

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

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10712

Countries

Regional (Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu)

Project Name

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

Agencies

FAO

Date received by PM

5/12/2022

Review completed by PM

12/13/2022

Program Manager

Astrid Hillers

Focal Area

International Waters

Project Type

FSP

PIF
CEO Endorsement

Part I ? Project Information

Focal area elements

1. Does the project remain aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements as presented in PIF (as indicated in table A)?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(6/14/2022)

Yes, the project remains aligned with the focal area strategy.

(11/1/2022) Cleared

(11/11/2022) Please note an additional comment:

1. On Project information: Please correct the expected implementation start to a future date and adapt the completion date/duration accordingly.

Submission Date 9/28/2020	Expected Implementation Start 10/4/2022	Expected Completion Date 10/3/2027
Duration ⓘ 60 In Months		Agency Fee(\$) 570,000.00

Submission Date 9/28/2020	Expected Implementation Start 10/4/2022	Expected Completion Date 10/3/2027
Duration ⓘ 60 In Months		Agency Fee(\$) 570,000.00

(12/12/2022) Please address /revise the expected implementation start and completion dates.

(1/24/2023) Comment addressed and dates have been revised.

Agency Response

FAO Response Jan2023:

The Expected Implementation Start and Expected Completion Date have been updated.

Project description summary

2. Is the project structure/design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs as in Table B and described in the project document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022)

1. Overall the intention of the project is well placed, yet while the PDO clearly aims at 'introducing sounds groundwater governance frameworks" the project itself (table B and description) is not explicit to include outputs including a process to develop or strengthen

such governance frameworks and bring these forward for consideration in the respective government systems for consideration. Clearly though there is a need to address groundwater governance incl. to avoid pollution and over-abstraction, clarify "ownership" of sub-surface water as a public good, and establish permitting system(s), zoning and enforcement systems.

2. This (above) causes a risk to sustainable uses including dialogues with private sector in "exploitation of the most attractive "prospects" emerging from the feasibility studies under outputs 1.1.2".

In sum, the project needs to be clearer on how it addresses potential extensive expansion of water use from volcanic aquifers if permit systems and incentives to enhance efficient water use are not put in place at the same time.

3. Please change component 3 from TA to INV (Investments).

(11/1/2022)

Comments have been addressed. Cleared.

Agency Response

1. Project activities related to supporting legislation and policy development which were to be undertaken under Output 4.1.1 are now shifted to Component 2 and made more prominent through the creation of a new project Output (2.1.1) to better highlight this action. The new Output (?Ongoing national efforts in reviewing existing legislations and developing new groundwater policies are supported?) is specifically aiming to update existing legislations and develop new policies and to bring them forward for consideration in the respective government systems. Governance reforms needs were identified during the national design phase in all 3 countries. These needs were prioritized to identify what could be addressed during this project. Table B and Component descriptions and budget were updated to reflect these changes. Even though the above-mentioned governance reforms will have to be addressed early on during project implementation, it is expected that the information that will emerge from the investigations and feasibility studies will be used to guide policy development over the longer term. This will ensure a bottom-up approach whereby governance reforms are supported by resource characterization evidence and strengthened through proposed aquifer management plans that will have been piloted in specific priority aquifers of national importance, and in which groundwater allocations will be guided by groundwater yields and long term aquifer recharge rates.

2. Volcanic aquifers in the Pacific region are poorly known and barely developed. This project is aiming to provide an assessment of the potential of groundwater resources present in these aquifers, through technical and economic feasibility studies. Considering this very early stage of groundwater development in these areas, the identification of public and private investors willing to develop these resources is seen as beneficial. The situation may differ in areas of identified priority aquifers which might be more extensively developed (e.g. Honiara aquifer) and where competing users might be present. For these particular aquifers, the project will focus on improving their governance and management to prevent unregulated and unsustainable withdrawals and identify pollution sources or land use practices which could lead to aquifer deterioration. Activities under Component 2 will ensure that

legislations/policies as well as aquifer management plans developed during this project (and beyond) will recommend the application of groundwater allocation schemes and permit systems for, different uses, based on groundwater investigations, and studies to provide a sound basis for which permits and allocations will be assigned. Potential expansion of groundwater development in unexplored volcanic aquifers (resulting from Component 1 activities) will eventually also benefit from the development/updating of national legislation and policy that will consider groundwater withdrawals at sustainable level and protection from pollution. Additional explanations were added throughout Section 3 (Proposed alternative scenario) to highlight this distinction between 1) newly identified aquifers and proposed investments and 2) highly developed aquifers in need for better management.

3. Done

3. If this is a non-grant instrument, has a reflow calendar been presented in Annex D?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response - - -

Co-financing

4. Are the confirmed expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented, with supporting evidence and a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized, and a description of any major changes from PIF, consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022)

1. Please separate in kind and investment mobilized co-finance in accordance with the letters of co-finance.

2. Projects that are funded by outside agencies would list these agencies as name of co-financier (and have a letter from these) while government budgets are part of government co-finance as listed now. (Note: Loans are part of the government's funds as well).

3. Please list co-finance by FAO as the implementing agency.

4. As the project aims at increased resilience via groundwater (incl. from seawater intrusion, drought resilience, and food security) it would be good to explore additional co-finance, including adaptation finance in any of the three countries. In fact the ER mentions e.g. GCF finance and other as aiming in the same direction.

(11/1/2022)

1. The table in the letters of co-finance from Vanuatu and Solomon Islands splits co-finance into recurrent/in kind and investment mobilized. Are there new letters that have changed that?

2. - 4. Addressed.

(11/7/2022)

Comment 1. above has been addressed.

Agency Response FAO response 11/4/022

The co-financing of Vanuatu and Solomon Islands was split into: in kind/recurrent expenditure and public Investment/Investments Mobilized coherently with the co-financing letters issued by the countries.

Kindly note, the countries requested NOT to issue new letter because they believe the information uploaded in the portal is still the correct one.

1. Following extensive consultations, the countries have identified and confirmed committed co-financing relevant to this project as listed in the respective co-financing letters, attached to this request. Co-financing is summarized in one letter per country, as recurrent expenditure.
2. Funding through other agencies identified and committed as co-financing to this project (e.g. ADB/EU Urban Water project in Solomon Islands and the GCF project in Vanuatu) is reported as country co-financing, as these funds have already been integrated in the respective national budgets and are not directly committed by the original financing agencies.
3. FAO co-financing letter added and figures were revised accordingly in Tables B and C.
4. We are exploring additional co-financing opportunities from Australian DFAT (through FAO), ACIAR, and Water for Women Fund. At this time, these initiatives are at concept stage and no funding is confirmed but there is a high chance that the project will be supported by some of these initiatives addressing some of the country needs identified during the design phase (legislation/policy development) and other relevant issues. These will be reported accordingly during implementation.

GEF Resource Availability

5. Is the financing presented in Table D adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022) Yes, the financing table is adequate.

(11/11/2022)

On the Budget (Annex E):

1. procurement officer, admin officer, Chief Technical Advisor, Specialist and Technical Officer are being charged across components and PMC. Per guidelines, project's staff should be charged to the GEF and co-financing portions allocated to PMC. Co-financing allocated to PMC is nearly 1.8 million, and 11 million of co-financing is represented in grants/loans. Please explore the possibility to cover the project's staff with some co-financing.

FAO Cost Categories	Unit cost USD	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4			PMC	Operational Partner Budget	FAO Support Services	Total GEF
		Outcome 1.1	Outcome 1.2	Outcome 3.1	Outcome 4.1	M&E	Total				
5011 Salaries											
Chief Technical Advisor	\$ 13,190	\$ 77,164	\$ 77,164	\$ 164,328	\$ 77,164			\$ 77,164	\$128,607	\$ 514,428	\$ 514,428
Technical Specialist	\$ 12,258	\$ 180,198	\$ 180,198	\$ 288,317	\$ 72,079			\$ 72,079		\$ 720,792	\$ 720,792
Technical Officer	\$ 2,194	\$ 11,519	\$ 11,519	\$ 13,623	\$ 9,215			\$ 9,215		\$ 46,077	\$ 46,077
Data and GIS Officer	\$ 9,484	\$ 28,452	\$ 28,452	\$ 28,452	\$ 28,452			\$ 28,452		\$ 113,807	\$ 113,807
Communication Officer	\$ 9,484	\$ 14,226	\$ 14,226	\$ 14,226	\$ 14,226			\$ 14,226		\$ 56,903	\$ 56,903
GIS Officer	\$ 7,529	\$ 8,778	\$ 8,778	\$ 8,778	\$ 8,778			\$ 8,778		\$ 27,105	\$ 27,105
Procurement Officer	\$ 7,529	\$ 11,294	\$ 11,294	\$ 11,294	\$ 11,294			\$ 11,294		\$ 45,175	\$ 45,175
Administration Officer	\$ 2,194	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -			\$ -	\$ 78,989	\$ 78,989	\$ 78,989
5011 Sub-total salaries		\$ 329,629	\$ 329,629	\$ 617,216	\$ 219,206	\$ -	\$ 219,206	\$ 207,590	\$ 1,603,277	\$ -	\$ 1,603,277

Table B - Execution Functions eligible for funding by the GEF portion of PMC¹⁰²

Staffing costs, including:

- Project manager;
- Project assistant technical specialist(s);
- Procurement specialist; and/or
- Financial specialist.

2. Lump sum without any kind of information cannot be approved. Please provide some level of details.

5021 Travel											
(Lump sum)	\$ 270,154	\$ 81,735	\$ 65,025	\$ 58,240	\$ 55,154	\$ 10,000	\$ 65,154		\$ 270,154		\$ 270,154
(Lump sum) National	\$ 480,718	\$ 135,855	\$ 92,461	\$ 242,315	\$ 10,087		\$ 10,087		\$ 480,718		\$ 480,718
(Lump sum) Travel for training/workshops and meetings (incl. IWT)	\$ 192,431	\$ 5,168	\$ 27,688	\$ 80,173	\$ 99,401		\$ 99,401		\$ 192,431		\$ 192,431
5021 Sub-total travel		\$ 222,758	\$ 185,174	\$ 360,728	\$184,642	\$ 10,000	\$ 174,642	\$ -	\$ 943,302	\$ -	\$ 943,302

3. Other expendable like bank fees cannot be charged to GEF resources.

5028 GOE budget										
ICT (computers, printers, internet, ICT support)	\$ 575	\$ 35,136	\$ 35,136	\$ 47,404	\$ 27,914	\$ -	\$ 27,914		\$ 145,589	\$ 145,589
Facilities (rent, electricity, water, maintenance)	\$ 328	\$ 25,896	\$ 25,896	\$ 32,907	\$ 13,577	\$ -	\$ 13,577		\$ 98,276	\$ 98,276
Other Expendable (bank fees and sundries)	\$ 9,391	\$ 2,348	\$ 2,348	\$ 2,348	\$ 2,348		\$ 2,348		\$ 9,391	\$ 9,391
6300 Sub-total GOE budget		\$ 63,379	\$ 63,379	\$ 82,658	\$ 43,839	\$ -	\$ 43,839	\$ -	\$ 253,256	\$ 253,256

(12/12/2022)

1. The co-financing of SPC for parts of the CTA and admin officers salary are appreciated. Also noted that government in-kind co-finance cannot co-finance project positions but Fiji - as host of SPC is providing ICT staff support in-kind. Further, the ADB loans in parallel co-finance in Vanuatu and Solomon islands. Thanks for exploring these co-finance opportunities.

Thank you for attaching the staff TORs. Please address and clarify the following:

- i) A significant part of the key staff TORs appear to be identical and contributing largely to the same outputs (part of the CTA responsibilities, and esp. the TORs of the Regional Project Administrator, Technical Specialist and Data and GIS officer) with the only difference that

the Technical Specialists and Technical Officer are assisting the Chief Technical Officer, while the Chief Technical Officer will be responsible for supporting the delivery of each technical task. This begs the question if 3 - 4 staff are needed to contribute to the same outputs especially in view of the high salary costs in the region.

Please clearly outline in each of the staff TORs what their contribution is with regard to the project components/outputs to be able to distinguish and justify the number of positions to be covered by the project

ii) Where is the Regional Project administrator listed in the budget? It is part of PMC? TORs are included but unclear where this position is budgeted.

iii) Please add the column for "responsible entity" in the budget as per the usual GEF template.

2. Noted and addressed in the revised budget.

3. The revised budget is noted. Comment addressed as long as it is understood that Bank fees are non-eligible expenditures for the GEF grant.

(1/24/2023)

1.

i. Comment addressed. Thank you for amending the staff TORs and aiming to outline specific contributions for most outputs. While the distinctive roles of each staff may be easier to represent at a higher level would make it easier to distinguish between staff, the representation is clear enough on technical grounds. In future though please make this easier or add a table so the reader is not forced to do a line by line comparison. SPC is the main technical agency in the region and participating countries dispersed and we understand from discussion with FAO that this adds to staff needs at SPC and/or hired by SPC to support the countries in technical outputs of the work on groundwater assessments.

ii. Addressed

iii. Addressed and column added on the left hand side of the table.

2. and 3. previously addressed.

Agency Response

FAO Response Jan2023:

i) The TORs of the Chief Technical Adviser, the Technical Specialist and Data & GIS Officer have been revised to reflect the role and contribution of each key staff to the delivery of the outputs. More details were provided to make clear why each of this staff needs to contribute. Kindly note that the Data and GIS Officer will only offer his/her service for 12 months and not throughout the project lifetime.

ii) The Regional Project Administrator was already included in the budget as Administration Officer and is charged under PMC. The reference in the Budget has been revised to Regional Project Administrator for consistency purposes - thanks to spot the mistake.

iii) The Responsible Entity Column has been added in the budget.

FAO Response:

Comment #1:

Kindly note that the budget was reviewed to address the PPO's comment. The Procurement officer is now completely covered by PMC. The remaining staff who are charged on technical components are duly justified by detailed ToRs attached as Annex M: Terms of Reference of Key staff and Consultants both in the FAO Project Document and as stand-alone document in the roadmap of the submission.

Re to the PMC, kindly note this cannot be further financed by the respective co-financing committed by the countries. Specifically, the government of Fiji has committed USD 1.6M as co-financing, which pertains to staff time working at ICT and facilities. As per their national policies, they cannot cover staff time of non-staff to further co-finance PMC. SPC is also co-financing PMC, including up to 35% of the CTA salary, and up to 40% of administration officer salary, indicating a total of up to \$330,000 USD in co financing.

Comment #2: Revised budget attached ? Thanks to spot out the mistake due to automatic links to the budget lines labels who did not update. The two lines now read as international and national travels, respectively.

Comment #3: The budget line label was wrong. These are Other Operating costs (sundries) which EAs always charge to the project. For this reason, these costs have been regrouped under the lines of Facilities (rent, utilities, maintenance, consumables, sundries).

A new budget reflecting these changes has been uploaded in the relevant box in the GEF Portal. The revised budget is also included in the revised FAO Project Document and attached as stand-alone in the roadmap of the submission.

Project Preparation Grant

6. Is the status and utilization of the PPG reported in Annex C in the document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
6/14/2022) Yes.

(11/11/2022)

1. On the utilization of PPG: please provide details on the activities funded through the PPG. ?Consultants? and ?Contracts? does not provide enough level of information to review and confirm if the activities funded are eligible under PPG (as per the GEF guidelines)..

1. On the utilization of PPG: please request the agency to provide details on the activities funded through the PPG. ?Consultants? and ?Contracts? does not provide enough level of information to review and confirm if the activities funded are eligible under PPG.

PPG Grant Approved at PIF: 150,000 USD			
Project Preparation Activities Implemented	GETF/LDCF/SCCF Amount (\$)		
	Budgeted Amount	Amount Spent to date	Amount Committed
5013 Consultants	7,500	0	7,500
5014 Contracts	142,000	101,250	40,750
Total	150,000	101,250	48,250

PPG Grant Approved at PIF: 150,000 USD			
Project Preparation Activities Implemented	GETF/LDCF/SCCF Amount (\$)		
	Budgeted Amount	Amount Spent to date	Amount Committed
5013 Consultants	7,500	0	7,500
5014 Contracts	142,000	101,250	40,750
Total	150,000	101,250	48,250

(12/12/2022) Thank you for adding notes to the outline items within the 5013 and 5014 FAO budget lines. The comment may not have been clear enough: Please split up items under

"consultants" and "contracts" by the eligible expenditure category examples on pg. 13 of the Project Cycle guidelines, i.e. itemize/separate the items of the explanations provided into budget lines (e.g. such as for workshops, travel, national or international consultants,...).
Thank you.

(1/24/2023) Comment addressed. We understand that this is the level of detail you have as per the reporting of SPC to FAO on the PPG funds utilization. Cleared.

Agency Response

FAO Response Jan 2023

A new PPG table was uploaded providing more details. The expenditures were itemized and explanations provided into budget lines.

However, please consider that for FAO de PPG budget lines were two: one for an international consultant to run a Climate Risk Assessment; and one budget line for a legal agreement (LoA in FAO) to put under contract SPC to run the PPG phase under FAO's supervision.

To address the PPO's comment, the new PPG table in both the portal and the FAO ProDoc, provides a breakdown of the LoA with SPC under the contract category.

FAO Response:

Line 5013: Consultants: International Consultant for Climate Risk Assessment (Annex I3)

Line 5014 Contracts: Contract (Letter of Agreement) with SPC to carry out the PPG phase, including consultations with the countries, thematic reports, identification of pilot sites, development of the Project Document, workshops, etc.

This information was included in Annex C: Status of Utilization of Project Preparation Grant (PPG).

Core indicators

7. Are there changes/adjustments made in the core indicator targets indicated in Table E? Do they remain realistic?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3. (6/14/2022)

1. There has been a change in indicator 4 which by itself is not a problem. Please provide clear evidence that with the amount of money (how much of the total grant) close to 2 mill ha of landscapes will be under improved management and how this will be achieved. This is huge area in comparison to the combined land area of the three countries.

2. The three SIDS share similar problems and are an example for other volcanic islands in the SIDS with these shared issues in a similar setting and region the glue between these SIDS. Also, the actions of the project are on land and hence the labeling and impact on the Northern Australian Shelf Great Barrier Reef seems a stretch as also commented by STAP. Sub-indicators 7.3 and 7.4 still apply to the project as well as to a certain degree 7.2.

3. Indicator 11 with around 1.1 million DIRECT beneficiaries does appear high. In fact section 6./GEBs (pg. 150) talks about around 150.000 direct beneficiaries. Please address.

(11/1/2022) Comments addressed. Cleared.

Agency Response

1. We had indicated 1.1 million in the PIF but in the prodoc we've indicated 795,605. Nevertheless, we have now reduced the numbers to the exact areas and population of the identified project sites, which is 35,358 hectares and 150,588 direct beneficiaries (Female: 72,000 - Male: 78,588). Please note that, even though project interventions under Components 2 (diagnostic analyses) and Component 3 (pilot infrastructure) will be limited to the areas of the identified project sites, the aquifer management plans which will be developed based on information collected predominantly through these interventions, will actually be covering the entire area of the aquifer system where the project sites belong to. For example, the information collected in the Yaqara Catchment in Fiji is expected to contribute to the development of an aquifer management plan for the entire Ba-Ra Volcanics Group extending over the entire northern part of Viti Levu island. In other words, the land area with improved management (and the direct beneficiaries) will eventually be larger.

2. Sub-indicator 7.1 removed as requested. Sub-indicators 7.2, 7.3, 7.4 maintained as suggested by STAP and GEF SEC. Since this sub-indicators must necessarily refer to a specific water body, we left Northern Australian Shelf Great Barrier Reef selected.

3. Changed as explained in comment 1 above.

Part II ? Project Justification

1. Is there a sufficient elaboration on how the global environmental/adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers, are going to be addressed?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022)

Overall yes, the project is aiming to decrease pressures on coastal aquifers and support increased access to safe water from volcanic aquifers through assessing these resources and enhancing groundwater governance frameworks. The latter remains to be strengthened in the project description and results framework (see previous comment under Part I , question 2). Without explicitly addressing governance and control withdrawals and protection from pollution there is a risk of simply creating incentives for uncontrolled increased uses. e.g. the ER states that in Fidji there is "no control or licensing of water well drilling in the private sector" (though there is a draft Groundwater Resources Development and Management Policy' that yet has to be approved and then would need support for implementation; similar for the Solomon Islands the background lists needs for increased governance of aquifer uses, problems overlapping and fragmented sectoral frameworks and limited monitoring as priorities that need addressing and somewhat similar issues in Vanuatu.

(11/1/2022) Comment addressed. Cleared.

Agency Response

As responded to previous comment, governance issues will be specifically addressed through provision of technical support to progress ongoing national efforts in Fiji and Solomon Islands to develop and update new legislations and groundwater policies. These national processes are struggling to progress due to limited national capacities and the countries have requested assistance through this GEF project. To specifically address this issue, a new Output 2.1.1 was included to specifically address this issue. Not all country needs could be accommodated in this project so these were prioritized with the remaining ones to be potentially addressed through parallel initiatives (contributing to co-financing) or follow up projects.

2. Is there an elaboration on how the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects were derived?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022) Yes.

Cleared.

Agency Response - - -

3. Is the proposed alternative scenario as described in PIF/PFD sound and adequate? Is there sufficient clarity on the expected outcomes and components of the project and a description on the project is aiming to achieve them?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(6/14/2022)

1. Please see previous comments asking to make actions to improve groundwater governance (addressing both quantity of uses as well as water quality protection) and lists these efforts as outputs/activities in component 2. Component 2 presently appears to mainly support conceptual models, analysis and the mmgt. plans which are NOT governance instruments.
2. Please add a narrative to the ToC diagram to explain the logic of the interventions (and possibly alternatives considered) and path to the desired alternative scenario/goal. Please expand on the pressures and drivers and also factoring in climate variability and change and various increasing and often unregulated and competing demands and uses.
3. Please include relevant gender aspects in the project component description. A Gender Action Plan cannot exist separately from the project and should aid to integrate relevant gender aspects and barriers in the design of the project and assure that consultations = incl. those on the aquifer management plans - ensure that women's voices are heard and that women are included in decision and have access to project resources. The lack of their voices being heard and constraints on lives voiced from women and youth was expressed in the stakeholder consultation reports.

Please also assure the consistent use of gender disaggregated indicators in the results framework.

Component 1:

4. Output 1.1.2 and 1.1.3. - Please briefly spell out what the potential investors (who are these?) are expected to finance - which would also elute to the type of investors being pursued for finance.
4. Output 1.1.1 : is the analysis to include determination of recharge areas to also underpin source water protection measures incl. via zoning recommendations?

Component 2:

5. The text argues for the need of "drastic improvement in groundwater management policies" and points barriers of institutional capacities, lack of decision making tool and governance mechanisms as well as awareness at the local and national levels, yet outcome 2 which is framed as "Introducing sound groundwater governance frameworks" lacks to do this so far. Please address in the resubmission.

Component 3:

6. The SAP is cited - are you referring to the 1997 SAP? When were the IWRM plans formulated (?) which also should be built on and priorities in these referred to. These are also much more recent.

7. Please make it somewhat clear who will execute/lead these investments and activities on the local and higher levels. Are there any water user association that could be involved to couple the monitoring with self-governance to assure sustainable use of groundwater which is a shared resource among users with one potentially impacting the other. Please also make that clear in the institutional set-up section.

8. Outputs 3.1.3 and 3.1.4 embeds some risk of encouraging increased groundwater use without at the same capping the use at a sustainable level. Please address formulation on how this will work together with measures on regulation of groundwater withdrawals.

Component 4:

9. The text of 4.1.1. addresses the need for specific needs to include governance frameworks on groundwater and support to advance these but the in terms of the component text and lack of detail with regards to this in the Results Framework it does not seem clear enough what is intended to be supported in terms of process and/or outcomes. Please enhance both the text and the results framework.

10 Output 4.1.2 : Who are the targeted users of the data visualization tool and groundwater dashboard in the countries besides use by SPC?

(11/2/2022)

1. - 3. : Overall comments under 1.- 3. addressed.

4. - 5. Comments re Component 1 addressed.

5. Comments re. Component 2 addressed.

6. - 9. Comments re. Component 3 addressed.

10.- 11. Comments re. Component 4 addressed.

Agency Response

1. Added new Output 2.1.1 'Ongoing national efforts in reviewing existing legislations and developing new groundwater policies are supported?' under Component 2 and merged old Outputs 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 into one Output 2.1.2.
2. A narrative was added right after the TOC diagram explaining the logic of the interventions forming a path to the desired project goal. We also expanded on the pressures and barriers by including the unknown effects of climate variability on groundwater including potential spatial and temporal changes in groundwater demand due to climate-related population migration.
3. The Gender Action Plan was mainstreamed throughout the entire prodoc (Project Outcome/Output descriptions, institutional arrangement description, Knowledge Management, M&E, Results Framework).
4. As mentioned under the description for 1.1.3, potential investors include livestock farming, aquaculture, high value crop irrigation, high value mineral water bottling, as well as State owned investments for to establish groundwater development infrastructure, for commercial or public water supply, with potentially socio-economic benefits (employment, income generation through tax, water security, introduction of farming practices, etc.).
5. Recharge areas for source water protection will be determined for the identified priority aquifers as part of Components 2 and 3 and this was captured in the description of Output 3.1.2.
6. Addressed as discussed earlier, through the introduction of Output 2.1.1
7. Reference is made to the 1997 SAP which was then implemented under GEF-2 between 2000 and 2005. We added references (under Outcome 3.1) to the priorities identified in the IWRM final reports for Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and how this project will also build on these priorities.
8. We added a section under the Institutional Arrangements and Coordination section (country engagement). We also updated the organigram (Fig 22) to include these additional national stakeholders.
9. The small-scale interventions under Output 3.1.3 are aiming at demonstrating the potential of lesser known volcanic aquifers to address agricultural and domestic water needs at community level. These interventions will mostly be realized within the priority aquifer areas identified by the countries where aquifer management plans will be developed addressing all aspects including evidence-based withdrawal controls at sustainable limits. These management plans will be backed by suitable legislation and policies, partly developed also during this project. Investigations, feasibility studies, diagnostic analyses, and management plans under this project are expected to provide the solid foundation on which the necessary governance reforms could be based on. Output 3.1.4 will contribute to better coordination and management of drilling activities at the national level, allowing more regulation over the industry and ensuring higher drilling standards.
10. This was shifted to Component 2 as per GEF's recommendation to enhance Component 2. The RF was updated to reflect these changes.
11. Targeted users mainly include the national government departments with the mandate of monitoring groundwater resources, as well as national water committees and catchment management committees. Text was added under Section 8 Knowledge Management.

4. Is there further elaboration on how the project is aligned with focal area/impact program strategies?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022) Yes.

Agency Response - - -

5. Is the incremental reasoning, contribution from the baseline, and co-financing clearly elaborated?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022)

It is clearly outlined what the GEF funds and co-finance contribute to the alternative. Please also complete this for component 4/co-finance and also for PMC which would be real helpful and would explain what the PMC co-finance includes (e.g. part-time staff, offices ?)

(11/2/2022)

Thank you for adding an outline of the contribution from co-finance for component 4 and PMC to table 17. Comment addressed.

Agency Response

Please refer to the **Table 17** ? in both the CEO endorsement request in the GEF portal and Agency prodoc uploaded in the roadmap of the submission. Summary of incremental cost reasoning by project Component was updated, including a clear reference of the contribution of co-financing.

6. Is there further and better elaboration on the project's expected contribution to global environmental benefits or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022) Yes.

Please note the earlier comments on core indicators (which will not be repeated here to avoid redundancy).

(11/2/2022) Comment addressed (see earlier comments and agency response). Cleared.

Agency Response

Addressed in previous comment

7. Is there further and better elaboration to show that the project is innovative and sustainable including the potential for scaling up?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(6/14/2022)

The project innovations are across the analysis of volcanic aquifers increasing the water security to the islands as well as working in different dimensions across countries and sectors and lead by an established and capacitated regional entity. Sustainability of the efforts will hinge on governance reforms with regards to groundwater which in turns requires ownership, commitment by the countries and active involvement of counterpart agencies in each country . Please strengthen these aspects.

(11/2/2022) Comment addressed.

(12/12/2022) Please address the two remaining comments (indicative start/end dates and PPG itemization) and resubmit.

Agency Response

Section 1.7 on Innovation, sustainability and potential for scaling up and capacity development was strengthened as requested.

Project Map and Coordinates

Is there an accurate and confirmed geo-referenced information where the project intervention will take place?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(6/14/2022) Yes.

Agency Response - - -

Child Project

If this is a child project, is there an adequate reflection of how it contributes to the overall program impact?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

NA

Agency Response - - -

Stakeholders

Does the project include detailed report on stakeholders engaged during the design phase? Is there an adequate stakeholder engagement plan or equivalent documentation for the implementation phase, with information on Stakeholders who will be engaged, the means of engagement, and dissemination of information?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022) The stakeholder consultation plans is providing a detailed reflection of was involved and what perceived barriers and needs are. Given the constraints of the COVID epidemic some detail on the engagement of stakeholders in project execution are to be refined still at this point.

(11/2/2022) Addressed and cleared.

Agency Response

Stakeholders section was strengthened, providing more details on stakeholder engagement under COVID19 (Part II, Section 2. Stakeholders).

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Has the gender analysis been completed? Did the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities? If so, does the project/program include gender-responsive activities, gender-sensitive indicators and expected results?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022) Yes, the gender analysis has been carried out.

1. Please note earlier comment to please mainstream relevant gender considerations and actions within the project component and output descriptions.
2. Please be more consistent to clearly indicate gender targets (%) and also indicate where/for which activities gender disaggregated data will be collected (participation).

(11/2/2022) Comments have been addressed.

Agency Response

1. Done. Gender considerations and actions have been mainstreamed through all project activities.
2. We have indicated a participation of at least 40% women for relevant activities (trainings, workshops, meetings) with the intention to achieve 50%.

Private Sector Engagement

If there is a private sector engagement, is there an elaboration of its role as a financier and/or as a stakeholder?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022) Yes, there are different roles of the private sector in the project and a bit more clarity on what roles are referred when "Investors" mentioned would be helpful. Both private sector water users (including agriculture, bottling industry) are mentioned as well as drilling companies and enhancing their capacity and performance. The latter appear to also be seen as investors. The role of agriculture exporters/large producers - as applicable in each country - could be more clear; same for tourism.

(11/2/2022) Noted. Comment addressed adequately at this stage and the interest of private investors to be further explored during implementation. Addressed.

Agency Response

We added some further details on the potential private investments has been added in the relevant section in the submission. These include: finance the establishment of groundwater development infrastructure, for commercial or public water supply, with potentially socio-economic benefits. We don't expect large agriculture exporters nor tourism industry to be involved in this project.

Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Has the project elaborated on indicated risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved? Were there proposed measures that address these risks at the time of project implementation?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(6/14/2022)

Yes a risk matrix, ratings and mitigation measures are provided.

1. Please include a climate risk analysis (e.g. ...how will this impact the recharge and quality of available groundwater)
2. Risk of participation and national and local buy-in is rated low. For this to hold, please more clearly describe the role of country based formal and informal institutions in the execution of a number of the project activities as well as budget for and mention detail of participatory development of e.g. aquifer management plans.
3. Please comment on the risk of further supporting uncapped expansion of water uses (e.g. more bottling etc.) given the new water sources with no limitations to assure there is a balance between recharge and withdrawals.

(11/2/2022) The Climate Risk analysis as separate and distinct annex 13 is noted. The comments have been addressed.

Agency Response

1. Climate risk assessment was already included as Annex I3 (page 187 of the Agency prodoc). This is uploaded in the portal as part of both the GEF Agency ProDoc and in the Roadmap of the submission as a stand alone document. We uploaded the document again for easy reference.
2. A section was added under Chapter 6 (Institutional arrangement) describing country engagement in more detail. Also, under Chapter 2 (Stakeholders) further describing the role of the National Project Coordinators and other national consultants engaged on a needs basis.
3. A new risk on uncapped groundwater use, with mitigation measures, has been included in the Risk Matrix

Coordination

Is the institutional arrangement for project implementation fully described? Is there an elaboration on possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(6/14/2022)

A. Institutional set-up:

1. Please clearly indicate the respective counterpart/national executing agency including in the "Part I: project information" fields of the ER. Active engagements of the national and also local institutions is essential for sustainability and to support the needed policy and regulatory reforms.

2. Further to above: will the countries provide in-kind contributions in form of some staff time of national staff? This will be important to signal ownership.

3. The organogram indicates the funds flow from the regional PMU to the countries. Will there be some budget transfer to counterpart agencies to e.g. directly contract local consultants or any other procurement?

4. The CTA will work full time on the project but is s/he fully financed from the GEF grant or is it 60 %? Also, 17 % of her/his time on coordination and project management for a regional project appears much lower than experience has shown to be needed. This may be because there is another part paid from co-finance (?)

5. Salaries : these seem high. Please provide comparisons from at least three other regional GEF projects in the Pacific and - if possible - comparators within established SPC staff salaries. We are aware that costs of living and salaries are high in the region.

6. In the budget it looks like the national coordinators have not project management responsibility as none of their time is charged to PMC.

B. Coordination:

1. A detailed list of projects and collaboration potential is provided (incl. funded by GCF; see earlier comment/question on potential of co-finance). Can you please also look at relevant adaptation projects (e.g. Adaptation Fund, LDCF/SCCF, PPCR, ..) for potential synergies.

2. In terms of pollution prevention and groundwater protection there also could be synergies with the GEF ISLANDS programs which has been officially launched last week.

(11/2/2022) thanks for addressing all comments, incl. providing comparisons in salary across the region. Comments addressed. Cleared.

Agency Response

1. Table in Part I was updated, adding the national counterparts in each of the project countries

2. Yes, the national lead agency for Fiji has indicated that they are expecting to provide over the 5 year period a total of \$1,602,314 in the form of staff salaries (incl. ICT and facilities costs) and this was included in the co-financing letter uploaded in the portal. While Vanuatu and Solomon Islands could not provide specific figures, it is expected that they will also

provide co-financing in the form of staff salaries, however the total amount is expected to be lower compared to Fiji. All three countries have also indicated in-kind contributions through national operational budgets of Government Departments contributing to the project objectives (e.g. drilling activities, hydrogeological assessments, water sector development), as detailed in the co-financing letters.

3. Local consultants are expected to be engaged on a needs basis to support the national project coordinators implementing some of the more technical activities at the national level. These consultants may be contracted directly by SPC following SPC's accredited procurement and project management policies and capacity or alternatively will be contracted by the country and managed along with other in-country procurements, such as travel, equipment, workshops, catering, etc. through specific Grant Agreements between SPC and each country.

4. The CTA will allocate 68% of his/her time on this position. This portion will be financed by the GEF grant. The remaining time will be financed by SPC or other projects to support specific technical and corporate requirements and ensure coordination and synergy with the GEF investment. CTA's time on coordination and project management was increased from 17% to 25% of PMC.

5.

? GEF RidgeToReef

- o CTA: 13,064 USD/month
- o Tech specialist: 11,433 USD/month

? GEF Managing Coastal Aquifers in Selected Pacific SIDS

- o CTA: 15,449 USD/month
- o Tech specialist: 11,433 USD/month

? This project

- o CTA: 13,190 USD/month
- o Tech specialist: 12,258 USD/month

Note that the banding (hence salary) for the CTA under this project has been reduced

6. The national project coordinators will be contracted by the lead national agencies as consultants dedicated to project implementation and are therefore not charged under the PMC.

7. Identified potential synergies with two ongoing AF projects in SI and one in Fiji. Table 20 was updated.

8. Thanks for the heads-up, GEF ISLANDS was included in the table, certainly some links there with groundwater protection.

Consistency with National Priorities

Has the project described the alignment of the project with identified national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under the relevant conventions?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022) Yes.

Agency Response - - -

Knowledge Management

Is the proposed Knowledge Management Approach for the project adequately elaborated with a timeline and a set of deliverables?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022)

1. Please provide a somewhat clearer summary of the knowledge products and key target audiences for these. E.g. who are the target users of the data visualization tools and also the volcanic groundwater dashboard.

2. [IW:Learn](#) : please clearly include typical [IW:Learn](#) activities such as attending two IWCs and relevant regional/thematic trainings, **two** experience notes (please correct this in the Results FW), a project website and RSS feed to the [IW:Learn](#) website. 1 % of the GEF IW grant should be allocated to [IW:Learn](#) participation.

(11/2/2022)

Comments addressed.

Agency Response

1. Clarifications have been added in the Knowledge Management section. Targeted users mainly include the national government departments with the mandate of monitoring groundwater resources, as well as national water committees and catchment management committees.

2. Suggested changes have been made accordingly in the Results Framework. Participation in [IW:Learn](#) is clearly budgeted in the project budget.

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS)

Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately documented at this stage and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(6/14/2022)

1. Please submit the completed safeguards documentation/ Annex M.
2. The table on page 92 indicates possible impacts on tenure and use rights which would require compensation, yet the involuntary resettlement standard is not triggered. Please explain.

(11/2/2022)

Thank you for uploading the ESS and explanation why the involuntary resettlement safeguards have not been triggered.

Agency Response

1. The environmental and social screening was already provided in Annex II. This is uploaded in the portal as part of both the GEF Agency ProDoc and in the Roadmap of the submission as a stand alone document. We uploaded the document again for easy reference.
2. ESS 1 has the objective to focus on ways to ensure the transition to sustainable practices. The scope of application section states that the actions necessary to meet the requirements of this standard are managed through incorporating environmental risk management measures into project design and ensuring monitoring and their application throughout project implementation. The ESS 1 screening identified that transitioning to sustainable practices through the development of Aquifer Management Plans has the potential to change or limit access to land or land use. The project design was therefore adapted to avoid this impact through the implementation of the management measures described throughout the ProDoc and defined in Annex II. Namely, only sites with no land access impacts, with voluntary support from communities and with FPIC will be selected for Aquifer Management Plans. There is no intention to create this impact or to need any compensation, therefore ESS6 has not been triggered. The iterative E&S screening during site selection as required under Annex II is the tool for monitoring the site selection to ensure that this is effectively actioned through project implementation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Does the project include a budgeted M&E Plan that monitors and measures results with indicators and targets?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022)

1. Please combine or clearly correlate table 21 and 22 to make this a 'budgeted M&E plan'.
2. If any funds are to be managed by FAO (such MTR or TE), this would to be clearly indicated AND needs prior approval by GEFSEC for such an exception. As you are aware GEF policies overall do not allow for mixing implementing and executing roles, i.e. project funds being administered by GEF implementing agencies. Some of the M&E milestones may be exceptions on a case by case base.

(11/2/2022) Explanation noted. Addressed.

Agency Response

1. The two tabled have been merged into a budgeted M&E plan, Table 21
2. FAO does not execute any activities. FAO only retains for now the funds to hire an independent entity/ies to perform the audits, MTR and TE as per FAO requirements. The expert to run the assessment will be hired in due course, when the MTE and TE will be required. The same approach was used in the GEF ID 10520 recently endorsed by the CEO.

Benefits

Are the socioeconomic benefits at the national and local levels sufficiently described resulting from the project? Is there an elaboration on how these benefits translate in supporting the achievement of GEBs or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022) Yes, these are described.

1. Will you aim to quantify or estimate the benefits listed in bullet points (e.g. baseline - MTR - TE)?

(11/2/2022)

The explanation is noted. *During implementation please consider* to conduct some socio-economic indicators to get a better indication of improved livelihoods of the direct beneficiaries at the beginning and end of the projects (e.g. a simple form of a household survey of at least a subsample). Addressed at ER stage. Cleared.

Agency Response

1. Some of the socio-economic benefits listed will be quantified through the monitoring of progress towards the core indicators. For example, the number of direct project beneficiaries

will reflect the benefit of improved water and food security, improved livelihoods, and improved access to water and infrastructure for small scale farmers and livestock owners. The area of landscapes under improved management will reflect areas with a reduced pollution load into groundwater and areas with sustained freshwater ecosystems goods and services. Gender equality and social inclusion will be monitored through a number of gender-sensitive indicators presented in the Results Framework.

Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(6/14/2022) Not all are complete/submitted at this point.

(11/2/2022) Yes.

Agency Response

Kindly note that all Annexes were duly uploaded in the portal. Annexes are uploaded in the portal as part of the GEF Agency ProDoc. Important Annexes such as Gender Strategy, Stakeholder Engagement, ESS, etc., are also uploaded in the Roadmap of the submission as a stand-alone documents.

Project Results Framework

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(6/14/2022)

1. Please see earlier comment re. gender targets and indicators
2. Please note earlier comments on core indicators
3. Please fill in/ describe assumptions and do not simply refer to the ToC
4. In case of participatory processes, please consider to not only count "the # of" but also report and set a min. acceptable quality and diversity of participation
5. Governance: as mentioned before: this is an important process of reform to be carried forward/supported by the project (see PDO and component 2 outcome) and cannot simply sit as an assumption in the RF.
6. for 3.1.1.: please define what you understand to be a "monitoring system" that is installed. Please define the scope/extent of this system to enable monitoring success. Further: Here the number is "1" - should it be "3" i.e. one in each country ?

7. Capacity building for country agencies: besides training on groundwater science, assessments, drilling, will there be some training on groundwater sampling? This is much more complex for groundwater than surface water to obtain meaningful samples.

8. for 4.1.2 a communication strategy will be drafted and endorsed by the PSC. Will there be implementation of the strategy within this project?

(11/2/2022) The comments have been addressed and the RF updated (pg 112 of prodoc).

Agency Response

1. RF updated

2. RF updated

3. RF updated

4. RF updated

5. RF updated

6. Text was added to indicator description explaining that monitoring systems include monitoring boreholes, rain gauges, and stream gauges

7. Yes, groundwater sampling (through bores and springs) will be part of groundwater investigations and reconnaissance surveys. Training sessions will include all these aspects.

8. Yes, final target indicator added

GEF Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request (6/14/2022) See review sheet

Agency Response - - -

Council comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022) Please address comments by the U.S. and Germany.

(11/2/2022) Comments of Council members have been addressed in Annex B. Cleared.

Agency Response

US and Germany's comments have been addressed under Annex B.

STAP comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(6/14/2022)

1. STAP 2nd comment on integration of the LDN neutrality framework: is this actually included ? How.
2. Gender and stakeholder comments: se GEFSEC earlier comments to mainstream gender consideration into the project design. Youth was another group voicing being impacted by the effort to have enough water.

(11/2/2022) Thanks for clarification on LD as the PIF was reviewed and approved by a previous staff member. Comments addressed.

Agency Response

1. During PIF stage, apart from the IW funding, also LD funding was being considered for this project (for Vanuatu). Shortly before the PIF submission the LD allocation was removed as the funds committed by the country were not available. The projects outcomes, outputs and activities were then reviewed to be fully aligned with the IW focal area as this is the only source of funds for the project. All the references to the LD funds were removed from the PIF except from one paragraph which was overlooked and was then transferred into the prodoc (the paragraph after Table 1). The paragraph was removed from the prodoc and this explanation was added in Annex B.

2. Done

Convention Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response - - -

Other Agencies comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response - - -

CSOs comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response - - -
Status of PPG utilization

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request <already responded to>

Agency Response - - -
Project maps and coordinates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request <already responded to>

Agency Response - - -
Does the termsheet in Annex F provide finalized financial terms and conditions? Does the termsheet and financial structure address concerns raised at PIF stage and that were pending to be resolved ahead of CEO endorsement? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

NA

Agency Response

- - -

Do the Reflow Table Annex G and the Trustee Excel Sheet for reflows provide accurate reflow expectations of the project submitted? Assumptions for Reflows can be submitted to explain expected reflows. (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response - - -

Did the agency Annex H provided with information to assess the Agency Capacity to generate and manage reflows? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response - - -

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

Is CEO endorsement recommended? (applies only to projects and child projects)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(6/14/2022)

Please address the comments provided in the review sheet and resubmit.

(11/2/2022)

The vast majority of previous technical comments have been addressed in sufficient detail at this stage of the project. Please still address comment 1. on co-finance and resubmit.

(11/11/2022) Please address the comments of (11/11/2022) and resubmit.

(12/12/2022) Please address the remaining comments (indicative start/end dates, PPG itemization, staff TORs/staffing and missing column in budget) and resubmit.

(1/24/2023) The remaining comments have been addressed and the project is recommended for endorsement.

Review Dates

	Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	6/14/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)	11/2/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)	11/11/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)	12/12/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)		

CEO Recommendation

Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations

Background. This is a trilateral GEF IW project among the volcanic Pacific island countries (PICs) of Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu addressing shared challenges and opportunities. Volcanic PICs are generally characterized by heavy dependence on traditional agriculture and suffer from environmental degradation with often devastating effects, determining structural constraints for economic growth, human development and environmental sustainability. Groundwater is particularly abundant in volcanic PICs. Its exploitation, though, is concentrated along more densely populated coastal areas, targeting vulnerable coastal aquifers. These are challenged, quantitatively and qualitatively, from contamination - sewage (poor sanitation), urban runoff, agrochemicals and solid waste ? and salinization, due to both overexploitation and seawater intrusion.

The Project. The overall project objective is ?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.? Specific outcomes include: Outcome 1.1. The knowledge of the exploitable groundwater resources improved in the three project island states; Outcome 2.1. Sound groundwater governance frameworks and policies are adopted. Outcome 3.1. Groundwater is integrated into IWRM policies and practices. Outcome 4.1. Enhanced national capacities in groundwater assessment, monitoring and management. FAO will be the Implementing Agency and Pacific Community (SPC) has been selected as the Executing Agency. Working in all three countries with one regional lead agency created economies of scale with SPC being an established technical partner to governments in the region.

Shared benefits created. This 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. The diagnostic analysis of selected primary aquifers and the drafting of aquifer management plans will support land use planning and sustainable management of groundwater resources in areas with multiple competing users from different sectors. The proposed on the ground investment will demonstrate new approaches and de-risk innovations to groundwater management, integrated catchment management, and sustainable land management with the goal of enhancing water and food security and empowering local catchment committees.

COVID 19. Water security in the islands is essential for human and ecosystems health. The project is therefore an important step to expand and sustainably manage freshwater from volcanic aquifers which will enhance resilience to a number of shocks, incl. those requiring water for hygiene needs during a pandemic. Currently, COVID 19 containment measures in Fiji are gradually being lifted and travel/work around the country is expected to be fully normalized by project initiation. However, a new COVID-19 wave could result in new containment measures being re-instated. If border restrictions prevent quarantine-free technical expertise to travel to the countries, the situation will be managed through remote support whenever possible (e.g. technical assistance required for the drafting/review of groundwater policies/legislations) and through the contracting of Chief Technical Adviser additional technical support. If the expertise cannot be found in-country, options including internationally recruited expertise will be considered, with quarantine costs borne by the project. Provisions have been made in the project budget to allow for these increased costs, if required. In addition, SPC has been managing the situation by modifying project workplans to accommodate, where possible, all project activities that can be delivered remotely or without the need for physical presence (e.g. desktop work, modelling, trainings)

early during implementation phase with the expectation that restrictions will gradually ease off.