

# GEF International Waters Pacific Regional Ridge to Reef Project

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

## REPORT

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



22<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020



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## ABBREVIATIONS

DCRP	Disaster and Community Resilience Programme
DPSIR	Driver-Pressure-State-Impact-Response
EGS	Ecosystem Goods and Services
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEM	Geoscience, Energy and Maritime Division (Pacific Community)
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
HRR	Harmonised Results Reporting
IA	Implementing Agency/Agencies
ICM	Integrated Coastal Management
IDA	Island Diagnostic Analysis
IMC	Inter-Ministerial Committee
IW	International Waters
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
JCU	James Cook University
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid Term Review
MYCWP	Multi-Year Costed Work Plan
OGC	Open Geospatial Consortium
PCG	Programme Coordination Group
PFD	Programme Framework Document
PGC	Post Graduate Certificate
PIC	Pacific Island country
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIFS	Pacific Island Forum Secretariat
PMIS	Project Management Information System
PMU	Project Management Unit
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PSC	Project Steering Committee
R2R	Ridge to Reef
RaPCA	Rapid Priority Coastal Area Assessment
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
RPC	Regional Programme Coordinator
RPCG	Regional Programme Coordination Group
RPCU	Regional Programme Coordination Unit
RPSC	Regional Programme Steering Committee
RSC	Regional Programme Steering Committee
RSTC	Regional Science and Technical Committee
SAF	Strategic Action Framework
SDI	Spatial Data Infrastructure
SOC	State of the Coast
SOE	State of Environment
SPC	Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme
STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USP	University of the South Pacific



## INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Pacific Regional International Waters Ridge to Reef (IW R2R) Project and coordination support of the broader Pacific R2R Programme is carried out under the general guidance of the Regional Programme Steering Committee (RSC), specifically formed for this purpose. The RSC includes the designated national R2R Focal Points, Project Managers, and Heads of Lead Agencies, as well as GEF Operational Focal Points.

The role of the RSC is to govern the project, guiding its overall implementation and monitoring, as well as supporting programmatic coordination through the SPC Regional Programme Coordination Unit (RPCU). Representatives from the GEF Implementing Agencies (IA) – UNDP, FAO and UNEP participated in the meetings to foster cooperation and coordination of the National STAR (System for Transparent Allocation of Resources) projects in line with the R2R programmatic approach.

Due to constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fifth Regional Programme Steering Committee Meeting for the GEF Pacific International Waters Ridge to Reef Project (RSC-5) was conducted through a 2-day Zoom meeting.

Leading up to the RSC5, there were a series of information and consultation meetings with members in order to socialise and facilitate discussion and deeper understanding on key thematic areas so that they would be able to engage and govern effectively. The paper and presentations for these meetings are available at <https://www.pacific-r2r.org/meeting-documents>.



# 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The Fifth Regional Steering Committee Meeting for the GEF Pacific International Waters Ridge to Reef Project (IW R2R) was held on 22 and 23 October 2020. The meeting was conducted virtually. The provisional agenda is attached as **Annex 1**.
2. The meeting was attended by fifty five (55) representatives and delegates from participating project countries of Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Kingdom of Tonga, Nauru, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Palau, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Vanuatu, Niue, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP Bangkok Office and UNDP Pacific Office, Suva), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Pacific Community (SPC), University of the South Pacific (USP) The list of delegates and observers is attached as **Annex 2**.

## 1.1 Meeting Preliminaries and Opening Prayer

3. Ms Rhonda Robinson, Deputy Director of SPC's Disaster and Community Resilience Programme (DCRP) in the Geoscience, Energy and Maritime Division (GEM) welcomed participants and noted the series of meetings held over the past few weeks culminating in this Regional Steering Committee (RSC) meeting. She urged participants to stay engaged in the discussions.
4. Mr Sammy Airahui (Solomon Islands IW R2R Project Manager) delivered an opening prayer.

## 1.2 Opening remarks by the Chair

5. The Chair, Mr Chanel Iroi, Undersecretary Technical – Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (Solomon Islands) welcomed delegates to the fifth meeting of the RSC. Noting that the meeting was being conducted virtually, he reminded delegates of the need to be strictly guided by time allocations set out in the provisional agenda (**Annex 1**).

## 1.3 Welcome address on behalf of the Pacific Community (SPC)

6. The Director of SPC's Geoscience, Energy and Maritime Division (GEM), Dr Andrew Jones, welcomed participants on behalf of SPC's senior executive management, the GEM Division, and the R2R Project team. He noted the challenges of 2020 and the impacts of COVID-19 on people's lives in different ways and highlighted how these impacts cut across SPC's programmes. He also noted that the pandemic has impeded progress of the R2R and other projects. Dr Andrew Jones' welcome address is appended as **Annex 3a**.

## 1.4 Welcome addresses on behalf of the Global Environmental Facility Implementing Agencies

7. The United Nations Development Programme's Interim Deputy Resident Representative for the Pacific Office, Mr Kevin Petrini, welcomed participants to the meeting on behalf of UNDP, UNE and FAO. He urged decisive leadership that requires rising to the COVID-19 challenge and suggested considering new opportunities. Mr Petrini noted that the R2R activities are a part of a larger programme and urged stronger coordination and collaboration. He added this approach in the Pacific was unique and could provide lessons for other regions. Mr Petrini also encouraged countries to maximise their efforts to spend the USD1.2 million remaining in the budget allocation by partnering with other countries and development partners. Mr Kevin Petrini's welcome address is appended as **Annex 3b**.

## 1.5 Remarks by a Representative of the Government of Fiji

8. This agenda item was deferred and later cancelled in the absence of a delegate from Fiji's delegation.

9. The Committee appreciated the opening remarks offered by the SPC as Executing Agency and by UNDP on behalf of all R2R Implementing Agencies (UNDP, UNEP and FAO). Key messages include but not limited to: -
- i. The challenges of COVID-19 impacting on peoples' lives in Pacific Island countries including technical services supporting Pacific peoples, which is demonstrated by current progress of implementation of the GEF Pacific R2R Programme;
  - ii. That decisive leadership requires rising to the COVID-19 challenge and taking on new opportunities; and
  - iii. That the R2R approach in the Pacific is unique and activities are a part of a larger programme that requires stronger coordination and collaboration, and this could provide lessons for other regions.

## 2. ORGANISATION OF THE MEETING

### 2.1. Message from the Outgoing Chair, Solomon Islands

10. The outgoing Chair, Mr Chanel Iroi, Undersecretary – Technical, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology, noted the importance of this regional project and reminded participants that they have been mandated to implement the project workplan. He recognised the challenges to implementation, including the impact of COVID-19, which is impeding face to face meetings and technical assistance. However, implementation continues at national level and he acknowledged the work of the RPCU, including the Regional Programme Coordinator (RPC) Mr Samasoni Sauni, and the previous RPC, Mr Peter Cusack, for their efforts in supporting the in-country work.

11. The Chair requested that the RPCU continue to provide guidance to help fast-track activities as the project comes to an end and urged countries and project coordinators to support the regional team in Suva to make this happen. Mr Iroi added that despite challenges there has been progress and he acknowledged everyone's efforts to date. He stressed that the R2R interventions on the ground are for the benefit of our people in this region.

12. The Chair, in accordance with the provisions of the Rules of Procedure, handed over the role of Chair to the Vice-Chair (Palau) to preside over the meeting as new Chair of the RSC.

### 2.2 Call meeting to Order (Palau – Chair presiding)

13. Ms Gwendalyn Kingtaro Sisor, Senior Projects Manager of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment & Tourism, Palau, resumed the Chair's role on behalf of Hon. F. Umiich Sengebau, Minister of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism. She acknowledged and thanked the outgoing Chair for his leadership at the last RSC4 meeting and over the year.



## 2.3 Appointment of Officers (Vice-Chair and 2 Rapporteurs)

14. The Chair called for nominations for a Vice-Chair, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, which provides for a rotation between Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia. It was determined that the representative be nominated from Polynesia (Samoa, Niue, Tonga and Cook Islands). Vanuatu and Solomon Islands nominated Samoa as Vice Chair. As there was no delegate from Samoa online, it was agreed that the Secretariat would contact Samoa on this out of session.
15. At a later part of the meeting, Mr Malaki Iakopo, Assistant CEO for Samoa's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, confirmed and accepted nomination for Samoa as Vice-Chair. Palau and Tonga volunteered to take on the role of rapporteurs.

16. The Committee endorsed Mr Malaki Iakopo of Samoa as Vice-Chair of the 2020 RSC 5th Regional Programme Steering Committee Virtual Meeting. The Committee further endorsed the Kingdom of Tonga and Palau as Rapporteurs of the 2020 RSC 5th Regional Programme Steering Committee Meeting.

## 2.4 Documentation available to the meeting

17. The GEF Pacific R2R Regional Programme Coordinator, Mr Samasoni Sauni, directed participants to the meeting papers, listed in GEF IW R2R/RPSC.5/Inf.04. Four additional papers, which were reports of the previous week's meetings, were added to the list and posted online.

## 2.5 Programme of work and arrangements for the conduct of the meeting

18. The Secretariat, Mr Sauni, introduced the Provisional Annotated Agenda GEF IW R2R RSC.5/WP.02, which sets out the arrangements for the conduct of the meeting. It follows the meeting agenda with clear short explanations of what each agenda item entails and the expected outcomes. The meeting noted that the rules of procedure provide for the Chair to guide the meeting, including responding to requests from heads of delegations and interested delegates who may wish to speak in the course of the meeting. Also, the Chair may consider and grant permission to observers interested to make an intervention.

# 3. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE 4th RSC MEETING AND MEETING AGENDA

## 3.1 Adoption of last meeting record and action items

19. The Secretariat, Mr Sauni presented the report of the 4th meeting of the RSC (report available as GEF IW R2R/RSC.5/Inf.05) and introduced the meeting paper GEF IW R2R/ RSC.5/ WP.01 noting that outstanding action items would be discussed in subsequent agenda items.
20. The Chair stated that the meeting report was finalised, circulated, and posted online following an iterative process of clearing it out of session.

### 3.2 Adoption of meeting agenda

21. The Chair introduced the Provisional Meeting Agenda, GEF IW R2R/ RSC.5/Inf.01, and there were no amendments proposed.

22. The Committee adopted the RSC4 Meeting Report and noted actions taken by the RPCU, national projects and partners in response to specific items as set out in the working paper GEF IW R2R/RSC.5/WP.01. The meeting also adopted the meeting agenda as presented.

## 4. COUNTRY STATUS REPORTING:

24. The Chair introduced the agenda item noting that unlike the past years, this year country reporting focused on STAR/IW R2R projects delivering on their focal areas and programmatic lessons learned. She stated the importance of knowing the progress of delivery of targets as the project approached closure.

24. The GEF Pacific R2R Country Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser, Mr Jose Antonio, presented the meeting paper GEF IW R2R/ RSC.5/WP.03 specific to the outcomes of the country status reporting, which was conducted over two Pre-RSC panel discussions on 8 and 13 October, 2020. The sessions were attended by thirty-four (34) participants with reports presented by six (6) child projects (from Fiji, Nauru, Palau, RMI, Tuvalu and the Regional IW R2R Project). Kiribati STAR R2R Project made available the presentation material but was unable to present due to connectivity issues.

25. Implementation progress varied among the R2R Programme child projects and generally, none have been fully achieved with the projects being hampered by strategic limitations. Limitations identified by the participants at the Pre-RSC Panel Discussion include poor project design, ambitious targets, change in political atmosphere, changed priorities, ineffective governance, turfing, competing interest among stakeholders, difficulty in enforcing processes and operational problems such as staff turnover. The COVID-19 pandemic has also limited the mobility of staff and consultants and thus affected timely production of outputs.

26. Mr Antonio highlighted lessons learned from the programmatic implementation as follows:

i. **Strategy:** 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 project should have considered the temporal aspect (started at the same time), and the steering and governance bodies harmonised – all geared towards the achievement of Programme outcomes.

ii. **Steering:** Mainstreaming R2R requires strong political support from the highest governance level through the inter-ministerial committee (IMC). It is assumed that the IMC shares the responsibility of joint action and decision for achieving results. In practice however, Project Steering Committees (PSC) are established solely for the purpose of project steering rather than serving as platform for mainstreaming R2R. Some PSCs are more 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. 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. 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 PICs in April 2013 in Australia, is not functional. 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 IW R2R project.

- iii. **Cooperation:** 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 emphasised 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.
  - iv. **Processes:** 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.
27. On thematic area/s for upscaling, Mr Antonio stressed that the R2R Programme must demonstrate inclusive steering, cooperation and meaningful participation and responsive processes. Specifically, the meeting noted that upscaling of a well-designed R2R programme requires:
- i. A well-defined strategy based on agreed science to policy continuum (i.e. common and enforceable implementation framework) and clear processes directed towards safeguarding ecosystem goods and services, improving climate resilience and improved livelihoods;
  - ii. An effective, meaningful participation, ownership and commitment by stakeholders;
  - iii. Demonstrable political support, community acceptance and active involvement; and
  - iv. Realistic timelines and adequate resources to deliver project objectives and outcomes that respond to domestic priorities or aspirations and meeting international targets.
28. Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Tonga, Ms Rosamond Bing observed that there had been some real reflection on the programmatic approach of the project with a focus on lessons learned and how upscaling may occur in future. She commended the concise nature of the paper and presentation and stated that this reflected the significant attention given by countries on this since the MTR. Countries have taken on advice from the MTR and worked on implementation as best they could.
29. Mr Nick Metherall of USP (observer), asked if there were plans for upscaling in the longer term, noting the challenges on predicting funding going forward. The Secretariat acknowledged the value of the question but noted that this was beyond the scope of this agenda, which was essentially an information session on the report on the 15 child projects under the USD90.4 M investment from GEF. The observer was advised that his question will

be appropriately discussed during the briefing meeting between RPCU and USP next week once their consultancy contract is signed.

30. Chair recognised the presence of observers who have provided significant expertise to the projects, and that proper introduction is required before making an intervention. The Secretariat advised that Mr Metherall and others from USP are observing the meeting at the invitation of the RPCU-SPC. SPC is currently negotiating contracts with USP to complete some of the work of R2R and contractual arrangements with vendors are expected to be formalised soon.

31. The Committee considered and noted the outcomes and recommendations emerging from panel discussions regarding progress of implementation across all the R2R Programme child projects (see details in GEF IW R2R/RSC.5/WP.03). This is specifically linked to STAR/IW R2R projects delivering on their focal areas and programmatic lessons learned. The Committee further recognised and encouraged progress in implementing the programmatic approach of the current project, which provides lessons for future R2R upscaling and replication.

## 5. A STOCKTAKE OF THE WORK SO FAR

### 5.1 MTR Recommendations and Management Responses on the GEF Pacific R2R Project - Updates

32. Mr Jose Antonio of the Secretariat provided an update of progress in implementing the RSC-approved MTR recommendations and management responses. The detailed updates are provided in the meeting paper GEF IW R2R/ RSC.5/WP.04. The MTR was conducted from February 2019 to June 2019 using a highly participatory approach and resulted in a rating by the review team of 'moderately unsatisfactory'. Eighteen (18) recommendations were made for enhancing achievement of results.
33. Mr Antonio discussed a matrix showing the status of implementation of the MTR recommendations, and noted that three (3) recommendations have been completed, fourteen (14) are ongoing and one (1) is pending (MTR Recommendation 18: Gender issue). He advised on the work under way to document experiences from national level in implementing the programmatic approach. He requested that all child projects actively participate in and provide support to the two consultancies on (a) options for mainstreaming and (b) human capacity assessment. He stressed that the success of the consultancies will depend on active participation and input from the countries to help draw out lessons and in-depth information.

34. The Committee endorsed the recommendations presented from the panel/breakout discussions on progress of the medium-term review (MTR) recommendations approved by RSC4 (see details GEF IW R2R/RSC.5/WP.06). The Committee also noted the impact of COVID-19 and related operational challenges hindering progress of implementation. Therefore, the Committee supported efforts that use alternative modalities through adaptive measures and other related opportunities that would allow progressive implementation of the MTR recommendations.

## 5.2 Status of the regional IW R2R project

35. Mr Sauni presented the working paper GEF IW R2R/RSC.5/WP.05, which discusses progress and highlights of the GEF Pacific IW R2R Project over the previous 12 months (July 2019 to June 2020). Mr Sauni noted that the project was able to fulfil the minimum deliverables as outlined in the Multi-Year Costed Work Plan (MYCWP) of the regional IW R2R project. The assessments of the project were made by SPC, UNDP Pacific Office, Suva and the UNDP-GEF Bangkok Office. The overall rating of the project implementation has improved to ‘moderately satisfactory’ since last reported at the RSC meeting. However, there was no change in the overall rating relative to achieving development objectives, currently levelled at ‘moderately unsatisfactory’.
36. Several projects are still pending or in progress and progress has also been impeded due to current challenges. However, there has been progress and the paper provide several highlights regarding current implementation of project outputs and activities associated with national and regional MYCWPs and logframes. Mr Sauni mentioned the successful progress on the spatial prioritisation procedures modelling work and its testing and trialling in Vanuatu. Several other highlights include:
  - i. Postgraduate certificate in Ridge to Reef Sustainable Development graduation for 36 students, and twenty (20) of which are women;
  - ii. Launch of the Pacific R2R Programme website, and ongoing redevelopment work including project management information system (PMIS);
  - iii. Launch of the Pacific R2R Programme Newsletter;
  - iv. Pacific R2R Programme lessons learned briefing, and country briefings for Tuvalu, Palau, Samoa, Cook Islands and Papua New Guinea;
  - v. Endorsement of multi-year workplans by the RSC (inclusive of project extension period); and
  - vi. Consultancies for conducting RapCA for Tonga, Cook Islands and Fiji were commissioned.
37. The GEF Pacific R2R Communication and Knowledge Management Adviser, Dr Fononga Vainga Mangisi-Mafileo, updated the committee on progress on MTR Recommendation 11 (and related recommendations) on lessons learned for the Pacific R2R Programme. She explained that the draft regional framework for the compilation and development of lessons learned for Pacific R2R Programme was endorsed by the RSC4 meeting in August 2019. This was followed by the circulation of a Terms of Reference for report writers provided to IW/STAR project coordinators and managers (December 2020). Country briefings on lessons learned were conducted for the regional programme (September 2020); with separate country briefings for Tuvalu, Palau, Samoa, Cook Islands and PNG (Q2 – Q3 2020). Countries had requested extensions from June 30 for submissions on titles and summaries to July 29.
38. A table was presented showing a preliminary consolidation of lessons learned contributions as of October 19, 2020.

Country	Project		Thematic areas
Cook Islands	STAR	IW	Capacity Building and sustainability, Conflict Resolution (land ownership) (STAR) and Project design (IW)
Fiji	STAR		Participatory planning and policy process (community to cabinet) 1.2.2 Functional catchment management committees in Tuva, Votua in Ba and Labasa; 3.2.4.2 Knowledge management - Biophysical/ demographic/Socioeconomic data collected and analysed; 1.3, 1.5 ICM Plans developed for 4 catchments.
FSM	* STAR		
Kiribati			
Nauru	STAR		1.3, 1.5 Participatory Planning and policy - Development and approval of the Coastal Fisheries & Aquaculture Act 2020. Draft LMMA plans to be later included in regulations
Niue			
Palau	STAR	IW	1.2.6 Capacity building (water quality monitoring program), 1.2.3, 1.5, 1.2.6 mainstreaming to sectoral policy (Greenboots), 1.2.2, 1.4 MNRET creating new institutional structures establishing a Bureau of Environment and Planning
PNG			
RMI	STAR		1.2.2, 3.2.4.2, 3.2.3 Participatory planning and policy - REIMAANLAK 8 Step Process as the operational guideline – knowledge management (incl. traditional knowledge) MIS, participatory planning and institutional structures – PAN Office and Action Plan (Output 1.1-1.3 and 3.1-3.3) , 1.2.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.2.6 Outputs 2.1 – 2.4,
Samoa			
Solomon Islands			
Tonga		IW	1.1.3, 1.2.4, 1.2.6, 1.2.7, 1.5 Community to Cabinet stakeholder engagement, media and policy advocacy
Tuvalu	STAR	IW	1.1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.3, , 1.2.7, 1.3, 1.5 8 ISPs have R2R principles integrated that incorporates ICM, MSP and IWRM
Vanuatu		IW	1.1.3, 1.2.3, 1.2.4, 1.2.7 Improved inter-agency partnership in sustainable catchment management and 2) Community to local government partnerships for sustainable land and surface water use preserving livelihood

Table 1: Pacific R2R Programme Lessons Learned submissions as at October 19, 2020

39. Mr Sauni discussed the budget utilisation up to 30 June 2020, noting that USD6.35M has been used with a balance of USD3.95M remaining of the USD10.3M. He stated that with the amount of funds remaining and based on the previous and projected expenditure, the project would benefit from an extension to 30 September, 2022. The meeting noted the reasons for an extension that include strategic issues of COVID-19, procurement and other operational challenges inhibiting progress and challenged delivery on the targets and the adaptive strategies that the project has taken. The RPCU continues to support countries through these adaptive measures.

### 5.3 Plenary Discussion & Decisions

40. Ms Rosamond Bing of Tonga requested clarification on the status of MTR recommendation 18 on gender issues. She also noted that retention of local capacity is not on track and explained that from Tonga's experience, it is an issue that is beyond their control. She pointed out that strategic framework is also not on track. The RPCU clarified that a consultant will be recruited to undertake the MTR recommendation on gender inclusion with the intention of conducting a gender audit of all R2R guidelines and manuals produced.
41. UNDP acknowledged the good progress made on the project and noted this was through the efforts of the RPCU, participating countries and project coordinators. UNDP supported the need for countries to provide information to the consultants – suggested reports, social media and other materials could help.
42. Mr Chanel Iroi of the Solomon Islands encouraged countries to spend the funds allocated to them following their approved MYCWPs and logframes. He also encouraged countries to increase their efforts and to seek out assistance from other countries as well as from CROP agencies, UNDP and RPCU so everyone can continue to improve on completing their activities and deliver results.
43. FSM IW R2R Project – Lead Agency Head, Kosrae Conservation and Safety Organization, Mr Andy George noted their agreement with SPC is to complete the project to end of December 2020 and asked whether there is opportunity to address extending this. The Secretariat advised this will be discussed under agenda item 8, however noting that the request for more time to deliver on FSM's stress reduction targets will be accommodated favourably.

44. The Committee considered and noted progress of implementing the Regional IW R2R project as demonstrated by numerous highlights presented in the paper. This includes the successful completion of preparing the spatial prioritisation procedures and modelling and trialling it in Vanuatu. The Committee recognised such successes before and during the current COVID-19 pandemic and registered their satisfaction on the overall rating of the project implementation as 'moderately satisfactory.'

45. The Committee further noted slow progress towards achieving stress reduction targets which have been revised in line with requirements of national updated logframes and multi-year costed workplans. The poor result of achieving targets is reflected in the overall rating for achieving development objectives remaining at 'moderately unsatisfactory.' Equally, the progress is disappointing on progressing the regional framework for the compilation and development of lessons learned for the Pacific R2R Programme. The Committee encouraged stakeholders whose submissions are yet to be received by RPCU to make an effort to complete and submit their lessons learned.



## 6. REPORTS TO THE COMMITTEE

### 6.1 The Regional Science and Technical Committee (RSTC)

46. Dr Isoa Korovulavula presented the outcomes of the 6th RSTC Meeting, noting the reappointment of Professor Marcus Sheaves and Dr Isoa Korovulavula into their current positions as chair and co-chair, respectively. The outcomes report is appended as Annex 4.

47. The Committee noted and endorsed the RSTC report, which includes approval of specific recommendations set out in that report, and several are outlined below.

- i. Progress implementation of the MTR recommendations
- ii. Current status of the Regional IW R2R project
- iii. Regional guidelines – ‘Modified’ Science to Policy theory of change
- iv. Regional guidelines – Spatial Prioritisation Modelling Procedures
- v. No-cost extension of 12 months
- vi. Next phase post R2R

### 6.2 James Cook University (JCU) Post Graduate Course Update

48. Mr Sauni presented an update on the R2R postgraduate course, discussing the progress by semester. He advised that some students had decided not to continue with their studies. For 2020 Semester 2, the graduate Diploma programme has been split into two streams: Management and Technical.

49. He outlined the issue of students not completing their course requirements and explained challenges being faced by JCU in maintaining its academic standards as a result. He urged participants who are current students on the course to commit to their studies or decide to withdraw from the course.

50. The Committee noted and endorsed the JCU’s course report which included the following decisions: -

- iv. Supported current efforts of both JCU and RPCU-SPC to assist students who are falling behind their studies;
- v. Further supported preparation of dedicated workplans by JCU that would allow students to catch up and submit late assignments;
- vi. Considered the seriousness of the matter where university regulations are continually challenged and possibly undermined to accommodate commitments to enable students to complete late assignments and therefore continue their studies; and
- vii. Endorsed that if all efforts fail and students do not satisfy the course requirements, the JCU and RPCU will request the students’ withdrawal from the course.

### 6.3 Regional Programme Coordination Group (RPCG)

51. Dr Winifereti Nainoca of UNDP reported on the outcomes of the RPCG, held virtually on 20 October 2020. The RPCG Meeting highlights are attached as Annex 5. Dr Nainoca reported two strategic points to the Committee as follows:

52. **Strategic point 1:** The RPCG stressed the coordination role of the RPCU and strongly urged the STAR projects to complete the Harmonised Results Reporting (HRR) template to enable reporting of results of the child projects and to share data to populate the regional information database and to assist with the lessons learnt documentation process.

53. Dr Nainoca reminded participants that the STAR and the IW R2R work are part of the same GEF package and that the mandate of the regional project is to report on the overall programme. STAR must report back to SPC on the focal areas it is working on through the HRR. She expressed disappointment that this was not happening. She reminded the committee that the Project Identification Form (PIF) of the GEF Pacific R2R program was endorsed in 2013 by the 14 Pacific Island countries. The same PIF was used by the STAR projects as basis for packaging their respective STAR project documents recognising the role of the Regional IW R2R project's Regional Programme Coordination Unit (RPCU) to coordinate the reporting of the Programme results and lessons learned.
54. **Strategic Point 2** – GEF IAs (UNDP, FAO, UNEP) to strongly advocate on the establishment of STAR and IW joint steering committee, support the consultancies on mainstreaming R2R and Human Capacity assessment, and promote the tested measures resulting from the programmatic implementation of R2R, in particular the land-sea model application, and contribute in populating the regional database infrastructure.

55. The Committee noted and endorsed the 5th Regional Programme Coordination Group (RPCG) virtual meeting report, covering amongst others the following decisions:
- i. Supported the coordination role of RPCU in reporting results of the child projects along the GEF focal areas using the HRR; child/STAR projects proactively share data to populate the Regional Database & Infrastructure; and
  - ii. GEF IA strongly advocated for the establishment of STAR and IW joint Steering Committees, supported the conduct of the mainstreaming R2R and capacity needs consultancies, and promoted the tested measures resulting from the programmatic implementation of R2R – e.g. land-sea model application (e.g. RMI interest on this), and regional dbase or infrastructure.

## 7. LAUNCHING OF THE R2R WEBSITE RE-DEVELOPMENT PHASE 2

56. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo, of the Secretariat, introduced the paper on the Launching of the Pacific R2R Programme website and related online decision support tools. A brief background on this project activity is available on the meeting paper GEF IW R2R/RSC.5/WP.07.
57. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo noted that SPC through the IW R2R Project provides programme support in areas of science-based planning, human capital development, policy and strategic planning, results-based management, and knowledge sharing. She explained that coordination, capacity building and knowledge sharing was the “glue” in the programmatic approach. She highlighted that knowledge management and communications initiatives were key to capturing and sharing lessons from national demonstration projects toward global benefit.

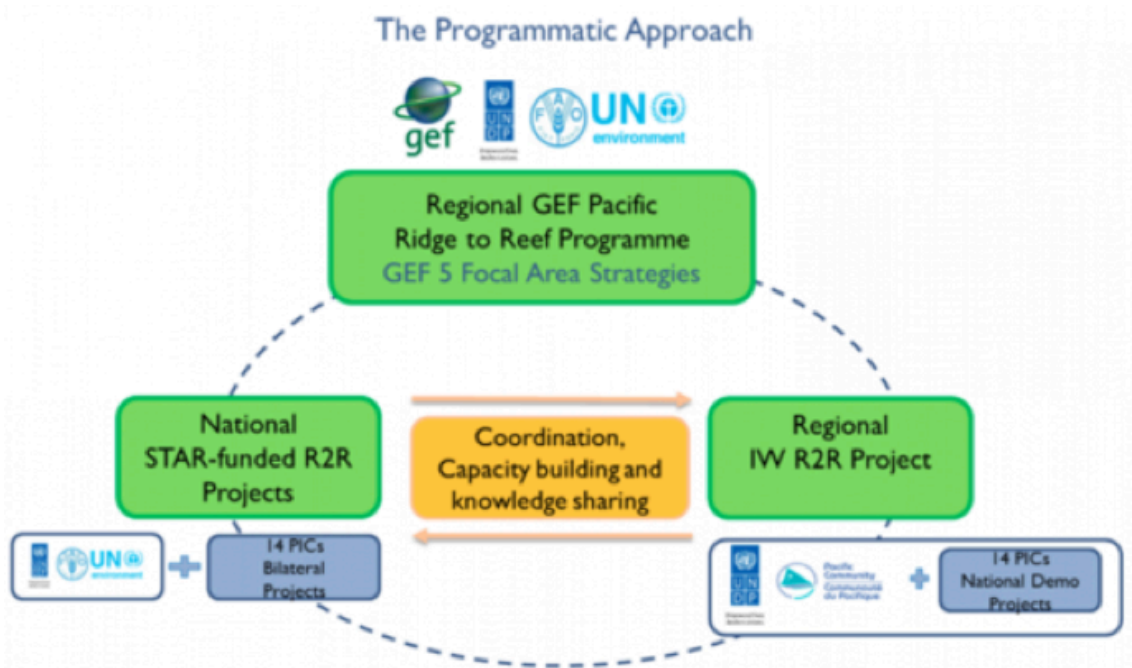


Figure 1: The Pacific R2R Programmatic Approach

58. To contextualise the launch, Dr Mangisi-Mafileo highlighted a slide from 2018 in Townsville, as a refresher for participants. She explained that global experience in integrated natural resource and environmental management had demonstrated that efforts to integrate water, land and coastal management have often been of less priority when introduced at the national and sub-national levels of government.
59. As a result, national leaders of these processes needed to be able to effectively communicate the benefits of integrated approaches across a broad range of government agencies and local institutions in order to impact: policy and development planning; investment in efforts to reduce stress on natural resources and improve environmental state; and in strengthening community engagement in management.
60. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo continued that the terminal evaluation of the GEF Pacific IWRM project highlighted that communications and knowledge management were critical elements in the efforts to raise awareness, to stimulate support for necessary policy and legal reforms, and for global outreach with donors and sister initiatives in the Caribbean and the Indian and Atlantic Oceans PICs. In the same review, it was also identified that communications and

knowledge management initiatives of the Pacific IWRM initiative were essential in ensuring that best practices generated through national IWRM demonstration projects and national policy development processes were captured, shared and effectively communicated to guide the longer-term sustainability and scaling up of investments.

61. The Regional IW R2R Project builds on these achievements through development of national and regional platforms for managing information and sharing best practices and lessons learned from efforts of this project to support the mainstreaming of the integration of water, land, forest and coastal management.
62. Central to the Communications and Knowledge Management Strategies (2016) supporting the programme, Dr Mangisi-Mafileo discussed the Theory of Change for decision-support tools. The data harvested from the various processes (Spatial Prioritisation, State of Coast) provide the basis for development of knowledge products which lead to information for policy makers.

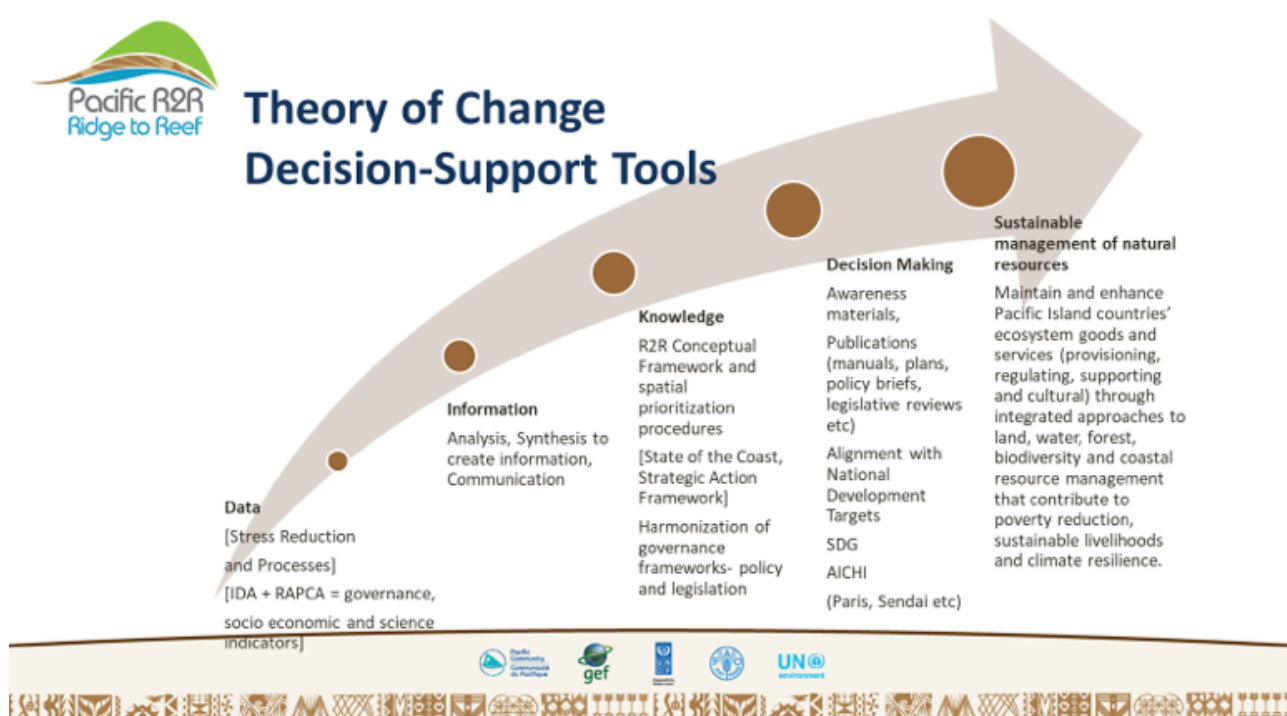


Figure 2: Regional International Waters Ridge to Reef (IW R2R) Project Theory of Change Decision-Support Tools

63. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo outlined user statistics from the R2R website, highlighting the indication that there is strong appetite for information. She also noted that users are depositing material on the portal.
64. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo explained that the RPCU has also been developing the Pacific R2R State of Coast Platform with key features in the database enabling geospatial data to be shared between users, groups, and the general-public. Advancing the ridge to reef concept would require access to spatial data and related documents to do with the environment, governance, socio-economic and traditional ecological knowledge. Equally, the broader application of Ecosystem Goods and Services (EGS) & Driver-Pressure-State-Impact-Response (DPSIR) approaches provide an opportunity for better coordination and population of the Spatial Data Infrastructure and information management systems for the Pacific R2R Programme.



## Website Redevelopment – Fast Facts

- **Phase 1** soft launch on **World Water Day** on March 22.
- Pacific R2R website results (Aug 30, 2020):
  - ✓ 3,304 users (target 100). Exceeded 100-user target,
  - ✓ 25,584 page views,
  - ✓ Bounce rate: 25% (26% - 40% rates excellent)
  - ✓ 2279 downloads
  - ✓ 167 countries visited
  - ✓ Most visited page:
    - Resource library
    - News
    - Project pages
    - Capacity development
    - Science portal

### Phase 2

- **Science Portal and the Pacific State of the Coast (SoC) system and database launch**
- Pacific R2R Science Database Training for PMs 2 October
- Follow-up country specific training for in-country GIS specialists
- Online regional and national portals developed
- Roster of national and regional experts and practitioners developed and deployed
- A virtual Content Management System training September 15-16 for STAR and IW projects to update, maintain and enhance the content of their respective online project pages.
- Launch of the first Pacific R2R Programme newsletter.

### Challenges:

- PMIS development delay due to implementation issues.
- Related WP.03 Status on implementing MTR Recommendations and Management Responses



Figure 3: Pacific R2R Programme website redevelopment fast facts

65. Mr. Sachindra Singh, Head of SPC Geoinformatics Unit and lead on developing the infrastructure, introduced the State of the Coast (SOC) Platform, stating that the platform aims to provide a strong foundation that enables users to do advanced mapping and visualisation by overlaying information. He explained that data by itself is not useful; but, by overlaying different levels of information, users can derive substantive information for decision making. This can help identify priority conservation areas on land for greatest impact on marine conservation; test proposed terrestrial and marine protection and restoration policy action and model the effect on marine resources; and develop a decision support tool to identify synergies and trade-offs in coastal conservation across terrestrial and marine areas.
66. Mr Singh stressed the importance of “good” data, noting the need for comparative data collection methodologies and validation of data provided. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo reiterated and reinforced the innovation of the R2R conceptual framework and the data to decision-making infrastructure and processes supporting decision-makers in Pacific small island development states. She stressed that decision makers would be able to explore different R2R scenarios in their specific contexts, understand trade-offs, and decide on the most suitable options informing their action and future investments.
67. SPC Deputy Director General (DDG), Dr Audrey Aumua, addressed the Committee via a video message. Dr Aumua stressed that Pacific islanders’ livelihoods and their survival depend on the environment from ridge to reef and beyond and that maintaining and conserving these ecosystems is critical. She conveyed that the R2R or “whole of island” approach ensures that policies, multiple sectors, agencies and community interests are properly considered and integrated to ensure sustainable development through integrated governance and participatory planning and management of resources.
68. Dr Aumua observed that by having access to technical data and information, documents, news and results, professional contacts and expertise, members of this knowledge network will be able to effectively contribute and participate in achieving a common goal – to maintain and enhance the state of our environment. She emphasised that harvesting and publishing



the lessons from years of implementation experience in this integrated governance and management approach is critical, to guide investments in the future.

69. In closing, Dr Aumua expressed that SPC is proud to partner with the Pacific Island countries, the Global Environment Facility, GEF implementing agencies in delivering this very important environmental initiative in the region by connecting people with the conservation and preservation of their environment for sustained and enhanced livelihoods and resilience.
70. Thanking SPC DDG Dr. Aumua, the Chair expressed her pleasure to join participants to celebrate the launch of the Pacific R2R Programme website and online decision-support tools and infrastructure to help the region better govern and manage resources. As Chair for the 5th Regional Steering Committee on behalf of the Palau GEF Political Focal Point and Minister of Environment and Tourism the Honourable F. Umiich Sengebau, she officially launched the Pacific R2R Programme website and associated online tools, requesting participants to please observe the shared screen online transition updating the R2R Roster of Expert and Practitioners.

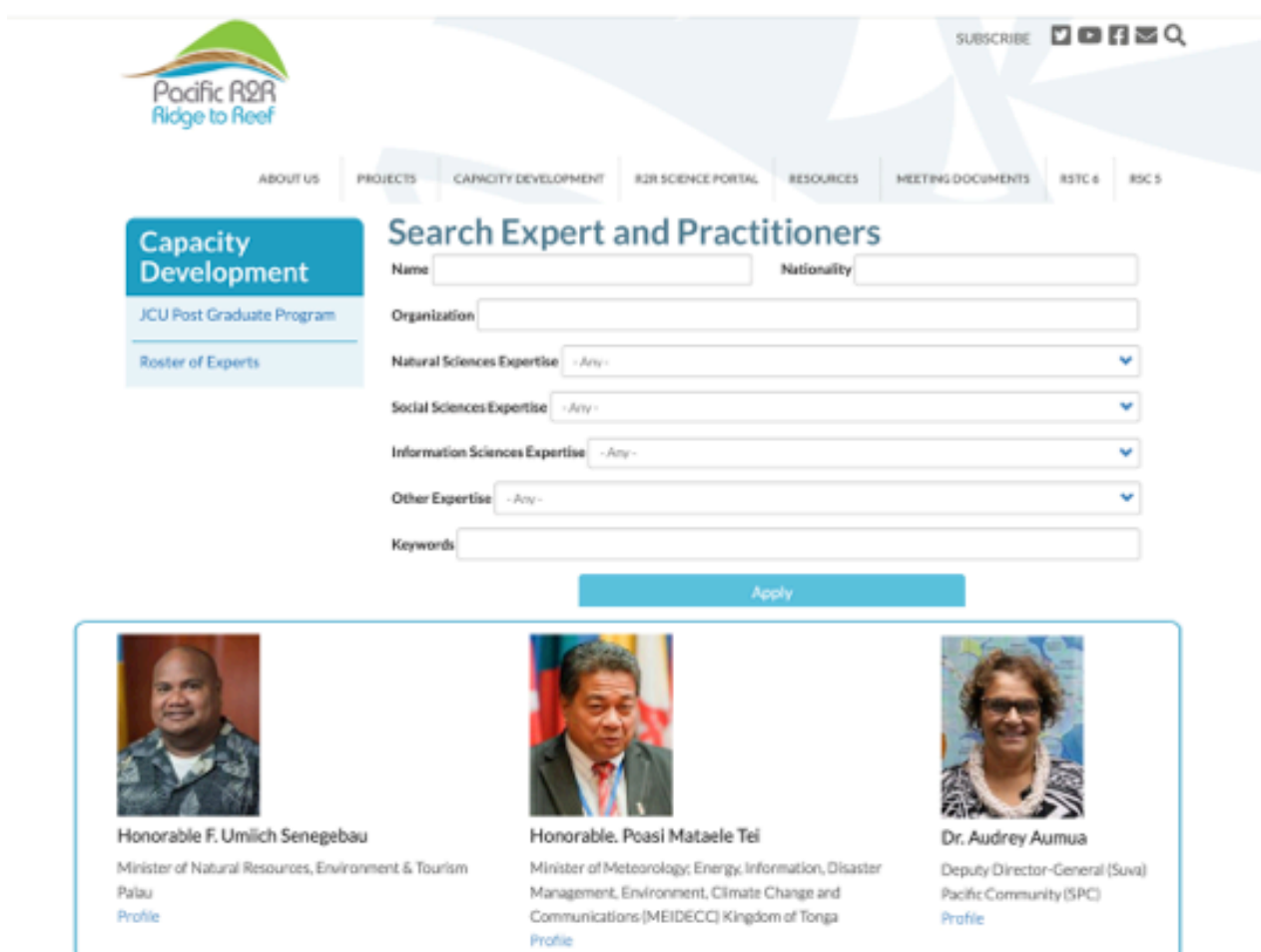


Figure 4: Pacific R2R Programme Roster of Experts and Practitioners after launch

71. Chair expressed that she was very pleased to see the Minister of Palau and GEF Political Focal Point on the Roster of R2R Experts and Practitioners. She requested a round of applause for the achievement of this great milestone, inviting the rest of the Committee to please update the Roster of Experts and Practitioners with their details as appropriate. She emphasised that she looked forward to growing this network, sharing and learning for the sustainable development of Pacific island nations, the region and the global community.
72. UNDP Regional Technical Adviser Dr. Jose Padilla also congratulated the countries and encouraged them to populate the Roster and grow the network to support implementation.

73. The Committee expressed satisfaction with the launching of the R2R website redevelopment and online support tools, such as the Science Portal and the Roster of R2R Experts and Practitioners. The Committee endorsed with appreciation key messages from SPC Deputy Director General, Dr Audrey Aumua, and Palau Minister of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism, Hon. F. Umiich Sengebau.
74. Having shared congratulatory notes for an achievement of launching this significant milestone, the Committee agreed to update the Roster of Experts and Practitioners with delegates and practitioners' details as appropriate. Looking forward, the Committee further endorsed growing the R2R network to support implementation, sharing and learning for the sustainable development of Pacific island nations, the region and the global community. The media release of the launch is appended as Annex 6.

## 8. MULTI-YEAR COSTED WORK PLAN FOR THE REGIONAL IW R2R PROJECT

75. Mr Jose Antonio of the Secretariat introduced the working paper GEF IW R2R/RSC.5/WP.08 on the multi-year costed workplan and budget (MYCWP) for the Regional International Waters R2R Project. Mr Antonio advised that following the MTR, the project had gained momentum and had progressed steadily, with adaptive measures identified to address previous delays and issues. This is evident in the Project Implementation Report July 2019 to June 2020, which rated the project implementation moderately satisfactory (improving from the previous rating of moderately unsatisfactory). The project had been on track for completion by 30th of September 2021 but has been set back with COVID-19.
76. Despite strong action to work within the COVID-19 disruptions, the setbacks and delays continue to grow, particularly where external technical expertise is required (through consultancies or through RPCU). Mr Antonio explained that an assessment of the situation suggests that, as of October 2020, with travel restrictions still in place, the project will need 11 to 12 months to recover. As of this reporting, Palau and Cook Islands were granted extensions. In addition, FSM, Niue, Nauru, PNG and Tonga have expressed their intention for additional time to implement the national activities. This will be processed once the RSC endorse the second extension of the Regional IW R2R project.
77. The revised MYCWP considers the proposal to request an additional 12 months no-cost extension (covering 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022) to give enough time to produce quality outputs and taking into account national procurement policies and decision making. Budget implications for MYCWP in relation to the 12-month extension include:
  - (i) financing the approved MYCWP of the national demonstrations;
  - (ii) financing ongoing commitments such as JCU Post-graduate certificate (PGC)/Diploma, regional consultancies, and terminal evaluation;
  - (iii) budget allocation for nationally procured consultants to carry out regional activities in anticipation of the approval of the second no-cost extension by UNDP;
  - (iv) reallocation of travel budget in anticipation of the prolonged COVID-19 Pandemic (lasting until June 2021); and
  - (v) reserved travel budget for RSC, RSTC & JCU face to face meetings in 2021 in anticipation of the lifting of travel ban due to Covid-19 by June 2021.

78. The budget allocations were outlined, noting that 56 per cent is allocated to support the modified science to policy continuum work. Mr Antonio congratulated Palau and Tuvalu for closing/completing their projects, observed that several demonstration projects were yet to utilise their funds, and stressed the need to focus on deliverables in terms of achieving outputs that contribute to the outcomes. He outlined the national demonstration end dates and further discussed the difficulties in meeting these, noting that FSM, Niue, Nauru, PNG and Tonga have requested extensions to their current end dates. Six projects (Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu) have indicated commitment to complete the modified Science to Policy Continuum.
79. Mr Antonio explained that the process for requesting a no-cost extension would be the same as was done for the first extension request and would require revisiting the logical framework (to ascertain the outputs that are yet to be delivered, then updating the corresponding MYCWP indicating the schedule when the outputs are delivered and how much resources will be needed), national and SPC approval processes and preparation of a letter of variation (see Figure 5). The RPCU indicated its resolve to assist countries with this.

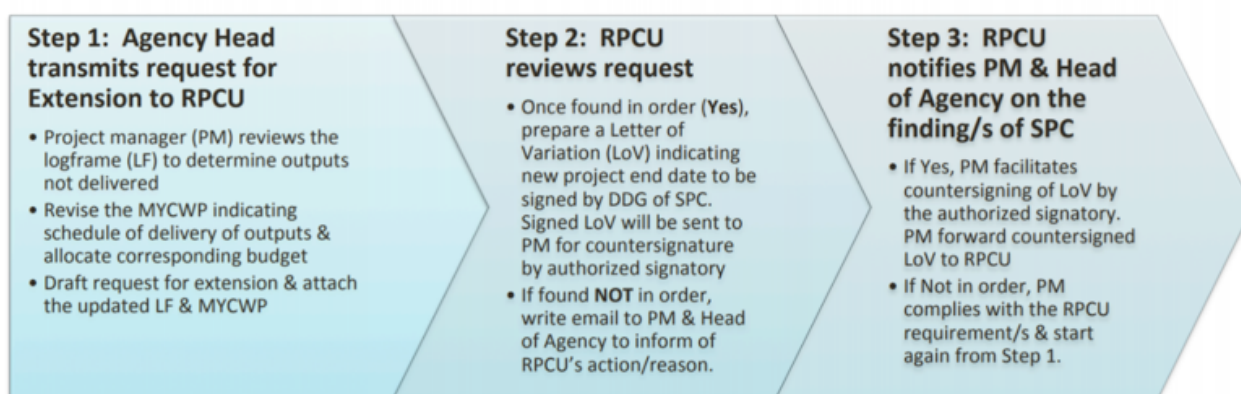


Figure 5: Process for requesting a no-cost extension for national IW R2R projects.

80. Mr Malaki Iakopo (Samoa) asked if there were mechanisms to assist those projects that have overspent their budgets. The RPCU advised that the aim is to support countries to deliver the outputs of their respective national demonstration projects and that one of the considerations of the extension is that funds are available. RPCU assured that countries will be assisted to ensure that no one will be left behind and unsupported to deliver their commitments indicated in the logframe and approved MYCWP.
81. Mr Andy George of FSM asked for clarification on what would happen to the regional project if the request for extension is not approved or if countries decide to complete their MYCWPs. Mr Sauni explained that the regional IW project depends on the delivery of the national projects. Regional led activities (SOC, etc) depend on the outcomes of the national demonstration projects. He noted that 56 per cent of the budget is allocated for implementing the science workplan. For countries finishing off, the RPCU remained committed to support another request for extension by the national demonstration projects if this is aligned with their respective logframe, Mr. Sauni added.
82. It was also noted that only Palau has completed its deliverables – all other national demonstration projects are yet to complete their targets. This means that additional time is needed to deliver the outputs.
83. Ms Rhonda Robinson of the Secretariat stressed that the additional time being sought will be supporting a fairly robust close down process – from executing agency point of view, it is important to close out the project properly and experience with similar large projects shows that at least 6 months are needed to do this right.

84. Mr Chanel Iroi (Solomon Islands) stated that the Solomon Islands in-country interventions are almost complete, however the regional component needs more time and funds to produce quality outputs. He noted that the funds earmarked for national consultancies to support the regional work is insufficient for attracting candidates and requested possibility of reallocating national funds to this end. He added that with time moving on, Solomon Islands may be requesting an extension.
85. Mr Antonio noted that it is important to enable countries to progress towards achieving the overall project deliverables. The USD10.3 million funds allocated by UNDP/GEF for the Regional IW R2R project is meant to finance the activities that will produce results to achieve the project objectives, hence, the regional and national activities should not be considered separately. If national funds will not be sufficient to produce the outputs, then the corresponding funds needed to implement the activities should be incorporated into the budget request. Again, it is important to look at what the deliverables and outputs are as basis for requesting project extension.
86. Mr Sauni also clarified that if there are remaining funds, there should be no issues with reallocation. This has been done in Fiji. Mr Senson Mark (PNG) advised that PNG has opted to do the RAPCA and SOC and have a consultant on board who previously prepared the SOE, however more time is needed. Consultants are available to carry out national activities. He noted that the project has already had one extension and asked whether the regional project would have funds available if national funds run out.
87. Mr Sauni stated that PNG has demonstrated achieving their MWYCP, noting that a draft Island Diagnostic Analysis (IDA) was developed previously. For PNG, the STAR and IW projects are situated in different places of the country making collaborations and sharing of information difficult. PNG has a relatively large landmass and the R2R projects' contributions to ascertain true picture of ecosystem goods and services in the country is relatively small. This is the main reason progressing IDA, SOC and SAP is relatively difficult. However, the results and information generated from both STAR and IW R2R projects provide invaluable contributions to parallel work streams such as reviewing national development strategies or reviewing State of the Environment (SOE) report.
88. Dr Jose Padilla (UNDP) advised that UNDP fully supports the second no-cost extension. The extension is made available to countries due to COVID-19. The current policy for UNDP extensions is 6 months. He noted that by the time the second extension request is submitted by March 2021, there is uncertainty whether there will be any changes to policy and he requested the RPCU to frame the request for extension.

89. Having reviewed and scrutinised the main considerations, management features, and budgetary implications for the proposed Multi-Year Costed Workplan (MYCWP), the Committee:
- (i) Considered and approved the MYCWP for the Regional IW R2R Project; and
  - (ii) Considered and endorsed a further no-cost extension of up to 12-months from October 1, 2021 subject to UNDP policies to deliver on the project outcomes.

## 9. SPECIAL TOPICS

### 9.1 (Modified) R2R science-policy technological interface

90. Mr Samasoni Sauni of the Secretariat introduced the working paper (GEF IW R2R/RSC.5/WP.09) on the regional guidelines for the science to policy framework. The science to policy framework was approved at the RSC4 the previous year, and has provided guidance to project implementation, particularly in the collection of baselines and conduct of rapid assessments, preparation and conduct of diagnostic analysis, state of the coast reports and strategic action plans and policy frameworks.
91. The guidelines are intended to be user friendly and easy to follow by all stakeholders involved in mainstreaming the ridge to reef approach in natural resource management and planning. The framework has also been modified as an adaptive strategy to address the different country aspirations regarding the Science to Policy continuum.
92. Mr Sauni explained key aspects of the guidelines and the modifications made to the framework to accommodate the desire of countries while adhering to the robustness of the work. He stressed that it is not possible to generate science- and evidence-based analyses and reporting to inform policy and decision-making if there is no, or relatively poor baselines and data.

### 9.2 Spatial prioritisation modelling

93. Mr Sauni of the Secretariat introduced the working paper (GEF IW R2R/RSC.5/WP.10) on the regional guidelines to implement the spatial prioritisation modelling. Dr Jade Delevaux was acknowledged as the lead scientist for the spatial prioritisation modelling work. The meeting noted that spatial prioritisation modelling is a science-based planning procedure that supports identification of priority sites for conservation.
94. Mr Sauni advised that the modelling framework has been tested in Vanuatu using data available for that country. A series of slides were presented to better explain how the modelling process can develop understanding of the impacts of land use activities on marine health, using specific indicators such as coral per cent cover and fish biomass. The demonstration model also showed impacts on marine health of establishing protected areas locations.
95. Mr Sauni explained that the regional guidelines provide stepwise procedures that include participatory planning, developing change scenarios on land marine use, identifying relevant spatial data gaps, and preparing and conducting field work to collect primary data or ground truth existing data. Mr Sauni noted the need for good baselines and data for such models to be effective.

### 9.3 R2R information management systems

96. Mr Sachindra Singh discussed the State of the Coast platform Spatial Data Infrastructure for the Pacific R2R programme, explaining that a Spatial Data Infrastructure, commonly referred to as SDI, enables the efficient use and management of spatial information. The SDI aims to share data easily across platforms. SPREP, USP and others are also working on similar activities. The platform is now available at <http://r2r.spc.int/>.
97. Mr Singh explained that users have full control of their data – who sees data and to what extent. Metadata is extremely important when it comes to sharing data across projects; it provides the history/background of the data and users need to ensure they provide this. The State of the Coast (SOC) is an open data platform, meaning access can be given to the public



(but user decides what is made available); it is Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) compliant (standardised and future proof). Mr Singh explained that regionally, different platforms are standardised through GeoNode, which allows different data portals to be published on other systems. Further details are outlined in paper GEF IW R2R/RSC.5/WP.11.

98. Project Assistant – GIS & Remote Sensing, Ms Carrol Chan of the SPC Secretariat, provided a demonstration of the SOC platform showing examples of the overlay feature using data available in the SOC database. Participants were reminded of the GIS training programme conducted earlier in the month for country data management specialists and project coordinators.

## 9.4 Plenary Discussion & Decisions

99. Ms Jennifer deBrum (RMI) observed that data from countries in the north (atoll countries) was not reflected even though STAR has collected significant data and asked how their countries can also capitalise on this GEF investment. She also asked about agreements to enable sharing of data. Mr Sauni of the Secretariat explained that what had been presented was data that was used to test and trial a land-sea model, which has no data. The SoC platform allows countries to upload and store their data and training has been provided on this. There are other sister databases such as INFORM at SPREP and countries are encouraged to share this information.
100. Mr Singh explained that SPC is aware of the challenges and advised that for RMI, work is also ongoing with SPREP and across multiple projects to address the gaps in baseline data. On the matter of agreements for sharing of data, the Secretariat advised that SPC has memoranda of agreements with SPREP and USP. It was noted that the R2R platform is just one of the many databases of SPC and the SOC reports can only be prepared with national R2R data.

101. The Committee adopted and approved the Regional Guidelines for implementing the 'Modified' Science to Policy Strategic Framework or Theory of Change. The Committee further approved the Regional Guidelines for implementing the R2R Spatial Prioritisation Procedures and Modelling and acknowledged the progress on the State of Coast platform Spatial Data Infrastructure for the Pacific R2R programme.

## 10. LOOKING AHEAD POST R2R & COVID-19

### 10.1 Concept note post-R2R & COVID-19, next step?

102. Mr Sauni of the Secretariat introduced the meeting the paper GEF R2R/RSC.5/WP.13, which provides an opportunity for the meeting to discuss and agree on a strategic approach into the future post R2R or COVID-19. The paper presents four options to explore further whether there is support for a next phase R2R and if there is support, what will it look like. Mr Sauni advised that the First Series Technical Consultation of the RSTC consisting of scientists and technical stakeholders, including those from national and regional institutions, was held in February 2020.

103. The meeting noted that the RSTC Technical Consultation in February 2020 supported a next phase streamlined R2R. However, the next phase must only focus on key priority areas towards continuing efforts to mainstream R2R into policy and to allow research to continue for developing regional standards in pollution from animal and human waste. It was noted that the GEF has been investing in this area for several years; the next phase would want to see upscaling based on science and long-term research.

## 10.2 Project closure & terminal review

104. Mr Floyd Robinson (UNDP) presented on the terminal review as contained in the paper (GEF IW R2R/RSC.5/WP.14). He noted that the role of UNDP is to provide monitoring and oversight while SPC is responsible for management and delivery. An extension was provided to the end of September 2021. A major review was conducted in 2019. He explained the purpose and criteria of the Terminal Evaluation, noting that it is independent and focuses on accomplishment and causal chains, critically examining processes and attainment of intended results.
105. The meeting noted that UNDP would play a lead role in recruiting consultants and will work with SPC in development of the TOR. UNDP will provide the draft report for review and input by SPC and countries. Mr Robinson proposed to recruit national consultants to carry out in-country surveys and interviews. National consultants would be contracted through SPC. The Terminal evaluation would be carried out 6 months prior to closure to ensure that staff are still on board.
106. The discussion that followed the presentation premised on the following:
- (i) Composition of consultants – team leader + national consultants (and which countries)
  - (ii) Budget – USD50,000
  - (iii) Number of days – suggestion to reduce the international consultant days and increase days for national consultants
  - (iv) Timeline – requesting a timeline that will encourage review and feedback from those involved in the project.
107. The RPCU offered the following observations with respect to the points of discussion, that: -
- (i) The timeline needs to be aligned to the recently approved MYCWP;
  - (ii) The national consultants that will be engaged for the Terminal Evaluation has to be contracted by UNDP following its procurement process to ensure and maintain independence;
  - (iii) Following the approach taken by the MTR, there will be 6 countries to be recommended by the RPCU where in-depth assessment will be undertaken. These countries represent the well-medium and poor performing projects in the 3-sub regions. The remaining 8 countries will still be part of the evaluation and stakeholders will still be consulted through other means of communication – zoom, email, etc. as previously done during the MTR; and
  - (iv) Since this is a UNDP-led external evaluation, UNDP will only invite SPC and the participating countries for their inputs to the draft Terms of Reference. SPC will actively participate in this process as deemed appropriate and based on the request by UNDP.
108. Mr Senson Mark (PNG) asked what measures were being taken to ensure the review would be as independent as possible to avoid conflict of interest by consultants. The Secretariat advised that it was unlikely that the TOR by UNDP would encourage consultants who have previously been involved in the R2R and noted that the TOR is not developed by SPC but by UNDP.
109. Ms Rhonda Robinson of the SPC Secretariat commented that some of the considerations outlined by UNDP may need to be discussed and agreed out of session. She added that in determining the timeline, countries give consideration to the need for a robust project close-out period, she cautioned against trying to complete activities too close to the end date and noted that SPC's experience is that 6 months are needed to properly close out the project.

110. Mr Chanel Iroi (Solomon Islands) suggested that past processes should be used to guide the timeline development and recommended that at least two national consultants be considered – a govt specialist and an environment specialist. Dr Isoa Korovulavula of USP and RSTC Co-Chair, observed that the terminal observation requires meeting people and getting information required. He noted the need to discuss how to prioritise those areas that are critical in this review and suggested that thought be given on how to capture and do justice to the various projects.

- (iii) Noted that UNDP will develop the TORs covering both international and local consultants, and with SPC having the opportunity to review and as deemed appropriate provide inputs to the draft TORs;
- (iv) Acknowledged the time commitment required by all stakeholders and committed to supporting the process; and
- (v) With that, agreed that details regarding the composition of the team, targeted countries by the review team, number of consultant days and the timeline, be discussed and agreed out of session, taking into account the endorsement by the Committee of the MYCWP of another no-cost extension of up to 12-months to end of September 2022 and subject to UNDP policies to deliver on the project outcomes.

112. The Committee approved and endorsed the proposal for a next phase of R2R investments. The Committee further supported designing a more streamlined R2R project in upscaling and replication future R2R investments and integrated coastal management (ICM) planning as set out in the working papers, GEF IW R2R/RSC.5/WP.13 & 15. The Committee discussed and endorsed a further no-cost extension of up to 12-months from 30 September 2021, and to use this time to start the process of designing the next streamlined R2R program or project, and have it ready for discussion at the next RSC meeting.

## 11. OTHER BUSINESS

113. There was no other business proposed by committee members. The Chair stated that the normal meeting of the RSC would be held in August 2021, pending the global situation of the pandemic. The Secretariat reminded the meeting that if the situation allows for a face-to-face meeting, the normal venue choice is Nadi, Fiji.

## 12. MEETING EVALUATION

115. An activity evaluation will be also done with an online link provided to the same questions as done in RSC4.

## 13. CLOSING

116. The Chair thanked the Committee for its deliberation and respective contributions and stated that she looked forward to another less challenging and successful year ahead. The SPC Secretariat thanked the Chair for her excellent chairing of the meeting and welcomed Mr Malaki Iakopo (Samoa) as Vice Chair.

117. Having no further delegate to take floor the Chair closed the meeting.

## Annex 1: Provisional Agenda

Start Time	End Time	Agenda Item	Description	Session Facilitator
<b>DAY 1</b>				
10.30am			Delegates sign in & undertake audio/ video check	Secretariat
11.00	11.30	1	Opening Ceremony	
		1.1	Meeting Preliminaries & Prayer	SPC (GEM Deputy Director)
		1.2	Welcome remarks by Chair	Chair (Solomon Islands)
		1.3	Opening remarks on behalf of the Secretariat	SPC GEM Director
		1.4	Remarks on behalf of UNDP and other IAs	UNDP Rep.
		1.5	Remarks on behalf of Fiji Government	Fiji Govt. Rep.
11.30	11.45	2	Organisation of the meeting	
		2.1	Message from current Chair	Chair
		2.2	Call meeting to Order by the new Chair	Chair (Palau)
		2.3	Appointment of Officers	Chair
		2.4	Meeting documents	SPC
		2.5	Meeting arrangements and conduct	SPC
11.45	11.50	3	Meeting record & adoption of agenda	Chair
		3.1	Last RSC meeting record, action items	SPC
		3.2	Adoption of agenda	SPC
11.50	11.57	4	Country reporting – outcomes of panel/breakout discussion	Chair, SPC
11.57	12.30	5	A stocktake of the work so far	Secretariat
11.57	12.07	5.1	Update progress on implementing MTR recommendations	SPC
12.07	12.14	5.2	Status of the regional IW R2R project	SPC
12.14	12.21	5.3	Plenary Discussion & Decisions	Chair
12.21	1.30	6	Reporting back	Secretariat
12.21	12.28	6.1	RSTC report by its Chair	RSTC Chair
12.28	12.35	6.2	RPCG report by its Chair	RPCG Chair
12.35	12.42	6.3	JCU	JCU
12.42	12.49	6.4	Plenary Discussion & Decisions	Chair
<b>DAY 2</b>				
10.30am	10.45	7	Launching of the R2R website & related online tools	Chair, Secretariat
10.45	10.52	8	MYCWP for the Regional IW R2R Project	Chair, Secretariat
10.52	10.59	8.1	Discussion	Chair
10.59		9	Special Topics	Chair, Secretariat
10.59	11.14	9.1	(Modified) R2R science-policy technological interface	SPC
11.14	11.21	9.2	Conceptual framework on spatial prioritization procedures	SPC
11.21	11.28	9.3	R2R information management systems	SPC
11.28	11.35	9.4	Plenary Discussion & Decisions	Chair
11.35	11.56	10	Looking ahead post R2R & COVID-19	Secretariat
11.35	11.42	10.1	Project closure & terminal evaluation	UNDP
11.42	11.49	10.2	Concept	Secretariat
11.49	11.56	10.3	Plenary Discussion & Decisions	Chair
11.56	12.00	11	Any other business	Chair
12.00	12.12	12	Meeting evaluation	SPC
12.12	12.20	13	Closing remarks by Chair	Chair



## Annex 2: List of RSC-5 Virtual Meeting Delegates and Observers

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GEF IW R2R/ RSC.5/ Inf.01  
Date: 23 October 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 22<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020

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## Annex 3a: SPC Opening Remarks (by SPC GEM Director Dr Andrew Jones)

1. Thank you Chair and good morning delegates and observers from participating countries of the SPC governments, civil society and partners.
2. On behalf of SPC Director General I welcome you all to the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Regional Steering Committee which in these interesting times is also our first virtual RSC meeting broadcasting from our SPC Nabua Regional compound here in Suva, Fiji Islands.
3. The SPC has used this virtual zoom platform for some time this year to conduct our business and continually improving in our efforts to maintain engagement with our respective members, partners and beneficiaries.
4. Chair, this is no easy year for SPC as the executing agency of the Regional International Waters Ridge to Reef project, as well as the coordinating unit responsible for the GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme.
5. Not only does the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic cut across all SPC programmes, the extent of its influence and disruption has resulted in the Regional IW R2R project not being able to improve our UNDP overall rating for its development objective – from “moderately unsatisfactorily” to a better rating.
6. Things were progressing in the right direction following the midterm review ending June 2019 as the project gained momentum in implementing activities that would have produced the planned outputs which could have improved the overall rating.
7. That said, I am also informed that the rating on the Regional IW R2R project implementation is “moderately satisfactorily.” And this speaks volume to joint and collaborative efforts between RPCU-SPC and partners particularly stakeholders and communities in participating project countries.
8. There is evidence and results that demonstrate commitments to adapt and progress implementation, even with the full knowledge of the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and the operational challenges hindering progress.
9. As the regional principal scientific and technical organisation serving our member countries and territories over many years, SPC has demonstrated its competence and will continue to support the GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme and all its fifteen (15) child projects to deliver on their GEF focal areas, and national development priorities and aspirations.
10. Surely, there are many lessons learned to draw from the programmatic and integrated approaches in the GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme, and I see progress of this work will be tabled and products of website re-development and online tools launched at this meeting.
11. Finally, while we recognise progress to date, and the new normal we now face, there remains work to be completed for the project, which needs more time. Equally important, SPC encourages strategic policy considerations and dialogue on this good work so that we might be able to support you in progressing things to a next project should this come into effect.
12. With that, we stand ready to take action on the endorsement of the RSC moving forward.
13. Vinaka

## Annex 3b: UNDP Opening Remarks (by UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Mr Kevin Petrini)

Statement by Mr Levan Bouadze,  
Resident Representative, UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji  
Fifth Steering Committee Meeting of the Regional Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project  
Thursday 22 October 2020

National Government Representatives; Directors, Permanent Secretaries and GEF Operational Focal Points, The Director of the Pacific Community's Geoscience, Energy and Maritime (GEM) Division - Dr. Andrew Jones, The Regional Program Coordination Unit, National Project Implementation Units of the Regional R2R and National R2R Projects, Development Partners, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Bula Vinaka to you all. On behalf of the UN Family (including UNDP, UNE and FAO), it is my pleasure to warmly welcome all of you to this important meeting.

First and foremost, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the donor agency, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for its commitment towards the development needs and aspirations of Pacific Island Countries (PICs). Thank you GEF and we hope to see more donor support in areas that are crucial in the future survival of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

The Small Island Developing States or SIDS are still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts. This is a game changer. It has further exposed the vulnerabilities of SIDS to climate change and forced new ways of doing business. One such example is this fifth (5th) regional steering committee meeting being held virtually. Perhaps something no one could have anticipated or imagined at the beginning of 2020.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you all for adapting to these challenging circumstances. Your participation in the virtual meeting is an indication of your commitment to ensuring effective and efficient results in the last remaining months of the Regional Ridge to Reef Project, until September 2021.

At this juncture, I would like to emphasize three points:

The first is Decisive Leadership.

The UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres in addressing the Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the Coalition of Finance Ministers stated and I quote

“We need decisive leadership and to...rise to the challenge”

The impacts of COVID-19 are profound, affecting the livelihood and well-being of our people in all aspects be social, economic and environmental. I urge all parties involved in the Regional Ridge to Reef Program to continually review circumstances with a view towards new opportunities at all levels that is local, national and regional. For example, travel restrictions in the Pacific may free up budgets previously assigned to travel. This may mean the availability of increased funds which could boost the implementation of technical components and activities of the project.

Second is the Programmatic Approach.

Whilst the National Ridge to Reef Projects and International Waters (IW) Projects are executed independently, they are part of a larger Pacific Regional Ridge to Reef Program. I understand that whilst this is a unique feature of the Program, it has presented several challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in the spirit of Pacific Solidarity and our common goal to managing resources and ecosystems in a sustainable manner, I strongly urge us all to continue identifying and building upon common grounds between the projects. Over the last two weeks, the Regional Program Coordination Unit (based at SPC) has facilitated several discussions which also included the Programmatic Approach.

Be it access to sharing of information especially pertaining to achieved targets, technical assessments which will inform decision makers or setting up structures which galvanise a programmatic approach – the circumstances surrounding the new Pacific (with COVID-19) only reinforces a need for stronger coordination and collaboration. In this regard, let's continue to put the programmatic approach at the core of our efforts as the Ridge to Reef family. Gender is a core value of UNDP. We look forward to proactive discussions on activities and reports which demonstrate gender inclusivity into project work.

Third and finally, the Mid Term Review.

Following the fourth Regional Steering Committee Meeting in 2019, the Regional Program Coordination Unit proactively engaged with national projects to implement recommendations of the Mid Term Review. In this regard, we acknowledge your efforts and request your continued perseverance. The Terminal Evaluation is under a year away.

Let's continue with our diligent efforts to maximising results under the Regional Ridge to Reef Program. In addition, one cannot over emphasise the value of adequate preparations for Terminal Evaluation. Currently about two-point-one-million (\$2.1m) US dollars of project funds remains unspent. I would like to encourage the team to make use of these available resources and prioritize on the completion of the remaining outputs and activities of the project with the available timeline.

#### Concluding Remarks

Ladies and Gentlemen, UNDP is honoured to partner with SPC, National Governments and Development Partners in implementing this project.

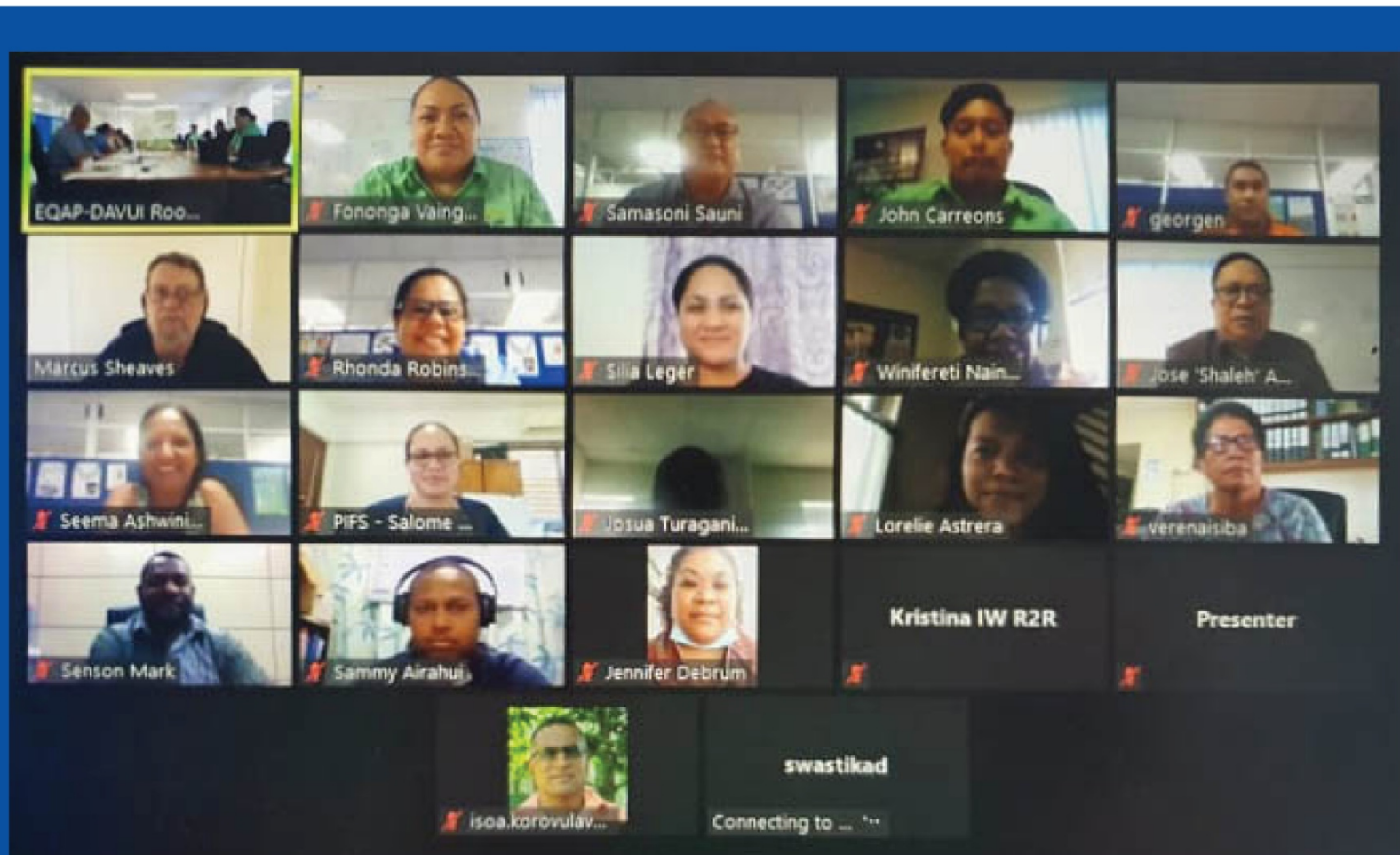
Our enduring commitment is to improve resilience of the Pacific Island nations, help them protect their rich biodiversity and secure their ecosystems.

I wish you all the very best in deliberations.

Vinaka vakalevu!

## Annex 4: Sixth Meeting of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee Meeting Report

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



## MEETING REPORT

Suva, Fiji 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020



## Abbreviations

BioRAP	Biological Rapid Assessment
DCRP	Disaster and Community Resilience Programme (SPC)
DPSIR	Drivers, Pressures, State, Impact and Response model of intervention
EGS	Ecosystem Goods and Services
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GEM	Geoscience Division (Pacific Community)
HRR	Harmonised Results Reporting
IA	Implementing Agency
ICM	Integrated Coastal Management
IDA	Island Diagnostic Analysis
IW	International Waters
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
JCU	James Cook University
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid Term Review
MYCWP	Multi-Year Costed Work Plan
RPCG	Regional Programme Coordination Group
PFD	Programme Framework Document
PGC	Post Graduate Certificate
PNG	Papua New Guinea
R2R	Ridge to Reef
RaPCA	Rapid Priority Coastal Area Assessment
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
RPCU	Regional Programme Coordinating Unit
RSC	Regional Steering Committee
RSTC	Regional Science and Technical Committee
RSTC-TC	Regional Science and Technical Committee Technical Consultation
SAF	Strategic Action Framework
SAP	Strategic Action Plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SOC	State of the Coast
SPC	Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme
STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USP	University of the South Pacific

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## Introduction

1. The Sixth Regional Scientific and Technical Committee for the GEF Pacific International Waters Ridge to Reef Programme (IW R2R) was held on 19 and 20 October 2020. The meeting was conducted virtually. The provisional agenda is attached as **Annex 1**.
2. Thirty-six (36) participants from GEF R2R implementing agencies in Fiji, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, UNDP Pacific Office, Suva, UNDP Bangkok Office, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), James Cook University (JCU), University of the South Pacific (USP), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Pacific Community (SPC) attended. The list of participants is attached as **Annex 2**.

## Agenda Item 1: Meeting Preliminaries and Opening Prayer

3. Mr John Carreon of SPC GEM, delivered an opening prayer.
4. In the absence of RSTC Chair Prof. Marcus Sheaves, Co-Chair, Dr Isoa Korovulavula of the University of the South Pacific (USP) chaired the meeting. He welcomed the members, noting this was the first time the meeting was being held virtually. He acknowledged Prof Sheaves for his efforts in strengthening the RSTC and recognised the partners and donors.
5. Dr Korovulavula thanked SPC for hosting the R2R programme over the years and acknowledged the various partners in the region. He acknowledged UNDP and GEF as the cornerstone of R2R and noted the project constraints not just regionally, but globally due to COVID-19.

### Agenda Item 1.1: Organisation of the meeting

#### **Appointment of Officers**

6. Chair explained that the RSTC meeting rules and procedures require annual appointment of officers, after which he called for nominations. Dr Winifereti Nainoca of UNDP moved to retain current Chair and Deputy Chair for the purpose of continuity towards the end of the project. Dr Salome Taufua of PIFS seconded the motion.

**7. The Committee reappointed Prof. Marcus Sheaves and Dr Isoa Korovulavula into their current positions as chair and co-chair, respectively.**

## Agenda Item 2: Opening remarks

8. Ms Rhonda Robinson, Deputy Director of SPC's Disaster and Community Resilience Programme in the GEM Division welcomed participants to the first virtual RSTC. She reiterated the role of the Secretariat as the principle scientific and technical

organisation in this region, and the effort put towards robust scientific and technical contributions that help member countries and government agencies plan for their improved resilience on the ground. Ms Robinson further noted that it was not always about science and technical effort provided, but what countries can do with that effort building on from the R2R and the predecessor, IWRM. She emphasised that mainstreaming and management efforts are as important as the science and this integration comes together to work on solutions on the ground which is seen now in R2R mainstreaming and the science-policy continuum as well as the spatial prioritisation procedures and modelling.

9. Dr Winifereti Nainoca (UNDP Pacific Office, Suva) acknowledged the partnerships between SPC, USP, PIFS and the countries and noted their resilience in this time of COVID-19. She highlighted the portal on scientific knowledge and requested that it continue to be available to all (beyond the project), noting the need for scientific evidence in determining activities. She commended SPC as a leader in scientific gathering and noted that valuable information is being collated through the R2R work. She further stressed that SPC has a mandate to report to GEF on the regional outputs as well as on the country GEF 5 STAR R2R programme and urged countries to provide feedback to the Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor.

### ***Housekeeping***

10. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo of the Secretariat advised the participants on basic housekeeping rules such as the “raise hand” function on the Zoom platform as well as leaving relevant messages in the chat box.

### **Agenda Item 3: Adoption of agenda**

11. Mr Samasoni Sauni of the Secretariat, advised participants on the working papers and information papers available online ([RSTC6](#)) on the R2R portal ([www.pacific-r2r.org](http://www.pacific-r2r.org)). The outcomes of discussions during the preparatory sessions held in the previous week were the basis for the scientific topics in panel discussions over the week.
12. Dr Jose Padilla (UNDP Bangkok Office) suggested that consideration be given to the compilation of lessons learned from the technical and scientific perspective, drawing from experiences of both the IW and STAR projects, in addition to what is highlighted in agenda items 5.1 and 5.2. He explained that this compilation would go beyond progress and implementation of the mid-term review (MTR) recommendations and perhaps lead to an electronic compilation of case studies based on what works and doesn't work in R2R interventions in the Pacific. He acknowledged that at this point it may not be possible but may be feasible if the no-cost extension is allowed.
13. The meeting agreed to include discussion on this under Agenda Item 7 on Mainstreaming, noting also that 5.1 and 5.2 would address lessons learnt in progressing MTR recommendations.
14. Mr Sauni stated that Agenda items 5.1, 5.2 and 7 are dedicated to all aspects of lessons learned that include compilation and populating the regional framework

document, responding to the MTR recommendation and progress thus far. He explained that the current work on lessons learned is imperative to guide broader and strategic planning and drafting of a next phase R2R (and possibly the island to island proposal). Mr Sauni requested patience and allow the Secretariat to report back on progress to date specific on the work on lessons learned.

**15. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda with amendments.**

### Agenda Item 3.1: Meeting Record and Action Items

16. Chair invited comments from the Committee on the current draft record of the last RSC meeting. Mr Samasoni Sauni, Regional Programme Coordinator, presented the action items arising from the last RSTC meeting ([RSTC-6 WP.01](#)) and discussed the progress to date, noting that several items would be elaborated in subsequent agenda items. The record of the RSTC first technical consultation (RSTC-TC) is also available for reference, as information paper [RSTC-6 Inf. 05](#).

17. Mr Sauni briefed the meeting on current progress of key action items outlined in the meeting records, several of which are provided below.

- (i) Water quality training in Kiribati was completed in Feb/Mar 2020, while similar works planned for FSM and RMI have been deferred due to COVID-19. The meeting noted that technical support from the RPCU will be provided to implement remaining technical activities in national demonstration sites in FSM and RMI.
- (ii) The first RSTC technical consultation was held in February 2020 in Nadi, and scientists and technical stakeholders from Fiji, Tonga, Tuvalu and RMI attended. The consultation was a success, and it was agreed to have another one towards end of this year or early next year.
- (iii) The standards used in the estimation of nutrient offloads from human and animal wastes were taken from outside this region.

The aim now is to encourage local research in this region that would allow for the development of standards, and as such can be the focus of studies from this region for MSc, PhD and post-doctorate studies to determine these standards.

Environmental stress reduction targets were approved by the RSC last year in view of participating countries revising targets to more realistic estimates that can be achieved over remaining periods of projects. Targets also relate to the no-cost extension of the project. Log frames were changed because of that exercise.

Research institutions including JCU and USP agreed to take up research topics on establishing standards however unsure if this has started.

- (iv) Mainstreaming ecosystem goods and services (EGS) has been attempted for Fiji and Solomon Islands. In Fiji, the Consultant is not yet confirmed yet, but it is expected that work will be completed by the end of the year for both countries.

- (v) As agreed in the past the Regional IW R2R project will have hybrid implementation of DPSIR and EGS frameworks, recognising the pros and cons of each. With the project winding down, the RSTC/RSC agreed not to have EGS replacing the DPSIR process.
- (vi) The meeting noted certain specialised areas of ecosystem goods and services, resource and habitat assessments or modelling, environmental assessments, water quality assessments, socio-economic and traditional ecological knowledge, of which all need to build the JCU course and other similar modalities in support of capacity building and training.
- (vii) The Science to Policy Theory of change approved last year is slowly progressing in implementation, although not everyone agreed to implement with complete faith steps 1 to 6. This is in recognition of parallel processes such as the State of the Environment (SOE) work led by SPREP, and that several countries opted to use R2R results and resources to support that process.
- (viii) Spatial prioritisation procedures and trialling in Vanuatu is now completed, and two technical reports will be soon become available and accessible online. Work is also under way to publish these in peer-reviewed journals.

18. Dr Nainoca commended efforts in responding to the MTR recommendation on ecosystem goods and services (EGS). She further suggested that the team holds talks with Conservation International based on their EGS work in Fiji (payment for ecosystem goods and services), which will benefit future EGS work of the R2R in Fiji. Mr Sauni of the Secretariat responded that the team would consult with CI and at this time, EGS is progressing in Fiji and Solomon Islands, recognising similar past EGS works, which been done by others including STAR R2R projects.

***19. The Committee noted the responses corresponding to the decisions and recommendations of the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the RSTC. The Committee further noted that details of specific action items would be considered and discussed as separate agenda items during the meeting.***

## Agenda Item 4: Looking ahead post R2R and COVID-19

### Agenda Item 4.1: Project closure and terminal evaluation

- 20. Chair briefed the meeting that COVID-19 changed the game plan globally and the impact is felt across the board including delivery and implementation of this project. Chair invited UNDP Pacific Office to introduce the paper and presentation on this agenda item.
- 21. Mr Josua Turaganivalu of UNDP provided brief outline of the Regional IW R2R project in terms of execution through SPC as the Executing Agency, highlighting the role of UNDP as GEF Implementing Agency, details on the project life and budget and signing of project document. He explained that the terminal evaluation is an independent



review and that it is mandatory for all GEF-financed full-sized projects (FSPs) to undergo terminal evaluations.

22. Mr Turaganivalu also explained that terminal evaluations aim at assessing and documenting project results, and the contribution of these results towards achieving GEF strategic objectives aimed at global environmental benefits. It promotes accountability and transparency and synthesises lessons that can help improve future UNDP-supported GEF-financed initiatives. The meeting was advised that the terminal evaluation guidelines can be found at [http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/GEF/TE\\_GuidanceforUNDP-supportedGEF-financedProjects.pdf](http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/GEF/TE_GuidanceforUNDP-supportedGEF-financedProjects.pdf).
23. The Committee considered information of the Regional IW R2R Project closure and terminal evaluation. The UNDP outlined key areas of the TOR including fees, timelines, and consideration for the engagement of local consultants to support terminal evaluation work. It supported revisiting discussion of timelines for the terminal evaluation, following the RSC decision on the proposal for a no-cost extension. The Committee endorsed the outcomes and recommendations of the Pre-RSC panel discussion on this presentation and recommended transmitting to the RSC for consideration and approval.
24. The Secretariat noted that there was a proposal on the table for a no-cost extension and that the pre-RSC meetings the previous week provided a placeholder until a decision (on the no-cost extension) is made by RSC-5. Discussions were also held on the need to consider national consultants due to current circumstances.
25. Dr Korovulavula commented on the evaluation process and suggested that there may be value in considering political aspects and how/whether projects impact on implementation of international policies (at national level). He asked how far this would be taken into consideration in the evaluation.
26. Dr Nainoca commented on reallocation of funds, noting that in cases where projects are close to their end, but delivery of outputs is delayed due to (for example) delay in delivery of materials or the need for offshore manpower, then there could be a reallocation of funding to help complete the activities. She added that extensions have been granted due to COVID-19. Dr Nainoca further noted that because of border restrictions, consultants are working virtually and would need on-ground support not only from IW R2R project managers and local consultants, but also from UNDP, FAO, and UNEP project management units on the ground. This would be particularly necessary where there will not be any on-ground national consulting for the terminal evaluation. She highlighted the need for precision and clear presentation of information to the international consultants so that the report will paint a true picture of what is happening on the ground.

**27. Having discussed and deliberated on the critical issues of the GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Program and its 15-child projects that need focused discussion at the RSTC and RSC meetings, the participants resolved and agreed to the following decisions: -**

**(i) That the composition of the Terminal Evaluation Consultants extends and includes local consultants in six (6) participating PICs. Participants recognized that during the mid-term review, the consultants visited 6 participating countries representative of sub regions, advanced and poorly performed countries and related criteria. These lessons are useful in planning for the terminal evaluation.**

**(ii) That the fix amount of US\$50,000 earmarked for the terminal evaluation be revised given change of strategy to include local consultants. Participants noted that savings from travels would be utilized to support local consultants.**

**(iii) That UNDP will prepare the TOR with consideration of the outcome of discussions particularly specific to its application and treatment of international and local consultants. Participants noted the independence of the consultancy team to avoid bias and the team leader plays an important role in this regard.**

**(iv) That the proposal for up to 12-months no-cost extension is discussed and agreed at the RSC as precursor to confirming dates, timelines, and related details of the terminal evaluation. Participants recognize the current challenges and changing circumstances in project implementation as influenced by COVID-19 and related challenges justifies need for more time to deliver on milestone targets but also ensure quality of products.**

**(v) That the extension proposal is subject to UNDP policies and must correspond with change in strategy that include more streamlined process of delivering the 'modified' science to policy theory of change on countries that are committed and demonstrably active to mainstreaming R2R in domestic policies, planning and enabling governance reforms.**

#### Agenda Item 4.2: What's next, post R2R and COVID-19?

28. Mr Sauni of the Secretariat, introduced the working paper [GEF-R2R-RSC-5-WP.15](#) and referenced [GEF IW R2R/RSTC.6/wp.02](#) (RSTC Chair's Report). The critical question relates to whether or not there is support and interest to progress further into the next phase of R2R investments centred on climate sensitive and inclusive ICM planning. The paper proposed four options that can be considered moving forward with R2R investments and ICM planning, targeting GEF-8 or other interested donors

29. Dr Jose Padilla of UNDP sought clarification on the disbursements of funds over the years as these details of the MYCWP were not presented. He asked if the MYCWP paper that would be tabled at the RSC covers a proposal seeking an RSC decision for a no-cost extension period of 6 to 12 months in accordance with UNDP policy. Dr

Padilla explained that UNDP policy can only accommodate a maximum of 6-months extension in the current COVID-19 situation. He further elaborated that this decision is evolving, and he was not sure if the 6-months allowable period could be extended. He suggested it would be best to look at 6 months rather than 12 months. Dr Padilla stated that a 6-month extension would mean spending USD2.6 million from July 2020 to presumably March 2022. He advised to explore ways to spend the rest of the funds in this project to fully utilise those funds.

30. Mr Sauni acknowledged UNDP policy would only support 6 months though the paper is proposing approval of the RSC for another no-cost extension is 12 months. UNDP advice is well noted though it would be ill conceived to do anything now because the paper has been circulated some time back and the RPCU-SPC intends to present the paper and proposal as currently worded. Mr Sauni also stated that SPC financial systems operate in 12-month cycle and it is impossible to accept any lesser periods.
31. Mr Sauni suggested that the RSTC considers and endorse the paper and provide appropriate recommendations to the RSC on the proposal recognising interventions and advice from as stated earlier. Mr Conway encouraged stepping away from operational matters but looking into the positive to join future science objectives through a COVID-19 lenses. He reckoned it is a good opportunity from a science perspective for the project that we talk about human environment interactions, but potentially promote future activities and extensions of project through a COVID-19 lens potentially. Mr Conway considered this might not be the right forum or the right agenda item but thought raise it since talking about COVID-19 responses.
32. Dr Padilla stated that as Regional Technical Advisor he has advised about limited/strict flexibility initiated by UNDP for existing projects to possibly address COVID-19 concerns within existing objectives and outcomes of project. There could be some opportunities for including activities to address COVID-19 concerns perhaps from the perspective of communications, perspective of improving further natural resource managements and other areas from health perspective that could be tagged on to existing outputs and outcomes of project. Dr Padilla also explained that the reason for such strict flexibility is that the project is still governed by GEF policies and rules. Therefore, if we can accept the changes, then funding at late stage of project might be limited to pay for emerging concerns. UNDP would encourage understanding of everyone as this is the direction we will take until closure next 18 months or so.
33. Ms Robinson responded to the previous interventions stating that across SPC, activities are being “pivoted” within projects if donor agreements allow and that these don’t take away from original intentions, goals, outcomes and results under current achievement. She noted that usually pivoting involves the methodology or approach of an activity (for example, virtual/remote meetings over face to face). She further stated that changes are not regarding content unless there is a specific COVID-19 response type project. Accordingly, the revised MYCWP changes relate to pivoting the mode of delivery. Ms Robinson added that SPC’s focus is on addressing pandemic hazards in general in future programming and to re-programme existing funding. She emphasised that it is different in the books for R2R programme, at least

in the context of how we deal with such matters at the SPC. She believed this to be the case in other CROP agencies as well.

34. Mr Conway acknowledged the issue of committed funding and outcomes and that opportunities to redirect resources are limited. He noted the point that instead of scientific refocus, it is more related to communications. Therefore, any opportunity to use the global attention to showcase local/regional impacts and lessons should be given some thought. He suggested that there may also be ways to rebrand current communications and activities to take advantage of the significant resources currently available in this area.

### Agenda Item 4.3: Chair's report 2020 – Highlights, Challenges and Opportunities

35. The RSTC Chair, Prof. Marcus Sheaves introduced the meeting paper [GEF R2R/RSTC.6/WP.02](#), which outlines the highlights, challenges and opportunities specific to all scientific and technical aspects of the R2R Programme or Regional IW R2R project. Prof. Sheaves emphasised the importance of science development into the future, and how the region can use science and technology to drive efficiency and improve productions and productivity.
36. The meeting noted the need to review survey methods and sampling designs with a view to standardise and harmonise for comparability of indicators within and across spatial areas and regions of the Western and Central Pacific. The decisions for future upscaling ridge to reef investments and ICM planning would require quality science- and evidence based approaches and processes – this includes comparability of trends in the state of ecosystem goods and services across landscape-seascape continuum in atoll and high island countries of the Pacific.
37. Prof. Sheaves stressed the Importance to start the conversation on how we will influence funding support for future investment. Obviously support for research and technology development is an important area for future R2R investments, particularly ensuring balancing ecosystem-based approach and valuation covering science, social-economic, and traditional ecological knowledge. He encouraged the publishing of all project knowledge products recognising that publications, especially those in international journals are the simplest assurance of quality in the science.
38. The meeting considered that the discussion of these papers during the Pre-RSC panel discussion had already covered in detail specific points important to inform and guide future directions post-R2R. Key to the discussion was the ability to monitor trends using baselines established in various demonstration sites across participating countries during the IWRM, and to assess the impacts of R2R interventions through innovative technologies and testing methods and measures that deliver on tracking environmental stress reduction targets.

39. Mr Sauni shared with the Committee an intervention by the Cook Islands participant at the pre-RSC session, which is relevant to this agenda item. Ms Maria stated that the programmatic approach was never really observed or implemented and there is disconnect between STAR and IW R2R projects. That said, she supported technological and scientific advances to inform policy and decision making particularly in ecosystem goods and services from ridge to reef and beyond to EEZ and high seas.
40. The Secretariat observed that while the IWRM baselines would indeed be useful in terms of monitoring, unfortunately not all IW R2R demonstration sites are the same as the previous IWRM sites.

#### Agenda Item 4.4: Discussion and Decisions

**41. The Committee endorsed the outcomes and recommendations of the Pre-RSC panel discussion on the theme looking ahead post R2R and COVID-19, as follows:**

- (i) Participants considered and reflected on key points in the paper relative to progressing project implementation within the current Programme scope and the supporting role of the RSTC in the remaining life of the project ending in September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**
- (ii) Participants discussed a broader vision and strategic directions and agreed for a follow up streamlined next phase post R2R. Participants recommended that the Committee endorse a next phase of future upscaling R2R investments and ICM planning relative to post-R2R and COVID-19.**
- (iii) Participants recommend that the next R2R project focuses only on priority focal areas supporting research and development, capacity building, and replicating innovative technologies and development measures that upscaled and replicated thereby securing ecosystems goods and services following the R2R-climate resilient approach and inclusive green economic pathway.**
- (iv) Participants considered and endorsed a further no cost extension of up to 12-months from September 30<sup>th</sup> 2021 subject to UNDP policies to deliver on the project outcomes, and use the opportunity to explore further concept note for phasing in strategy to be considered at the next meetings of the RSTC and RSC in 2021.**

**Therefore, the Committee recommends further consideration and approval of the RSC on a next phase project post R2R, and a no-cost extension beyond September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 of the current project.**

## Agenda Item 5: A stock-take of the work so far

### Agenda Item 5.1: Update progress on implementing MTR recommendations

42. Mr Jose Antonio of the Secretariat introduced the working paper [GEF R2R/RSTC.6/WP 03](#), which provides an update of the progress on implementing the eighteen (18) MTR recommendations approved by the RSC last year. The Committee was invited to review the management response and corresponding status of implementation as basis for providing strategic focus and advice. The meeting was advised the management responses were presented following 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. The meeting discussed implementation of each of the 18 recommendations, with a summary of status provided (Figure 1).

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
MTR Recommendations	Actions	Status
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

Figure 1: MTR Recommendation Implementation Status



43. Mr Antonio stated that the RSC paper on the MYCWP takes into consideration allocations and workplan to be implemented that would cover the proposal for another no-cost extension for all national projects. As part of the renewed COVID-19 strategy, shift towards using local consultants to carry out technical assessments and deliver on science deliverables. At this time, the RPCU has commissioned three (3) consultancies that would support MTR recommendation on mainstreaming R2R, lessons learned, science-policy framework and capacity needs. The details of these specific consultancies are available and accessible online the R2R website.
44. Dr Winifereti Nainoca of UNDP Pacific Office acknowledged progress on lessons learned work, stating there must be reporting back to SPC under PFD under which the Regional IW and STAR R2R projects were all approved. She reiterated earlier remarks that SPC is mandated to report against the PFD and GEF tracking tools, therefore it is important to submit reports to SPC for this purpose. 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. 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.
45. Dr Nainoca further encouraged that STAR projects commit to meeting with Mr Antonio and provide the required data. She stressed that this was a serious concern because the matter is repeatedly raised and discussed each year. The RSTC Co-Chair, Dr Korovulavula, shared sentiments raised by Dr Nainoca particularly on lessons learned and how this can be shared and improved in future.
46. Mr Antonio thanked UNDP and others for supporting the call for programmatic action in sharing data and information. He explained that the matrix and the harmonised results reporting (HRR) tool was provided and made available to everyone in July 2018. There are two versions of HRR to be used in reporting contributions of each child project to GEF-5 focal areas.
- (i) The first HRR version is for the Project Manager/Coordinator, and there was an information session held in the past to orientate people on how to use the template.
  - (ii) The second HRR version was developed in July 2019 intended for GEF implementing agencies (IAs) as oversight of the child projects. This HRR template for GEF implementing agency was developed as requested by the IAs (since the RPCU has no authority over STAR projects).
47. Mr. Antonio suggested that the child project or the GEF IA should simply use the existing reporting template available.
48. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo of the Secretariat explained that the framework for the compilation and development of lessons learned was endorsed by RSC4 and that it provided countries with a template for the submission of their lessons. A Terms of

Reference was provided to report writers should the project choose to procure external individuals to write and package their lessons. This was provided in December 2019. Guidance documents were also developed and circulated to countries and briefings followed thereafter jointly between STAR and IW projects. This culminated in a full programme briefing to which all STAR and IW projects were invited. Updates will be provided under Agenda Item 7 and at the RSC5. It was also noted that the partnership with JCU will also incorporate lessons learned into the public policy and technical streams in the final unit. These will be consolidated as appropriate. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo also mentioned that lessons will be harvested from programmatic implementation. This was led by Mr Antonio in the previous week.

49. The Chair stressed the need to take heed of time available to the project and to treat this as a matter of urgency.

## Agenda Item 5.2: Status of the Regional IW R2R Project

50. Mr Sauni of the Secretariat introduced the working paper [GEF R2R/RSTC.6/WP.05](#), which provides details on the status of Implementation of the Regional International Waters Ridge to Reef (IW R2R) Project. 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. The contributing factors to the ratings are detailed in the paper and details are expected to provide strategic guidance in the successful implementation of the project and delivering on its objectives and outcomes.

51. The Committee noted that the financial liquidation continues to be an issue as clearly raised by UNDP Pacific Office by way of reporting back to UNDP. Cognisant of the implications, the RPCU has engaged with countries encouraging and supporting them in terms of completing outstanding acquittals. The issue remains a bottleneck that clearly slowed down complete and accurate submissions and reporting back to UNDP – an issue also clearly reflected in the UNDP audit report. The RPCU continues its regular monthly meetings with UNDP Pacific Office to discuss challenges and working towards overcoming issues – e.g. staff turnover but SPC was quick to respond to that challenge by reinstating positions.

52. Mr Sauni discussed some key points brought up through the assessments and steps being taken to address these as follows:

- (i) Timely financial liquidation. The RPCU has engaged with countries to encourage completion of outstanding acquittals and to submit the complete report back to UNDP. Monthly meetings are being held with UNDP Suva office to discuss challenges and working towards overcoming issues.

- (ii) Staff turnover in the RPCU. SPC has been quick to respond to that challenge by reinstating positions. This would be further discussed in the presentation on the MYCWP during the RSC meeting.
- (iii) Programme outputs and activities. Acknowledged that several outputs and activities are yet to be completed or to be commenced. This has been factored into the MYCWP paper.

53. The Committee considered a summary of the project status from June 2019 to June 2020 (Figure 2) noting highlights, which include the spatial prioritisation modelling work. Some activities have been deferred to the next financial year and workplan.

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

Figure 2: Status of IW R2R

### Agenda Item 5.3: James Cook University (JCU) Update Report

54. Prof. Marcus Sheaves of James Cook University and also RSTC Chair introduced the meeting paper [GEF R2R/RSTC.6/Inf.07](#), which provides an update of the teaching course at James Cook University. The report outlines two subjects at this first semester followed by two new subjects at the first semester of 2020. He stated that the subject is very difficult and that students also faced problems dealing with restrictions of COVID-19, however there was a lack of commitment by some of the students, some of whom fail to communicate over many weeks. Additionally, students had not been engaging very strongly even when they could. He stated that under normal circumstances, leeway would not have been provided as was being done in the current situation. Professor Sheaves emphasised his belief that if given the opportunity to advance one's education, one must be committed to get things done.

55. Mr Sauni of the Secretariat explained that the RPCU is also monitoring progress of students in the JCU course, and several students were falling behind in schoolwork due to COVID-19 and connectivity issues within the countries even during last year's

subjects. The RPCU and JCU have jointly supported the students by giving them numerous chances to catch up and, prepare tailor-made workplans that would allow catch up, students were still falling behind. Mr Sauni recognised the difficulty handling sensitive issues as such this and there needs to be alternative strategy where university regulations can no longer be undermined to suit out students. The GEF Pacific R2R Programme Administrator, Ms Vere Bakani and RPCU staff have reached out to students and offered encouragements knowing too well how difficult it is to managed studies and work during the pandemic. While acknowledging the issues, he advised that a line needs to be drawn and students be encouraged to either complete their education or to formally communicate to RPCU to withdraw from the course.

56. Chair thanked Ms Vere Bakani and Mr Sauni for helping and emphasised that students cannot go a long period of time without engaging in communications with the course.

57. Chair explained the two streams for current semester are Management stream EV5966 and Technical stream EV5968. The final semester for the course is in the first semester of 2021 so need to get things done through in the coming months.

#### Agenda Item 5.4: Discussion and Decisions

**58. The Committee endorsed the decisions of the Pre-RSC sessions on the papers under the Stock-take theme, and recommended transmitting these to the RSC for further consideration and actions. These decisions include the following: -**  
**(i) Progress on implementation of the MTR recommendations; and**  
**(ii) Current status of the Regional IW R2R Project.**

**59. The Committee also noted the JCU course report and recommended that the RSC: -**  
**(i) Supports current efforts of both JCU and RPCU-SPC to assist students who are falling behind their studies;**  
**(ii) Further supports preparation of dedicated workplans by JCU that would allow students to catch up and submit late assignments;**  
**(iii) Considers the seriousness of the matter where university regulations are continually challenged and possibly undermined to accommodate commitments to enable students to complete late assignments and therefore continue their studies; and**  
**(iv) Endorse that if all efforts fail and students do not satisfy the course requirements, the JCU and RPCU will request the students' withdrawal from the course.**

## Agenda Item 6: Mainstreaming R2R – Research and Information Management

### Agenda Item 6.1: R2R website re-development and related online tools

60. Dr Fononga Vainga Mangisi-Mafileo of the Secretariat presented an update on the R2R website re-development and related online tools. She explained that Phase 1 was launched during World Water Day March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020. The meeting also noted the following updates and key statistics as at August 30<sup>th</sup> 2020:

- Over 3,304 users (target 100). Exceeded 100-user target,
- 25,584-page views, 05:22 minutes per session and 4 pages per session
- Bounce rate: 25% (26% - 40% rates excellent)
- 2279 downloads, 167 countries visited
- Most visited page (in order of frequency of visits) - Resource library, News, Project pages, Capacity development, and the Science portal.

61. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo also provide updates on other activities under the website redevelopment work includes:

- Science Portal and the Pacific State of the Coast (SOC) system and database launch this week
- Pacific R2R Science Database Training for project managers on 2 October
- Follow-up country specific training for in-country GIS specialists
- Online regional and national portals developed
- Roster of national and regional experts and practitioners developed and deployed
- Repository for best practice, lessons learned, and other programme outputs developed
- A virtual Content Management System training September 15-16 for STAR and IW projects to update, maintain and enhance the content of their respective online project pages.
- Launch of the first Pacific R2R Programme newsletter in August.

62. Dr. Mangisi-Mafileo highlighted a key challenge, including the Project Management Information System (PMIS) development delay due to implementation issues. She explained that more information can be found in related Working Paper “*Status on implementing MTR Recommendations and Management Responses*” (GEF R2R/RSTC.6/WP.03).

63. Dr Nainoca of UNDP acknowledged the good work on the website and associated online tools. Dr. Nainoca also enquired whether there is a dedicated place in this portal for COVID-19. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo explained that there is currently no designated page for COVID-19 but assures if there are programme outputs that need that space then we can explore options. However, the RPCU needs to know a focal point of this initiative who will be responsible for feeding the information into the

website and the RPCU can liaise with this person. But this is certainly an opportunity that can be explored. In agreeing with what's been suggested, Ms Robinson of SPC also talks about COVID-19 related activities and starting points in putting up information on COVID-19 related sections on the website.

**64. The Committee thanked the Secretariat for reporting on progress of the R2R website redevelopment and related online tools. It also underlined the importance of a dedicated portal on COVID-19 in the R2R website recognising similar efforts done on other programmes of the SPC including public health. It recommends exploring further the proposal including identifying focal points responsible for feeding information into the website and the RPCU as the administrator.**

## Agenda Item 6.2: R2R information management systems - environment, governance and socio-economic baseline assessments using EGS and DPSIR Approaches

65. Mr Sachindra Singh, Head of SPC Geoinformatics Unit and lead on developing infrastructure, gave updates on the R2R Information Management Systems, which will be launched at the RSC meetings later in the week. He reminded participants of the live demonstration in Nadi and advised that since then, the team has worked with several stakeholders to collect, collate, convert and upload baseline and country datasets. Data types include water quality, terrestrial maps, biological data and benthic maps. He stated that a data register for environmental datasets has been built and it is possible to use expertise within SPC and within country projects which then feed back into the State of Coast. He further stated that baseline data from global data sources were used and these data sets were accessible. He requested that the Committee visit the website ([www.r2r.spc.int](http://www.r2r.spc.int)) and provide some feedback.
66. Prof. Marcus Sheaves and RSTC Chair observed the reliance on global data source and acknowledged the need to use those data sources to fill in data gaps in the region. He asked how difficult it was to control the quality of this data in terms of sampling designs and how the data was collected, noting that this is a growing challenge as more data becomes available worldwide.
67. Mr Singh advised that systems are in place through SPC's data register, which collates and standardises data, since countries collect in their own standards, formats and file structures. However, he explained that they do not have the ability to conduct quality control in terms of what methodology was used or to validate the data collection process.
68. Mr Sauni stated that there are processes in SPC for data to be cleaned and filtered before they can be used in the models and analytical tools such as for the spatial prioritisation modelling. Where data is not available from primary sources, free access data is sought. Mr Sauni agreed that the ability to assess and evaluate the quality of data collected should conform to standards of high quality. He further



noted that SPC has processes and protocols to clean raw data from member countries before it can be put into the regional database.

69. Dr Korovolavula mentioned that some governments are updating their State of Environment reports and relying on various sources for data. He asked how countries could best benefit from the R2R data beyond the project. He further stated that it would be a waste if it would “fizzle out” after the R2R project and perhaps it could be used for something concrete such as contributions towards a State of Environment report. Mr Sauni noted that a demonstration showing how the data can be used by policy makers would be conducted during the launch of the platform at the RSC.

70. Ms Robinson noted that what is seen on the R2R spatial database is replicated in other parts of SPC’s work, such as the Pacific Risk Information System. She agreed on the need to ensure longevity of the work commenced under the project and stated that the DCRP is working with partners to connect this data infrastructure with other infrastructures available through the Pacific Resilience Nexus.

### Agenda Item 6.3: Discussion and Decisions

**71. The Committee recommended that RSC supports exploring further the proposal for a separate standalone COVID-19 space within the R2R website, which includes identifying individuals or focal points responsible for feeding information into the website and the RPCU as the administrator.**

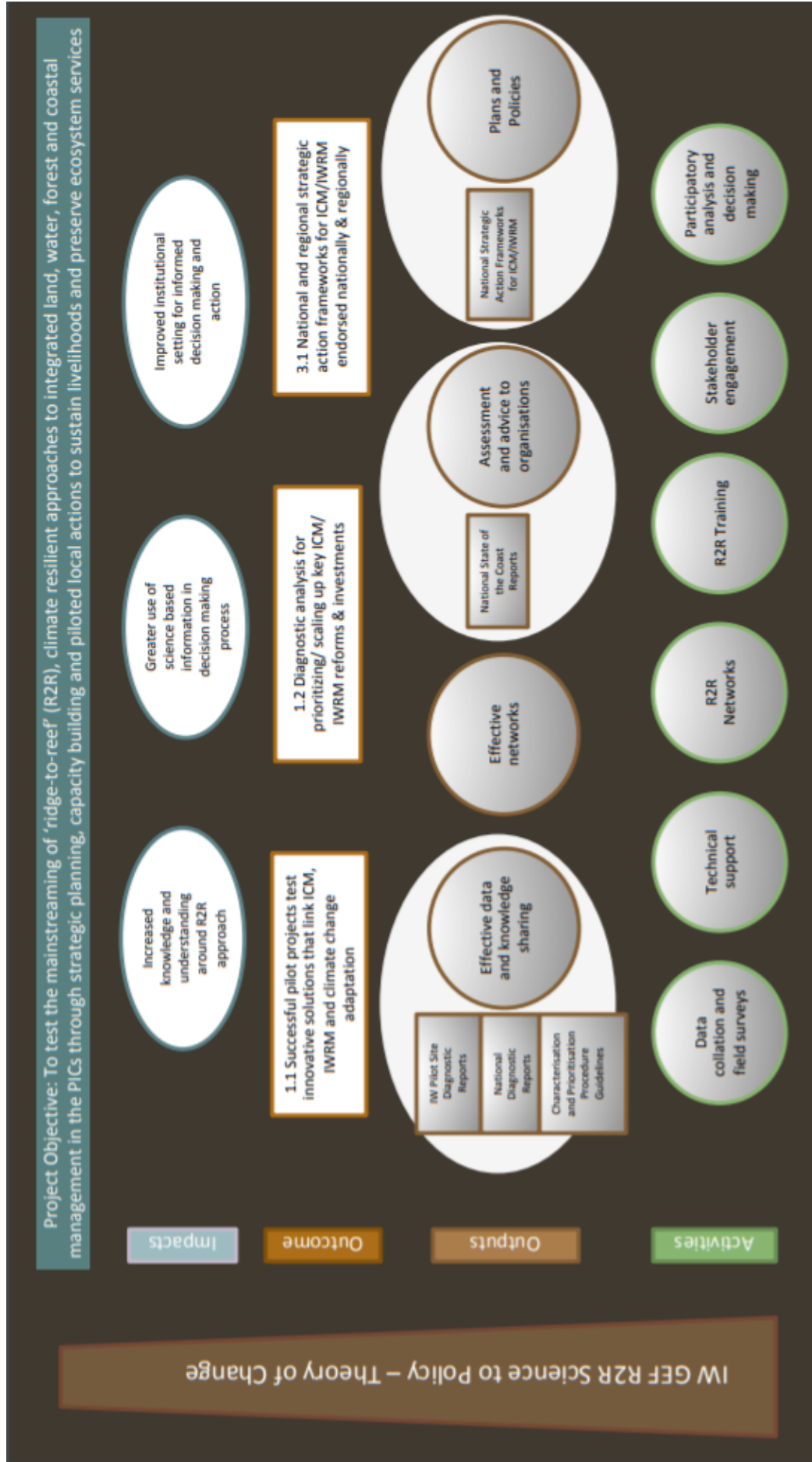
**72. The Committee recommended that the RSC: -**

- (i) Endorse and launch the R2R Science Portal, which includes the R2R information management systems, science portal and data infrastructure;**
- (ii) Note the utility and application of the Pacific State of Coast Spatial Data Infrastructure for the Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme, and that it links to other data infrastructure/ systems of the SPC;**
- (iii) Support linking the R2R data infrastructure to other regional and global data sources for purposes of sharing and minimising chances of duplication; and**
- (iv) Note the need for caution and effective use of controls to ensure quality of data (including methods and designs employed to collect the datasets) feeding into the R2R data systems.**

### Agenda Item 7: Mainstreaming R2R – Special Topics

Agenda Item 7.1: (Modified) R2R science-policy technological interface

73. Mr Sauni of the Secretariat, introduced working paper [GEF R2R/RSTC.6/WP.04](#), which clearly set out guidelines to assist stakeholders and managers implement the science-policy strategic framework in future upscaling R2R investments. The framework was approved by the RSC during its formal session last year 2019. However, there have been no commitments demonstrated by the countries in implementing the framework.
74. Consequently, the framework has been slightly modified to cater for circumstances and situations of countries and allow for flexibility implementing steps 1 to 6 of the science-policy framework. For instance, the framework had been modified to address limitations identified by countries in implementing the science to policy continuum (such as timing, availability of experts, low uptake by the participating projects, and parallel efforts from other projects). The modifications are still in conformity with the approved science to policy theory of change ensuring robustness of scientific and technical basis.
75. Mr Sauni further stated that the focus remains on delivering environmental stress reduction targets in each of the 14-national demonstration projects. Having revised and agreed on new targets, progress of implementing project activities and outputs to deliver the targets remain off track. The aim now is to continue supporting demonstration in country and deliver on those targets by the end of project life. Broadly, the science-policy framework is delivering on project outcomes in 1.1, 1.2 and 3.1. If not for COVID-19, there is possibility and opportunity to pursue positive trends that we have started and put back on track implementation in poorly performed countries.
76. Mr Sauni explained that this is the reason why the proposal in the working paper on MYCWP to the RSC, requests for more time to be able to deliver targets. Mr Sauni noted the difficulties working with consultants during this pandemic due to border restrictions. Notwithstanding, in view of programming outcomes 1.1, 1.2 and 3.1 into the MYCWP, not only covering technical related outputs/activities delivering steps 1 to 4 of the science-policy framework but also doing steps 5 and 6 relative to reforms on policies, strategic plans and legislations that would inform changes within institutions and governance structures. Mr Sauni stressed the need of data to develop technical reports (IDA etc), which need us to go back to collecting baselines to ensure datasets collected can feed into analytical tools to be able to narrate products required for policy and decision making. Spatial prioritization work in Vanuatu identifies the data gaps that need to be filled by calibrating and ground truthing data to complete it.
77. Mr Antonio of the Secretariat, urged participants to reflect on the temporal dimension of each of the stages of the modified science to policy framework, suggesting that they consider the amount of time required for each stage of the process. He noted that expertise will need to be procured to conduct the RaPCA, IDA processes through to the SOC and SAP. Understanding the timeframes will assist with providing advice on the proposed no-cost extension in terms of the amount of time needed to deliver on the stages and achieve the target.



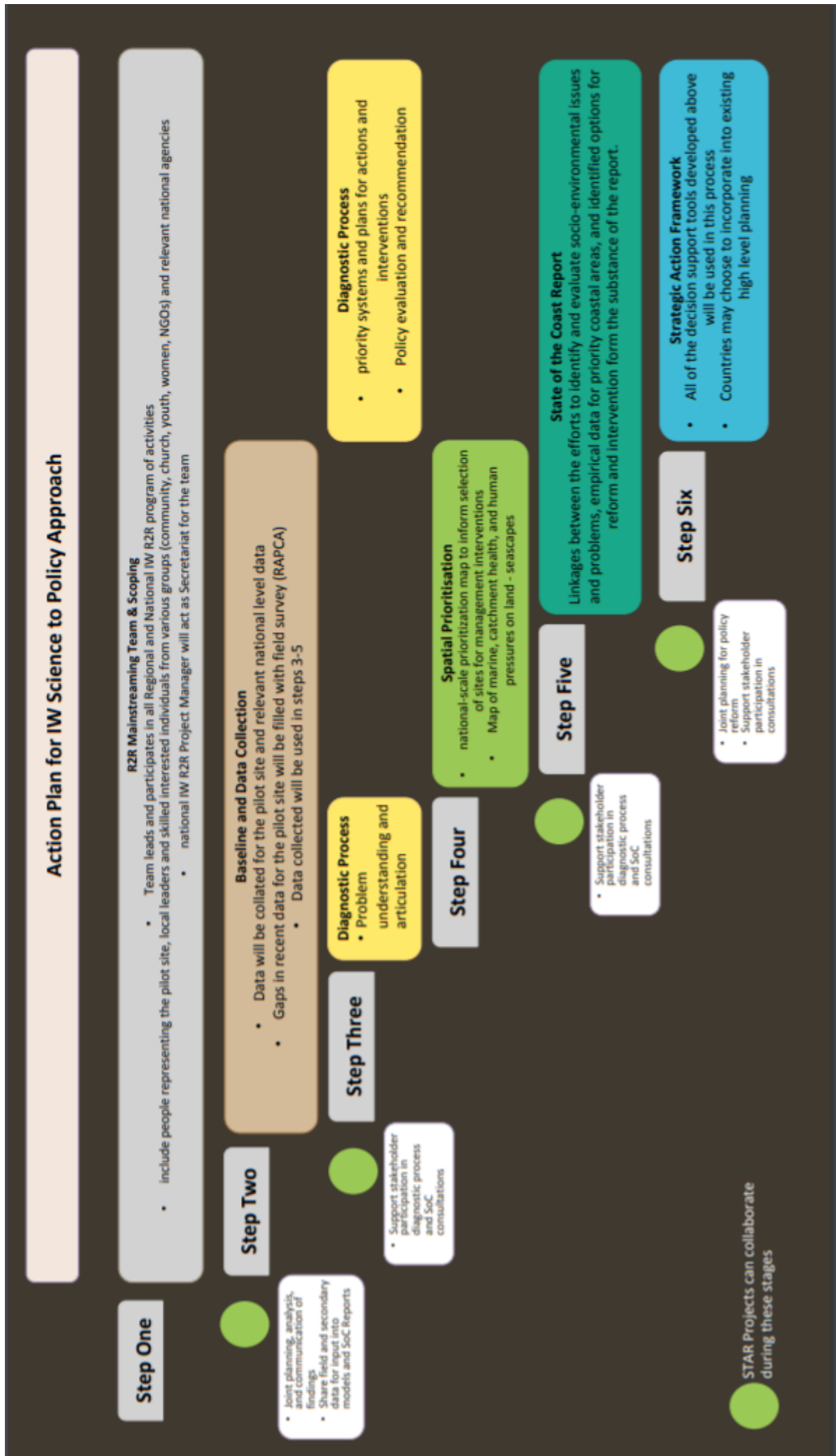


Figure 4:  
Action Plan  
for IW  
Science to  
Policy  
Approach

78. Dr Korovulavula pointed out that the context and narrative of the framework is clear, but the question is how to make it relevant/roll it out in practicality. He suggested the need to consider development policies and the drivers causing the issues as well as how science can advise policy by addressing how governments work. He added that it is not that easy and that perhaps this is something that can come out beyond the R2R project, whereby more detail can be teased out - such as the need for an engagement strategy, building on science communication to target government, opposition, community, etc.
79. Mr Sauni followed up and stated that the outcome of RSTC-TC Feb 2020 is to convince policy makers in decision making processes. He noted however, that the role of the RPCU is just to communicate and convince through development of products from scientific and technical work. Eventually, it is the decision makers that make the final decision and that is beyond the project scope. RPCU can only advocate evidence-based best practice and encourage and support using work of scientists to inform decision making. He hoped that products developed from the project will add value to that process of decision making. Mr Sauni stated that the paper is just guidelines that have no "legal teeth".
80. Chair agreed and stated that it would be good to have a committee to consider one of goals on how science interacts in almost a philosophical way regarding the way science is used to influence end users and decision makers.

## Agenda Item 7.2 Conceptual framework on spatial prioritisation procedures (guidelines, publications, factsheets)

81. Mr Sauni of the Secretariat, presented the paper [GEF R2R/ RSTC.6/ WP.05](#) "Regional Guidelines for the Application of Ridge to Reef (R2R) Spatial Prioritization and Planning Procedures to Identify and Select Priority Coastal Areas and Sites for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Ecosystem Goods and Services". The purpose of the presentation was to reflect on the R2R approach in natural resource management and governance and to consider and endorse the framework for future R2R investments and planning.
82. Mr Sauni explained that spatial prioritisation is a science-based spatial planning procedure that supports selection of priority areas and sites for R2R interventions and reforms. He referenced a brochure that provides further information on spatial prioritization procedures and is available as [GEF R2R/ RSTC.6/ Inf.06](#).
83. Mr Sauni discussed how modelling can help policy makers in the selection process of priority areas set aside for conservation actions. He presented the stepwise procedures outlined in the paper and used scenarios from the Vanuatu model, developed through the work of Dr Jade Delevaux to showcase the methodologies and outputs or results of the model.
84. Effectively, the model considers impacts of certain land-use activities that would lead to sediment export from upstream to lower areas downstream of the watershed catchment and further impacts on adjacent coastal/marine areas. The model will determine the impacts of total suspended solids, as influenced by one or a mix of land-use scenario(s) of say deforestation, urbanisation and protected

areas on land/forest, in the water column on marine ecosystem health, using indicators of percentage of coral cover, fish biomass and macroalgae growth.

85. Mr Sauni noted the value of engaging local counterparts on the ground, which provided opportunity to train and upskill and to assist international consultants' technical assessments and collection of additional data. Mr Sauni stressed the importance of having access to data, noting that any model is only as good as the quality/adequacy of data that is put into the model, recognising a suite of model assumptions.
86. Chair Prof. Sheaves T complimented the work of Dr Delevaux and acknowledged that limitations are expected. He echoed the comment on need for data, noting that good data from the biological field is needed and science must do the work to work out streamlining to fill those gaps. He stated he is convinced, proposed endorsing the spatial prioritization model, and opened the floor for discussion.
87. Dr Korovulavula noted the value of the model in addressing the ridge to reef continuum in the programme and expressed that this would also be valuable for the Fiji STAR project because a lot of good data has been collected in Fiji. He also noted the need to look at different variables in the model such as considering different islands in Vanuatu.
88. Dr Nainoca reflected on the amount of data being generated from this project and suggested the possibility of developing lessons learned in the application of the guidelines on spatial prioritisation. She recognised that investments have already been done by the partners and other organisations and through RPCU, which has published IW:LEARN experience notes. She suggested this could be moved up another notch and develop into an e-publication to be led by RSTC, depending on availability of resources. She recommended an editorial team be established to formulate an outline, which would collate the large amount of good scientific work, lessons learned stories both from STAR and IW work and have this published electronically.
89. Chair stated that one of the immediate needs is to get the work of R2R out so people will see it. International publications and e-publications provide the type of coverage and profile required and would be worthwhile investments. He suggested there are several options, including possibility of a collaborative approach with specific journals. However, it was important to do this in a logical way, noting that costs are involved.
90. Mr Sauni acknowledged the merits in publishing products and noted that R2R products had been made available in the public domain. He advised that two papers are being prepared for submission to peer reviewed journals and suggested that the same could be done for other work (potentially for something stronger than an e-publication), however, the current priority is the two peer reviewed papers, which continued to be led by Dr Jade Delevaux.
91. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo of the Secretariat, advised the Committee on a legacy publication on Mainstreaming R2R into Sustainable Development in the Pacific and lessons learned, noting that this is work in progress and updates will be provided in the next agenda item. Mr Sauni reminded the meeting that the



current project is focusing on “testing” and while it is also good to publish the results and strategic innovations tested and methods employed, it is equally important that further publications on the impacts of R2R interventions be considered in future upscaling of R2R.

### Agenda Item 7.3 Lessons learned – Mainstreaming

[This agenda item was included at the request of UNDP Bangkok]

92. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo of the Secretariat presented on the compilation and development of lessons learned and associated knowledge products. This work responds to MTR Recommendation 11 (and related recommendations) where it highlights: *“In most cases, it is likely that the most valuable programme outcome (in addition to capacity building) will be lessons learned. 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 IWRM/ ICM/ R2R investments. This would include providing guidance to current projects (STAR and IW) regarding which lessons should be derived, and how to do it.*
93. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo updated the committee on the progress to date:
- (i) Regional framework for the compilation and development of lessons learned for Pacific R2R Programme drafted and endorsed by the RSC4 (August 2019).
  - (ii) TOR for report writers provided to IW/STAR project coordinators and managers (December 2020).
  - (iii) Country briefings on lessons learned have been conducted for the regional programme (September 2020), with separate country briefings for Tuvalu, Palau, Samoa, Cook Islands and PNG (Q2 – Q3 2020).
  - (iv) Countries had requested extensions for submissions on titles and summaries from 30 June 2020 to 29 July 2020.
94. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo presented to the Committee the update on submissions of lessons learned summaries and/or full drafts by STAR and IW. Through further preliminary analysis, the lessons were corresponded to different sections/themes under the Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme framework for coordination, compilation and development of R2R lessons learned. The numbers in the table indicate the sections in the framework they correspond to. It was highlighted that sections that were not filled in the table provided, the RPCU did not receive any submissions.
95. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo also provided context of the lessons learned to be packaged as part of a legacy publication on Mainstreaming R2R into Sustainable Development in the Pacific. The Framework is in 3 parts, the first 2 parts on a guide is being written by a consulting team. The lessons will be incorporated to demonstrate project/national implementation success. This will be done as an e-book, and/or hard copy if there are resources.

Country	Project		Thematic areas
Cook Islands	STAR	IW	Capacity Building and sustainability, Conflict Resolution (land ownership) (STAR) and Project design (IW)
Fiji	STAR		Participatory planning and policy process (community to cabinet) 1.2.2 Functional catchment management committees in Tuva, Votua in Ba and Labasa; 3.2.4.2 Knowledge management - Biophysical/demographic/Socioeconomic data collected and analysed; 1.3, 1.5 ICM Plans developed for 4 catchments.
FSM	* STAR		
Kiribati			
Nauru	STAR		1.3, 1.5 Participatory Planning and policy - Development and approval of the Coastal Fisheries & Aquaculture Act 2020. Draft LMMA plans to be later included in regulations
Niue			
Palau	STAR	IW	1.2.6 Capacity building (water quality monitoring program), 1.2.3, 1.5, 1.2.6 mainstreaming to sectoral policy (Greenboots), 1.2.2, 1.4 MNRET creating new Institutional structures establishing a Bureau of Environment and Planning
PNG			
RMI	STAR		1.2.2, 3.2.4.2, 3.2.3 Participatory planning and policy - REIIMAANLAK 8 Step Process as the operational guideline – knowledge management (incl. traditional knowledge) MIS, participatory planning and institutional structures – PAN Office and Action Plan (Output 1.1-1.3 and 3.1-3.3), 1.2-2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.2.6 Outputs 2.1 – 2.4,
Samoa			
Solomon Islands			
Tonga		IW	1.1.3, 1.2.4, 1.2.6, 1.2.7, 1.5 Community to Cabinet stakeholder engagement, media and policy advocacy
Tuvalu	STAR	IW	1.1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.3, , 1.2.7, 1.3, 1.5 8 ISPs have R2R principles integrated that incorporates ICM, MSP and IWRM
Vanuatu		IW	1.1.3, 1.2.3, 1.2.4, 1.2.7 Improved inter-agency partnership in sustainable catchment management and 2) Community to local government partnerships for sustainable land and surface water use preserving livelihood

Figure 5: List of country contributions to Pacific R2R Programme Lessons Learned as at 20 September 2020

## Agenda Item 7.4: Discussion and Decisions

**96. The Committee endorsed the decisions of the Pre-RSC sessions on the papers under the Special Topics theme and recommend transmitting these to the RSC for further consideration and actions. These include the following: -**

- (i) Regional guidelines – ‘Modified’ Science to Policy theory of change; and**
- (ii) Regional guidelines – Spatial Prioritisation Modelling Procedures.**

## Agenda Item 8: Any other business

### Agenda Item 8.1: Next RSTC meeting and 2nd technical consultation

97. There were no other matters raised by participants.
98. The Secretariat proposed to postpone decision on details of dates and venue of the next RSTC meeting and 2<sup>nd</sup> technical consultation until decisions are taken by the RSC regarding the proposal for a no-cost extension.

## Agenda Item 9: Closing remarks by Chair

99. Chair reflected on how well so much has been done despite the difficulties. He stated the challenges of working across multiple countries in the region and thanked everyone for their involvement and commitment. He added that he was impressed by the commitment, input and integrity shown by the team and said that this has stood out through the whole process.
100. SPC representative Ms Robinson, thanked Professor Sheaves as Chair of the RSTC and acknowledged Dr Korovulavula for chairing the meeting the previous day. She stated that these meetings provide the opportunity to talk about the scientific work being done which in turn enables the tools and support to be provide to member representatives. She acknowledged Mr Sauni and his team and thanked Dr Nainoca and the UNDP team, FAO representative and country representatives.

## Annex 1: Provisional Agenda

Start Time	End Time	Agenda Item	Description	Session Facilitator
DAY 1			Monday, 19 <sup>th</sup> October 2020	
10.30am			Delegates log in and undertake audio/ video check	Secretariat
11.00	11.20	1	Welcome and Opening	
		1.1	Prayer	tbc
		1.2	Welcome and remarks by Chair	Chair (Prof. M. Sheaves)
		1.3	Opening remarks on behalf of the Secretariat	SPC (Andrew/ Rhonda)
11.20	11.35	2	Organization of the meeting	
		2.1	Appointment of Officers	Chair
		2.2	Meeting documents	SPC
		2.3	Meeting arrangements and conduct	SPC
11.35	11.45	3	Adoption of agenda	Chair
		3.1	Last RSC meeting record and action items	SPC
11.50	12.20	4	Looking ahead post R2R and COVID-19	Chair
		4.1	Project closure and terminal evaluation	UNDP
		4.2	What's next, post R2R and COVID-19?	SPC
		4.3	Chair's report 2020 – Highlights, Challenges and Opportunities	Chair, SPC
		4.4	<i>Discussion and Decisions</i>	Chair
12.20	1pm	5	A stocktake of the work so far	Chair
		5.1	Update progress on implementing MTR recommendations	SPC
		5.2	Status of the regional IW R2R project – specific to the science workplan	SPC
		5.3	JCU Course Report, 2020	Prof. M. Sheaves
		5.4	<i>Discussion and Decisions</i>	Chair
DAY 2			Tuesday, 20 <sup>th</sup> October 2020	
10.30am			Delegates sign in and undertake audio/ video check	Secretariat
11.00	11.30	6	Mainstreaming R2R – Research and Information Management	Chair
		6.1	R2R website re-development and related online tools	SPC
		6.2	R2R information management systems - environment, governance and socio-economic baseline assessments using EGS and DPSIR Approaches	SPC
		6.3	<i>Discussion and Decisions</i>	Chair
11.30	11.55	7	Mainstreaming R2R - Special Topics	Chair, Secretariat
		7.1	(Modified) R2R science-policy technological interface	SPC
		7.2	Conceptual framework on spatial prioritization procedures (guidelines, publications, factsheets)	SPC
		7.3	<i>Discussion and Decisions</i>	Chair
11.55	12pm	8	Any other business	Chair
		8.1	Next RSTC meeting and 2 <sup>nd</sup> technical consultation	SPC
12.00	12.05	9	Closing remarks by Chair	Chair

Name	Affiliations
<b><i>RSTC Members</i></b>	
Prof. Marcus Sheaves (Chair)	James Cook University
Dr Isoa Korovulavula (Co-Chair)	IAS, University of the South Pacific
Dr Salome Taufa	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
Conway Pene	Consultant
<b><i>GEF R2R Implementing Agencies, GEF R2R Executing Agency</i></b>	
Ms Evayne Gaubidi	IW R2R Nauru
Mr Senson Mark	IW R2R PNG
Ms Kristina Reimers	IW R2R RMI
Mr Sammy Airahui	IW R2R Solomon Islands
Ms Debra Kereseke	IW R2R Solomon Islands
Ms Silia Leger	IW R2R Tonga
Mr Taaniela Kula	IW R2R Tonga
Mr Pesega Lifuka	IW R2R Tuvalu
Ms Beverly Sadole	STAR R2R Fiji
Mr Noa Vakacegu	STAR R2R Fiji
Ms Phaedora Harris	STAR R2R Nauru
Ms Jennifer Debrum	STAR R2R RMI
Mr Josua Turaganivalu	UNDP Pacific Suva Office
Ms Amelia Raratabu	UNDP Pacific Suva Office
Dr Jose Padilla	UNDP Bangkok Office
Dr Winifereti Nainoca	UNDP Pacific Suva Office
Mr Floyd Robinson	UNDP Pacific Suva Office
Ms Anne Trevor	UNDP Samoa Office
Ms Jessica Sanders	UNFAO, Samoa
<b><i>Secretariat - SPC</i></b>	
Rhonda Robinson	GEM, SPC
Dr Fononga Mangisi-Mafileo	GEM, SPC
Samasoni Sauni	GEM, SPC
Jose Antonio	GEM, SPC
Vere Bakani	GEM, SPC
Swastika Devi	GEM, SPC
Navneet Lal	GEM, SPC
Mr George Naboutuiloma	GEM, SPC

Name	Affiliations
Mr John Carreon	GEM, SPC
Mr Sachindra Singh	GEM, SPC
Ms Carrol Chan	GEM, SPC
Ms Seema Deo	Consultant, GEM, SPC
Ms Lorelie Astrera	Consultant, GEM, SPC



## RSTC6 Chair's Report – Outcomes and Recommendations

### Sixth Meeting of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC) for the GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Project 19 – 20 October 2020

1. The Committee reappointed Prof. Marcus Sheaves and Dr Isoa Korovulavula into their current positions as chair and co-chair, respectively.
2. The Committee noted the responses corresponding to the decisions and recommendations of the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the RSTC. The Committee further noted that details of specific action items would be considered and discussed as separate agenda items during the meeting.
3. The Committee supported revisiting discussion of timelines for the terminal evaluation, following the RSC decision on the proposal for a no-cost extension. The Committee endorsed the outcomes and recommendations of the Pre-RSC panel discussion on this presentation and recommend transmitting to the RSC for consideration and approval.
4. The Committee endorsed the outcomes and recommendations of the Pre-RSC panel discussion on the paper. Therefore, the Committee recommends further consideration and approval of the RSC on a next phase project post R2R, and a no-cost extension beyond 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2021 of the current project.
5. The Committee noted the JCU<sup>1</sup> course report and recommended that the RSC: -
  - (i) Supports current efforts of both JCU and RPCU-SPC<sup>2</sup> to assist students who are falling behind their studies;
  - (ii) Further supports preparation of dedicated workplans by JCU that would allow students to catch up and submit late assignments;
  - (iii) Considers the seriousness of the matter where university regulations are continually challenged and possibly undermined to accommodate commitments to enable students to complete late assignments and therefore continue their studies; and
  - (iv) Endorse that if all efforts fail and students do not satisfy the course requirements, the JCU and RPCU will request the students' withdrawal from the course.
6. The Committee endorsed the decisions of the Pre-RSC sessions on the papers under the stock-take, Special Topics and Looking Ahead Post R2R themes, and recommend transmitting these to the RSC for further consideration and actions. These includes the following: -
  - (i) Progress implementation of the MTR recommendations;
  - (ii) Current status of the Regional IW R2R Project;
  - (iii) Regional guidelines – 'Modified' Science to Policy theory of change;
  - (iv) Regional guidelines – Spatial Prioritization Modelling Procedures;
  - (v) No-cost extension; and
  - (vi) Next phase post-R2R.
7. The Committee thanked the Secretariat for reporting on progress of the R2R website re-development and related online tools. It also underlined the importance of a dedicated portal on

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1 James Cook University, Australia

2 Ridge to Reef Regional Programme Coordination Unit, GEM, SPC

COVID-19 in the R2R website recognising similar efforts done on other programmes of the SPC, including public health.

8. The Committee recommended that the RSC endorsed and launched the second phase of the R2R website re-development including related online tools such science portal and data infrastructure.

9. The Committee recommended that RSC supports exploring further the proposal for a separate standalone COVID-19 space within the R2R website, which includes identifying individuals or focal points responsible for feeding information into the website and the RPCU as the administrator.

10. The Committee recommended that the RSC: -

- (i) Endorse and launch the R2R Science Portal, which includes the R2R information management systems;
- (ii) Note the useful utility and application of the Pacific State of Coast Spatial Data Infrastructure for the Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme, and that it links to other data infrastructure/ systems of the SPC;
- (iii) Support linking the R2R data infrastructure to other regional and global data sources for purposes of sharing and minimising chances of duplication; and
- (iv) Note the need for caution and effective use of controls to ensure quality of data (including methods & designs employed to collect the datasets) feeding into the R2R data systems.

## Annex 5: RPCG's Chair Report to RSC5 Highlights & Outcomes and Recommendations

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GEF IW R2R/ RSC.5/ WP. 17

Date: 17 November 2020

Original: English

Fifth Regional Steering Committee Meeting 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*

**Fifth Meeting of the GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Project Programme Coordinating Committee (RPCG), 22<sup>nd</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020**

**RPCG Chair's Report – Outcomes & Recommendations**

# RPCG's Chair Report to RSC5 Highlights

## Strategic Points - 1

1. Coordination role of RPCU in:
  - a) reporting results of the child projects along the GEF focal areas using the HRR;
  - b) child/STAR project proactively share data to populate the Regional Information Database/ Infrastructure;
  - c) child/STAR projects submit to RPCU to the lessons learned documentation.

## Strategic Points - 2

2. GEF IA will strongly advocate on:
  - a) the establishment of STAR and IW joint steering committee;
  - b) support the conduct of the mainstreaming R2R consultancy (email introducing the consultants were already forwarded);
  - c) support the conduct of the Human Capacity assessment for Ridge to Reef (email introducing the consultants will be sent next week);
  - d) Contribute and promote the tested measures resulting from the programmatic implementation of R2R:
    - i. Land-sea model application (e.g. RMI signify interest including a capacity building)
    - ii. Regional database infrastructure

**Annex 1: VIRTUAL MEETING RECORD OF THE GEF PACIFIC R2R PROGRAM  
COORDINATING GROUP (R2RPCG) - DRAFT  
20<sup>th</sup> October 2020, 2:00pm – 4:40pm**

**Agenda Item 1: Appointment of Chair**

1. Dr Winifereti Nainoca from UNDP as Programme Lead chaired the meeting

**Agenda Item 2: Introductions**

2. Chair invited everyone to introduce themselves.

**Agenda Item 3: Endorsement of minutes of previous meeting**

3. The minutes of previous meeting were reviewed and endorsed by FAO. Ms Rhonda Robinson from the Secretariat states that SPC cannot endorse and second a motion as that is a conflict in its role as Secretariat to the RPCG.

**Agenda Item 4: Agency Status Reporting**

4. The UNDP & FAO representatives presented updates on status of Pacific R2R projects in their respective portfolios. The SPC Secretariat provided an update on status of regional components of project in the next agenda item.

**Agenda Item 5: Regional Coordinator's Status Report**

5. Mr Samasoni Sauni of the Secretariat appealed to the RPCG members to seriously consider the issues affecting the coordination role of the RPCU to the GEF Pacific R2R Programme. He reiterated what has been sanctioned in past meetings on a need for sharing of IW/STAR R2R data and reports. Mr Sauni also stated that the reporting lines between the RPCU-SPC and IAs are an issue and requested for better reporting where the Implementing Agency requests the necessary information from STAR countries and then that data to be then shared with IW projects.

6. About lessons learned and knowledge products, Mr Sauni briefed the meeting on the recruitment of additional resources has just completed, and more information will be provided especially regarding the project framework document. Mr Sauni reported to the RPCG the discussions and ongoing consultations with the countries through virtual platforms with combined training for lessons learned. He also mentioned the invites extended also to STAR.

7. Mr Sauni raised an ongoing issue demonstrated by the lack of interest and therefore commitment from responsible agencies and persons. This has resulted in shifting of milestone targets twice to accommodate the lack of progress and commitments from authors responsible for IW and STAR Lessons Learned stories. Mr Sauni reiterated that the RPCU can provide mentorship role but ultimately it is up to the authors in-countries to write their Lessons Learned. The RPCU has prepared a matrix that shows countries what are progressing and those with no progress and requiring submission of draft lessons from the countries.

8. Other points raised in the Regional Coordinator's report include the following: -

- (i) Programmatic implementation and demonstration of lessons learned is an effective R2R approach for sustainable resource governance. Project staffs were able to attend and present their projects in international conventions, as well trips to observe commercial application of dry litter technology through piggeries in American Samoa. These visits provide important first-hand knowledge and awareness of lessons for replication and upscaling Ridge to Reef principles and innovative technologies.

- (ii) That the buy-in from stakeholders is slowly increasing with increased awareness as more R2R publications and knowledge products are posted online the R2R website, thereby increasing accessibility by users. Equally, the various meetings and assistance offered through the programmatic approach with examples from Kiribati, RMI and Fiji demonstrate successful application of the R2R concept;
- (iii) That the recruitment of consultants to support documentation of lessons learned following the broader regional framework endorsed by RSC last year. This calls for the use of local consultants to support technical assessments and virtually supported by RPCU staffs and international consultants. That said, the project is experiencing challenges with delayed submission of draft lessons learned from authors, which led to the continuous shifting of timelines to accommodate the completion of drafts.
- (iv) That data and information gaps is central to the successful delivery of project targets and outcomes. The RPCU continues to encourage all child projects of the GEF Pacific R2R Programme to collect and share their data and reports in order for the RPCU to report back on the GEF tracking tools on HRR process set out in the Programme Framework Document (PFD). At this time, STAR R2R projects' data is not shared. As said in the past, the RPCU is unable to not only report against GEF tracking tools but also not possible to write diagnostic reports without incomplete data. The MTR recommendations were clear about this issue that encourages sharing and provision of data and reports.
- (v) That what RPCU requests the RPCG and GEF IAs to advocate and promote to STAR projects to encourage Project Managers/ Coordinators show commitments and complying with the programmatic approach underpinning R2R implementation. If this is not done, continued quarterly reports will be submitted to UNDP with missing details from the STAR projects and having no Lessons Learned from STAR managers so we are seeking support regarding this issue.

9. Dr Nainoca of UNDP made the following observations in response to the Regional Coordinator's project status report: -

- (i) She informed the RPCG that every year the STAR R2R projects presents to UNDP Suva, the PIR, quarterly reports (though not as substantive). She encouraged all IAs and Star R2R Projects to provide data and reports to the RPCU-SPC to enable the mandated tasks of reporting to GEF carried out and completed satisfactorily. Dr Nainoca emphasized and clarified that UNDP Pacific Office can only provide UNDP STAR data and reports for countries under that Office, but unable to direct other STAR R2R projects under the mandate of other UN IAs. Nonetheless, she will reach out to the other IAs and request to share their PIRs with the RPCU-SPC. She requested Mr Josua Turaganivalu of UNDP Pacific Office to email STAR R2R project countries to fill in the Quarter 3 report gaps.
- (ii) She placed the importance of using and working with local consultants as a strategy proposed by RPCU-SPC to get around current issue of the borders closed. Dr Nainoca also raised that there may be not enough funding to get local consultants in each of the 14 PICs. If this is the case then since the international consultant(s) will not be on the ground, they will be highly relying on the PMUs of the IW/STAR Project Managers and Coordinators to support the work.
- (iii) She requested a list of those who have not contributed to completing HRR, and an the RPCU-SPC agreed to Dr Nainoca and UNDP an updated table of countries progress on this.

10. Ms Sanders of UNFAO agreed that there needs to be a push from the IAs to fill some of the information gaps and get people going in the project teams. She explained that from FAO there appears to be a bit of a disconnect between the child projects including that of STAR R2R and the GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Regional Programme Coordination Unit (RPCU) team. Ms Sanders suggested a useful way forward is the RPCU staff could present the lessons learned framework to the FAO team in order to extract some of the lesson learned and can help connect some projects back to the regional team. This helps with connecting project teams to the regional group in the future as well. The Secretariat agreed and if requested is happy to facilitate training FAO dedicated sessions on the approved regional R2R lessons learned framework.



11. The meeting agreed that FAO formally requested RPCU-SPC to facilitate training sessions dedicated for FAO and STAR project staffs under FAO oversight.

12. Mr Antonio of the Secretariat reiterated presentation by Mr Sauni earlier on the GEF focal area, especially discussion of country reporting in Session 2 as covered in the Program Coordinator's report. The meeting noted that focal area of reporting in that session was framed in accordance and using the HRR template. There were inputs from six (6) child projects (supposed to be 14) on their projects' contributions to the GEF focal areas. If recall RPCU has the coordination role, and it includes consolidating and reporting back to GEF through UNDP on progress of achieving GEF focal areas and GEF targets. The RPCU-SPC received with appreciation inputs from STAR R2R projects of Fiji, Nauru, RMI, Palau and Kiribati. This follows past circulars and repeated requests that each child project would make a verbal report participation on Pre-RSC Panel Discussion Session 2. Ms Rosalinda from FSM STAR R2R project was the only one that sent her apologies in not being able to participate in the discussions as they were very busy at the time.

13. Moreover, Mr Antonio stated that there are two (2) templates provided by the RPCU-SPC, one is for Project Coordinators or Managers to complete, and the other template is for GEF IAs (FAO, UNEP and UNDP) on behalf of project in case they cannot do it. It was also explained that it is not simply through sending to the RPCU-SPC the progress report and the PIRs of the project because there is no specific reporting on your contribution on the GEF focal areas. These are very specific reporting requirements and as monitor of the R2R Programme, the RPCU-SPC advocates that all child projects really fulfill the template reporting requirements rather than just sending the report.

14. Dr Nainoca suggested that Mr Antonio talked with Ravi, the UNDP Pacific Office monitoring and reporting Officer. She also suggested that the table of all child projects and progress of filling the templates is prepared and circulated and shown to everyone to strongly advocate for people that have not contributed, to work on it. As stated before, Dr Nainoca would be pushing strongly with other IAs for this to be done.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Decision items**

15. Ms Ronda Robinson acknowledged the good work of the RPCG, and she felt the programmatic approach has been difficult from the start of the program. Therefore, there needs to be in-depth discussion at some point in terms of the many evaluations and lessons learned documentations that are being generated by this project or program. She recognized that not all the UN IAs are on the call today for the RPCG which is a key coordinated governance mechanism for us to manifest the programmatic approach.

16. This level of manifestation is what is seen here, where the SPC, UNDP, FAO representatives are the only in attendance at this meeting. Ms Robinson reiterated that from the very start of the R2R Program up until now at RSC 5, people are still discussing this issue that was brought up three years ago, and something is not quite right. She further voiced her concerns that it is perhaps not about actioning on the ground programming but more about demonstrating we can report against what is being done through these many tools and templates we have developed. She stressed for a need to do some deep digging and lessons to learn from some of the successes and challenges faced on the ground when we are trying to implement programmatic approach. Ms Robinson believed that contractually it is not set up to be programmatic and that is a lesson in itself.

17. Dr Nainoca of UNDP reminded the meeting that in the early days of negotiations towards approval of the PFD, there were only 2 or 3 Pacific island countries submitted their GEF Project Identification Form (PIF) Templates. There was still that sense of obligation because under the original PFD in which SPC is required to report under the Regional IW R2R project.

18. Mr Sauni of the Secretariat informs the meeting that the newly recruited international consultants are undertaking work mainstreaming R2R. He requested support from IA through STAR projects to lend that level of support to consultants when there is surveys to complete or information and reports being requested. Dr Nainoca suggested to write an email to the other members of the RPCG on this development. Mr Sauni confirmed a formal e-circular was sent out to all participating countries and it includes UN IAs,

STAR R2R projects and partners – happy to resend. He also reminded the meeting that this is not an IW R2R consultancy but a GEF Pacific R2R Program consultancy thereby expecting support from everyone in the R2R family.

### **Agenda Item 7: Regional Steering Committee Meeting**

19. Mr Sauni of the Secretariat presented on this agenda item stating that to prepare for the upcoming RSC-5 virtual meeting, UNDP and with support the RPCU-SPC prepares the RPCG's Chair report to the RSC. The report should cover key areas to be presented and points that needs to be influenced by STAR project countries towards decision making process of the RSC. For instance, Mr Sauni suggested the Chair to report on the RPCG's position on the main proposals to be tabled at the RSC – such as the no-cost extension, next step post R2R giving with an indication of support for next phase, regional guidelines to implement the 'modified' science to policy framework and spatial prioritization procedures. Mr Sauni also raised the issues raised in Mr Floyd Robinson's email regarding second extension and to getting us to be on the same page before going to the members of RSC.

20. Mr Sauni suggested that the UNDP team could consult internally if possible willing to frame joint approach on the issues raised in Floyd's email and to avoid disagreeing with SPC in plenary. Mr Sauni reminded the meeting of the key working papers on MYCWP and next phase put forward a proposal for another no-cost extension. Mr Sauni reiterated that the RPCU is well-aware of the UNDP current policy that the proposal is beyond the 6-month limit and therefore inconsistent with the requirement of the UNDP policy. However, in terms of the arguments set out in the paper, and that the papers have been circulated to delegations some time back, the RPCU-SPC felt proper that the RSC plenary is a place for the countries to decide for themselves the best way forward in terms of the no-cost extension period. Dr Nainoca suggested exchanging some emails with UNDP team to clarify some of these points.

21. Mr Sauni reiterated that in response to Mr Floyd's email, today's RPCG meeting would have been the meeting in which these points should have been clarified. Unfortunately, Mr Robinson was unable to participate in the meeting. Mr Sauni states he is unsure of how to move forward addressing and ironing out these important issues before RSC plenary. Given the tight schedule before the RSC-5 virtual meeting in two days- time it may be possible to entertain another meeting to iron out these issues. However, the meeting recognized the RPCU staffs need to prepare for the RSC-5 meeting and there were numerous preparations needed done.

22. Dr Nainoca advised she will start communications through email to have a discussion on having everyone on the same page regarding the above-mentioned issues. Another issue she raised was the island to island approach where the formulation had already been started between UNDP Samoa and SPREP. She further stated that something should come after this Regional IW R2R Project. Mr Sauni proposed that the approach is such that the Secretariat presents the meeting papers covering both proposals for a no-cost extension and a next phase as circulated recognizing the UNDP reactions to the proposal. The Secretariat will assist the Chair guides plenary discussion and decisions of the RSC. It was raised as a request if there is PIF for the SPREP/UNDP led island to island project to please share with us to advise the Chair of this proposal.

23. Ms Robinson of the SPC Secretariat anticipated a lot of the detailed discussions that Dr Padilla had been bringing up were to be clarified today. Ms Robinson encouraged to have a meeting as the RPCU have been doing a lot of the heavy lifting and kindly requests to accommodate their need for a meeting before the RSC proper. She also noted the sensitive topics and comments made by Dr Padilla regarding reallocation of funds across budget lines and extension periods without perhaps his full appreciation for the revised MYCWP and what the team puts in place for COVID-19 pivoting, suggesting perhaps review of the papers would provide some clarity. Ms Robinson further states that these one-on-one meetings serve the purpose of ironing out sensitive issues that we do not want to take to the countries so that we are on the same page when in front of the countries. Mr Antonio reaffirmed he will emailed Dr Nainoca Annex 9 Highlights RPCG Meeting and presentation by Dr Padilla.

**Agenda Item 8: All Other Business**

24. There were no other businesses discussed.

**Agenda Item 9: Next Meeting**

25. Chair, Dr Winifereti Nainoca thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting.

**Annex 1: GEF PACIFIC R2R PROGRAM COORDINATING GROUP  
(R2RPCG), ANNOTATED AGENDA**

*20<sup>th</sup> October 2020, 2:00pm – 4:40pm*

**Virtual Discussions**

- 26. Appointment of Chair**  
*UNDP as programme lead will initially chair the meeting until a chair is designated.*
- 27. Introductions**
- 28. Endorsement of minutes of previous meeting**  
*UNDP will lead the discussion. The minutes of previous meeting will be reviewed and endorsed.*
- 29. Agency Status Reporting**  
*UNDP, FAO and UNEP will present updates on status of Pacific R2R projects in their respective portfolios. SPC will provide an update on status of regional components of project.*
- 30. Regional Coordinator’s Status Report**  
*Report on Regional Project Status, includes implementation of MTR Recommendations, Priorities in the remainder of project life & supported requested from Program Coordination Group*
- More discussions on stronger coordination between the IW & Country STAR – especially for Monitoring & Reporting on Indicators & Targets under the PFD*
- 31. Decision items**  
*Discussion on key discussion items which require program coordination group support/direction and way forward*
- 32. Regional Steering Committee Meeting**  
Summary of key updates to be presented at the Regional Steering Committee Meeting
- 33. All Other Business**
- 34. Next Meeting**

**Annex 2: List of Participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliations</b>
<b><i>RPCG Members</i></b>	
Dr Winifereti Nainoca	UNDP Pacific Suva Office
Ms Jessica Sanders	UNFAO, Samoa
Mr Josua Turaganivalu	UNDP Pacific Suva Office
<b><i>Secretariat - SPC</i></b>	
Rhonda Robinson	GEM, SPC
Dr Fononga Mangisi-Mafileo	GEM, SPC
Samasoni Sauni	GEM, SPC
Jose Antonio	GEM, SPC

Vere Bakani	GEM, SPC
Swastika Devi	GEM, SPC
Navneet Lal	GEM, SPC
Mr George Naboutuiloma	GEM, SPC
Mr John Carreon	GEM, SPC

## Annex 6: Media Release

### Pacific Island Environmental Network champions new technology for conservation and sustainable development



Over 40 environmental policymakers and practitioners across the Pacific Island region have called for the adoption innovative technology to promote sustainable development.

The Global Environmental Facility Pacific Ridge to Reef (R2R) Programme stakeholders from 14 Pacific Island countries convened online for 2 days for the 5th Regional Steering Committee (RSC) meeting to discuss guidelines and decision-support tools that prioritizes areas for sustainable governance and management of resources.

Demonstrated to the Committee, the R2R framework supports Pacific Island countries identify priority conservation areas on land that will have the greatest impact on marine conservation; testing of policy actions prior to implementation; and the development of a decision support tool to identify synergies and trade-offs in habitat conservation across terrestrial and marine ecosystems at an archipelagic scale.

The RSC Chair Honourable Minister of Environment and Tourism of Palau and GEF Political Focal Point highlighted that: “With growing population numbers, our habitats and community livelihoods are at risk, threatened by urbanization, logging and commercial agriculture.”

“The R2R framework and spatial planning procedure enables the mapping of priority areas that can improve land-to-sea governance and management by prioritizing local conservation and management actions,” he emphasized.

The Minister continued that the R2R approach supports locally driven solutions and mobilizes communities to take local action that collectively have global benefits and be active participants in local level decisions related to their environment and part of a community to cabinet policy making process.



The Pacific Community's (SPC) Deputy Director-General Dr Audrey Aumua said: "Experience has demonstrated that an integrated approach from ridge to reef, including the ocean, is necessary for sustainable development."

"The challenges we face in coastal areas are global in scale, and SPC's role is to continue to support our national stakeholders through the provision of context specific scientific and technical innovation," she emphasized.

"The Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme's pioneering integrated approach to the management of coastal resources from land to sea will provide critical lessons to inform national to global governance frameworks supporting poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience," she concluded.

One of the core outcomes of the GEF Pacific R2R Programme focuses on the establishment of national and regional platforms for managing information and sharing of best practices and lessons learned from implementation.

Dr. Aumua congratulated delegates for the launch of Pacific R2R Programme website and online decision-support tools providing access to technical data and information, documents, news and results from implementation, professional contacts and expertise, and that members of the Pacific R2R network will be able to effectively contribute and participate in achieving a common goal – sustainable development.

Tonga Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources Chief Executive Officer Ms. Rosamond Bing observed that there had been some real reflection on the programmatic approach of the project with a focus on lessons learned and how upscaling may occur guiding future investment.

R2R modelling has been trialed in Vanuatu finding that deforestation resulting from urbanization and commercial agriculture expansion increases sedimentation while forest restoration mitigates sedimentation. A further trial is planned for the Solomon Islands.

Pacific R2R Regional Programme Coordinator Samasoni Sauni said: "Together with the R2R conceptual framework supporting modelling work, we have also provided the committee with guidelines for mainstreaming the ridge to reef approach from science to policy for national application."

"If correctly and successfully used, the guidelines support the programme goal to 'maintain and enhance Pacific Island countries and territories' ecosystem goods and services through integrated approaches to land, water, forest, biodiversity and coastal resource management, which in turn contribute to poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience," he concluded.

Another priority of the Pacific R2R network is to enable regional and partner research institutions to cater for knowledge needs and align these with national and regional development contexts and goals. Research institutes are recognized as producers of knowledge, not only as contributors to research but as influencers of research outcomes.

The Pacific Ridge to Reef (R2R) Programme is a multi -country, multi -GEF agency programmatic initiative guiding the coordinated investment of USD 90 million in GEF grant funding across multiple focal areas of biodiversity conservation, land degradation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, sustainable land management, sustainable forest management, and international waters in Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Operating across 14 Pacific Island countries, the programme aims to deliver tangible and quantifiable local and global environmental benefits by focusing on cross-cutting approaches to water, land and coastal management with linkages across GEF focal areas including: biodiversity, land degradation, international waters, sustainable forest management, climate mitigation and adaptation and capacity development.

The programme is implemented by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) & the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Executed regionally by the Pacific Community (SPC) through the Pacific Regional Ridge to Reef International Waters project (Pacific Regional R2R IW), the R2R programme is supported by the Regional Programme Coordination Unit (RPCU) in areas of science-based planning, human capital development, policy and strategic planning, results-based management, and knowledge sharing.

Pacific R2R participating countries include: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

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