

Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority



Republic of the Marshall Islands
Pacific Islands Regional Oceanscape
Program (RMI PROP)

**SIX MONTHLY
PROGRESS REPORT**

JULY – DECEMBER 2020

Executive Summary

MIMRA progressed a lot of activities during this period. Despite substantial challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, including extensive domestic and international travel restrictions, MIMRA and the PMU had proactively identified alternate and efficient means of delivering key project activities (e.g. virtual meetings and radio outreach). There was a significant boost in the implementation of the remaining programmed activities for the past semester, foreshadowing with positivity that the project is on track to achieve the Project Development Objective and intermediate results indicator targets and deliver on the expected outcomes by closure. The World Bank Project Implementation Support Team had assessed in their recent mission the likelihood of the project achieving its Project Development Objective by the new closing date of September 30th 2021, by reviewing implementation progress, results framework and the likelihood of external factors jeopardizing achievement of PDO.

(1). Overall Implementation Progress and Key Period Highlights

With the accelerated implementation of activities compared to the last reporting period, the disbursement substantially increased by approximately 70% in December 2020 and from US\$0.85M GEF disbursed in January to US\$1.26M in December 2020. The GEF Grant was closed on September 30th, 2020 as originally planned and complied with legal covenants. Several key activities and procurement packages have been advanced including all GEF -financed activities have been completed, except the purchase of a coastal fisheries fishing vessel. The latter activity was dropped based on a detailed assessment of the technical specification and purchase price of the type of the vessel required by the coastal fisheries unit. This assessment confirmed that the GEF financing earmarked for the required vessel was insufficient. As such, MIMRA returned the unused funds budgeted for this vessel to the Bank.

(2). Key Issues and Actions Taken

The Project's second restructuring exercise was approved by the World Bank on September 7, 2020. The restructuring included a 12-month, no cost extension of the IDA grant closing date to September 30, 2021. This extension is expected to ensure that the project has sufficient time to deliver all remaining programmed activities as well as successfully achieve the PDO and deliver forecasted outcomes.

(3.) Progress with Component Implementation

Project implementation has accelerated significantly, with important progress made in key areas such as below;

3.1 Component 1: (Oceanic Fisheries)

With travel restrictions on board, all planned workshops were postponed. However, the MIMRA Legal Counsel has been able to continue in-house training on fisheries legislation and enforcement mechanisms to MIMRA staff and officials of the Ministry of Justice, Immigration and Labor. For increased surveillance and enforcement of fisheries management, individual consultancy Terms of Reference for Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) strategy and a Legal Advisor were both approved by the World Bank. However, unfortunately the MCS strategy advisor was no longer deemed a priority and MIMRA requested to have it dropped and the Bank concurred. MIMRA was able to successfully engage in all recent Regional Organizations (PNA, WCPFC, SPC, FFA) meetings, training and negotiations conducted virtually. As part of MIMRA's strategic and functional review with a focus on improvements to human resource management, a Terms of Reference for a consultancy for HR Advisor to carry out this review have been approved by the World Bank for recruitment. Additionally, there were recruitment of three consultancies underway for Competent Authority for the following; (i) review the Fish Processing and Export Regulation and associated protocols and industry standards prepared by MIMRA; (ii) scope laboratory options; and (iii) provide seafood safety training (conducted remotely if required). The first lot in the Supply of uniform package was the procurement of Observers uniform and the goods were received in June 2020 and now the PMU is moving to procure the second lot which are MIMRA Staff uniforms. The PMU and Oceanic Chief Fisheries Officer are working on finalizing the technical specifications for the observers' port monitoring equipment targeting to be advertised by March 30th, 2021.

3.2 Component 2: (Coastal Fisheries)

There are confirmed significant progress with the national management measures for targeted coastal fisheries. The Reimaanlok documentary for Bikar and Bokak has been completed and uploaded in the MIMRA website along with the baseline data methodology that was utilized on the survey missions. Data analysis from the Reimaanlok surveys conducted is proving challenging due to a lack of capacity to undertake. The Resource Management Plan for Bikar and Bokak is being drafted along with the Ecological Assessment Report that will undergo peer review. Upon the completion of these documents, MIMRA is planning to develop legal mechanisms to identify Bikar and Bokak as a special Protected Management Area (National Monument). PROP will be funding a short-term consultant to provide technical assistance with Reimaanlok and other PAN works to complete the requirements within the results framework. Key Highlights of progress of national management measures within the Coastal Fisheries are as follows;

- Eleven (11) coastal communities actively managing their targeted fisheries area, measured through implementation of an agreed coastal fisheries area management plan
- Twenty-one (21) marine surveys and twelve (12) socio-economic surveys to inform preparation of the management plans have also been completed
- Seven (7) management plans are completed and formally endorsed by local government; four (4) are in final review and further ten (10) are in draft awaiting endorsement

Formal endorsement of management plans by local government to allow full implementation at the Reimaanlok sites continues to be a key challenge as prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this was usually facilitated by MIMRA staff visiting each atoll in person. The staff are working around this through a combination of virtual support and taking advantage of limited shipping schedules to visit in person.

The construction of Woja hatchery raceway tanks and pipe installation have been completed. The existing Aquaculture program is looking into utilizing their cost-saving under this activity to purchase equipment for the Majuro facility (e.g. aerator tanks, filter bags).

The Community Marine Monitoring Toolkit is planning to start conducting workshops remotely given the travel ban still in place for RMI. This activity is planned to be implemented in April – May 2021.

Fish Aggregate Device (FAD) has been procured and deployed to three atolls and associated training to communities has been delivered too. Deployment to a fourth atoll is delayed due to weather conditions and targeted to be delivered by March 2021.

3.3. Component 4: (Project Management)

The Project Management Unit (PMU) is the main driver of the Project for PROP and PMU in-housed staff are Deputy Project Coordinator and Finance Officer. There are four planned new consultancies for the component to be recruited; (i) Project Coordinator (ii) Project Assistant (iii) GEF Completion Note and (iv) Implementation Completion Report. The PMU will hire a consultant to update the POM to reflect the changes from the first project restructuring exercise. The Financial Management of PROP is working well to capture all financial transactions.

The PMU activities are concentrating on the completion of all the remaining packages before closure on Sept 30th 2021.

3.3.2 Financial Monitoring

The report below provides information on the progress of the project in terms of financial and procurement activities. This FMR for the ending period December 2020.

PMU continues to provide accurate and timely financial information and ensure that project funds are being used for the purposes intended. The table below captures all financial transactions during the period from July 2019 to December 2020. 70% has been disbursed from the IDA fund and 69% of the total GEF grant. All planned GEF financed activities have completed before closing of the fund (September 30, 2020), except the procurement of the coastal fisheries research vessel and few items not delivered before the closing date. IDA grant has been given one year extended (September 30, 2021) due to ongoing COVID19. By the grant closing date the project must fully utilize the remaining project funds. MIMRA FY2019 Audit report completed and submitted to the Bank.

3.3.3 As reflected in the Table below is the progress of disbursement as of December 2020.

EXPENDITURE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD: July – December, 2020



Pacific Islands Regional Oceanscape Program Project

MIMRA PROP Project: P151760

GEF GRANT D017-MH and IDA GRANT TF018606

SUMMARY BY COMPONENT

For the Period Ending Dec. 31, 2020

UNAUDITED

Expenditure	Budget	Budget	Budget	Outstanding	Jul-Dec	Year to Date	Cumulative	Variance	Variance
	(USD) 2019	(USD) 2020	(USD) Total	Commitments	Expenditure	Expenditure	Expenditure	Cumulative	Cumulative
	(USD)	(USD)	(USD)	(USD)	(USD)	(USD)	(USD)	(USD)	(USD)
Component 1 Sustainable Management of Oceanic Fisheries									
1 A Sustainable management of shared tuna fisheries	1,150,000.00	575,000.00	1,725,000.00	0.00	20,527.30	109,145.97	596,645.60	1,128,354.40	1,128,354.40
1 B Strengthen the institutional capacity of MIMRA	205,000.00	180,000.00	1,155,000.00	0.00	0.00	79,143.82	851,408.68	303,591.32	303,591.32
Subtotal - Component 1	1,355,000.00	755,000.00	2,880,000.00	0.00	20,527.30	188,289.79	1,448,054.28	1,431,945.72	1,431,945.72
Component 2 Sustainable Management of Coastal Fisheries									
2 A Development of monitoring and control systems	190,000.00	1,870,000.00	2,630,000.00	0.00	338,255.75	957,589.47	1,468,719.72	1,161,280.28	1,161,280.28
2 B Strengthening capacity of MIMRA for sustainable management of fisheries.	305,000.00	305,000.00	1,800,000.00	0.00	261,509.13	571,803.04	1,183,707.52	616,292.48	616,292.48
Subtotal - Component 2	495,000.00	2,175,000.00	4,430,000.00	0.00	599,764.88	1,529,392.51	2,652,427.24	1,777,572.76	1,777,572.76
Component 4 Coordination, Monitoring & Evaluation									
3 A Project Management Costs	100,000.00	100,000.00	600,000.00		132,203.07	255,087.36	794,135.87	-194,135.87	-194,135.87
Operations	50,000.00	50,000.00	300,000.00		10,206.20	40,202.34	167,500.03	132,499.97	-61,635.90
Subtotal - Component 4	150,000.00	150,000.00	900,000.00	0.00	142,409.27	295,289.70	961,635.90	-61,635.90	-255,771.77
Grand Totals	2,000,000.00	3,080,000.00	8,210,000.00	0.00	762,701.45	2,012,972.00	5,062,117.42	3,147,882.58	2,953,746.71

*Total IDA SDR 4.6 is equivalent to USD 6.75m at the time of restructuring. This will fluctuate as the agreement in SDR

*Total GEF USD 1.83m (Component 2.2)