



FAO-GEF Mid-Year Implementation Update

Period covered: 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2021



1. Project Basic Data

General Information

Region:	Pacific/Oceania
Country (ies):	Kiribati
Project Title:	Resilient Islands, Resilient Communities
FAO Project Symbol:	GCP/KIR/009/GFF
GEF ID:	5551

Review and Evaluation

Expected Mid-Term review date:	31 March 2021
Actual Mid-term review date:	
Terminal Evaluation Date planned (if applicable):	
Expected Project Completion date (NTE):	15 April 2023

Project Contacts

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2. Information on Progress, Outcomes and Challenges of Project Implementation Activities

1. Progress since the FY20 update

Component 1. After the setting up of a complete body of the Project Management Unit (PMU) in August 2019, Annual Work Plans (AWPs) for each of the relevant implementing partners were developed through September and October 2019 and endorsed by the project steering committee that was established and supported by technical working groups within the implementing partners celebrated 31st Oct and 1st Nov 2019. Three National Project Personals (NPPS) supporting the implementing partners were then recruited as requested by the project stakeholders and implementing partners after the PSC and assisted in the preparation of the LoAs for the implementing partners of the project that were then developed and implemented with activities related to outcome 1. As such, Inception meetings in the 3 project sites through July and August 2020 were then conducted to increase awareness of the project to the local governing structures in the islands and also begin consultations with the local councils to endorse decisions on the development of agricultural activities in the island (i.e. idle land utilization) and giving the ground for the project beneficiaries to consult directly with the implementing partners regarding activities to be implemented.

A Country Gender Assessment of the Agriculture and the Rural Sector survey was conducted in the 3 project sites through 2020 and as well as in the capital, targeting Government Ministries, CSOs, NGOs, Faith based Organizations and active individual fishers and farmers. A draft report is being currently reviewed at its final stages and to be published/cleared in April/May 2021. There were also on-going discussions between implementing partners for common understanding in the development of policies and national strategies with support from FAO on the opportunities from a roster of experts, and as such TORs and interests were being scoped from both international and national experts to engage in the consultancy work for these policies. Examples of such policies and strategies, include the development of the biosecurity regulation, new fisheries regulation, food and nutrition security policy, Environment resilience framework, development of the livestock policy, etc. Close collaborations between different divisions and stakeholders in meetings related to project outputs were ensured that participation of local level government and traditional elders are integrating science and local knowledge to reflect decision making that is based on a bottom-up approach to achieve the project outputs. For example, development of island strategic plans for the 3 project islands that were planned and discussed during the 2nd PSC meeting in March 2021 and a LoA to support its development is currently under preparation.

The project is still focusing on activities for component one due to the challenges faced by the Covid19 pandemic including on ground implications to execute activities in the project sites on a timely manner. However, initial stages of consultation and mini inceptions and awareness raising in the project sites had already paved way and ensured a cross sectoral mechanism and community participation or engagement through the decisions endorsed at the island level that was recognized in a bottom up approach. For example, the consultation on the utilization of idle lands in the three project sites was focused on the interest and needs of the communities that was supported by the local government and island council members and elders in the villages. Also during the second Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting conducted in March 2021, the committee endorsed the interest raised by the three project islands through the local government division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, on the development of their Island Strategic Plans (ISP). To ensure the project concept is streamlined into the sector development priorities, the Island Strategic Plan is an entry point. Island Strategic Plan is the fundamental mechanism for the Island Councils that will shape and guide the Council's implementations and interventions on priority issues on the island. However mainstreaming of the project priorities in the Island Strategic Plans will enhance project activity implementations at the island level.

Component 2. There is no progress on the outputs in component 2 as so far, this component can only be achieved when Component 1 has been well established through the implementing Partners. For example, output 1.1.2a in component 1 (*Development of national system for decision making on selection of PA at the national level*) is yet to be established and while a ToR is being currently developed to engage an international expert to work on this, implementation in terms of numbers of protected areas to be established as per component 2, output 2.1.4 (*at least three PAs established*) will be done only when a national system for the selection of PA is in place. The Local Government Division within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) also as another important implementing partner of the project is yet to develop a LoA after the endorsement of their AWP during the 2nd PSC meeting on 9th March 2021.

Component 3. Inception meetings were completed in the three project islands/sites (North Tarawa, Butaritari and Tab North) in July and August 2020, with the presence of all implementing partners, PMU and the Political and Operational country GEF focal points (approximately missions of 12 people each + island council members). Presentation of the Project R2R (Local name used as acronym for Ridge to Reef Approach) project overview was introduced and as well as information sharing through project brochure and shirt designs for the project name was distributed. Consultations to establish sign boards displaying project name and activities was also completed and planning currently underway in the project sites and to be set in place around April and May 2021 (i.e. 2 Signboards in Butaritari, 2 in Tab North and 2 in North Tarawa).

2. Challenges

Some challenges have been ongoing including:

National Elections that was conducted in April 2020 has slowed down awareness raising and consultation with the island council on project activities in two of the project islands (Butaritari and North Tabiteuea). This is whereby, two weeks prior the elections, the implementing partners of the project were advised to be committed to preparations within their relevant line Ministries and therefore, to halt all intended missions or duty travel. As such, the project was unable to deliver the planned activities in these two project islands on a timely basis and had to wait until after the elections. In addition, when the national elections was completed, a reshuffling within the Government of Kiribati and as well as the local government further caused a change of planned activities and a need to reintroduce the project and its activities to the newly elected members of parliament (MPs) and the local council in the two project islands was considered. It is anticipated then that after the second project steering committee meeting conducted in March 2021, the participation of the newly elected MPs and local council members will ensure a new sense of direction and sustainable implementation of activities by the project on a timely manner.

Covid-19 delayed engagements and participation that should be expected on a timely manner (travel mostly). For example, Kiribati has only one available flight service provider in the country offering domestic travel to the outerislands and back to the capital, Tarawa. Because of the closure of borders due to Covid19, spare parts for the fleet are very complicated to reach Kiribati at times, thus causing a lot of postponed travels (periods of two months with no domestic flights in the country), and because of the fact that it is only one plane providing service in the country, sometimes it has to stop from flying to allow for the plane crew to rest once reaching a certain amount of hours of flying. If the plane has a mechanical problem, it will completely halt all its service and wait for the spare parts to arrive in the country before operating again. While this impacted service in the country for the people, implementation of activities in the project sites become very delayed as when Air Kiribati resumes activities it is again only with the one plane for 12 passengers to be used for the entire Gilberts groups (approx. 85,000 people), meaning that there are no seats available for several weeks to accommodate the project's implementing partners for the travel to the project sites and bookings must be done months in advance.

Given the procurement procedures in place by FAO, several businesses and suppliers in Kiribati sometimes become reluctant and hesitant, meaning that some of the requirements that they have to abide by is considered time wasting for them. For example, registering in UNGM. On the other hand, given the context in Kiribati, micro canvassing for the best supplier with the best value of goods and service offered is usually very complicated as there is very limited competition in the country and also most of the items that are needed for procurement can only be available partially,

otherwise, the project will have to wait for the items to arrive from overseas with very long delivery times increased by the global pandemic.

More importantly, delays in the provision of LoAs have delayed delivery. Disbursement of funds after signing of LoA is usually taking a lot of time to proceed and then the internal process at the Government of Kiribati to credit funds to the Ministry is also long (one or two months) plus the required clearances from the GoK to authorize the signatories. In addition, limitations with the Operational Cash Advances (OCA) where at times, it can be very complicated and prolonged. For example, Western Union in Kiribati usually have limits imposed on the amount to be received and at times when they cannot accommodate the funds, disbursement then become very slower than anticipated. This means postponing missions for the project if the funds to pay for field activities don't arrive on time.

3. Adaptive measures and actions

It is seen as most important by the project to always plan well in advance and whenever necessary to make requests, seek clearances, approvals from FAO well before executing planned activities. When it comes to disbursement of funds, PMU will continue to support the process within the Ministry of Finance and Economic development in Kiribati and constantly follow up with pending things that needs to be completed and speed up timing in order to ensure that everything is done on time and as accordingly planned timely delivery of project activities in the project sites. In case where there is need, it is highly recommended to meet in person with respective Managers, Secretaries, or any responsible authorized staff to deal with the project. It is also highly recommended for the support from a recruited a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) to support the project on the ground and help establish the link between FAO systems and processes in place with Kiribati to ease arrangements for example, to help facilitate a long term agreement in place between FAO and the suppliers in Kiribati to ease procurements complications for the project (i.e. Flight service, Hotels, Hardware Shops, Catering services, etc.).

A Long Term Agreement (LTA) is being discussed with Air Kiribati to help in the bookings for flights and a Petty Cash Account was also requested in November 2020 and finally processed in March 2021 and now to be handled by the PMU, to avoid the request of OCAs and the long liquidation procedures. Finally, FAOSAP and PMU usually have support meetings conducted every 10 to 15 working days, where PMU will have a one or two hours call with the key staff supporting the project from SAP (LTO, Ops officer and other required staff when needed in the areas of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries) to ease issues and keep well informed LTO on the activities happening.

3. Stakeholders Engagement

Please report on progress, challenges and outcomes on stakeholder engagement (based on the description of the Stakeholder engagement plan included at CEO Endorsement/Approval (when applicable))

A ToR for the PSC was presented during the first PSC (Oct-Nov 2019) and received feedback from all the stakeholders. Through this ToR, clear guidelines on the duties of the PSC stakeholder members are outlined to give a better understanding for stakeholders of the mechanism of a PSC and implications (can/can't) for stakeholders. The ToR will be updated in every PSC reflecting the proposal of the stakeholders submitted to a voting. To name a few, the main project stakeholders include, the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development (MELAD), Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development (MFMRD), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the Island Councils, etc.

The impact of Covid19 seen here related to the engagement of stakeholders is basically on their participation as for now, Kiribati remains Covid19 free but it has had an overall disruption with communication. As such one of the project sites is Kiritimati Island and in order to get to Kiritimati Island a long travel had to be undertaken through Nadi (Fiji) on an international flight (there is no other possible route through plane and boat travel can take seven to 10 days not being safe). Because of the covid19 restrictions and closure of borders, the project was unable to conduct an inception workshop in Kiritimati and consult with relevant line ministries there on the project activities until date.

With the implications with flight service in Kiribati where only one plane is currently serving domestic travel in the country, constant and timely follow up with stakeholders in consultation meetings and monitoring of project activities is very slow. Endorsements of decisions by the local island council and communities on some of the important initiatives by the project is often delayed and the project is usually faced with uncertainty that requires many back and forth follow ups on phone call or email where necessary to understand the decisions to take on board. Although, email communication is not fully effective given the local context in the islands with poor connection, etc. constant follow up through phone call or visit in person is recommended to achieve full engagement of the stakeholders.

Finally, to address the constraints hindering participation of stakeholders, the project ensured that continuous follow up meetings with the partners are conducted on a monthly basis face to face and a technical task force was formed by one member each from the primary implementing partners (Environment and Conservation Division, Agriculture and livestock division, lands management division and the local government) and inclusion of other members according to the technical topics, island site and needs. To reach the project partners in the outer islands, travelling by speedboat with relevant sea safety equipment (grab bags) to the nearest project site was utilized to make use of the time and not wait for the flights to operate again. And also where there is charter opportunity by the project partners to reach the furthest project sites, a co-finance arrangement is usually agreed upon.

4. Gender-responsive measures

Please report on the progress of gender-responsive measures taken as documented at CEO Endorsement/Approval in the gender action plan or equivalent (when applicable)

A Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector is under preparation with the recruitment of an international gender expert (home based) collecting information provided by the National Project Coordinator and Project Assistant. Questionnaires have been disseminated to the different Ministries, Civil societies, NGOs and UN agencies. The CGA will provide a baseline assessment for project interventions, a project-level gender strategy and FAO future programming in Kiribati. The tentative completion timing of the report should be in April 2021.

Challenges

During the initial stages of data collection through stakeholder consultations, delayed provision of relevant data needed from conducting the surveys was experienced. This was due to the panic caused by covid19 when it was announced to have already affected the pacific region towards the end of 2019. While the lockdowns took place in Fiji, New Zealand and Australia, Kiribati on the other hand, closed down schools, businesses and some government staffs were also forced to take leave or work from home, and so as such, makes it very difficult for the project to carry out the surveys on a timely manner, hence the delay.

Furthermore, when conducting the surveys in the project sites especially in North Tabiteuea, the project team experienced hesitancy in the responses provided by women in most of the villages there. The customs and tradition in North Tabiteuea often regard women as minor and draws a clear line to differentiate the roles between men and women. As such, women usually do not want to take part in the interviews when their husbands or a male figure is present in the household, as it should be the role of men to talk to the project team and provide responses to the questions asked, while they (women) are only to be responsible to welcome the team and prepare food and drinks for them during the interview.

5. Knowledge Management Activities

Please report on the progress of implementation of the project's Knowledge Management Approach approved at CEO Endorsement (when applicable), knowledge products documenting good practices, lessons learned, websites/ other platforms developed, a communication strategy adopted.

The project has a communication strategy that was drafted at the end of May 2020 by the FAO-SAP communications specialist and requires feedback from the PMU. The challenge with this is on the engagement of a local communication specialist requested by the implementing partners as there are different understandings from GoK and FAO in what it has to cover as per ToR for such post, which still needs to be discussed and look at the next steps forward.

The project initially produced awareness materials which were translated into the country language (I-Kiribati) in consultation with the relevant project implementing partners to achieve the right vocabulary. Then, these were widely disseminated during national events in Kiribati by the implementing partners and as well as in the project sites at the inception phase of the project. The project has also contributed to the Pacific R2R website and has been involved in a virtual training conducted by SPC on how to use the website and finally a production of video clips was done in a collaborative effort between the project and its partners and this provides the opportunity to still share the awareness and information about the project activities and synergies on the web despite the complications with Covid19.

6. Risks

RISK TABLE					
<p><i>The following table summarizes risks identified in the Project Document and reflects also any new risks identified in the course of project implementation. The <u>Notes</u> column should be used to provide additional details concerning manifestation of the risk in your specific project, as relevant.</i></p>					

	Risk	Risk rating ¹	Mitigation Action	Progress on mitigation actions ²	Notes from the Project Task Force
1	Logistics stymie project implementation capacity.	Medium	Distances are great and logistics challenging in Kiribati. The project is designed specifically to be sure adequate resources are available and focused. Pilot sites were chosen based upon the ability to generate strong models for replication.	Project assistant has been recruited and it will take care of this area. Local companies have been registered in FAO systems and staff have presented UNGM to local companies and Kiribati Chamber of Commerce and Industry.	

¹ GEF Risk ratings: Low, Medium, Substantial or High

² If a risk mitigation plan had been presented as part of the Environmental and Social management Plan or in previous PIR please report here on progress or results of its implementation. For moderate and high risk projects, please Include a description of the ESMP monitoring activities undertaken in the relevant period.

	Risk	Risk rating ¹	Mitigation Action	Progress on mitigation actions ²	Notes from the Project Task Force
2	Sectoral barriers and siloed thinking within government ministries and agencies remain.	Substantial	The project approach is to create space for government ministries, local councils and community leaders to share information and experiences. A special “listening” session has been arranged for communities to participate in the PSC. Project staff will emphasize the merits of creating a common and unified vision and assist in taking steps towards achieving a common goal. Links between the R2R and other relevant projects (including the GEF LDCF project) will be strengthened. M&E will track and provide specific feedback on progress towards cross-sector cooperation and non-silo thinking.	PSC as mechanism of discussion has been established with great success. As requested from the PSC stakeholders, the establishment of technical working groups among the implementing partners to meet and discuss issues between PSCs kept the momentum project progress.	

	Risk	Risk rating ¹	Mitigation Action	Progress on mitigation actions ²	Notes from the Project Task Force
3	Island Government and community level support is not sustained, including failure of communities to follow the new rules.	Medium	<p>Collaboration of local communities will be critical to achieving the objectives of the project, but the communities will need incentives to take ownership and participate in the resource management and biodiversity conservation activities. It may be difficult to reach agreement with all members of communities on management and enforcement measures.</p> <p>Extensive community consultations are built into every aspect of the project. Project sites will be selected, in large part, in places where communities demonstrate an interest and willingness to engage in project activities. Project ownership will be generated very early and economic incentives through livelihood diversification and improvement activities will be provided. The project is also working very closely with the MIA. The Ministry is responsible for supporting the activities of Island Councils.</p>	All implementing partners have visited the three project sites and presented their activities to the island councils, where feedback and endorsement of decisions undertaken were reported to the PMU of the project to provide the required support.	

	Risk	Risk rating ¹	Mitigation Action	Progress on mitigation actions ²	Notes from the Project Task Force
4	Communities disengage from implementing management solutions.	Substantial	Community engagement in substantive project activities coupled with in-field vocational training coupled with providing a community voice in the project steering committee will provide both the means for (i) real community engagement in the project, and (ii) monitoring perceptions and benefits being derived by the project at the community level.	Communities will be involved and consulted at all the times for their good interest in the solutions proposed and the feasibility of their implementation in the ground.	

	Risk	Risk rating ¹	Mitigation Action	Progress on mitigation actions ²	Notes from the Project Task Force
5	Over exploited and heavily depleted zones expand and new fishing grounds are opened up without effective conservation and management measures.	Medium	<p>This risk stems through unsustainable activities creeping into the project sites through external actors. The approach to address this risk would be triple pronged. One, local ownership and engagement for local level monitoring and reporting. Two, through engagement of Island Councils for immediate action on transgressions and three, through providing livelihood diversification pilots.</p> <p>As mentioned above, ownership and engagement of local communities is an integral part of the project. Similarly, Island Councils are key partners in the project planning and implementation processes.</p>	<p>Implementing partners in collaboration with other projects as complimentary have begun consultation in the project sites to raise awareness of the new fishing regulations targeting schools this will be continuously widespread to the rest of the project sites including awareness on Marine Spatial Planning as well.</p> <p>Working through Community Based Management approaches will be the key strategy to mitigate this risk.</p>	

	Risk	Risk rating ¹	Mitigation Action	Progress on mitigation actions ²	Notes from the Project Task Force
6	Government support, including sustainable financing, becomes inconsistent with long term project objectives.	Medium	<p>While MELAD and MFMRD have experience implementing GEF-financed and other projects, overall human resource capacity is generally low, particularly in the outer islands where government presence to look after environment management and protection, is nearly non-existent. Government budgets are fairly low, which could present problems if already low budgets are reduced due to changes in national budget allocations.</p> <p>Significant capacity-building activities, for government and stakeholders alike, are included in the project to address capacity gaps. Project management will closely monitor government budget allocations in order to flag and potential shortfalls as soon as possible, so that corrective measures can be taken as needed to ensure continued implementation of project activities.</p>	<p>One national expert has been assigned to each implementing partner to deal directly with their activities proposed and act as the focal point for the project.</p> <p>Implementing partners have also requested extension officers in the project sites that are currently at the final stages of the recruitment process that will improve the follow up of activities to support work of the national experts and also improve the linkages with the communities.</p>	

	Risk	Risk rating ¹	Mitigation Action	Progress on mitigation actions ²	Notes from the Project Task Force
7	Climate change negatively impacts project outcomes.	Medium	Sea level rise, storm surge, and variable rainfall patterns may cause communities to migrate to other areas, potentially disrupting community-led activities. The project is designed specifically to improve resilience to climate change. The likelihood of short-term impacts is low.	Implementing partners through their activities will ensure that actions to mitigate the risk posed by climate change will be enforced through local bylaws, Island strategic plans or community based management plans.	
8	Covid19.	Medium	<p>Impossibility of international travel for staff or Technical Advisors and Consultants.</p> <p>Disruption on domestic air travel.</p> <p>Materials purchased overseas not possible to reach Kiribati in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Adaptation to the needs through zoom meetings and other VC options.</p> <p>Alternative to charter sea transport.</p> <p>Work with local available materials that can temporally be used.</p>	

Project overall risk rating (Low, Medium, Substantial or High):

FY2020 rating	Mid-Year 2021 rating	Comments/reason for the rating for Mid-Year 2021 and any changes (positive or negative) in the rating since the previous reporting period
Medium	Medium	No change - this may change when project moves into Outcome 2. For the time being Outcome 1 will not have much impact on the overall risk rating.

7. Development Objective Ratings, Implementation Progress Ratings and Overall Assessment

	Mid-Year 2021 Development Objective rating ³	Mid-Year 2021 Implementat ion Progress rating ⁴	Comments/reasons justifying the ratings for Mid-Year FY2021 and any changes (positive or negative) in the ratings since the previous reporting period
Project Coordinator	MS	MS	<i>Covid19 restrictions and uncertainties with especially travel to the project islands to implement activities is slowing down progress. However, it is anticipated that the project will utilize the available options on the ground to continue delivery of the outputs from FY2019 and FY2020 and onwards until project ends.</i>
Budget Holder	MS	MS	The project has been facing operational delays (both Covid19 related and unrelated). These delays and bottlenecks are being dealt with through adaptive measures by the project management unit. In the reporting period, under the Component 1, considerable progress has been made.
Lead Technical Officer⁵	MS	MS	Taking into account the initial operational delays and the restrictions in place due to Covid 19, the progress made during this reporting period has been quite substantial, both in terms of engagement and initiation of activities with and through key government executing partners, and engagement at the community level.

³ **Development/Global Environment Objectives Rating** – please refer to Annex 1.

⁴ **Implementation Progress Rating** – please refer to Annex 1.

⁵ The LTO will consult the HQ technical officer and all other supporting technical Units.

FAO-GEF Funding Liaison Officer	MS	MS	<p>Though Kiribati remains COVID-19 free so far, travel restrictions related to the pandemic still affected the smooth functioning of the project. Despite this, some adaptive measures have been adopted and progress made on some fronts, including inception workshops in the three projects islands, awareness raising activities, endorsement by the PSC on development of the Island Strategic Plans that incorporate the strategic priorities of the three project islands.</p> <p>Due to the interdependence of some of the sub-outputs under outcome 1 and outcome 2, such as development of cross-sectoral coordination and decision-making mechanism (1.1.2) to establish three PAs (2.1.4), the project will have to prioritise some of its activities to avoid multiple delays.</p>
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Annex 1. – GEF Performance Ratings Definitions

Development/Global Environment Objectives Rating – Assess how well the project is meeting its development objective/s or the global environment objective/s it set out to meet. **DO Ratings definitions:**
Highly Satisfactory (HS) - Project is expected to achieve or exceed **all** its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as “good practice”); **Satisfactory (S)** - Project is expected to achieve **most** of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings); **Moderately Satisfactory (MS)** - Project is expected to achieve **most** of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve **some** of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits); **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)** - Project is expected to achieve of its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only **some** of its major global environmental objectives); **Unsatisfactory (U)** - Project is expected **not** to achieve **most** of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits); **Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)** - The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, **any** of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits.)

Implementation Progress Rating – Assess the progress of project implementation. **IP Ratings definitions:**
Highly Satisfactory (HS): Implementation of all components is in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised implementation plan for the project. The project can be resented as “good practice”.
Satisfactory (S): Implementation of most components is in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan except for only a few that are subject to remedial action. **Moderately Satisfactory (MS):** Implementation of some components is in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan with some components requiring remedial action. **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU):** Implementation of some components is not in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan with most components requiring remedial action. **Unsatisfactory (U):** Implementation of most components is not in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan. **Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):** Implementation of none of the components is in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan.