GEF R2R/ RSTC.6/ Inf.04
Date: 25 September 2020
Original: English

Sixth Meeting of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee for the GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme

Suva, Fiji 19th-20th October 2020

Records of the 5th meeting of the RSTC, Nadi, Fiji

Regional Scientific and Technical Committee Meeting Highlights

RSTC5 Inf.6

Date: 14 August 2019

Original: English

Fifth Meeting of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee

for the GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme

Nadi, Fiji 28th July 2019

Meeting Record (Draft)

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Opening & Prayer

1. The 5th meeting of the RSTC for the GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme (R2R) was held at the Tanoa International Hotel in Nadi, Fiji on the 28th July 2019. Sixteen representatives from James Cook University (JCU), University of the South Pacific (USP), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), United Nation Development Programme (UNDP Offices in Bangkok, Suva and Apia), United Nation Environment (UNE), Pacific Community (SPC), and two independent consultants, attended the meeting. The list of participants is appended as *Attachment 1.*

2. The Chair, Prof. Marcus Sheaves, called the meeting to order, confirmed the quorum and commenced the meeting. As in the past, the rules and procedures used in the conduct of this Committee meeting followed those set out under Regional Science & Technical Committee (RSTC) Terms of Reference (ToR), and closely follows those governing the conduct of R2R Regional Steering Committee (RSC) meetings.

3. The R2R Regional Programme Coordination Unit's Science and National Project Leader, Samasoni Sauni, offered an opening prayer for the meeting.

Introductory Remarks

4. The Chair gave brief introductory remarks encouraging the Committee to be more proactive and action oriented.

5. The Regional Science and Technical Committee **noted** the need to be more action oriented and to meet more regularly if needed to better support the program implementation. The status of the Committee requires enhancement because it has historically been largely sidelined, and process-focused, and has failed to deliver on its ToR efficiently. It recommends the R2R Regional Steering Committee (RSC) recognises the important role of the Committee and support opportunities for more active and relevant

6. The Chair announced departing and new members of the Committee, , consistent with the Committee's TOR. The Chair invited the Committee to note the work behind the scenes aimed at reviewing and revising the membership of the Committee. The former Head of the Institute of Applied Science of USP has resigned and SPC subsequently sought a replacement and one additional member, as follows:

(i) Dr Isoa Korovulavula accepted the invitation to sit on the Committee and is now USP representative as a new member of the Committee. Dr Korovulavula is with the Institute of Applied Science of USP, Acting Head of the Institute and has been heavily involved in R2R STAR project implementation.

(ii) SPC sought the participation of a representative of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat as a new member of the Committee. Dr Salome Taufa is a natural resource economist and brings to the Committee expertise from a range of areas in natural resource economics, including ecosystem goods and services valuation, and cost-benefit- analyses.

7. The Chair sought confirmation of acceptance of the two new members from the Committee. In accordance with the Committee ToR, the Chair also requested nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair. The ToR states that these positions shall be appointed at every annual meeting of the Committee. The Chair sought nominations for the vacant positions of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, noting the two options:

(i) Agreement to retain the current Chair and Vice-chair for another term of 12-months; or
(ii) Agreement and endorsement of a new Chair and Vice-chair.

8. The Regional Science and Technical Committee **agreed** that Prof. Marcus Sheaves of JCU continues in the position of RSTC Chair, and **elected** Dr Isoa Korovulavula of USP as Vice-Chair. It recommended that the Regional Steering Committee approves these new appointments. The Committee **further noted** that the ToR clearly sets out the role of SPC in providing Secretariat functions of the Committee and that SPC staff members cannot be nominated to the vacant positions.

Agenda Item 1. Provisional Agenda

9. The Chair emphasised that the bulk of the agenda would be dedicated to the IW R2R Mid-term Review (MTR) outcomes and recommendations, noting that the Committee should be cognizant of this because members need to discuss the MTR conclusions and recommendations and provide inputs that will be reported back to the RSC plenary through the Chair's report for further consideration. A copy of the agenda is appended as *Attachment 2.*

10. The committee considered and **endorsed** the provisional agenda.

Agenda Item 2. Review of the Minutes from 3rd RSTC-3 meeting & Action Items

11. The UNDP Bangkok Office representative (Dr Jose Padilla) requested a brief summary of the records of RSTC 4 for the benefit of new members from UNEP, USP and PIFS. The SPC Secretariat representative Mr. Sauni, gave a brief summary of the minutes of the previous meeting focusing on outcomes and highlights. There were no other matters arising from the records.

12. The Committee **endorsed** the minutes of the RSTC4 meeting that was held in Townsville,

Agenda Item 3. General Highlights

13. The R2R Programme Coordinator, Peter Cusack, provided general highlights relevant for the work of the Committee in the last 12-months of project implementation.

14. The Committee **noted** the general highlights.

Agenda Item 4. Mid-term Review Findings, Conclusions & Recommendations

15. The UNDP Suva Office representative. Floyd Robinson, introduced ***RSCT5_WP.1***, and presented to the Committee on the IW R2R MTR findings, conclusions and recommendations. Amongst the MTR conclusions of relevance to the Committee are those recommendations concerning the scientific and technical aspects of the Regional International Water Ridge to Reef project.

16. The UNDP Bangkok Office representative explained that the MTR assessment and ratings are those of an independent Consultant and should be noted. The MTR recommendations are for the RSTC to consider the following points:

(i) whether or not the recommendations are soundly based;
(ii) if particular recommendations can be addressed within the timeframe of the project - recognising that some recommendations may not be able to be achieved within the present timeframe; and that
(iii) some of the MTR recommendations do not align with the expectations of GEF.

Dr Padilla further noted that the RSTC could consider these points above to inform their discussions and decisions.

16. The SPC Secretariat staffs (Peter and Emma) followed on presenting agreed UNDP/SPC management responses to the MTR recommendations.

17. The Committee **noted** the paper, recognizing that specific technical discussions on the MTR recommendations were to follow in the next agenda items.

Agenda Item 5. Revised National Results Logframe

18. The RPCU Science Officer, Emma Newland, introduced the paper *RSTC5_WP.2* that sets out the latest specific milestone targets and outputs following consultation with project countries. Emma explained that as much has changed since the original setting of national targets, and priorities have also shifted on management approaches (e.g. stress reduction, catchment protection, habitats). The paper addressed MTR Recommendation 1 that calls for the revision of national logframes which include milestone targets.

19. The paper highlighted metrics used for milestone targets, which includes the area of the demonstration site or the boundary of catchment sites estimated by the countries or by the RPCU using QGIS software. The second metric measures reduction in nutrients through a water source waste treatment system and/ or dry litter piggery system.

20. The USP representative, Dr Isoa Korovulavula, raised a point of concern on the assumptions and risks associated with the use of best available standards in the calculation of milestone targets, such as nutrients loads, which originate from research done in places outside this region. The Committee noted the need to critically identify and understand the assumptions used in order to generate realistic parameters and standards in order to better understand how the targets were derived. The assumptions extend to cover economic, political and social factors.

21. The Committee recognized the issue of environmental stress reduction relating to any business development involving animals being challenging but nonetheless important. The uncertainties are critical and needs to be recognized and included in the baseline, if the aim is to allow targets to be realistically compared with actual outcomes. Equally important is the need to identify and understand the underlying assumptions and risks, and the consequences if such is not met.

22. The Committee encouraged moving away from using external standards that don't relate to the tropics and to consider carrying out research that would generate such standards closer to the point of discharge. There was also agreement to establish standards and nutrient levels that are relevant to this region and can be used in future calculation of estimates on the reduction of nutrient loads to aquifers and receiving environments.

23. The RPCU Science Officer provided the following explanations:

(i) The RPCU collaborated with project countries to explore research possibilities and investigations on nutrient content from piggeries at several sites so that there are datasets specific to countries like Kiribati where water scarcity is a recurring issue.

(ii) The milestone targets were updated in consultation with R2R IW demonstration projects, in particular for the waste treatment systems or piggeries. There was limited data available in the literature on nutrient contents of different countries in this region.

(iii) As a result of these consultations, Nauru has dropped the activity on the constructed wetlands system and, Niue will no longer be progressing work on the renovation of septic systems. This has been taken up by a GIZ and Australia Aid project in the country.

24. The Committee **reviewed and endorsed** the methodology and formula used to calculate estimated levels of land area and pollution levels, in order to review project countries' milestone targets. At the same time the Committee also **considered** the need to be clear about the assumptions, risks and uncertainties when using this methodology. The formula for piggeries uses data standards for piggeries based on Australian and American Commercial piggeries, where circumstances are not the same as in the tropics and in this region.

25. The Committee also **noted** the *'Revised and Updated Environmental Stress Reduction Targets of the Regional IW R2R Project'* and recommend sharing this information with R2R STAR Projects for their inputs and updates for reporting under the GEF Pacific Regional R2R Programme Framework Document.

26. The Committee **considered and supported** future studies focusing on estimating nutrient concentrations and BOD of human and animal faeces and urine, and the efficacy of different waste treatment systems. The Committee r**ecommended** future research to improve estimated loads for waste pollution with more applied research on nutrient contents of human and animal wastes closer to point source of pollution in tropical areas of the Pacific region.

Agenda Item 6. Analyses of MTR Recommendations & management responses

27. The RPCU Science and National Project Team Leader introduced the agenda item, making reference to five substantial papers that would follow, corresponding to priority recommendations of the MTR.

Environmental goods and services, EGS (Rec. 5) – RSTC5_WP.3

28. The RPCU Science Team Leader introduced the paper RSTC5_WP.3 in response to MTR recommendation 5. The paper seeks discussion on the adoption of an Ecosystem Goods and Services (EGS) framework as the foundation of the IW R2R Project scientific and technical approach. The Committee was invited to consider and advise on the recommendation considering the current state of implementing IW R2R project activities.

29. The Committee discussed the paper and offered the following observations:

(i) There is value in having an EGS approach however significant attention must be given to the availability of data, and the resources and time required to collect data for evaluation, and the availability of capacities to conduct the evaluation exercise.
(ii) From an economist's perspective the EGS is a good approach, providing more flexibility and therefore the ability to enhance the 22 indicators already identified and agreed upon under the DPSIR[1] framework. Protecting ecosystem goods and services is an impact long- term outcome of the R2R project the EGS approach responds to that. The Committee noted that EGS valuation requires extensive collection of data, which could be useful in ensuring that the environmental goods and services are being preserved. Most EGS are not market goods and therefore collection of the required data can be costly.
(iii) The DPSIR framework is arguably best used in industrialised countries, whereas EGS is best suited in a small island developing states context. However, it is also recognised that the DPSIR framework is a sensible approach when working in water catchments, and bigger islands with multi-stakeholders and land-use practices. Noting that the two approaches or frameworks can work together, the DPSIR complements the EGS with the latter more applicable to an island system, depending on the type of ecosystems under investigation
(iv) The Committee noted that carrying out of an economic valuation on EGS can be challenging and the collection of market and non-market type data extenuating.

30. The Committee discussed the pros and cons, as well the application, of both frameworks, recognising the limited resources and time available for the project to undertake fully-fledged EGS activities. On the one hand, there are options of progressing both frameworks in parallel, noting opportunities
for trialling and training on an EGS approach. On the other hand, the committee considered the option to note the recommendation and that EGS might considered in future project design given the limited timeframe and budget now available. The Committee supported the latter.

[1] drivers, pressures, state, impact and response
[2] State of Environment report
[3] International waters resource management
[4] Integrated coastal management
[5] The RSTC meeting in Townsville Australia August 2018 was wrongly recorded as the 3rd meeting as currently seen in the meeting records. It was in fact the 4th meeting of the RSTC. This year the mistake has been corrected in meeting papers

31. The Committee **agreed** with the recommendation to mainstream ecosystem goods and services but to do so within the scope of (and not to replace) the current DPSIR framework. Moreover, the Committee:

(i) recognised the value of the EGS approach, and that it is an appropriate goal to work towards in the future;
(ii) noted that the current DPSIR approach comprehensively address the objectives as originally developed; and
(iii) noted that an EGS approach would need considerable additional data so could best be deployed in projects where data were yet to be obtained.

32. The committee **endorsed** the EGS approach but did not agree that the EGS framework is a better choice than the DPSIR framework. The Committee therefore **disagreed** with the recommendation if the intention is to replace the current DPSIR with EGS. If resources allow, SPC should support implementation of both DPSIR and EGS frameworks (a hybrid approach) focusing on opportunities for strengthening the scientific approach while avoiding duplication of efforts on indicators.

33. The Committee **supported** planned activities for the testing and training on EGS approach and EGS valuation through current pilot projects and JCU training. It also **supported** the intention that it should be considered in future project design if possible, again noting the limited time and resources to do so now.

Revised strategy on Island Diagnostic Analyses (IDAs) & State of Coast (SOC) reports (Rec. 6) – RSTC5_WP.4

34. The RPCU Science Officer introduced RSTC5_WP.4 on a revised strategy on IDAs & SoCs, responding to MTR recommendation 6. The revised strategy on IDAs & SoCs is also the theory of change pertaining to steps taken in-country to mainstream and integrate the R2R concept along the science-policy continuum - Rapid Assessment of Priority Coastal Areas (RAPCA), IDA, SoC Reports, Strategic Action Plan (SAP) or Framework and Planning along the Ridge to Reef landscape.

35. The paper described the path that current and future national IW R2R projects might follow to mainstream the ridge to reef concept and evidence-based planning approaches into national and local governance mechanisms. This pathway uses the steps set out in the revised strategy for IDA/ SoC or Theory of Change.

36. The Committee further noted several project countries already indicated support for the revised strategy, recognising the flexibility it provides in opting out on one or more steps of the science-policy continuum. For instance, several countries opted out of working towards SoCs and SAPs. This was expected as there are other alternative processes such as the SoEs[2] led by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) where results of the project can contribute to SoE reviews.

[2] State of Environment report

37. The Committee considered and **endorsed** the trialling of this Theory of Change or revised strategy for the preparation of IDAs/SoCs, and report back the results for further consideration. The trial will also provide opportunity to better understand what datasets are needed in developing spatial prioritization procedures (Step 4).

Lessons learned (Rec. 11) – RSTC5_WP.5

38. The RPCU Communications and Knowledge Management Advisor, Dr. Fononga Vainga Mangisi-Mafileo, introduced the paper RSTC5_WP.5 on lessons learned, which correspond with the MTR recommendation 11. The paper contains a proposed Pacific regional R2R programmatic framework for lessons learned, which was developed in response to MTR recommendation 11, and notes:

(i) "In most cases, it is likely that the most valuable programme outcome (in addition to capacity building) will be lessons learned"; and

(ii) "There is a clear need and opportunity for the RPCU to become actively involved in promoting lessons learned across the programme and deriving (or compiling) lessons learned from previous [3]IWRM/ ICM[4]/ R2R investments. This would include providing guidance to current projects (STAR and IW) regarding which lessons should be derived, and how to do it."

39. The meeting noted that the lessons learned for the Regional IW R2R Project have been captured systematically, including through quarterly and annual progress reports, experience notes, coaching and mentoring workshops, and national demonstration project activity reports. However, these reports do not capture lessons learned from STAR R2R projects.

40. The UNDP Bangkok Office representative suggested that "impact" after "action" be reflected on and included in the Knowledge Management cycle. The Committee also noted the need to link or mainstream R2R lessons learned during the process of reviewing current or developing new policy and legislative frameworks.

41. Dr. Mangisi-Mafileo informed the Committee of the Most Significant Change (MSC) workshop planned for Monday 29th 2019, which would provide the opportunity for national R2R PCUs to showcase the impacts and success of their projects. At the workshop, the countries would assess stories to select a Most Significant Change story and the "impacts" will be highlighted on the new R2R website.

42. The Committee considered and **agreed** on the proposed regional programmatic framework and template for Pacific R2R lessons learned. It endorsed the revised draft framework including Annex 1 & 2 subject to the incorporation of the RSTC inputs for recommendation to the Regional Steering Committee (RSC) for their consideration and approval.

43. The 7th step on impact was considered appropriate to better understand the actual impacts of policy actions and revised legislations. The Committee also **agreed** on the proposed implementation schedule.

[3] International waters resource management
[4] Integrated coastal management

RSTC composition & modus operandi (Rec. 16) – RSTC5_WP.6

44. The RPCU Science and National Project Leader introduced the paper RSTC5_WP.6 on RSTC composition & *modus operandi,* which responds to MTR recommendation 16.

45. The UNE representative, Dr Manoela Pessoa De Miranda, expressed reservation on the suggested change that replace "project" with "programme." The reason being that under clause 1.1 the Committee can only facilitate but not ensure effective implementation of activities undertaken by the program's child projects. The UNDP Bangkok Office representative supported UNE's position on the matter, and suggested that changes not be made to the original wording of the ToR.

46. The RPCU Science and National Project Leader explained that the reason for the proposed amendments is to remove ambiguity in the current ToR around the Committee's role providing scientific and technical oversight on R2R IW and STAR projects, consistent with the intent in the IW R2R Project Document. The MTR consultants picked up these anomalies and inconsistencies and thus made MTR recommendation 16. The current ToR refer to both "projects" and "program" which makes it difficult to define the scope and extent of the Committee's role.

47. The Committee noted the MTR recommendation on the RSTC composition and *modus operandi*. The Committee discussed the suggested amendments, which seek to tighten the TORs in support of the programmatic approach consistent with the MTR recommendation. However, the Committee was **unable to unanimously agree** on the changes. The proposed amendment was thus not adopted. The Committee determined that RSTC advice on the IW project can be shared with the STAR projects, but that the Committee does not have oversight of STAR projects.

Communications strategy (Rec. 17) – RSTC5_WP.7

48. The The RPCU Communications and Knowledge Management Advisor introduced the paper RSTC5_WP.7 on Community Strategy, which responds to MTR recommendation 17.

49. The Committee noted value in understanding the microscale activities in the context of communication. This relates to raising awareness and the MTR sees that communicating the R2R concept on top of the theory of change, is lacking. The Committee further recognized the need for parallel efforts on the STAR project relative to communication pieces.

50. The Committee **endorsed** the recommendation to review the R2R Communications Strategy in light of the MTR recommendation, and that the endorsed proposed approach on the strategy may also be useful to STAR projects. The committee also **discussed and agreed** to minor changes in the following statement:

The project communications strategy needs to be vigilant that its primary role is to communicate about the project objective, which is R2R, and ~~de-emphasise~~ contextualise micro-scale activities (although such can be good communication/promotional opportunities where successful)

Agenda Item 7. Procedural framework for the identification and spatial prioritization of conservation land/sea areas – concept

7.1 *Technical paper on application of prioritisation methodology to inform ridge-to-reef management in Vanuatu catchment areas*

51. The concept paper *RSTC5_WP.8*, on the spatial prioritization procedural framework, followed by a technical paper, *RSTC5_WP.9* on its design development and trial in Vanuatu catchment areas, were not formally presented and considered by the Committee, due to the lack of time, as two Committee members were to catch their flights back to Suva. The Chair thus referred the meeting to the papers and sought quick responses the recommendations.

53. There was no discussion and the meeting endorsed trialing the concept for the identification and spatial prioritization of conservation land/sea areas or sites. The Committee further noted the initial efforts and inputs into the design and application of the prioritization methodology and modelling.

54. The Committee considered the conceptual framework on spatial prioritisation procedures; and **endorsed and approved** the concept on spatial prioritisation procedures for trialling in one or more countries if practical, and the reporting of outcomes for further consideration.

55. The Committee further **noted** the review and highlights of the JCU course with students performed at an expected rate given the various challenges

Agenda Item 7. Other Matters

56. The next meeting will be announced later. Given the discussion on a renewed focus on the work of the RSTC it is possible to plan for the next meeting around the end of January or early February 2020.

57. The Chair thanked the Committee for their work then closed the meeting. A copy of the Chair's report was be prepared and presented to the RSC-4 meeting.

Attachment 1: List of Participants

Name Invited Members	Position	Affiliations
Prof. Marcus Sheaves (Chair)	Director, Special Projects, College of Science & Engineering; Director, Marine Data Technology Hub; Team Leader, Science for Integrated Coastal Ecosystem Management,	James Cook University
Dr Isoa Korovulavula (Co-Chair)	Acting Head, Institute of Applied Science,	University of the South Pacific
Dr Salome Taufa	Natural Resource Economist	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
Conway Pene	Consultant	
GEF R2R Implementing Agencies, GEF R2R Executing Agency & Secrétariat- SPC		
Dr Jose Padilla	Technical Advisor	UNDP Bangkok Office
Dr Winifereti Nainoca		UNDP Pacific Office
Floyd Robinson		UNDP Suva Office
Anne Trevor		UNDP Apia Office
Dr Manoela Pessoa De Miranda		UNEP, Samoa
Rhonda Robinson	Deputy Director, GEM	Pacific Community (SPC)
Peter Cusack	Regional Program Coordinator, GEM	Pacific Community (SPC)
Samasoni Sauni	Science & National Project Team Leader, GEM	Pacific Community (SPC)
Emma Newland	Science Officer, GEM	Pacific Community (SPC)
Dr Fononga Vainga Mangisi-Mafileo	Communications and Knowledge Management Advisor, GEM	Pacific Community (SPC)
Jose Antonio	Country Coordination, Monitoring & Evaluation Advisor, GEM	Pacific Community (SPC)
Dr Jade Delevaux	Consultant	Pacific Community (SPC)

Attachment 2: Meeting Agenda

1. Adoption of Provisional Agenda
2. Review of the Minutes from 3rd RSTC[5] meeting & Action Items
3. General Highlights
4. Mid-term Review - Conclusions & Recommendations
5. Revised Updated Environmental Stress Reduction of Targets of the Regional IW R2R Project
6. Analyses of MTR recommendations & management responses
   (i) Environmental goods and services (Rec. 5)
   (ii) Revised strategy on IDAs & SoCs (Rec. 6)
   (iii) Lessons learnt (Rec. 11)
   (iv) RSTC composition & *modus operandi* (Rec. 16)
   (v) Communication strategy (Rec. 17)
7. Procedural framework for the identification and spatial prioritization of conservation land/sea areas – concept
   (i) Technical paper on application of methodology to inform ridge-to-reef management in Vanuatu catchment areas
8. Other Matters

[5] The RSTC meeting in Townsville Australia August 2018 was wrongly recorded as the 3rd meeting as currently seen in the meeting records. It was in fact the 4th meeting of the RSTC. This year the mistake has been corrected in meeting papers circulated as the 5th meeting of the RSTC.