issues that hampered achievement of the outcomes.
10. Operationally, projects were also affected by the limited local technical expertise, different technical capacities among implementors, disparity in technical skills and management experience, delays in fund transfer, slow spending by implementing partners, and staff turn-over.
11. Covid-19 pandemic also limits the mobility of staffs and consultants and thus affected timely production of outputs.

On lessons learned from programmatic implementation

12. Child projects acknowledged Ridge to Reef is an effective approach for sustainable resource governance. However, this approach requires convergence of ideas among stakeholders and agreements on clear pathways for achieving desired results. As a Programme, a unified science to policy continuum should have been established among the child projects to ensure technical and scientific robustness as basis for achieving Programme results. The design of each child projects should have considered the temporal aspect (started at the same time), steering and governance body harmonized – all geared towards the achievement of Programme outcomes.
13. Mainstreaming R2R requires strong political support from the highest governance level through the inter-ministerial committee (IMC)⁴. It is assumed that the IMC shares the responsibility of joint action and decision for achieving results. In practice however, Project Steering Committees (PSC)⁵ are established solely for the purpose of project steering rather than serving as platform for mainstreaming R2R. Some PSCs are so concerned with project management and operational issues such as contracting, staffing, and spending. The latter is a management function as opposed to the expected role of the PSC – that is to provide strategic guidance and directions for mainstreaming R2R tested approaches.
14. For those countries with joint PSC, a greater chance of success was reported. Joint planning took place at this level and the PSC provides clear directions and guidance. The requisite for this is a strong Project Management Unit (PMU) that is providing excellent secretariat role for instance by supplying accurate monitoring data and information, as basis for PSC decisions.
15. At the GEF Pacific R2R Programme level, the steering structure remained unclear. The Regional Programme Steering Committee (RPSC) as defined in the Programme Framework Document (PFD) that was endorsed by 14 pacific island countries (PICs) in April 2013 in Australia, is not functional.

⁴ Strategic steering

⁵ Core processes steering

During the last RPSC meeting in July 2019, it was reiterated that the RPSC's role would be to steer, guide and advise the Regional International Waters Ridge to Reef project.

16. Cooperation means to collaborate, work together, join or combine forces or resources to achieve the Programme objectives. Active and meaningful participation means to invest, to contribute, to play a part. Both terms – cooperation and participation, are emphasized in the Programme Framework Document. However, in practice, majority of the child projects reported that cooperation and buy-in of and among R2R stakeholders needs improvement. A carefully and properly conducted stakeholders' mapping and analysis needs to be done to ascertain the willingness to participate and cooperate meaningfully.
17. Processes, rules and procedures are directed towards achieving the Programme objectives. As demanded by the Programme, new processes and procedures will have to be instituted and for the same to be clearly understood by the stakeholders to eliminate confusion and enhance compliance. For example, clear agreements among executing agency and project partners through MOA/MOU helped ensure transparency and understanding.

On thematic area/s for upscaling

18. R2R Programme must demonstrate inclusive steering, cooperation and meaningful participation, and responsive processes. Specifically, upscaling of a well-designed R2R Programme requires (i) a well-defined strategy based on agreed science to policy continuum (e.g. common implementation framework), and clear processes directed towards safeguarding ecosystem goods and services, improving climate resilience and improve livelihoods, (ii) an effective, meaningful participation, ownership and commitment by stakeholders, (iii) demonstrable political support, community acceptance and active involvement; and (iv) a realistic timelines and adequate resources to deliver project objectives and outcomes that respond to domestic priorities or aspirations and meeting international targets.

Annex 1:

Record of Discussions

Session 2: Country Reporting-GEF Focal Areas and Lessons Learned

Day 1:

Opening & Prayer

1. The virtual Country Reporting session of the RSTC for the GEF Pacific IW R2R & STAR project was hosted at the EQCAP conference room (SPC building, Suva) on the 8th October 2020. Twenty-eight (28) participants representing the national STAR and IW stakeholders, UNDP, FAO and SPC.
2. The overall moderator, Dr. Fononga Mangisi-Mafileo, welcomed all participants to the Country Reporting session.
3. RCPU staff, Mr. George Naboutuiloma offered an opening prayer for the virtual information session.
4. The RCPU Monitoring Officer, Mr. Jose Antonio, offered his brief opening remarks, and proceeded to introducing and facilitating the session. The session was set up to allow countries to present on the status of the project contributions to the overall GEF Pacific R2R program, and strategic issues and remedial measures from the Programmatic implementation; draw lessons learned from national programmatic implementation in mainstreaming Ridge to Reef in planning and/or policy; and identify possible thematic areas that could be further explored as regional strategic lessons for upscaling future R2R investments.

Country Presentations:

Palau

5. Ms Gwen Sisor of Palau national STAR gave a presentation on the project contribution on the GEF Focal Area outcomes and outputs. The project has four main focal areas; Biodiversity, International Waters, Land Degradation and SFM/REDD+ and the Palau STAR project has managed to achieve all the target set out for each focal area. Ms Gwen stated that strategic issues were also encountered, and remedial measures were put in place to encounter it. Issues such as change in political atmospheres with different people having different ideas and priorities, different capacity levels among implementers and the outbreak of Covid-19. Remedial measures include adapting implementation to incorporate social and political priorities, conducting capacity assessment and addressing gaps for specific agencies and learning to adapt to the “new normal” of the pandemic.
6. For the lessons learnt in implementing the programmatic approach, Ms Gwen stated that while the project document noted the risk in changes of political priorities and the capacity of the partners to implement, it did not consider the pandemic. It, however, allows for adaptive management to occur. For steering, Ms Gwen outlined the importance of having one steering committee for both IW and STAR as it helps aligned the work and provide clear directions and

guidance and minimising the risk of repetition of work. Ms Gwen further explained the importance of cooperation and coordination between the internal and external partners for it enhanced the delivery of projects.

7. Ms Gwen outlines the importance of having clear agreements between the executing agency and the project partners. She stated that having a clear Memorandum of Agreement helped ensure understanding and transparency between stakeholders. She further explained that sometimes government tend to overstep their boundaries when it comes to partnering agencies; thus the need for a clear MOA.

Discussion

8. The facilitator Mr Jose Antonio asked if Ms Gwen can elaborate more on steering and collaboration between agencies noting Palau has a senior manager providing oversight to the environment projects implemented by MNRET.
9. Ms Gwen stated that when the projects started, they decided to have one steering committee, and this is important as it ensures that they (STAR & IW) are not repeating the same work. She also noted that MNRET decided to establish the Environment Coordinating and Planning Unit (ECPU).
10. The UNDP-Suva rep, Mr Floyd Robinson asked whether the establishing unit between the Environment Coordinating and Planning Unit within MNRET was planned earlier or did it arise when the IW & STAR project was implemented.
11. Ms Gwen explained that it was formed during the implantation of the program. Realizing that the Bureau of Environment was missing a role in the planning process, the unit was formed and was later integrated into the GEF6 programme.
12. Tonga IW Project Manager Silia Leger briefly shared project key lessons learned from implementation. Ms. Leger thanked RPCU Communications and Knowledge Management Adviser Dr. Fononga Vainga Mangisi-Mafileo for training in strategic communications at the margins of the Fourth Regional Steering Committee, in particular stakeholder engagement (community to cabinet), media for policy advocacy, awareness and visibility.
13. Ms. Leger explained that the application of the learnings from training included developing a media engagement strategy which included uptake by regional media, including Radio NZ and local media (radio and online magazine) building awareness and conversation on sanitation and related public health issues in Tonga at the community to cabinet level and raising the profile of R2R. There we also talk shows on the socio-cultural norms discouraging Tongans from opening discussing issues of sanitation and inhibiting any progress to proactively find solutions.
14. Ms. Leger highlighted that a key result is the engagement of the Hihifo District Member of Parliament, Former Minister of Internal Affairs Losaline Maasi, former CEO of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Head of the Hihifo Development Council, a policy advocate championing R2R at community to cabinet levels. The agenda framing and setting opportunities from media engagement coupled with strong R2R policy advocacy reinvigorated dialogue in the Tonga Parliament on the Water Bill tabled in 2012, and key in facilitating its current enactment.

Marshall Islands

15. Ms Jennifer of RMI STAR delivered her presentation stating that the project's is still working towards achieving all the targets set out for each focal area. She identified four strategic issues and the remedial measures to counter it.
16. For the lessons learnt in implementing the programmatic approach, Ms Jennifer stated that the regional and national project need to be better aligned to support the mainstreaming of R2R concept. For steering, Ms Jennifer stated that the STAR project initiated a joint board meeting which includes STAR & IW members and implementing partners. However, it remains difficult as several representatives of states sometimes have very little no active engagement. Ms Jennifer further explained that in terms of cooperation, the STAR R2R have a very robust and enthusiastic partnership with implementing partners who are also REIMAANLAK facilitators. The partners are very clear and aware of the REIMAANLAK framework and its operational guideline.

Discussion

Mr Jose Antonio asked for clarification on the function of the joint board in terms of joint planning, coordination and decision making.

Ms Jennifer stated that the joint board consists of the mayors of the state, government agencies and secretaries who are well versed with the project making it easier for them to understand what is happening. However, it is not the same with IW and while it is a good concept, it is not fully integrated yet into how the STAR is being implemented.

17. Mr Francis stated that during the pandemic, the scope can change on what the countries prioritise, so there is a need for the project to align itself to what the people really need.

Regional IW R2R Project

18. RPCU team leader Mr Samasoni Sauni presented on the progress of the project in the region. He emphasised on the need to cooperate and work together to progress implementation, particularly under the current circumstances. The full details of the presentation are provided in the full presentation made available to participants.

Discussion

19. UNDP staff, Dr Winifereti Nainoca reminded the STAR project managers that apart from conducting their PIR's for reporting, it is also important that they cooperate fully with the RPCU monitoring officer in terms of providing necessary information that will assist him in his presentation to GEF.
20. RCPU staff, Mr Jose Antonio reminded the project managers on the importance of completing the template and the other documents and reports that needs to be submitted.

21. RPCU team leader Mr Samasoni Sauni asked in terms on integrating the two child projects, IW & STAR, why it works in Palau and not in RMI.
22. Ms Jennifer of RMI STAR pointed out that the projects started at different dates, and the monitoring tools not in place to be integrated into IW to utilise and adopt. For the STAR project, the monitoring tools are adopted from the REIMAANLAK framework. Ms Gwen Sisior from the Palau STAR pointed out that for Palau, the projects started at the same time and under the same Ministry. Palau's IW was all about creating partnerships, upscaling lessons learned, building partnership. The STAR project created best practices and with the partnership that IW created, they can merge the projects together making it easier for implementation.
23. Recognizing that there are design flaws, RPCU staff, Mr Jose Antonio asked that as managers what do you recommend as remedial measures for you to reach the objective.
24. Ms Gwen of Palau STAR pointed out that from Palau's perspective, projects are developed when it was a priority and over time, priorities and administration changes. For Palau, during implementation, they know the intent of these projects and their specific deliverables that they must do, thus the importance of adaptive management. This allows them to deliver for a national priority first to fulfil that need before delivering for the project. She further states that these projects support them in achieving priorities at national level so the alignment of these projects with national priorities are constantly being done to still address the priorities and meet the deliverables that they sign up for. This is all achieved through constant discussion and coordination between the projects.
25. RPCU team leader, Mr Samasoni Sauni points out that national priorities and international obligations are equally important to all of us both at the regional and the country level. He further asked which one comes first, the country or national priorities or the international obligations, recognising the need to support and strengthen compliance by PICs in the latter.
26. Ms Gwen responded that in terms of projects and multi-lateral agreements, it is hard to decide whether you are going for the multi-lateral agreement or for the national priorities. For Palau, in order for them to meet the MEA's that they've signed onto, they need the capacity to be able to do that. She points out that from her understanding, when they are meeting national priorities, they are also meeting the global commitments.
27. RPCU staff, Mr Jose Antonio stressed the importance of getting together now and working out ways in which the projects can move forward. He urged project managers not to wait for the project to finish before they start talking about programmatic approach.
28. RPCU Communications and Knowledge Management Advisor Dr. Fononga Vainga Mangisi-Mafileo briefly presented on the RSC4-endorsed Regional Framework for the compilation and development of lessons learned for the Pacific R2R Programme.
29. Using examples presented by Palau, Dr. Mangisi-Mafileo demonstrated how country reports presented could be incorporated in to the Mainstreaming R2R into Sustainable Development in the Pacific legacy publication.

30. The moderator, Dr Fononga Mangisi-Mafileo thanked everyone for attending the meeting and closed the session.

Continuation of Country Reporting Session 2. (13th October 2020)

Recap

1. The R2R-RPCU Monitoring Officer, Mr. Jose Antonio, offered his brief opening remarks, and proceeded to introducing and facilitating the session. He offered a quick summary recap on the outcome of the last session and proceeded to invite the remaining countries to present their report.

Nauru

2. Ms Phaedora Harris of Nauru national STAR gave a presentation on the project contribution on the GEF Focal Area outcomes and outputs. The Nauru STAR project focussed on three main focal areas, Biodiversity, Land Degradation and International Waters. Ms Harris pointed out that there was a bit of delay in some of the components of the project, so it is still working towards achieving all the target set out. She pointed out that strategic issues were encountered in the duration of the project. Issues such as collaborating with project partners, schedules not aligning, delays in financial transactions, partners not spending funds on time and high rate of high staff turnover. However, remedial measures were put in place to counter these issues.
3. Considering the most relevant and best feature or lessons that the project has drawn from implementation experience which could potentially be replicated or upscaled - ultimately nationally or even regionally Ms. Harris indicated having a place online where both STAR and IW can showcase their work and/or lessons learnt.
4. having a place online where both STAR and IW can showcase their work and/or lessons learnt is important. She further stated that for activities, the implementation on the ground was challenging because of external factors that cannot be controlled.

Discussion

Fiji Islands

5. Ms Beverly Sadole of Fiji national STAR gave her presentation focussing on five main focal areas; Biodiversity, Climate Change Mitigation, International Waters, Land Degradation, and FSM/REDD+. The project is still working towards achieving all the targets set out for each focal area.
6. In terms of strategic issues encountered, Ms Sadole points out that the framework for catchment was not included in the project document to help guide catchment management planning for both the IW & STAR project. Plans are being put in place to develop the management plan depending on the dynamics of the catchments. Also, many IPs involved, and processes needs to be adhered to by different organizations. This is dealt on a case by case basis and build on existing synergies.

7. In terms of lessons learnt in implementing programmatic approach, Ms Sadole stated that buy in is needed at all levels from inception. When both projects started, its importance in STAR and IW to be able to work together in terms of implementation on the ground and in terms of the steering platform for the project. Buy in however, is needed at all levels. She also commented on the role that SPC plays in the regional IW & STAR project.

Discussion

8. R2R-RPC Mr Samasoni Sauni pointed out that the role of SPC is clearly set out in the project documentation and that the organization has a role to play in terms of reporting to GEF Focal areas. Accordingly, SPC is the executing agency and the Regional Programme Coordination Unit (RPCU) is housed in the SPC with a role to coordinate and support the regional programme particularly facilitation exchange of information and data. Participants also noted that the Regional IW R2R project is one of the 15 child projects, which the RPCU-SPC is directly responsible for its coordination.
9. UNDP staff, Dr Joe Padilla stated that government have not welcomed SPC to be part of the national boards, however, the project document particularly the regional program support project document has indicated this and all countries are signatories to that document. He further commended SPC for attending the project board meeting and have instituted project board meetings in some PICs so decision making for both projects can be made more coherent as in some cases there are a lot of synergies to be achieved by the two projects.
10. R2R-RPCU staff, Mr Jose Antonio pointed out that in various occasions, the RPCU has been utilizing the mandate referring to the MoA signed between the SPC and the Fiji Government. The MoA indicated having to establish a joint steering committee for both STAR and IW and that is the basis that governed SPC's interactions and support to the Fiji STAR project.
11. Ms Sadole confirmed that the MoA was indeed available and thus serving the basis of collaboration.
12. Ms Ivy Latasi of Tuvalu national STAR presented, and she focussed on 3 main focal areas, Biodiversity, Land Degradation and International Waters. She points out that some of the targets set out for each focal area have been achieved, some are still ongoing, and a few has yet to start. She stated that sharing of information and data among key stakeholders and limited amount of technical/scientific data to inform on policies and decision have been some of the issues that the project has encountered. However, remedial measures have been developed and put in place to help address these issues.
13. In terms of lessons learned in implementing programmatic approach, Ms Latasi suggest that the R2R approach/principle be mainstreamed into the Island Strategy Plans and National Strategy Plan. However, in doing this, it will require effective participation of key stakeholders.
14. The moderator, Dr Fononga Mangisi-Mafileo thanked everyone for attending the meeting and closed session 2.

Annex 2. List of Participants

Country/Organisation	Name	Registered	Actual
Cook Is	Mr Paul Maoate		1
FSM	Ms Faith Siba	1	1
Nauru	Ms Evayne Gaubidi	1	
PNG	Mr Senson Mark		1
Samoa	Mr Malaki Iakopo		1
Sol Is	Mr Sammy Airahui	1	1
Sol Is	Ms Debra Kereseka		1
Tonga	Ms Silia Leger	1	1
Tonga	Mr Taaniela Kula	1	
Subtotal	IW R2R	7	9
Fiji	Ms Fane Cinavilakeba		1
Fiji	Ms Beverly Sadole		1
Kiribati	Mr David Yeeting		1
Nauru	Ms Phaedora Harris	1	1
Palau	Ms Gwen Sisor	1	1
RMI1	Mr Warwick Harris	1	
RMI	Ms Jennifer Debrum	1	1
RMI (UNDP)	Mr Francis Wele	1	1
Tonga GEF Operational Focal Point	Ms Lupe Matoto	1	1
Tuvalu	Ms Ivy Tumua		1

Subtotal	National STAR	5	8
Consultant	Mr Cenon Padolina		1
FAO	Jessica Sanders		1
PIFS	Dr Salome Taufa		1
UNDP	Dr Winifereti Nainoca		1
UNDP	Mr Floyd Robinson	1	1
UNDP	Mr Josua Turaganivalu	1	1
UNDP	Ms Anne Trevor	1	
UNDP	Mr Rusiate Ratuniata		1
UNDP	Ms Amelia Raratabu		1
UNDP	Mr Jose Erez Padilla		1
USP	Dr Isoa Korovulavula		1
Subtotal		3	10
SPC	Mr Samasoni Sauni	1	1
SPC	Dr Fononga Mangisi-Mafileo	1	1
SPC	Mr Jose Antonio	1	1
SPC	Ms Vere Bakani	1	1
SPC	Mr Navneet Lal	1	
SPC	Ms Swastika Devi	1	1
SPC	Ratu George Naboutuiloma	1	1
SPC	Mr John Carreon	1	1
SPC (Consultant)	Ms Seema Deo		1
Subtotal		8	8
Grand Total		23	34