

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Project ID:	10712
Project Name:	Enhancing water-food security and climate resilience in volcanic island countries of the Pacific
Countr(ies):	Regional, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu
Implementing Agency:	FAO

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. OVERVIEW3

A. Description3

B. Ratings and Disbursements3

C. Key Dates4

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES4

A. Progress: Information on progress and outcomes of project implementation activities4

B. Challenges: Information on challenges of project implementation activities5

C. Stakeholder Engagement5

D. Gender Equality7

E. Knowledge Management9

III: MINOR AMENDMENTS11

IV: GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES12

V. ANNEX13

I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

Enhancing water-food security and climate resilience in volcanic island countries of the Pacific

Country

Regional, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu

GEF ID

10712

Implementing Agency

FAO

Executing Entity

Executing Agency: Pacific Community (SPC); National lead agency Fiji: Mineral Resources Department, Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources; National lead agency Vanuatu: Department of Water Resources, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources; National lead agency Solomon Islands: Water Resources Division, Ministry of Mines, Energy, and Rural Electrification.

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

FSP

PIR Submission

9/9/2025

Fiscal Year , PIR Number

FY 2025 , 1st PIR

Objective

The project aims to enhance water and food security and climate resilience, sustain ecosystem services, and relieve pressure on over-exploited coastal aquifers by expanding and assessing the role of volcanic aquifers and by introducing sound groundwater governance frameworks in selected volcanic island states of the Pacific.

B. Ratings and Disbursements

Implementation Progress

Satisfactory

Development Objective

Satisfactory

Overall risk

Low Risk

Project Financing

6,570,000.00

Cumulative Disbursement

788,550.93

C. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval 1/31/2023	Agency Approval 4/25/2022
Implementation Start 2/1/2024	First Disbursement 4/30/2024
Expected MTR	Actual MTR
Expected Completion 1/31/2029	Actual Completion

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Progress: Information on progress and outcomes of project implementation activities

Project implementation is progressing according to plan in all project countries. A project management team was set up within SPC in Suva, Fiji, consisting of a Chief Technical Adviser, a Project Technical Adviser, a Project Implementation Officer, and a Finance/Admin Officer. The SPC team including its extension technical team and the two Water Resources Specialists based with the lead national agencies in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, have been ensuring consistent delivery of technical activities at the national level. These included the delivery of geophysical surveys in Solomon Islands (Gizo) and Vanuatu (East Santo and Sarakata Catchment) to map and assess the groundwater potential (output 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 3.1.3) around selected communities (project sites), the undertaking of spring and borehole surveys and pumping tests to support data collection and feasibility assessment (output 1.1.2) of aquifer development, and the installation of water resources monitoring equipment (output 3.1.1) to support data collection and aquifer management (output 2.1.3). National efforts in reviewing and drafting water resource policy and legislation in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands (output 2.1.1) have been supported through the procurement of consultancies (ongoing). The drilling of groundwater supply boreholes was supported through the engagement of a local private consultant in Nabutautau Fiji, while grant agreements have been signed with the Government of Vanuatu and Solomon Islands to support drilling operations (output 3.1.3). Procurement of handheld water testing equipment, borehole loggers and rain gauges is supporting the capacity of the countries to monitor water resources (output 1.1.1, 2.1.3, 3.1.1). Capacity building activities (regional drillers workshop, targeted on-the-job training) provided by the technical SPC team and in-country specialists have contributed to exceeding the final target (output 4.1.1) that was identified during project design. Letters of Agreement have been signed with all three national lead agencies setting out the terms and conditions of a joint cooperation between the two parties to deliver on national project activities. A project website is in place with project deliverables and a communication strategy has been drafted and will be presented during the next PSC meeting for endorsement (output 4.1.2). A dedicated gender action plan was developed during the project design phase and efforts are made to incorporate the recommendations into project activities. For example, both Water Resources Specialists have attended a regional training workshop on People Centered Approaches in development projects. The project was represented during the IWC10 in Uruguay and a twinning event is currently being planned for late 2025, further supporting regional capacity building efforts in water resources management (output 4.1.3).

B. Challenges: Information on challenges of project implementation activities

Challenges were mostly related to setting up financing and procurement modalities during the project start up. Letters of Agreement detailing the roles and responsibilities for project implementation at the national level had to be discussed, drafted, and reviewed by the national lead agency before they could be signed. Grant agreements had to be set up to allow the transferring of funds to the national lead agencies to allow for national drilling activities to commence. Preferred supplier agreements were put in place to enable and facilitate easy purchasing of technical equipment and the use of services to support project implementation. These measures are now all in place and the project is able to focus solely on the implementation of project activities.

Logistical challenges are being faced with domestic flights in Vanuatu, complicating the travel of SPC's in-country coordinator based in Port Vila to Espiritu Santo island (project site). The airline is currently following strict ticketing rules which are not compatible with SPC's procurement policy. As a result, the duty station of the SPC staff is being shifted to Luganville, Espiritu Santo, to facilitate implementation of national activities in Vanuatu.

Engaging with Solomon Water, one of the main stakeholders in the Solomon Islands, was proving difficult due to different priorities between the project and the national water utility. Even though Solomon Water was a main stakeholder shaping the project design during the project preparation phase in 2020-2021, these priorities changed over time (4 years). The project was able to effectively re-engage with Solomon Water by incorporating Gizo Island into the project scope, at the request of Solomon Water and the Water Resources Division (MMERE), due to the pressing issues affecting the water supply of Gizo Town. A formal request from the Solomon Islands will be presented to the PSC for approval. Also, an evaluation of the new associated costs is being carried out, along with a strategic assessment to ensure that the change does not reduce contributions to the project indicators.

There are challenges in involving women in capacity building activities (output 4.1.1) due to the national water resources sector and particularly the drilling sector being heavily male dominated. Efforts are made to involve all female government employees during capacity building activities. This has been successful in Fiji but not in Vanuatu or Solomon Islands where female employees are practically absent.

C. Stakeholder Engagement

Profile	Stakeholder name	Type of partnership	Progress, results & Challenges on Stakeholder's Engagement
Government Institutions	Mineral Resources Department (MRD), Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources, Fiji	Implementing Partner and Member of Steering Committee	Letter of Agreement in place stipulating roles and responsibilities for joint project implementation. Close collaboration with this stakeholder is critical to ensure successful project delivery. The project is supporting the Department's priorities in identifying, developing, and establishing water supply systems for vulnerable farming communities in selected areas. This support is in the form of borehole drilling, drilling supervision, pumping test support, and potentially groundwater investigations. Additionally, the project supports capacity building of Government staff through training workshops on drilling and surveying techniques.
Government Institutions	Water Authority of Fiji	Strategic partner	Collaboration with WAF commenced in May 2025 and a Letter of Agreement is currently being drafted to formalise the collaboration. WAF is supporting the project with the installation of certain water tank and reticulation systems in selected areas where project groundwater bores (incl. solar-powered pumps) have been drilled. SPC is providing training and equipment to WAF to build their capacity in spring surveying techniques which in turn will benefit the project.
Government Institutions	Department of Water and Sewerage, Fiji	Strategic partner	Data on springs and community water supply systems in Fiji was provided by DWS, assisting with the planning of spring and borehole surveys across Viti Levu. The stakeholder should be kept informed about progress at least bi-annually and should be regularly invited to PSC meetings and other capacity building opportunities.
Government Institutions	Department of Trades Measurement and Standards (DTMS), Ministry of Commerce, Trades, Tourism and Transport, Fiji	Strategic partner	DTMS oversees the establishment and operation of water bottling companies in Fiji. Upon compliance to all the trade and standard requirements, a certificate of production or license is issued. Part of DTMS's role is to also install flow meter in every production bore within the companies' land boundary, allowing the recording of groundwater abstracted volume over time. An effort should be made to strengthen the partnership between MRD, DTMS and FRCS through an MOU to allow a government coordinated approach through joint monitoring of water bottling companies and data sharing.
Government Institutions	Fiji Customs and Revenue Services (FCRS), Fiji	Strategic partner	FCRS, through its 2008 Water Resources Tax, administers the levying of payable tax to water bottling companies that extract water in its natural state from either springs or groundwater bores for commercial use. Through this tax, FCRS personnel visit the sites on a monthly basis to get the aggregated abstraction records and do verifications on the flow meters if and when required. An effort should be made to strengthen the partnership between MRD, DTMS and FCRS through an MOU to allow a government coordinated approach
Private Sector entities	Private drilling industry, Fiji	Strategic partner	<p>There is a need to address substandard groundwater drilling and construction and enforcing the completion of boreholes to sanitary standards across the entire drilling industry. MRD should be able to enforce sanitary standards to all completed boreholes to reduce the risk of groundwater contamination.</p> <p>Through the newly endorsed Groundwater Resources Development and Management Policy, MRD can issue drillers' licensing to existing and new drilling companies and application of bore construction standards, bore location criteria and other regulatory requirements of similar drilling controls internationally.</p> <p>There is a need for a national drilling registry including all bore locations, drilling logs, success rates, etc.</p> <p>There is a need for capacity building in advanced drilling techniques</p>

D. Gender Equality

Category	Yes/No	Briefly describe progress and results achieved during this reporting period.
a. Closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources	Yes	<p>As part of the project, community and water committee consultation will be taking place in four communities in Santo, Vanuatu (2025, more to follow). To contribute to the GESI consideration of the project below are some suggested data collections for this initial consultations. This will not be a full GESI assessment but an initial data collection that will contribute to the development of further GESI activities and integration of GESI considerations within the project activities. This initial data collection is also linked to the project's GESI action plan, as highlighted below.</p> <p>Community Water committee/ management team consultation</p> <p><u>Data to collect from the Community Water committees</u></p> <p>Water committees within the four communities are already established. The below data collection is to better understand the different roles that people have within these committees and how you get to be on these committees.</p> <p>-How many men/ women/ people with a disability/ young people attended the community consultation? -Who participates in the meetings? Who speaks in the consultation? -Where did the consultation take place and at what time? Where there any barriers for people to participate in the consultation?</p> <p><u>Questions for water committee</u></p> <p>-How do people become members of the water committee? -Are there different positions on the water committee and how do people get to be in these roles? -How do you ensure all the needs of the community are taken into consideration when making decision's regarding water accessibility and usage within the community?</p> <p><u>Links to GESI Action Plan</u></p> <p>Overarching requirement</p> <p>6. Community assessments are undertaken in all Project sites, prior to any drilling or other works, in order to understand existing water management/ governance structures (i.e., Community Development, Water and Project Committees) to ensure the Project supports these arrangements.</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>-Community assessment of water management arrangements in each Project Area of Interest involve women, youth, people with a disability and the elderly.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <p>-Number of community assessments completed. -SAAD disaggregated Community Assessment participant lists.</p> <p>Community Consultation/meeting</p> <p>These community consultations are being lead by government officers. SPC can collect the below information through observation during the community meetings.</p> <p>Data to collect from the community consultation</p> <p>-What considerations did you take (egg: venue choice, time of day for the meeting ect) to ensure meaningful participation from all community members during community consultation? -Approx how many men/ women/ people with a disability/ young people attended the community consultation? -Who actively participated in the community consultation? Who do you notice is making the most contribution to the meeting? -Where there any barriers to community members active participation? -Was there any questions regarding the land access agreement that was directed at women's right to land?</p> <p><u>Links to GESI action plan</u></p> <p>Overarching requirement:</p> <p>1. Gender equality and social inclusion are fully mainstreamed across all Project components and activities and the Project takes every opportunity to strengthen women's voice and influence in groundwater planning, management, and governance.</p> <p>Targets:</p> <p>-Project/activity planning meetings are attended by a relatively equal number of women and men of different ages, and inclusive of people with a disability.</p>

E. Knowledge Management

Knowledge management and Learning (KML): Does the project have a KML strategy?	No
If YES, what is the implementation progress? In your answer, please describe how the project is fostering knowledge sharing and learning among stakeholders at national and sub-national level.	
If NO, how does the project identify, collect and document good practices?	Communication specialist within SPC's GEM Division is providing targeted support when required. Private consultants have been engaged to develop communication products. An IW:LEARN twinning event (regional) is being planned for November 2025 to promote the exchange of good practices. The training material from the regional drillers training conducted in 2024 is being compiled for uploading on the project website.
Please list good practices, including key-technical and/or institutional innovations, from the project thus far.	An airborne geophysical survey is being planned to assess the groundwater potential of Viti Levu at the island level. This will be the first water-related airborne geophysical survey conducted in Fiji. Other technical innovations included the collection of 3D geophysical (resistivity) data in Gizo (Solomon Islands) to inform the drilling operations for the Gizo Town water supply (report being drafted).
Communication strategy: Does the project have a communication strategy?	Yes
Please provide a brief overview of the communications successes and challenges this fiscal year.	The communication strategy is in draft format and has yet to be approved by the Steering Committee. It is expected that communication efforts will increase with the completion of the first project deliverables (e.g. water supply systems, policy/legislation reviews, etc)
Human-interest story: Please share a human-interest story from your project, focusing on how the project has helped to improve people's livelihoods while contributing to achieving the expected Global Environmental Benefits. Please indicate any Socio-economic Co-benefits that were generated by the project. Include at least one beneficiary quote and perspective, and please also include related photos and photo credits.	Draft story still under production: https://youtu.be/hQyPJSOY72E
Please provide links to related website, social media account	https://gem.spc.int/projects/pacwells
Please provide a list of publications, leaflets, video materials, newsletters, or other communications assets published on the web, if any.	Project factsheet uploaded on website (https://gem.spc.int/projects/pacwells) Direct link: https://www.spc.int/digitallibrary/get/wgszo
Please indicate the Communication and/or knowledge management focal point	Joseph Hing, josephh@spc.int

III: Minor Amendments

CONTEXT	
Result Framework	Minor amendments were made to the original Results Framework (Annex)
Components and Cost	
Institutional And Implementation Arrangements	
Financial Management	<p>The project budget was amended to accommodate the following: 1. Salaries have increased from USD 1.6M to USD 2.58M to accommodate two Water Resource Specialists recruited by SPC in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, to support the delivery of technical, financial, and administrative activities in the two countries. The two governments submitted formal written requests for these positions on 6th May 2024. The engagement of the two positions reflects the agreed TORs. The Water Resources Specialists are 100% dedicated to the project and are helping to build government capacity. 2. Consultants have decreased from \$641,123 to \$270,885 as the 3 National Coordinator positions were replaced by the 2 Water Resource Specialists (Vanuatu and Solomons). For Fiji, that support is provided by the Project Technical Advisor, Project Implementation Officer, and Technical Support Officer. 3. Contracts have decreased from \$1.79M to \$1,315M as the Water Resource Specialists will be undertaking some of the activities that were originally expected to be outsourced (Structural Geology Analysis for three countries, Drilling supervision and logging each country). Also the unit costs for “Drilling” were reduced from \$220 per meter to \$134 per meter based on quotations that SPC received in Fiji. 4. The budget for audits and spot checks was shifted to FAO, as this is FAO's responsibility as Implementing Agency. 5. The budget for project Monitoring & Evaluation was shifted to SPC as SPC is responsible for project monitoring. Note - the budget for the MTR and TE remain with FAO. These changes were endorsed at the PSC meeting that coincided with the Inception Workshop (6 June 2024), and were formalised through the an OPA amendment with FAO (signed 5th May 2025).</p>
Implementation Schedule	
Executing Entity	
Executing Entity Category	

Minor Project Objective Change	
Safeguards	
Risk Analysis	
Increase of GEF Financing up to 5%	
Co-Financing	
Location of Project Activity	At the request of the Solomon Islands Government in early 2025, Gizo Island was incorporated into the project due to a shift in government priorities and its suitability within the project's scope. The inclusion of Gizo Island will necessitate a corresponding reduction in the project scope on Guadalcanal. Activities to be undertaken in Gizo include: island-wide groundwater potentiality mapping (Output 1.1.1), technical-economic feasibility studies (Output 2.1.2), water resources monitoring (Output 3.1.1), land use management measures (Output 3.1.2), small scale demonstrations of groundwater utilization (Output 3.1.3). A formal request from the Solomon Islands will be presented to the PSC for approval. Also, an evaluation of the new associated costs is being carried out, along with a strategic assessment to ensure that the change does not reduce contributions to the project indicators.
others	

IV: Geographic Coordinates of Project Activities

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Viti Levu island, Fiji	-17.793383	177.978225	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Espiritu Santo island, Vanuatu	-15.156341	167.051071	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
West Ambae, Vanuatu	-15.361981	167.758968	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Gizo island, Solomon Islands	-8.07503	156.787115	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

V. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category	Title
M and E Document	GEFID10712_2025PIR_FAO_Regional