



**REPUBLIC OF PALAU
INTERNATIONAL WATERS
RIDGE TO REEF PROJECT**

LESSONS LEARNED



"Pacific R



Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Foreword | 4 |
| Acknowledgements | 5 |
| Palau Ridge To Reef In Context | 6 |
| Project Results | 8 |
| Process | 13 |
| Stress Reduction | 17 |
| Lessons Learned | 18 |
| Summary | 20 |
| References | 21 |

Foreword

The Heads of States of 13 Pacific SIDS developed and, in 1997, endorsed a GEF International Waters Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for Pacific Island Countries. That document identified priority areas for action in the international waters focal area as improved management of ocean and coastal fisheries, integrated watershed and coastal management, and water supply protection. On the basis of the Pacific SAP, the GEF International Waters focal area has subsequently invested in a series of regional initiatives. The first was the UNDP implemented project entitled “Implementation of the Strategic Action Program for the International Waters of the Pacific Small Island Developing States” initiated in 2000 and operated over almost 7 years to 2006.

In light of the critical water resource and sanitation issues facing Pacific SIDS, GEF support in the years following targeted improved coordination and planning of water resource and wastewater management to balance overuse and conflicting uses of scarce freshwater resources through the GEF Pacific IWRM Project.

Building on achievements of previous investments, the project focused on national IWRM demonstrations aimed at providing an opportunity for participating countries to implement, and experiment with, new management models and methods. The practical on-the-ground solutions to water and sanitation issues demonstrated by the national IWRM projects acted to stimulate support at both community and national government levels for policy reform and the mainstreaming of integrated approaches as part of national sustainable development planning.

The experience and local capacity in integrated environmental and natural resource management generated through the GEF Pacific IWRM project became appropriate entry points for the testing of innovative approaches and measures to integrate land, forest, water and coastal management, including climate change adaptation in Pacific SIDS. =



F. Umiich Sengebau
Ministry of Natural Resources,
Environment, & Tourism
fusengebau@gmail.com



Acknowledgements

The lessons learned for each country project have been compiled from the consolidation of information from:

- information in the quarterly and annual reports,
- deliberations at regional meetings and workshops,
- written inputs and online discussion with country project managers

To include a list of contributors to the lessons learned and partners in implementation.



Palau (Belau)



Sonsorol

Pulo Anna

Merir

Tobi

Helen Reef

0 Kilometres 100



Palau

Ridge to Reef in Context

The Republic of Palau consists of elevated volcanic islands, flat karsts islands and atolls covering 458 square kilometers. Palau's 2015 census showed a population of 17,661 people. An estimated 77% live in urban areas and 23% live in rural areas. The mean annual rainfall is 3.7m/yr generating an abundant supply of surface water from the streams and rivers on the main island of Babeldaob, where the largest water supply is the Ngerikiil Watershed. Palau's natural environment is still in a healthy state, particularly its marine environment.

Palau's population is highly reliant on its natural resources for both subsistence and commercial livelihoods. Palau's marine environment in particular underpins the nation's primary economic industry – tourism. Palauan culture is closely linked with the environment.

Palau's terrestrial and water resources, as with most small island states, are under increasing pressure from increasing population and higher tourist numbers coupled with inadequate wastewater management systems, deforestation and use of pesticides and fertilisers in agriculture. Climate variability adds to these pressures through extreme weather events of both droughts and increased rainfall.

Major increases in population and tourism are currently centred on the states of Koror and Airai with 75% of the population residing in both states. These two states obtain their piped water from the Koror/Airai Water Treatment Plant (KAWTP) with the government subsidising a majority of the cost of water delivery to the households. The Ngerikiil River and the Ngerimel Dam are the main water sources for this public water supply system.

A lack of comprehensive water policy has resulted in Palau managing water resources on a sectorised basis. Protection of the source is done at the state level; water quality and safety is regulated by the Environmental Quality Protection Board (EQPB); water delivery is the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Industry and Commerce, and the cost of water supply is managed through the Ministry of Finance. The GEF Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) project (2011 – 2014) focused efforts on establishing a coordinated and cross-sectoral approach to water resource management in Palau.

Natural resource conservation is of paramount importance to Palau and the country has approached this through a two-pronged approach:

1. protected areas, established through the Palau Protected Areas Network (PAN) to conserve threatened species and areas of high biodiversity; and
2. broader sustainable land management (SLM) beyond protected areas and the PAN, which encompasses all activities including construction regulations and building permits through to harvesting limits and restrictions on allowable catch size. Needs were identified for strengthening capacity and coordinating policies and legislation to support PAN and SLM.

Palau's International Waters Ridge to Reef (IW R2R) national demonstration project was designed in 2013 with the aim of building on from the previous IWRM work in water resource management and to support Palau's natural resource management and conservation efforts through a ridge to reef mainstreaming approach. Specifically, the project aimed to strengthen coordination and support for implementing the 5-year Airai State Watershed Management Plan and the Palau GEF STAR "Advancing Sustainable Resource Management to Improve Livelihoods and Protect Biodiversity in Palau". The STAR project focuses on protecting Palau's biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources through PAN and the SLM Initiative. It contributes to GEF Focal Areas: Biodiversity, International Waters, Land Degradation and Sustainable Forest Management (SFM/REDD+).

The objectives of the IW R2R project focussed on strengthening coordination and support for implementing the 5-year Airai State watershed management plan; strengthening capacity for participatory monitoring and evaluation of catchment management in Palau; and establishing public-private partnerships for tourism sector investment in Integrated Water and Coastal Land Management.

Project Results

The Palau IW R2R Project was implemented between 2016 and 2020, through the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism. The Project had 3 main objectives:

1. Strengthening coordination in support of the implementation and national replication of the Ngerikiil Management Plan
2. Strengthening the capacity for participatory monitoring and evaluation of the Ngerikiil Management Plan to strengthen the enabling environment for catchment management in Palau
3. Establishing public- private partnerships for tourism sector investment in IWLCM in Palau

During the implementation period, changes in state priorities meant and the Palau IW R2R project projects required revision and subsequent approvals before implementation could begin. A key change involved identifying a new demonstration site and establishing new partnerships. An adaptive management process was facilitated through the joint IW R2R and the STAR project Steering Committee, which helped to provide direction and guidance on realigning the project and enhancing the contribution of the demonstration project, without losing sight of the overall R2R project goals. These changes took time and caused a shift from the original vision of building on from the IWRM project. This included expectations that baseline data (e.g. water quality) would be available for the demonstration site.

The subsequent sections discuss the project processes, results, and learnings.

COMMUNITY TO CABINET APPROACH

There is a growing recognition in the Pacific region of the need for partnerships, alignment of donor support with national priorities, and country ownership in the development of results-oriented programs and projects. The Pacific leaders recently emphasized these needs noting the well-known challenges Pacific Island communities face in shaping sustainable futures. These include geographical isolation, high levels of dependence on natural resources for nutritional security and livelihoods, and a highly variable environment characterized by numerous coastal hazards.

The above combined with considerable variation in island geomorphology, socioeconomics and politics make locally driven solutions to key issues influencing island sustainability and resilience a necessity. Particularly, the complex land and marine tenure systems and institutional relationships between national and community-based governance structures.

While the Pacific small island developing states, also coined, large ocean states, have largely adopted western-style constitutions and legal systems, although community-based governance and leadership arrangements remain highly influential at all levels. The support of resource owners is essential to resource management and use. Cross-sectoral coordination arrangements and efforts are necessary to engage stakeholders in sustainable development planning at all levels. Accordingly, the participation of civil society organizations and community leaders in development planning is essential to increase the local relevance of management actions and their results in Pacific SIDS. The following outlines cross sectoral coordination arrangements and efforts to engage stakeholders in sustainable development planning.

Strengthening Cross-sectoral Coordination and Planning

The groundwork for an integrated and cross-sectoral approach to water management in Palau was laid during the GEF Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) project (2011 – 2014). A national steering committee ensured coordination and improved understanding on water management issues and subsequently, the Palau National Water Policy was developed and endorsed in 2012.

When the Palau IW R2R project commenced in April 2016, a joint ridge to reef project steering committee was established to bring together the GEF R2R STAR and IW projects under a single coordination mechanism (Fig. 1).

As the project progressed, this coordinating mechanism became integral to providing a leadership and communication structure that enabled shared understanding between the two projects as well as amongst the various government agencies and other stakeholder bodies.

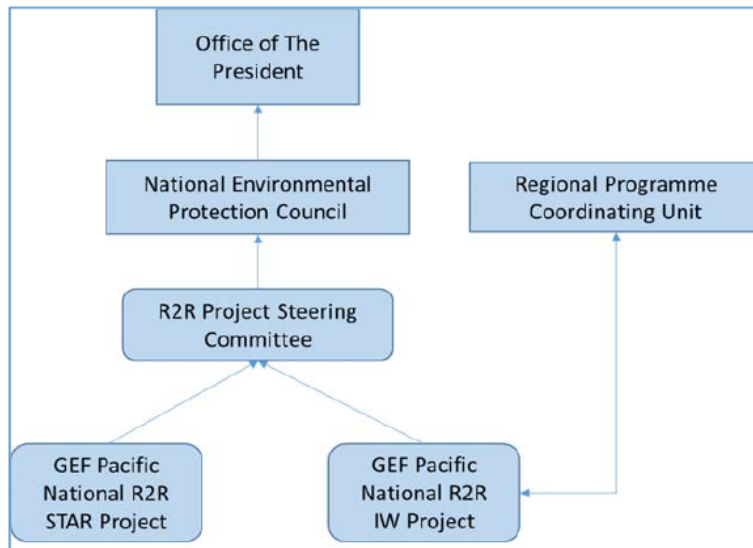


Figure 1: Governance structure in 2016 R2R

Linking Local and National Coordination

During the IWRM project, a collaborative and highly participatory approach saw the development of the 5-year Airai Watershed Management Plan. It was expected that the Plan would enable the Airai State Government to access funding for management, monitoring and enforcement of best management practices in the Watershed. This was enthusiastically supported by the State Governor at the time. The IW R2R demonstration project was designed to help progress the implementation of the Airai Watershed Management Plan.

However, in the time between project design (2013) and project inception, several changes had occurred in Palau, resulting in a loss of “momentum” with many stakeholders. A change in the Airai state government administration resulted in loss of the significant support that had been evident in the previous years. This support had been garnered through targeted awareness raising and information sessions with the then state administration. Unfortunately, the new administration had different priorities and there was limited active commitment for implementing the 5-year Airai Watershed Management Plan. The challenge for the project was how to rebuild this lost momentum.

The decision was made to reassess the situation and build a partnership with the Belau Watershed Alliance (BWA). The BWA is a nation-wide collective of state governments, national agencies, NGOs, and the private sector with the mission of improving watershed management throughout Palau. At the time, Airai State was not a member of the BWA. The collaboration with BWA provided the opportunity to seek out an alternative pilot site for the project, beyond the Airai watershed. Additionally, because of this collaboration, the IW R2R and STAR projects were able to facilitate the inclusion of Airai State in the island-wide alliance through a state resolution.





Stakeholder Engagement

As a small country with a small population, engagement of stakeholders from community to government is imperative for the success of any initiative. Effective engagement requires understanding who the stakeholders are as well as their priorities, areas of interest and capacities. A stakeholder analysis was conducted to help determine key stakeholders and partners.

The project also invested in ensuring stakeholders were kept engaged through workshops and training programmes. Project management workshops were organised for government and community partners and community members participated in water quality monitoring training and information sessions.

R2R stakeholders

- Airai State Government
- Airai State Public Land Authority
- Airai Zoning Commission
- Ministry of Natural Resource, Environment & Tourism
- Belau National Museum
- Bureau of Agriculture
- Bureau of Public Works
- Environmental Quality Protection Board
- Palau Automated Lands and Resources Information Systems (PALARIS)
- Palau Conservation Society
- Public Health (Division of Environmental Health, DEH)
- Palau Community College- Cooperative Research Extension
- Office of Environment Response & Coordination (OERC)
- SPC/SOPAC
- Palau Community Action Agency
- Grants Office
- PPUC-Water and Wastewater Operations

Process

Partnership with the island-wide Belau Watershed Alliance

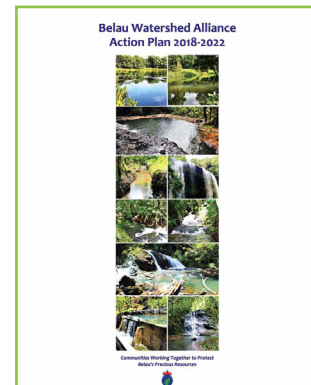


By partnering with Belau Watershed Alliance (BWA), the project was able to direct resources on a far greater scale and be assured of lasting change. The BWA is well-established and supported by government and state agencies as well as civil society and NGOs. This partnership further served as the impetus for Airai State deciding to seek membership on the BWA. By joining the BWA (through a legislative resolution),

Airai State has committed to the mission of the island-wide alliance toward watershed management and protection.

Multi-stakeholder National Dialogue on Environment Issues

The project, in collaboration with the BWA, partnered with various agencies <insert agencies> to host the National Dialogue on Environment Issues in Palau on May 10, 2018. Participants included over 80 people ranging from the National Government, State Government, and the local community. <insert key outcomes of dialogue>



Revised and Updated BWA Watershed Management Plan

The IW R2R project partnered with the Palau Conservation Society (PCS) to support the review and revision of the Belau Watershed Alliance Action Plan which encompasses the watersheds of 10 states in Palau. The catchment management planning process of the 5-year Airai State Watershed Management Plan served as a replicable model and was applied in the BWA Action Plan update. The results-based action plan ensures that the management plan can be operationalised.

Global convention reporting and mainstreaming R2R into national budgets



Palau submitted their Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2019 reflecting on achievements and acknowledging vulnerabilities while accelerating progress the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Palau embraces the SDGs at the highest political level, the 2019 VNR presents a baseline report against the national framework and outlines a pathway to 2030 and beyond. The VNR incorporated data and information

from watershed profiles produced by the Palau IW R2R Project. Next steps include integration of the nationalized SDGs into planning and budgeting framework to facilitate monitoring and timely implementation while building ownership of the SDGs at the grassroots.

Strengthened capacity of the Melekeok Conservation Network in water quality monitoring

Ngardok Nature Reserve, in Melekeok State was chosen as the alternate pilot site (to the Airai Watershed). The reserve houses Lake Ngardok, a natural freshwater lake, and is managed by the Melekeok Conservation Network (MCN), a part of the Palau Protected Areas Network – PAN.

One of the tasks of the IW demonstration activity was to improve data collection via Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) to support the development of national catchment plans. The data collection focused on water quality monitoring in the Ngardok Nature Reserve. Training workshops highlighting the interconnectedness of the water catchments and the health of the natural environment were run by MNRET’s IW R2R project and followed by training of selected community members (rangers and conservation officers from the nature reserve) in water quality monitoring. This approach helped build a greater interest in water quality and an understanding of the need for data collection.

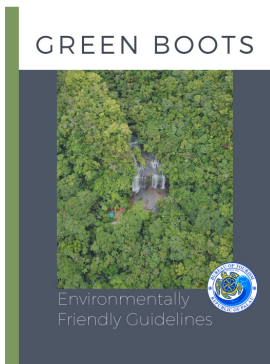


Two MCN staff from the Ngardok Nature Reserve participated in the water quality monitoring training and received on the job support through a partnership with the Palau Coral Reef Research Foundation. The training not only resulted in improved staff technical capacity but built staff confidence and moral. Both staff reported a new enthusiasm for and commitment to water quality monitoring in the Reserve, noting that the training helped them better appreciate the links between water quality and conservation. MCN decided to continue water quality monitoring beyond the project closure and has partnered with local agencies to scale up monitoring through sedimentation and hydrological studies. A water quality participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) plan was developed and incorporated into the Melekeok Ngardok Nature Reserve Plan.

Functioning partnerships for coastal monitoring

Through a series of Memoranda of Agreement, partnerships were established between the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment & Tourism (MNRET), the Environmental Quality Protection Board (EQPB), and the Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC). These partnerships are active and functional and are generating effective data for evaluating the impacts of environmental interventions from a ridge to reef perspective.

Terrestrial Best Practice Guidelines Green Boots – partnership with Bureau of Tourism



Terrestrial tourism best practice guidelines, known as Green Boots, were developed in partnership with MNRET, the Bureau of Tourism, NGOs, and several tourism organisations. The guidelines have been integrated into the Bureau of Tourism activities. Green Boots provides the steppingstone for building a terrestrial tourism certification programme and encouraging tourism sector investment in IWLCM. Palau has strong marine tourism guidelines, and these terrestrial guidelines will strengthen the ridge to reef approach to marine conservation.

CROSS-CUTTING RESULTS



Knowledge transfer and capacity building through the James Cook University Post Graduate Course in R2R Sustainable Development

Palau students enrolled in the JCU post graduate certificate program submitted an assignment as part Unit 2 on Project Management on a Project Proposal which was later received GEF Small Grants Program funding for implementation. This encompassed a series of workshops with stakeholders including communities and CSO

on project proposal writing. The workshops also spurred the partnership with the Bureau of Tourism, leading to the development of the Green Boots policy guidelines. These were positive indirect results from the Pacific R2R Programme human capacity development component of the Regional IW Project, based at the Pacific Community (SPC).



Increased Community Engagement in R2R related issues

The engagement of resource owners is essential to the success of the R2R project. The partnership with the Palau Conservation Society, which has a long history of working with Palau communities, was considered key to enhancing the project’s acceptance amongst this key group of stakeholders <insert details on Palau communities linking local to national coordination and planning>.



Stress Reduction

While the Palau IWR2R Project did not have specific stress reduction indicators, it supported the STAR R2R project in the following target areas: Increase land and forest management contributing to UNCCD goals and Multilateral Environmental Agreements and targets eg. RAMSAR

Increased access to safe drinking water supply through water quality monitoring program developed with community and routine monitoring.



Lessons Learned

Lesson 1:

A robust, proactive and inclusive steering committee is essential in progressing a programmatic approach to R2R.

The implementation of the IW R2R with STAR project benefitted from both projects being housed under Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment & Tourism (MNRET). The setup of both projects as described in the project's Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) allowed for coordination, communication and sharing of resources and capacity building activities (such as workshops and training). The IW R2R water quality monitoring was conducted in a STAR project site, ensuring further coordination, collaboration, and learning.

Composition and representative of community to cabinet, and science to policy (multi-stakeholder/multi-disciplinary): <Leena insert – affiliations and advocacy>

Lesson 2:

Project managers and partners must have good understanding of Project Management in order to effectively carry out adaptive management.

The three year lag between the IWRM and R2R required that the project logframe be adjusted to account for changes in socio-political circumstances, and priorities requiring stakeholder re-engagement, and the completion of certain project outputs through initiatives undertaken in the intervening period. If this is recognised in the project development phase, resources and time can be allocated to “reassessing” the project and revising through adaptive management as part of the inception phase.

For adaptive management to be achieved, project implementers and key partners must have a robust understanding of and experience in Project Management Cycle, Results-based Management and Program Monitoring and Evaluation theory and practice in order to effectively address changing national circumstances and avoid delays in project implementation.

Lesson 3:

Establish clear agreements between the executing agency and project partners

Use of Memorandum of Agreements to ensure transparency and shared understanding among stakeholders of their commitments and expectations as a basis for healthy and sustainable partnerships.

Lesson 4:

Strategic value of having a stakeholder engagement in all phases of the project

The project has realised the importance of stakeholder engagement and engaging the right partners to help leverage support and work with ongoing and planned initiatives. The GEF Ridge to Reef Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and its accompanying GEF Pacific R2R Stakeholder Engagement Analysis Toolkit, helped with identifying key stakeholders and their potential roles in the project.

This will help maintain shared understanding of the project objective and implementation to ensure buy-in and active participation, linking to Lesson 3.

Lesson 5:

Leverage existing networks that provide strategic opportunity

In addition to strategic partnerships, the value of having the “right” messengers or champions were underscored throughout the project, and especially when seeking to engage with communities. The use of subject matter experts as well as people who know the right language with which to approach groups helped to build community interest and on-going support. The Palau Conservation Society (PCS), which has long-established positive relationships with state governments and the communities, is trusted and respected and was instrumental in enabling discussions with resource owners and as a result, progressing the project.

Leveraging existing strategic partnerships to build on and enhance education and outreach opportunities.

Although representation of the IW R2R project in education and outreach events was not specifically articulated in the results framework for Palau, the IW R2R partnered with existing organisations for education and outreach events. These events facilitated an audience of the project outside stakeholder list and publicity for the project.

Summary

The Palau IW R2R project succeeded in mainstreaming R2R into policy and planning by harnessing strong partnerships across civil society, government agencies and within state administrations. Formal and informal capacity building has had positive indirect results with the development of the Greenoots Guide and the contributions of data and information in the Palau VNR 2019 on SDG implementation.

A multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder steering mechanism ensured effective cross-sectoral and local to national coordination. And an effective stakeholder engagement plan guided the project's outreach, effective advocacy and strategic partnerships with well-established organisations, such as the Palau Conservation Society, and engaging with scientific institutes such as the Palau Coral Reef Center. The partnership with the Belau Watershed Alliance, which has a membership of state governments as well as NGOs, civil society, and private sector, was considered the turning point for the project.

Capacity of project managers and partners in project cycle management, and Results-based Management was also identified as key to ensuring effective adaptive management for effective implementation.



References

MNRET (2020) Palau GEF IW R2R Final Report

Mainstreaming consultation virtual interviews (G.Sisior, L. Mesebeluu)

GAC (2017), Synthesis of Evaluations of Grants and Contributions Programming funded by the International Assistance Envelope, 2011-2016, Global Affairs Canada, http://international.gc.ca/gacamc/publications/evaluation/2016/evaluations_grantsevaluations_subventions.aspx?lang=eng

GEF (2017), Review of Results-Based Management in the GEF, Independent Evaluation Office, Global Environment facility, November 2017.
http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/files/rbm-study-2017_2.pdf

USAID (2017), Evidence base for collaborating, learning, and adapting – Summary of literature review. https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/eb4cla_summary_literaturereview_20171020_final.pdf

USAID (2018), What is adaptive management? <https://usaidlearninglab.org/lab-notes/what-adaptive-management-0>
<https://usaidlearninglab.org/lab-notes/what-adaptive-management-0>

The GEF unites 182 countries in partnership with international institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives.

The GEF Pacific R2R programme was developed to provide an opportunity for Pacific small island developing states (SIDS) to develop and implement integrated approaches for the sustainable development of island economies and communities. Partnerships are key to realizing benefits at the local, regional, and global levels.

GEF Implementing Agencies

UNDP is on the ground in 177 countries and territories and partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone.

FAO has 194 member nations working to achieve food security for all, to make sure people have a regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active and healthy lives.

UNEP is the leading global environmental authority that sets the environmental agenda and promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system.

Executing Agency

The Pacific Community is an international development organization with 26 member countries and territories. It is the principal scientific and technical agency proudly supporting development in the Pacific regional since 1947.

GEF Pacific Regional International Waters Ridge to Reef Project & Programme Coordination Unit
Geoscience, Energy and Maritime Division
Pacific Community
SPC - Private Mail Bag - Suva, Fiji
pacific-r2r@spc.int
Tel: (679) 3249257 | Ext: 36257