



GEF R2R/ RSTC.6/ WP.01

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

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

**ACTION ITEMS – RSTC-5 MEETING RECORD**

**Recommendations:**

The Committee is invited to discuss and note progress of implementing the action items of the RSTC-5 meeting records.

1. The Committee noted the need to be more action oriented and to meet more regularly if needed to better support programme implementation. The Committee status is considered relatively poor because in most cases it is largely side-lined, process focused and fails to deliver on its TOR effectively. It recommends the RSC recognises the important role of the Committee and support opportunities for more active and relevant action-oriented interventions.

*The RSTC first technical consultation in February 2020 provided an opportunity for Committee members and national scientists and researchers to engage in technical and scientific discussions on range of research topics supported with R2R funds and related resources. Committee members continue to support delivery of the R2R funded JCU course, water quality training and testing in Kiribati, RMI and FSM, provided inputs into the lessons learned framework, and others.*

2. The Committee agreed Prof. Marcus Sheaves, JCU University continues in the position of the RSTC Chair, and elected Dr Isoa Korovulavula of USP as Co-Chair. It recommends noting and approving these new appointments of the Committee.

*It is required to have election for officers of the Committee during annual meetings. The Chair and Vice-Chair have been active in supporting the R2R science workplan.*

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

*While endorsing the methodology and formula used to calculate estimated levels of land area and pollution levels, it is not enough to continue standards opted from places outside this region to make that determination on targets. This includes addressing the underlying assumptions and uncertainties in the methodology.*

*The RSTC first technical consultation in February 2020 provided the opportunity to discuss this subject further but focusing on identifying options to progress the determination of nutrient offloads, which include support for future R2R investments directed into research and development incl. Masters and PhD or post-doc scholarships to undertake research to establish standards and nutrient contents in PICs.*

4. The Committee also noted the 'Revised and Updated Environmental Stress Reduction Targets of the Regional IW R2R Project' and recommend sharing this information with R2R Star Projects for their inputs and updates for reporting to the Programme Framework Document.

*The document on revised targets was shared with R2R STAR projects and the brief updates from project managers may share light if the information been useful to them including reporting to the Programme Framework Document. There is an opportunity at the country reporting session for STAR R2R Project Managers to provide updates.*

5. The Committee considered and supported future studies focusing on estimating nutrient concentrations and BOD of human and animal faeces and urine, and the

efficacy of different waste treatment systems. The Committee recommended future research to improve estimated loads for waste pollution with more applied research on nutrient contents of human and animal wastes closer to point source of pollution in tropical areas of this region.

*Generally, there was support on future studies focusing on estimating nutrient concentrations and BOD of human and animal faeces and urine, and the efficacy of different waste treatment systems. It also supports the recommendation that future research improve estimated loads for waste pollution with more applied research on nutrient contents of human and animal wastes closer to point source of pollution in tropical areas of the Pacific region.*

6. The Committee agreed with recommendation of mainstreaming ecosystem goods and services but to do so within the scope of (and not to replace) the current DPSIR framework. The Committee:

- Recognised the value of the EGS approach – and that it is an appropriate goal to work towards in the future;
- Noted the current DPSIR approach comprehensively address the objectives as originally developed; and
- Noted an EGS approach would need considerable additional data so could best be deployed in projects where data were yet to be obtained.

*We have two EGS valuations currently underway in the Solomon Islands and Fiji, and the updates from Project Managers in those countries can be requested. That said, there are ongoing work on science-policy deliverables (IDA, SoC and SAP/SAFs) using the DPSIR approach. Notwithstanding the recommendation of mainstreaming R2R and EGS is certainly the basis of project implementation in its final closing stage.*

7. The Committee discussed the pros and cons as well the application of both frameworks, recognising resources and time left of the project to undertake fully fledged EGS activities. On the one hand, there are options of progressing both frameworks in parallel noting opportunities of trialling and training on EGS approach. On the other hand, the committee also considered the option to note the recommendation and to be considered in future project design given the limited timeframe and budget.

*As above*

8. The committee adopted the EGS approach and not to the extent where EGS framework is a better choice than the DPSIR framework. The Committee disagreed with the recommendation of the intention to replace the current DPSIR with EGS. If resources allow, support implementation of both DPSIR and EGS frameworks (hybrid) focusing on opportunities for strengthening the scientific approach while avoiding duplication efforts on indicators.

*As above*

9. The Committee supported for the testing and training on EGS approach and EGS valuation through current pilot projects and JCU training. It also adopted the recommendation and that it should be considered in future project design if possible, given the limits of timeframe and budget.

*EGS is currently taken up in the JCU training and future project designs.*

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

*Update of the (modified) science to policy theory of change will be represented to the Committee, recognising its implementation already in progress, including launching of the R2R regional science portal/ database, and use of baselines and RapCA data to conduct analysis including modelling to select priority areas for conservation actions. This is the process done for preparing the R2R spatial prioritization modelling framework and its trials in Vanuatu.*

11. The Committee noted the MTR recommendation on the RSTC composition and *modus operandi*. The Committee discussed the suggested amendments, which seek to tighten the TORs in support of the programmatic approach consistent with the MTR recommendation. However, the Committee was unable to unanimously agree on the changes. This means reject amendment on 'project' instead of 'programme' since the RSTC has the oversight and ability to deal with the IW part of the program as a whole. The RSTC advice on the IW project can be shared with the STAR projects, considering that RSTC do not have the oversight on the STAR projects.

*Having the RSTC rejected suggested amendments to the RSTC modus operandi that conforms with MTR recommendation, means the RSTC has no jurisdictions over STAR R2R projects. This also means that it is not possible to tighten the RSTC ToR in support of the programmatic approach. The only thing to do is to share RSTC advice on the IW R2R project with STAR R2R project. It is up to STAR R2R projects if they wish to reciprocate and share or exchange data and experiences etc.*

12. The committee endorsed the recommendation to review the R2R Communications Strategy considering the MTR recommendation, and that the endorsed proposed approach on the strategy would also usefully extend to STAR projects. The committee also discussed and agreed to minor changes in the following statement:

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

*The endorsed R2R Communication Strategy already shared and usefully extended it to STAR R2R projects. The RPCU has communicated extensively implementation and outcomes of both STAR & IW R2R projects through various R2R online platforms – e.g. R2R accounts on Facebook, twitter, country pages and other online tools available on the R2R website. The current re-development of the R2R website provides opportunities to regularly report real time data and information of projects, but also enable fast track or automate harmonised results reporting against GEF focal areas and targets in range of instruments such as SDGs, Aichi targets, Samoa Pathway and reporting on contributions to domestic priorities.*

*Given the above, it is uncertain how is it possible to focus reporting on the project objective and de-emphasise contextualising micro-scale activities. It is the latter that provide details on the empirical evidence and scientific basis that explain project results*

*and trends, and more importantly understanding what contributed to the achievements (or the lack of) in project objectives. This also includes documenting lessons learned as currently pursued by the RPCU for both STAR & IW projects consistent with the MTR recommendation.*

13. The Committee considered and agreed on the proposed regional programmatic framework and template for Pacific R2R lessons learned. It endorsed the revised draft framework including Annex 1 & 2 subject to the incorporation of the RSTC inputs for recommendation to the Regional Steering Committee (RSC) for their consideration and approval. The 7<sup>th</sup> step on impact was considered appropriate to understand better actual impacts of policy actions, for instance, new or revised legislations. The Committee also agreed on the proposed implementation schedule.

*A paper on the progress of the Pacific R2R lessons learned framework will be presented to the Committee (see details in WP.03). The RPCU carried out virtual zoom sessions individually with project countries and, collectively together over 2-days virtual training. The turnout from project managers and coordinators was variable and disappointing.*

*The JCU course is also assisting with this regional programmatic framework and embedded the lessons learned into the theory content as well as in the assessment, with all students completing the lessons learnt template incorporated into their assessments for two subjects in the Pacific R2R Sustainable Development Post Graduate Programme namely, EV5966 Public Policy tools (management stream), and EV5968 Tools for resource assessment (technical stream). Refer to RSTC6 Inf. 07.*

*Several participating countries have demonstrated mainstreaming R2R in domestic policies and legislations. For instance, the amendments on water bills were passed into law by respective parliaments in Samoa and Tonga and R2R contributed to this process. The same process is ongoing in other countries like Niue. These milestones are linked to the 7<sup>th</sup> step on the actual impacts of policy actions.*

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

*A paper on the regional guidelines to implement spatial prioritization procedure in future upscaling R2R investments and ICM planning will be presented to the Committee. The trialling of the spatial prioritization modelling work in Vanuatu is completed, and two technical reports on the national and local scales are now available online. There were plans to continue trialling in the Solomon Islands however this is no longer possible because of the current situation of borders closed to get people into the country to work on this.*

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

*An update of the JCU course will be presented to the Committee.*