GEF IW R2R/ RSC.5 / WP.06
Date: October 19, 2020
Original: English

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

A stocktake of the work so far – 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.

SESSION 4 – STOCKSTATUS OF THE WORK SO FAR WITH COVID-19

OUTCOMES & DECISIONS

Having discussed and deliberated on the papers and presentations the participants resolved and agreed to the following decisions: -

1. Participants reviewed the management response and corresponding status of implementation is adequate to serve as basis for providing strategic focus and advice.
2. Participants noted that the MTR determined the achievement of project objective as moderately unsatisfactory, and the 18-recommendations of the MTR, if implemented appropriately would enhancing delivery within the remaining project life.
3. Participants also noted positive rating of project implementation now at 'moderately satisfactory.' This is largely explained by progress guided by the approved RSC MYCWP and renewed priorities and update environmental stress reduction targets endorsed as part of the no-cost extension process last year.
4. Participants underlined adaptive measures and responses addressing impediments to implementation progress from the beginning till date and some of the highlights of such interventions captured within the reporting period of July 2019 to June 2020.
5. Participants reiterated support using available means to minimise chance of recurring issues and ensuring technical robustness as basis for decisions in sustainable resource governance, limited local capacity, disparity in technical skills and management experience among managers, turnover of stuff, travel restrictions, and the programmatic implementation of the GEF Pacific R2R.
6. Participants agreed that local consultants can be used to support project work in-country wherever deemed possible with local capacity. It was pointed out the importance to prioritise what can be done with the current constraint and need to be creative on how certain project works can effectively deliver under this condition – e.g. use of awareness videos, developing brochures for local consultants; innovative research capabilities, communications and collaborations.

ANNEX 1:

RECORD OF DISCUSSION
SESSION 4 – STOCKSTATUS OF THE WORK SO FAR WITH COVID-19

Opening & Prayer

1. Session 4: A Stocktake of the work so far with COVID-19 of the Pre-RSC for the GEF Pacific IW R2R and STAR projects was hosted at the SPC ECAP conference room on the 14th October 2020.
2. The overall moderator and session facilitator, Regional Programme Coordination Unit Communications and Knowledge Management Advisor Dr. Fononga Vainga Mangisi-Mafileo, welcomed all participants to the session.
3. RCPU staff, Mr. George Naboutuiloma offered an opening prayer for the session.

Overview

4. Facilitator Dr. Mangisi-Mafileo provided a brief overview on reference papers. She advised participants that the Secretariat will prepare an outcome of discussion and consolidate clear recommendations for plenary, if any.
5. Providing an outline of the session, she explained that the MTR Recommendations and Management Responses on the GEF Pacific R2R Project – Updates will be presented by Mr Antonio, and that participants will be given the opportunity to clarify matters critically impacting implementation of their respective projects, particularly the STAR projects.
6. Dr. Mangisi-Mafileo explained that the detailed updates are provided in the meeting paper GEF IW R2R/ RSC.6/WP. 04 and power-point presentation.
7. It was further explained that the Status of the regional IW R2R project would be presented by Mr Sauni with reference to the discussion paper GEF IW R2R/RSC.5/WP. 05 and power-point
   presentation.
8. Participants were encouraged to reflect, discuss and clarify any management and implementation concerns.

***Presentation*:**

Update on Implementation of MTR Recommendations

Mr Jose Antonio mentioned the MTR in 2019 where several recommendations were put forward for the project to consider. The objectives and focus of the MTR were to gain an independent analysis of the progress mid-way through the project and to focus on identifying potential project design problems, assessing progress towards the achievement of project objectives, and documenting lessons learned about project design implementation and management. Mr Antonio elaborated on the composition of the MTR (team leader and governance specialist) as well as the overall rating since March 2019: Development Objective (DO) and Implementation Progress (IP); both were rated Moderately Unsatisfactory.

Mr Antonio stated the aims of the presentation which were:

- To inform members of the RSC on the implementation progress of the MTR recommendations to the Regional International Waters Ridge to Reef Project;
- For RSC to review the management response and corresponding status of implementation as basis for providing strategic focus and advice.

Rec 1 - Review and update of national IW logframes - completed and used as basis for approving the request for no-cost extension of the national IW R2R projects

Rec 2 - Review of lessons learned - ongoing process. This has commenced and in the margins of the RSC-4 there were guidance documents made available to both STAR and IW projects and virtual meetings to guide projects and national teams in development of lessons learned reports and papers. In addition, there is an ongoing consultancy document for lessons learned on the national level for mainstreaming R2R. The results of this would be a simple guide for mainstreaming R2R in the Pacific region which would be made available in the earliest, February next year.

Rec 3 - Re-evaluate project linkages and other national activities and processes - ongoing process. This is also part of the consultancy for documenting lessons learned with strong participation from both STAR and IW. This consultancy team was introduced to national stakeholders, particularly national coordinators and Project Managers, STAR and IW and supervisors from implementing agencies. Mr Antonio hoped that everybody would actively support this consultancy as it is an important activity of the project.

Rec 4 - Mainstreaming R2R - ongoing consultancy like Rec 2, 3, 4 and 11 and are covered under this consultancy that commenced in September 2020 and this will be running until major part of deliverables delivered in 2021. Full report from results of consultancy presented in the next RSC meeting next year.

Rec 5 - Adopting an EGS approach - ongoing activity of project. National IW R2R Fiji have commenced procurement of services. Jointly, hopefully with the Fiji STAR project.

Rec 6 - Re-assessing IDA-RAPCA-SOC-SAF-SAP continuum - ongoing. Also referred to as reassessing science to policy theory of change. First consultancy meeting conducted in February that was participated by both STAR and IW technical experts. This science to policy continuum was pursued by the RPCU but noting that there were limited or no takers of fully pursuing the entire continuum of theory of change therefore prompted RPCU to revisit the applicability and adaptability of this and modifications were made. These modifications will be presented to the regional scientific and technical committee to the regional steering committee next week.

Rec 7 - Mapping R2R contribution to SDGs - ongoing. Part of the HRR module under website redevelopment phase 2 where each child projects can report online and visualize the contribution of the project to GEF focal areas as well as SDG and Aichi. Once this is completed together with the PMIS, this would become accessible to all parties

Rec 8 - Website structure and purpose - ongoing. 2 phases of this under a consultancy with 80 options. 1st phase March 2020 courtesy of Dr Fononga Mangisi-Mafileo leading this process. 2nd phase R2R redevelopment process and corresponding PMIS scheduled this month at the margins of RSC.

Rec 9 - Reassessing multi-focal website features - ongoing. PMIS framework currently developed as mentioned earlier and one of modules have been completed but not deployed and incorporated into

the website. All information and visualization will happen at the pacific R2R website. This PMIS includes HRR, SDG, Aichi and dashboards in training as well as JCU status.

Rec 10 - Delivering outcome 4.2 - ongoing status. This will be launched also in margins of RSC

Rec 11 - Compiling lessons learned - ongoing. Guidance documents made available such as regional framework and developing lessons learned in R2R program. Also, standard template TOR for report writers to assist the national team in writing lessons learned documents. Also, several virtual meetings were held, and 1 on 1 briefings conducted. Mr Antonio stated that had it not been for the travel restrictions, there would also be country visits on-site to assist in crafting these documents.

Rec 12 - A no-cost extension - completed. Extended till September 2021. But approval from UNDP came up only with a 12-month extension of the project. Consequently all 14 national IW R2R projects were also extended.

Rec 13 - Reporting links and information sharing across Regional R2R Programme - ongoing status - still advocating sharing of information and sharing of data across on GEF focal areas.

Rec 14 - Clarifying RPCU's programme role and programmatic implementation modalities - ongoing status. Mr Antonio stated that RPCU had already brought it up to the RPCG. The record of these minutes is in the meeting report, Agenda 7, Agenda 10 which is accessible on the website.

Rec 15 - Capacity building focus. Ongoing status. - largely employing a participatory approach in development measures. This is the basis for the engagement of stakeholders introduced at the start of the project.

Rec 16 - Re-assessing the role and structure of RSTC - ongoing status

One of agendas the RSTC meeting in July. There was a record of the meeting and the RSTC highlighted that this will be a platform to assure scientific robustness by measure implemented by regional IW R2R project (Noting that the RSTC is only for IW).

Rec 17 - Communications strategy - ongoing

Already mentioned in Rec 8, 10 and 11

Rec 18 - Gender Issue - pending. Mr Antonio stated that resources have been allocated to commission a gender specialist to do gender audit in order to be gender compliant.

Dr Mangisi-Mafileo opened the floor for questions. There were no questions or comments from the floor.

Presentation:

Status of the Regional IW R2R Project

9. SPC Regional Programme Coordinator Mr Samasoni Sauni was invited to present on the Status of the Regional IW R2R Project looking at the overall performance of the development objectives and implementation progress, the detailed status of

implementation, the strategies issues and adaptive measures, and the financial status and forecast.

10. The presentation aims to inform the members of the RSC on the progress of implementation of the Regional IW R2R project and for the RSC to review and note the progress of implementation as basis for providing strategic guidance and focus, and advice in the remaining project duration.
11. Mr Sauni elaborate on the 5 project components and its outcomes and outlining its importance and how it contributes into national development planning and coordination. He also explained the overall rating of the project from the beginning till date and some of the highlights captured within the period of July 2019 to June 2020. He also pointed out that strategic issues were encountered in the duration of the project. Issues such as challenges in ensuring technical robustness as basis for decisions in sustainable resource governance, limited local capacity, disparity in technical skills and management experience among managers, turnover of stuff, travel restrictions, and the programmatic implementation of the GEF Pacific R2R. However, adaptive measures were put in place to counter these issues.
12. For the financial status and forecast, Mr Sauni explained how the funds were allocated to the 6 components and showed a rough estimate of how much the countries have spent and the remaining balance as of Sept. 30, 2020.
13. Facilitator, Dr.Mangisi-Mafileo opened the discussion focusing on guiding questions:

a) *Clarify matters that critically impact implementation projects and delivering on joint steering and programmatic implementation data and information sharing and results reporting?*
b) *Reflect on implementation and challenges of the Regional IW R2R Project and recommend appropriate measures to enhance achievement of the project outcomes.*

14. With a focus on the session of stocktake, Dr. Mangisi-Mafileo drew participant's attention to the challenges faced progressing implementation of the MTR recommendations and the Regional IW R2R Project and identify areas that may need strengthening and propose measures to advance achievements. An example to demonstrate challenges included the impact of COVID-19 on implementation. *Do projects need more time?*
15. Dr. Mangisi-Mafileo explained that recommendations would be made to plenary emerging from discussions, if any. The floor was open for discussion.

Discussion

16. University of the South Pacific (USP), Dr Isoa Korovulavula encouraged RPCU and participants to think innovatively, partnering international and local technical specialists. He stated that in relation to COVID-19, the University has ventured to using innovative ways to keep students engaged. He stated that sitting and waiting is not the way forward and urged the country members to come up with innovative ways to carry out and conduct the work.
17. RPCU staff, Mr Jose Antonio raised again the question, '*do we need more time to deliver?*' and stated that most of the national projects have yet to deliver on their outputs. He further stated that this is worrisome as there is not much time left. RPCU would like to know the intentions of the national projects whether they will need additional time for implementation noting that it would be self-serving if the RPCU would be the one to instigate to the national project for an extension. He challenged the participants to voice out their concerns so that it can be properly addressed by the RPCU.

18. Mr Sauni responded to the statement by Dr Korovulavula and points out that the RPCU is working closely with the member countries assisting them in delivering their targets. Referring to the statement made by Mr Jose, Mr Sauni agrees and stated that he'd rather prefer that countries state the problems they are facing since they are the ones on the ground doing the work.

19. FSM IW R2R Project Manager Ms Faith Siba stated that FSM needs more time for implementation. She stated that they have completed the construction of a dry-litter piggery but have yet to collect any baseline data due to technical difficulties. She also emphasizes that even though there is local expertise, travel restrictions have made it difficult to get across to them.

20. USP, Dr Korovulavula asked that countries prioritise what can be done with the current constraint. He suggested that managers be creative on how they can effectively deliver under this condition. He points out the use of awareness videos, developing brochures for local consultants to use as some of the way forward. He urged participants to look at innovative research capabilities, communications and collaborations, that could be efficient.

21. Dr. Mangisi-Mafileo emphasized that unprecedented times call for considering new ways to conduct business that are efficient, but to also consider effectiveness.

22. Nauru National R2R STAR Mr Cenon Padolina stated that the Pandemic has affected the implementation of project activities on the island and the difficulties in procuring materials. It also affects the face to face engagement of international consultants and their capacity to be able to deliver robust evaluations.

23. USP, Dr Korovulavula stated that some communities are into the virtual type of discussion while others may not, and this is something that needs to be taken into consideration. He further adds that it is good to continue to think positively and countries can also prioritise and rank the activities set out and see the ones that can and cannot be done. He also supported the use of national experts in implementation.

24. Dr. Mangisi-Mafileo re-emphasized prioritization and for participants to consider specific national contexts, diversity of stakeholders (from community to cabinet), and targeted approaches.

25. UNDP Pacific Office Team Leader Resilience and Sustainable Development Dr Winifereti Nainoca stated that it is hard to move within the PICs due to the restrictions in place. However, they are relying on experts and managers on the ground. She points out that consultants could try and make virtual recordings, and this can be delivered to communities where the contact person can then deliver the exercise. This exercise will work in some communities and it may not work others but that is the best they can do during this time. She emphasizes on the point made by Dr Korovulavula on prioritising the activities and stated that managers need to be realistic in what they can do especially if they are waiting for materials to be delivered from offshore. If the materials never arrived, then there could be a possible re-direction. However, she urged that managers weigh this option carefully because the fund was given for an activity that they must tick a box for.

26. Solomon Islands IW R2R Project Manager Mr Sammy Airahui stated that for the country project, almost 90% of the national implementation is nearly completed. Now they are still waiting for the national consultants to deliver drafts and consolidation reports. He points out that due to current situation, regional activities may lag, however, this depends on the response of the regional office to the IDA.

27. Mr Samasoni Sauni responded that the RPCU will respond within a week so that they can proceed into finalising the consultant reports as well as the appointment of the local consultants. He stated that some consultants are available and have the expertise but may not be applying due to the fact the fund allocated for the work that is to be undertaken may be small and they'd rather do something else. He points out that if we are to prioritise by way of how we deliver those targets, it is important that the prioritisation process consider the levels of outcomes and outputs that will be delivered. When it comes to Component 1 and Component 2, the technical results and analysis are very fundamental for the science to policy framework.

28. UNDP-Samoa, Ms Anne Trevor stated that they just recently conducted a terminal evaluation for the member countries that they are looking after. She pointed out that they are also looking at bringing in national consultants and relying on social media to try and continue the work that is being currently implemented by the member countries.

29. USP, Dr Korovulavula stated that from a researcher's perspective, countries must look for ways to keep moving forward effectively and efficiently.

30. UNDP, Dr Winifereti Nainoca stated that a lot of national consultants are working virtually, and they rely on the R2R country project to help them. Managers need to be very clear and precise when presenting information to the international consultants so that the final report will paint a true picture of what is happening on the ground.

31. Referring to the "tick the box" scenario mentioned by Dr. Winifereti Nainoca in her previous intervention and given the current scenario under COVID-19 and other operational issues already discussed, Mr. Antonio enquired UNDP's experience in other projects for handling this situation. The RPCU has been trying its best not only to "tick the box" but to deliver meaningfully the outputs to achieve the desired outcomes of this project. The RPCU only requires additional time – under a second request for extension" to implement. The request of RPCU is indicated in several papers made available to the participants to consider and understand the operational issues besetting the project. These papers clearly indicated the rationale for the second no-cost extension request. He encouraged the participants to indeed consider innovative ways of project implementation but cautioned that this should be done within the milieu of the existing project – i.e. national and regional logframes and expected deliverables to achieve the objectives.

32. Dr. Wini responded that the ticking of the box will be done on a case by case basis and with due considerations of the circumstances.
33. The meeting was closed by RPC Samasoni Sauni.

List of Participants

Country/Organisation	**Name**
FSM IW R2R Project	Ms Faith Siba
Nauru IW R2R Project	Ms Evayne Gaubidi
Solomon Islands IW R2R Project	Mr Sammy Airahui
Solomon Islands R2R Project	Ms Debra Kereseka
Vanuatu IW R2R Project	Mr Ericksen Packett
Fiji STAR R2R Project	Mr Noa Vakacegu
Consultant	Dr Ernie Guiang
Consultant	Dr Cenon Padolina
JCU	Professor Marcus Sheaves
UNDP Pacific Office	Dr Winifereti Nainoca
UNDP Pacific Office	Mr Floyd Robinson
UNDP Pacific Office	Mr Josua Turaganivalu
UNDP Samoa Office	Ms Anne Trevor
USP IAS	Dr Isoa Korovulavula
SPC	Mr Samasoni Sauni
SPC	Dr Fononga Mangisi-Mafileo
SPC	Mr Jose Antonio
SPC	Ms Vere Bakani
SPC	Ms Swastika Devi
SPC	Mr George Naboutuiloma
SPC	Mr John Carreons
Total	**21**