



GEF R2R/ RSTC.6/ WP.02

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Original: English

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

Suva, Fiji 19th – 20th October 2020

### **RSTC Chair's Report – Highlights, Challenges and Opportunities**

1. There is a fundamental principle of maintaining high quality science to inform scientific and technical advice given to RSC. It must be evident that the role of the RSTC be active and action-oriented by providing guidance through robust technical discussion on aspects of project implementation such as testing of innovative technologies, review research methods and sampling designs used, and critically assess recommended best practices and upscaling R2R investments.
2. There should also be an emphasis in maintaining the 'conversation' moving forward when considering the post R2R Programme. There is a need to influence and leverage funding support to continue R2R into the future. In order to realise intended long-term impacts from delivering on domestic aspirations and priorities but also compliance on regional and international commitments and obligations. Suggestions to guide deliberations and future technical discussions:-
  - (i) Consider and reflect on the important questions that influence funding support for future R2R investments, imperatives that would influence outcomes, and published science emerging from R2R;
  - (ii) Against the backdrop of the remaining months and financial resources of the IW R2R project, it is important to have a balanced view of science, social science, and traditional ecological knowledge, and also the dynamics in society from community and cabinet;
  - (iii) Consider options to accelerate implementation that adds value to the decision that policy makers are going to make, in the remaining timeframe, and beyond; and
  - (iv) Determine how to give best efforts to make sure that we are achieving values for sustainable development of the region?

3. From the previous presentations on scientific research carried out by IAS-USP team, some observations made:-
  - (i) The conclusions drawn in the research papers appear too strong and premature because the research findings do not necessary provide compelling evidence for closing off certain areas of land and sea for biodiversity conservation relative to the consideration of replicating the research and methods in other candidate areas to enable spatiotemporal comparison of results.
  - (ii) Strong support to filter these researches through peer review groups set up at the national level and to review the methods to acceptable quality standards. Similarly, support for publication of the methods and research work in journals for better chance of being scientifically robust and acceptable to replicate and generate quality data to inform policy discussions and decisions.
  - (iii) Consider using nationals in-country who have retired but have extensive technical expertise to get the working on up-scaling or twinning future R2R investments and ICM planning nationally that uses similar methods or best practices.
  - (iv) Support for pool of experts established to assist with compilation of data. It is important to consider the appropriate method used is acceptable and the datasets collected are reliable so that analysis and therefore, conclusions can be used to inform policy change to effect reforms and good governance.
  - (v) While all the assessments are carried out to collect baseline data, planning and design development measures and intervention in R2R, it is not immediately clear what is being done to continue the monitoring process and better see how effective the development measures are. Support for ongoing monitoring of key indicators are important candidates for post R2R programme to measure and detect real impacts of R2R interventions.
  - (vi) Ensure the methods used are easy to adopt, easily transferrable and replicated elsewhere in assessing similar ecosystems and drawing the same type of information. This would allow tempo-spatial comparisons of certain proxies and indicators to inform policy decisions.
  - (vii) Data can be coupled with species distribution model that can allow for geographical extrapolation of data points to areas that have yet to be surveyed therefore potentially can be taken from a watershed to island scale if the data is available.
4. In the possibility of the next phase of R2R consider the implementation hurdles of current national projects and the various differences (public acceptability of innovative technologies, lessons learned from current implementation, current stage and current trend in meeting stress reduction targets, convincing ongoing support post R2R).
5. Due to the individual differences between countries, to avoid duplication of work it is essential to revisit the Theory of Change and keep open communications with the relevant government agencies as some countries do not follow each step.
6. The Committee to highly and carefully consider the realistic expectations moving forward in a post-Covid19 world and its implications. Due to the higher risks and vulnerabilities of PICs, plans to discuss the implications of these changes in the context of R2R could be a topic of discussion.