



GEF IW R2R/ RSTC-TC.2 WP.01

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

Radisson Blu Resort, Denarau, Fiji 15th to 17th February 2021

Session 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) Note where we are in R2R project implementation following discussion and decisions taken last year at the RSTC and RSC meetings,
- (ii) Discuss and agree on the options to progress implementation delivering results and outcomes under non-normal circumstances of COVID, and
- (iii) Revise the Regional IW R2R Project MYCWP and its Monitoring Plan or Results Framework, under a 6-months no cost extension.

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. This paper provides updates of where we are in R2R, specifically focusing on what has transpired and in motion following discussion and decisions reached at the last formal annual sessions of the RSTC and RSC. Participants will revise the Regional IW R2R Project Monitoring Plan or Results Framework, and its MYCWP under a 6-months no cost extension. Participants will also discuss options to progress implementation delivering results and outcomes.

Where we are in R2R:

Project Status June 2019 – June 2020

3. At its last formal session, the RSTC considered the status of Implementation of the Regional International Waters Ridge to Reef (IW R2R) Project. The highlights include the spatial prioritisation modelling work in Vanuatu, which has been published. Some activities have been deferred to the next financial year and workplan.

3. Generally, the overall rating by SPC and UNDP of the project implementation progress has improved to moderately satisfactory since last reported at the RSC meeting year. However, there was no change in the overall rating relative to achieving development objectives, currently levelled at moderately unsatisfactory.

4. The contributing factors to the ratings are detailed in the paper ([GEF R2R/RSTC.6/WP.05](#)) and is largely influenced by the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1. Status of the IW R2R IW R2R Project

Component	Outcome	As of Jun 2019	As of June 2020
1	1 – Pilot testing of innovative solutions	Off track	On track
	2 – National diagnostic analysis	Off track	Off track
	3 – Multi-stakeholder leader roundtable networks	Off track	On track
2	4 – National and local capacity on ICM and IWRM	On track	On track
	5 – Incentive structures for retention of local expertise/ human resource needs for ICM/IWRM	Off track	Off track
3	6 – National and regional strategic action framework for ICM/IWRM	Off track	Off track
	7 – Coordinated approaches for R2R	On track	On track
4	8 – National and regional integrated and simplified frameworks for integrated multi-focal projects	On track	On track
	9 – National and regional platforms for managing information and sharing of best practice & LL	On track	On track
5	10 – Effective program coordination of national and regional R2R projects	On track	On track

Update progress on implementing MTR recommendations

5. At its last meeting the RSTC considered progress of implementing 18-MTR recommendations (see [GEF R2R/RSTC.6/WP 03](#)). The management responses followed the UNDP

format indicating the tracking status as of August 2019. An additional column labelled Status as of September 30, 2020 is added to capture the status of implementation.

Table 2. MTR Recommendations Implementation Status

MTR Recommendations	Actions	Status
1 – Review and update of national IW logframes	Done	Completed
2 – Review of lessons learned and best practice from previous IWRM	Consultancy	Ongoing
3 – Re-evaluate project linkages with other national activities & processes	Consultancy	Ongoing
4 – Mainstreaming Ridge to Reef	Consultancy	Ongoing
5 – Adopting an Ecosystems Goods and Services approach	IW Fiji	Ongoing
6 – Reassessing the Science to Policy Continuum (IDA-RapCA-SoC-SAP/F)	Modified S2P	Ongoing
7 – Mapping Ridge to Reef contributions to SDGs	HRR	Ongoing
8 – Website structure and purpose	Consultancy	Ongoing
9 – Reassessing multi-focal website features	Consultancy	Ongoing
10 – Delivering outcome 4.2 – Pacific R2R Website (also in relation to Recommendations 8 & 9).	Consultancy	Ongoing
11 – Compiling lessons learned	Consultancy	Ongoing
12 – A no-cost extension	Done	Completed
13 – Reporting links and information sharing across the Regional R2R Programme	RSC 4 & RPCG	Ongoing
14 – Clarifying RPCU’s programme role and programmatic implementation modalities	RSC 4 & RPCG	Ongoing
15 – Capacity building focus – ensuring effectiveness and scientific results	Consultancy	Ongoing
16 – Reassessing the role and structure of the RSTC	RSTC 5	Ongoing/Completed
17 – Communication strategy based on clearly defined Theory of Change	Guidance documents	Ongoing
18 – Gender issues	Budget allocated	Pending

The SPC-RPCU

6. The RPCU and its secretariat functions to the GEF Pacific R2R program and its child projects (14 STAR and one IW) continue despite setbacks in staffs turn-over. The current team of 6 staffs plus 2 interns jointly work towards performing the functions of the RPCU and implementing the Regional IW R2R project multi-year costed workplan (MYCWP) as approved by the RSC. The positions of Science Team Leader and Science Officers have been vacant for over a year.

7. The focus in the remaining period of the project is to hire Specialist and Support staffs, and several Consultants to implement the RSC-approved multi-year costed workplan with fundamental considerations on implementing the MTR recommendations, particularly on: -

Heightened support of 11 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

8. 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 GEF Pacific R2R program (i.e., 15 child projects STAR and IW). Other than UNDP Pacific Office, there is generally little sign of commitments and support even under current difficult non-normal circumstances of COVID.

9. In the past that group advised that additional work that the MTR recommendations demand should not be at the expense of the main deliverables of the Regional IW R2R project. This is important to note given the current circumstances which the Regional IW R2R project is operating.

Role of RSTC and its TOR

10. The key issue of disagreement remains on the jurisdiction and scope of the RSTC, which currently covers the R2R program (and its child projects) and the Regional IW R2R project. The RSTC determined that its advice on the Regional IW R2R project can be shared with the STAR projects being the child projects of the GEF R2R Program, but that the RSTC does not have oversight of the individual STAR R2R projects.

11. Notwithstanding, the RSTC meeting last year appears to have progressed past this issue with strong support and justification in the RSTC record, such that: -

- (i) "There is a requirement for the Regional IW and STAR R2R projects to report back to SPC under PFD.
- (ii) SPC is mandated to report against the PDF and GEF tracking tools, therefore it is important to submit reports to SPC for this purpose.
- (iii) There is continued misunderstanding of the contractual roles of the RPCU-SPC both as executing agency for the Regional IW R2R project and as well, the coordination unit for the GEF Pacific R2R Programme.
- (iv) It is impossible for the RPCU-SPC to perform its core function of reporting back to PFD and GEF tracking and harmonised reporting tool if the STAR R2R projects are not submitting their reports and data using the agreed HRR tool.
- (v) It further encouraged that STAR projects commit to meeting with RPCU and provide the required data. This was a serious concern, and the matter is repeatedly raised and discussed each year."

12. Base on the above the RSC needs to revisit discussion and agree amending the ToR to reflect the above details, which was the original suggested amendments.

13. Moreover, it is now a requirement opening 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.

RSC-5 approved workplan & budget

14. The RSC-5 approved a multi-year costed workplan (MYCWP) for the Regional IW R2R Project. The MYCWP generally contains the intended project outputs and outcomes as amended, taking account of the impact of COVID and to send UNDP a proposal for a 12-months no-cost

extension. The MYCWP gives the project full justifications of the no-cost extension to the regional component. The proposal was rejected granting only 6-months instead.

The decision requires changes and revisions to both regional and national components of the project relative to: -

- (i) RPCU – revise the MYCWP and updating the deliverables prioritising the ones that can be realistically completed within the timelines and drop everything else important but unable to complete.
- (ii) Commence and complete work 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.

15. The revised MYCWP 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.

Improved communication of lessons learned within the Pacific R2R network

16. 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.

17. The RPCU commissioned a consultancy for this work which is currently underway. The Consultant will present several draft lessons learned at this technical consultation.

National R2R demonstrations

18. The progress of national R2R demonstrations were potentially impacted by COVID with very few works done in 2020. Fiji and RMI will be presented progress of R2R implementation in-country. Table 1 appended to this provides a summary of national demonstrations and associated timelines.

Science-policy strategic policy framework

19. The science-policy framework is a regionally led activity but implemented nationally. This means the RPCU 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.

20. Last year the RSTC and RSC agreed to 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 (following their respective national procurement processes) national consultants with the expertise that will support with the projects to achieve the milestone indicators. This is a difficult undertaking for some countries, and the time to hire local consultants following domestic procurement processes take 3-4 months and this is not sustainable.

21. The RPCU is exploring options to increase the fees and the science team leading the work in collaboration with Project Managers and team on the ground to do the work and produce results.

COVID Strategy - Future Opportunities & Directions

22. In the years leading up to 2020, 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 actively supporting practical action-oriented activities like this first series of R2R technical consultation.

22. Since last year there has been progress and the RSTC appears to be actively engaged supporting project work and relevant action-oriented efforts. This includes project works and series of R2R Technical Consultations planned for the remaining life of the Regional IW R2R project.

23. The RSC approved MYCWP takes into consideration allocations and workplan to be implemented covering the proposal for another 12-months no-cost extension for all national projects. Recently UNDP rejected the proposal and agreed only on a 6-months extension. Consequently, the MYCWP and Results Framework (and logframe) will need changing and prioritise to focus only on activities and outputs that can be implemented realistically on a 6-months no-cost extension.

24. The renewed COVID-19 strategy is now shifting towards using local and national consultants to carry out technical assessments and deliver on science deliverables. The extension on national projects would focus on implementing priority outputs and activities to deliver on stress reduction targets and outcomes. This also means dropping off project outputs and activities no longer priority and not practical to complete within the new timelines. This is the basis for reallocation of project resources under the renewed COVID-19 strategy.

25. Moreover, the RPCU commissioned consultancies in Quarter 4 of 2020 are still underway supporting MTR recommendation on website redevelopment, mainstreaming R2R, lessons learned, science-policy framework and capacity needs. The remaining consultancies including gender and R2R regional action plan (SAP) will be commissioned soon.

26. Unfortunately, the renewed COVID strategy is no longer committing the SPC RPCU to support all countries (leaving no one behind) right through to implementation, including those that have just commenced on national activities. Rather, the focus is to implement the full cycle of the modified science to policy theory of change in 6 countries who have confirmed their commitments.

Table 1. National demonstrations and progress of implementation

	Vanuatu	Tuvalu	Tonga	Solomon Islands	Samoa	RMI	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