



GEF IW R2R/ RSTC-TC.2 WP.14

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Session 4 – Research & Information Management

Socio-Economic Baseline Assessment Using Ecosystem Goods and Services (EGS)

Summary:

In addressing the recommendation from the mid-term report, the ecosystem goods and services framework was discussed at the first series technical consultation of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC) in Nadi last year. It was clear from that discussion that there was limited capacity to undertake such work and that additional data collection would be required which is often a very expensive exercise that will require lots of planning which may not be feasible noting the remaining duration of this project.

This paper provides information on how ecosystem goods and services (EGS) can be considered in future projects, noting that the challenges faced by the current project primarily with the limited capacity in understanding of EGS and how it can be incorporated into the projects.

Recommendations:

The R2R Technical Consultation is invited to: -

- (i) Discuss current delays and difficulties progressing EGS valuation works or trials as recommended by the RSTC and MTR; and
- (ii) Evaluate and provide clear advice on the suggested options and information provided for consideration in the remaining of current projects, or upscaling or replicating future R2R projects.

Socio-Economic Baseline Assessment Using Ecosystem Goods and Services (EGS)

Introduction/Background

1. In the First Series Technical Consultation of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC), the stakeholder consultation:

- (i) Supported the possibility to incorporate these frameworks into the training programme for the managers done by JCU (James Cook University) as a positive outcome;
- (ii) Supported capacity building opportunities offered through R2R funded initiatives such as EGS and Spatial prioritization work, to engage PIC students and researchers for experience and pursuing graduate programs of Masters, PhDs and post-doctorate;
- (iii) Encouraged strategic planning rolling out ESG trial work as appropriate in several project countries within the remaining period of the IW R2R project.

2. Noting the limited capacity to incorporate the ESG framework into the existing projects, it is unlikely that the EGS framework can be used in the existing project sites. However, scientific information collected from the project sites can certainly be useful when identifying and quantifying the ecosystem goods and services in any future work.

3. This paper will provide information on how the EGS framework can be used in future projects.

Key Issues

4. The decision to adopt EGS framework as a foundation of scientific and technical approach was made in the mid-term review report. At this stage, it was clear that the understanding of EGS framework and the capacity to incorporate it into the current projects was limited. Although expertise in this field is available in the Pacific region, the setting in of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closing of borders to mitigate its impacts constrained any support to the existing project.

5. In terms of the remaining time for this project, it is unlikely that any incorporation of EGS framework can be completed. However, with the understanding of the importance of adopting the EGS framework, it can be taken into consideration in the early stages of future projects. There are existing resources available that can be used to draw from for better understand of the ecosystem goods and services in the Pacific context.

6. A Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Management in Pacific Island Countries (MACBIO) project, implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), undertook economic assessments of marine and coastal ecosystem services and supporting the integration of results into national policies.

7. Through this work, the project produced a Guidance Manual on Economic Valuation of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services in the Pacific which follows the approach for assessing ecosystem services developed by The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) initiative.

8. The Guidance Manual can certainly assist any future project in incorporating the EGS framework in the Pacific, however, it is important to note that this manual focuses on 2 out of the 6 steps in the TEEB approach. This does not mean that the other steps are less important as those other steps produce policy-relevant information particularly the need for stakeholder engagement through the process.

9. The TEEB approach comprises six steps: -
- i. Specify and agree on key policy issues with stakeholders
 - ii. Identify the most relevant ecosystem services
 - iii. Define information needs and select appropriate methods
 - iv. Assess and value ecosystem
 - v. Identify and outline the pros and cons of policy options
 - vi. Review, refine and report.

10. Most of the scientific work that has been conducted in the current project can be useful in the first steps of the TEEB approach on any future projects. The main challenge may be in the valuation of EGS due to the limited capacity in the region, however, the economic valuation of ecosystem goods and services reports produced by IUCN under the MACBIO projects can be used to guide any valuation exercise required.

Conclusion

11. The incorporation of the EGS framework as a basis for scientific and technical approach for this project was challenging due to various reasons including limited capacity and funding, and that it came halfway through the life of the project. The current duration of this project may not be sufficient to incorporate EGS framework as many of them were already underway and some were near completion.

12. However, the EGS framework can certainly be taken into consideration in a case where this project is extended or in the development of similar projects in the future. There are existing tools available, including the guiding manual in the MACBIO project together with the economic valuation of ecosystem goods and services reports and the TEEB approach. The outcomes of the current project, particularly the scientific works, can certainly utilize the existing tools to build projects that provide a good understanding of the economic value of the ecosystem goods and services.

13. The R2R Technical Consultation is invited to: -

- (i) Discuss current delays and difficulties progressing EGS valuation works or trials as recommended by the RSTC and MTR; and
- (ii) Evaluate and provide clear advice on the suggested options and information provided for consideration in the remaining of current projects, or upscaling or replicating future R2R projects.