



1. Project Data

Project ID P151760	Project Name PROP for Marshall Islands	
Country Marshall Islands	Practice Area(Lead) Environment, Natural Resources & the Blue Economy	
L/C/TF Number(s) IDA-D0170	Closing Date (Original) 30-Sep-2020	Total Project Cost (USD) 6,133,700.90
Bank Approval Date 22-Dec-2014	Closing Date (Actual) 30-Sep-2021	
	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	6,750,000.00	0.00
Revised Commitment	6,449,190.22	0.00
Actual	6,133,700.90	0.00

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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

As mentioned in the Financing Agreement (June 26, 2015, page 5) and GEF grant agreement for project P152934 (March 19, 2015, page 6), the project development objective (PDO) was to **strengthen the shared management of selected Pacific Island oceanic and coastal fisheries, and the critical habitats upon which they depend**. The PDO was stated the same way in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD). The Project Development Objective is for a regional project and this ICRR only reviews results in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) project - P151760. The third element of the PDO “strengthened shared



management of critical habitats” was designed to be addressed by the project with the Forum Fisheries Agency project alone.

Please refer to the Implementation Completion Report Reviews (ICRRs) for the Pacific Island Regional Oceanscape Program (PROP) (P131655), PROP for Solomon Islands (151777), PROP for Federated States of Micronesia (P151754) for a complete overview of the regional project.

There are two objectives contained within this PDO:

- i) strengthen the shared management of selected Pacific Island **oceanic fisheries**; and
- ii) strengthen the shared management of selected Pacific Island **coastal** fisheries.

Both the oceanic and coastal fisheries are linked to regional management. The management of oceanic fisheries is highlighted in the PAD to require coordination between different countries in the region to maintain fish stocks and avoid free-riding.

Component 1: Sustainable Management of Oceanic Fisheries

Component 2: Sustainable Management of Coastal Fisheries

Component 4: Regional Coordination, Implementation Support, Training and Monitoring and Evaluation

The following received no allocation to the Marshall Islands - Component 3: Sustainable Financing of the Conservation of Critical Fishery Habitats

b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?

Yes

Did the Board approve the revised objectives/key associated outcome targets?

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

Yes

d. Components

The project was designed with four components. The Marshall Islands received funding for three out of the four components. The project was restructured twice, first in 2018, which substantially changed the scope of the project and second, in 2020, to extend the closing date.

The components for the Marshall Island's project were as follows.



Component 1: Sustainable Management of Oceanic Fisheries (Total cost at appraisal US\$5.45 IDA, revised to US\$3.31m IDA, actual US\$2.42m IDA)

At appraisal, the objective of this component was to strengthen RMI's implementation of the vessel day scheme (VDS) for the purse seine fishery and extend compatible management systems to long-line and other fisheries. Specifically, this was to be implemented through the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA), developing its capacity to sustainably manage shared tuna fisheries. Strengthened capacity was to be achieved through (i) disbursements to MIMRA for operating costs linked to indicators for strengthened tuna fisheries management, such as fuel and additional costs to support increased fisheries surveillance patrols, and (ii) the procurement of Goods and services needed for the achievement of the disbursement-linked indicators, such as technical assistance to support a comprehensive review and reform of MIMRA's roles, functions, human and financial resources and organizational structure, and enhancement of internet access.

In the restructuring of 2018, the implementation support from the Forum Fisheries Agency was removed, with the focus of the project becoming more specifically tied to strengthening MIMRA's capacity and a more detailed scope of technical support and good procurement with a reduced budget for Component 1. For example, the PAD committed to the "acquisition of hardware and software for real-time monitoring of the fishing activity by observers," whereas the restructuring committed to the "Provision of a "whole of information technology (IT) systems" package, including expansion of the MIMRA fisheries information management system (IMS) and improvement of IT facilities (hardware, software, bandwidth) that support it; integration of new data sources (e.g., radar satellite data) into vessel monitoring systems (VMS); and, equipment for enhanced maritime communication for the expanded MCS Operation Center." (Report No. RES31646, pages 7-8).

Component 2: Sustainable Management of Coastal Fisheries (Total cost at appraisal US\$0.95 IDA and US\$1.83m GEF, revised to US\$ 3.01 IDA and US\$1.83m GEF, actual cost US\$0.1 IDA and US\$0.89m GEF)

At appraisal, the objective of this component is to support RMI to sustainably manage defined coastal fisheries, focusing on those with the most significant potential for increased benefits, i.e., coastal fisheries such as bêche-de-mer (BDM) that (i) can generate export earnings for the country, and (ii) support livelihoods, food security, and dietary health. Planned activities include supporting the Government in developing national management measures for targeted coastal fisheries and stakeholder management of targeted coastal fisheries.

In the restructuring of 2018, the scope of this component was expanded and further specified to include (i) Formulation of additional coastal fishery management plans and regulations; (ii) Operating costs to implement national regulations on sea cucumbers, marine ornamentals, and other targeted coastal fisheries; (iii) Expansion of the existing Aquaculture Program; (iv) Industry and community awareness activities; (v) Introduction of a series of new training activities; (vi) Development of a two-year coastal fisheries pollution management program; (vii) TA and training to enhance local coastal fishery management in the outer islands and Majuro; and (viii) procurement of a medium-size vessel (12 – 13 m) to support coastal resource assessments and management.



Component 4: Regional Coordination, Implementation Support, Training, and Monitoring and Evaluation (Total cost at appraisal US\$0.35m IDA, revised to US\$0.43m IDA, actual cost US\$1.19m IDA)

The objective of this component was to provide regional coordination, implementation support, and program management to ensure a coherent approach to program implementation and wide dissemination of results and lessons learned.

The 2018 restructuring strengthened the PIU staffing complement to compensate for the implementation support that was to have been provisioned by the regional FFA PROP Project but was removed through the restructuring.

Across all components, the disbursement-linked indicator modality was dropped through the 2018 restructuring, with claims only valid until the end of the calendar year 2018.

e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates
Financing

At approval, project financing was US\$8.58 million from IDA with a \$6.75 million grant loan, and US\$1.83 million from GEF this level of financing was maintained through to closure.

Project Cost

The project was restructured on June 28, 2018 and June 9, 2020 (ICR paragraph 19.). The 2018 restructuring moved money from Component 1 to 2 and further specified outputs - see above - further the staff component of the project implementation unit at the country level was strengthened with a with recruitment of a Deputy Project Coordinator. The 2020 restructuring of the project changed the project completion date. Total disbursement for the project is US\$7.35 million made up of USD\$6.11 million against IDA grant amount and US\$1.24 million against a GEF grant. Given the reduced ambition of the project this review concurs with the ICR and a split rating will be undertaken.

Borrower Contribution

While no government contribution is discussed, there was some recognition of joint funding from Australia and operational support from Australia, USA, New Zealand and France in the PAD (page 50). These contributions are not cited in the ICRR.

Dates

The project was approved on December 22, 2014 and became effective on September 4, 2015. The second restructuring (June 11, 2020) changed the closing date by 12 months from September 30 2020 to September 30 2021 to account for COVID-19 restrictions, but did not revise any of the components.

3. Relevance of Objectives



Rationale

The project's objectives with the RMI are highly relevant to the appropriate regional strategies, which seek to **strengthen the shared management of selected Pacific Island oceanic and coastal fisheries and the critical habitats upon which they depend.**

At the regional and global level, the project reflects international commitments. The project's objectives are aligned with the GEF, which promotes sustainable fishing practices and wider ecosystem stewardship aligned to all elements of the national investments that tie to regional commitments and investments. At the regional level, the project objective also remains highly relevant and aligned with the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Oceans.

The project's implementation aligned and was integrated with the Reimaanlok Framework, RMI's national conservation area planning framework.

The objectives remain consistent with the most recent Regional Partnership Framework: For Kiribati, Republic of Nauru, Republic of The Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, Independent State of Samoa, Kingdom of Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu, FY17–FY21 (Report No. 100997-EAP) particularly with Focus Area 1 'Fully exploiting the available economic opportunities,' through the project's contribution to Objective 1.1 'Improved management of oceanic and coastal fisheries'. Through the RPF, the World Bank also committed to platform-based approaches offering a menu of investment and TA options, which support a common objective and are tailored to country contexts and the Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for the Solomon Islands 2018–2023 (Report No. 122600-SB) (ICR Page 17 paragraph 34).

Two areas relevant to country conditions missing in the project's objectives are the incorporation of gender and the country's FCS status. The project has not mainstreamed gender in its objectives as committed to in the Regional Partnership Framework. Further, all four countries where the project was implemented (the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu) have been identified as fragile and conflict-affected small states with high institutional and social fragility. This issue is not reflected in any part of the project development objective or corresponding elaborations. This means that the objective fails to reflect a project working in a set of diverse and difficult operating environments, that can experience frequent and fast changes on the ground, reversals, security and active conflict risks.

Rating

Substantial

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1



Objective

Strengthened shared management of oceanic fisheries

Rationale

The PAD does not include a theory of change and the ICR reconstructs the theory of change for the regional RMI project, consistent with its objectives, approach and the activities of the project both before and after restructuring (ICR, Figure 1, paragraphs 8 & 9; Figure 2, paragraph 30). The PAD and ICR define a rationale for the project based on a regional context of increasing cooperation and coordination in fisheries and the need to strengthen national and regional elements to optimize the protection of fisheries and their natural habitats, while enhancing the economic benefits. In strengthening the national and regional benefits the PAD identifies the need to address a range of issues, for example, weaknesses in the institutions responsible for managing the use of fisheries, the fragile process of collective action in the oceanic purse seine fishery and initial progress in the long-line fisheries, threats to coastal fisheries and the degradation of natural coastal habitats. The key assumptions of the commitment, coordination and cooperation between different implementing agencies (donors, regional agency and national agencies) is not unpacked in the PAD weakening the link and the ability to demonstrate that outputs can lead to outcomes relevant at the regional level.

Theory of Change (ToC) objective 1: Linked to Objective 1, the ToC defined in the ICR proposes that the project contribute a long-term outcome to enhance livelihoods, habitats and fish stocks in the RMI based on strengthening the capacity of MIMRA to sustainably manage the shared tuna fisheries through (i) improving monitoring compliance and surveillance practice; (i) carrying out effective and sustainable fishing practices and value addition; (ii) having improved access to regional markets; and (iv) receive a more equitable distribution of returns from sustainable tuna and habitat conservation. To contribute to these outcomes under this objective would require the restoration and development of coastal fisheries.

The various elements of the ToC are reasonable, yet their translation of outputs into outcomes at the regional level is weakened as the outputs in the PAD are loosely specified and not clearly connected with strengthened management of purse seine and long-line tuna fisheries. Further the main assumption that could have been further unpacked is how the regional technical assistance by the forum fisheries agency will be applied by the four countries and the Parties to the Nauru Agreement Organization), which is not described by the PAD.

Outputs pre 2018 restructuring (ICR provides limited details)

Prior to the 2018 restructuring according to aide memoir's progress towards the project objective had limited momentum. The project had limited disbursement and encountered issues with the DLI modality, limited implementation of fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance activities and an overlap of development partner mandates. There was also limited progress on procurement and other institutional strengthening activities. These issues look to be compounded by limited program support from the Forum Fisheries Agency. These challenges in undertaking fisheries activities are not reflected in project indicators. The indicators show that by the end of the project targets were being met against the vessel a day scheme and the sale of fishing days (interim results are not reported for this project).

Following the restructuring, the project initially slowly and then rapidly improved implementation. Results are reported in strengthened capacity of the observer program and capacity at MIMRA (see below)



Rating

Modest

OBJECTIVE 1 REVISION 1

Revised Objective

Strengthened shared management of oceanic fisheries

Revised Rationale

Outputs post-2018 restructuring

Following the restructuring, the project initially slowly and then rapidly improved implementation.

i) Strengthened tuna fisheries management - The ICR also reports that the capacity of the RMI Observer Program was deepened and temporarily expanded with PROP support, with a total of 92 observers trained. However, the overall observer program continued to experience a high turnover of staff, which means that the intent to expand capacity was not reached. Also, under this output area, Foundational work was completed on establishing a competent authority with a legal framework established with staff recruited and trained to administer food safety inspections and sample testing.

ii) Strengthen the capacity of MIMRA - A strategic review of MIMRA was completed in 2019, and subsequently, MIMRA revised and updated key corporate guidance documents, including the MIMRA Strategic Plan 2019–2023/18 and Tuna Fisheries Management Plan 2020–2025. Though these were complete, MIMRA’s strategic planning and management documents laid out the intended activities, but they fell short of clearly defining the intended results. Systematic monitoring and the evidence-based assessment of the performance of MIMRA, therefore, became challenging (ICR page 20, paragraph 47). A new IT system was procured and implemented to enhance fisheries monitoring capability. Finally, a review of MIMRA’s human resources management function was undertaken.

The progress after the restructuring is rated as modest. These outputs align well with the intent of the 2018 restructuring. These outputs are not assessed by project indicators that focus on the overall monitoring of oceanic fisheries. Therefore, the project reporting does not reflect improved shared management of oceanic fisheries. The measurement of the application of the outputs would have better shown a contribution to project objectives. For example, the number of inspections and patrols implemented to target identified high-risk ports, boats, and fish receiver premises. It would have been helpful for the ICR to more clearly define the quality of outputs (e.g., application of training rather than number of people trained) post-restructuring and their significance.

Revised Rating

Modest

OBJECTIVE 2

Objective

Strengthen the shared management of selected Pacific Island coastal fisheries.



Rationale

Theory of Change (ToC) Objective 2: The ToC defined in the ICR (see above) proposes that the project contribute a long-term outcome to enhance livelihoods, habitats, and fish stocks in the Marshall Islands through (i) improving monitoring compliance and surveillance practice; (i) carrying out effective and sustainable fishing practices and value addition; (ii) having improved access to regional markets; and (iv) receive a more equitable distribution of returns from sustainable tuna and habitat conservation. To contribute to these outcomes under this objective would require the restoration and development of coastal fisheries. A key assumption of the commitment, coordination, and cooperation between different implementing agencies (donors and national agencies) is not unpacked in the PAD, weakening the link and the ability to demonstrate that outputs can lead to outcomes relevant at the regional level.

Outputs pre-2018 restructuring (ICR paragraphs 50-53)

By the time of the restructuring, various outputs had been delivered for objective 2, though there is a limited connection to the overall objective of these activities. The restructuring paper acknowledged the positive momentum under this objective with the government as a rationale for the expanded activities. The results against the pre-restructuring targets were as follows:

* 21 of the additional coastal fisheries were legally managed by stakeholders in each country, with support from the Government against a target of 24

*24 of coastal fish resources assessed as the basis for improved management against a target of 24

* 0 national coastal fisheries management plans implemented for coastal export fisheries against a target of 2

Outside of these targets, no boat had been purchased during the restructuring.

Part of the reason for the successful momentum of the project was the integration of the PROP with the government's existing 2008 Reimaanlok (*Marshallese term that means 'look towards the future' - World Bank Feature Story November 2021*) process for community-based resource management.

By the project's close, a range of outputs and targets had been met in the management of coastal fisheries (these are detailed below). For example, targets were met, and there was evidence of enhanced capacity at MIMRA. However, these achievements, though important, do not demonstrably contribute to the shared management of selected Pacific Island coastal fisheries.

Rating
Modest



OBJECTIVE 2 REVISION 1

Revised Objective

Strengthen the shared management of selected Pacific Island coastal fisheries.

Revised Rationale

Outputs post 2018 restructuring (ICR paragraphs 50-53)

At project closing the following outputs had been achieved against revised indicators:

21 Coastal communities in RMI that are managing targeted fisheries areas against a revised target of 20.

24 Coastal fish resources assessed as the basis for improved management against a revised target of 20

21 Targeted coastal fisheries areas management plans developed in RMI against a revised target of 20

Additional outputs reported in the ICR and the Mid-term review include:

i) National management measures for targeted coastal fisheries - As reported in the ICR between 2016 and 2020, resource/habitat surveys were conducted at 24 atoll sites involving underwater surveys complemented by drone-based aerial assessment that collected biophysical and environmental data, evidence for coral bleaching, and identified potential species and sites for aquaculture, and consultations with communities. PROP support, 21 community fisheries management plans were developed using the Reimaanlok process. Also with project support, the Protected Areas Network (PAN) was formalized and brought under MIMRA's mandate. Thus, 21 Reimaanlok sites were ready to become a part of the PAN and can continue to receive and disburse funding to support protected areas established by communities in the RMI (ICR page 25, paragraphs 60-62). BY 2019 MIMRA, in collaboration with the University of the South Pacific, had developed a Coastal MCS certificate program and 15 students were enrolled in the program.

ii) Strengthening of the capacity of MIMRA for sustainable management of fisheries - Fish Aggregating Devices were deployed and thereby can provide alternative fishing areas for food security to relieve fishing pressure on the reefs and a Marine Pollution Study was completed in 2021 and is being disseminated. The Mid-term review confirmed that the contract for the selected Vessel Specification Advisor had been drafted and would be signed prior to September 30, 2019, although this is not reported on in the ICR (Mid-term Review PROP RMI paragraph 24).

The outputs achieved under this objective are important, though at close the evidence did not provide sufficient information on how shared management had been enhanced.

Revised Rating

Modest

OVERALL EFFICACY



Rationale

The overall efficacy of this project is rated as Modest, in alignment with the ICR (page 26 paragraphs 65-66). Though the restructuring process did help support the enhanced delivery of outputs for objective 2 and there was expanded implementation under objective 1, there remains a gap between the outputs delivered and the intent of the PDO to strengthen the shared management of selected Pacific Island oceanic and coastal fisheries, and the critical habitats upon which they depend. Specifically, we do not have evidence on the extent of implementation of management plans and the project appears to have helped maintain, rather than enhance the capacity of MIMRA.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Modest

Primary Reason

Low achievement

5. Efficiency

Economic Analyses: The project is estimated over its lifetime to have yielded net benefits of US\$1.35 million and an internal rate of return estimated to be 15 percent, which falls short of 55 percent which was cited at design. The economic analysis of the program was based on a cost benefit analysis that took a conservative approach by solely focusing on the benefits from the purse seine tuna fishery under Objective 1 and noting that additional benefits would accrue from the long-line fishery. The main economic benefits were assumed to be due to the increase in revenue from the purse seine fishery over the six years of program implementation because of the program and a strengthened income from the vessel a day scheme. No benefits from the achievement of targets under objective 2 are included in these estimates.

The main asset developed by the project, however, was under objective 2, with objective 1 producing modest results around training and the implementation of IT systems and the development of a competent authority - although no outcomes were related to these outputs.

There are shortcomings in this economic analysis. First, as indicated under efficacy, the assets of the project were realized incrementally, with many being realized in the last two years of the project. This means the contribution of the project to the benefits from the purse seine tuna fishery will be limited for much of the project. Second, there is a poor connection between the results measured for the project and the overall objectives, as noted in the ICR and in the efficacy section.

Implementation Efficiency: The project was inadequately designed for the context and appears to have had insufficient support during initial implementation leading to delays in the first two years that were not fully mitigated even after the restructuring. The original project design made a range of assumptions on adequacy of support from the regional body (the FFA) on procurement, technical, fiduciary, monitoring and implementation support which did not hold when tested. The design does not seem to have taken into account the challenges in the fragile context in which it was implemented. The supervision from FY15-17 could have been more intense to help pickup and mitigate issues. Following restructuring the focus on areas with enhanced country demand and links to existing government initiatives increased the efficiency of the outputs. The improved efficiency of implementation is indicated by the improved disbursement in the final two years with the project finally disbursing 86 percent of its commitment across the GEF and IDA grants.



Efficiency Rating

Modest

a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal	✓	55.00	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate	✓	15.00	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

6. Outcome

Based on the project's substantial relevance, modest ratings for efficacy, which are the same for the whole period and after restructuring, and modest rating for efficiency, this project is rated as 'Moderately Unsatisfactory'. The overall rating is aligned with the ICR. The Outcome Rating is based on a split evaluation of the performance of the project's objectives.

a. Outcome Rating

Moderately Unsatisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

The main risks to development outcomes arise from gaps in the theory of change, which assumed sufficient coordination capacity and commitment from regional and national bodies in policy development and implementation and does not fully reflect the fragility of the context. The extent to which changes in Fisheries monitoring can be sustained relies upon the MIMRA's continued adaptation. For example, the ICR (page 37 paragraph 122) reports that COVID-19 restrictions have taken a toll on the program's ability to operate, and some staff who had been trained as part of the project have left.

The establishment of a CA has received an impetus through this project, but the ICR (page 37 paragraph 123) reports that the international recognition process is progressing very slowly. Further support will be necessary to complete the EU registration process in the RMI CA and enable the country to benefit from EU exports of canned tuna.



8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The strongest feature of the World Bank's performance for quality at entry was the strategic relevance of the project. The project attempted to undertake a new level of regional collaboration. In 2014, at the time of project preparation, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat had just begun to develop a new strategic framework to streamline the development agenda and prioritize the key challenges for the region (ICR paragraphs 109 & 110). Further, the project was aligned to the Regional Partnership Framework and the strategies of the Marshall Island's government.

Yet, as documented throughout this review, the technical, financial, fiduciary, institutional, implementation and M&E arrangements were not aligned at entry and hindered project performance initially. Issues and risks related to these areas were not identified at appraisal as the focus of the assessment did not accurately reflect the Forum Fisheries agency's readiness to support RMI and did not consider appropriately the country's systems. Further coordination arrangements with other development partners were not well defined and meant that overlapping areas of support were not detailed or managed.

The project components were designed in a manner that would contribute to the project objectives, though as highlighted under the efficacy section, the monitoring indicators did not connect project implementation with outcomes. Following restructuring, the reduction in scope and the measurement of a mix of higher-level outcome indicators for objective 1 and output-level indicators for objective 2 meant there was a disconnect between demonstrating country results and the regional level intent of the objectives.

Quality-at-Entry Rating

Moderately Unsatisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The World Bank's supervision came to identify and resolve issues that would constrain the achievement of relevant development outcomes three years into the project with the first restructuring. The project became effective in April 2015 and from 2017 the project had a dedicated task team leader who led a restructuring mission in March 2018, with the restructuring completed by June 2018. This restructuring reshaped the procurement, implementation and monitoring and evaluation processes and adapted the scope of the project to focus on areas of country demand under objective 2. The refocusing of the project supported enhancements in the projects delivery.

As reported by the ICR (page 36, paragraph 116) the team intensified its support following restructuring in 2018 in a range of areas. This enabled the project to meet a range of output indicators and deliver useful activities in fisheries monitoring and observation. The World Bank fulfilled its fiduciary role through adjusting the scope of expectations at the regional level and addressing cost overruns in the project implementation unit. The project reporting provides a useful assessment of the performance and supportive interventions undertaken.



As reported in the ICR (page 36, paragraph 118) the ratings during the last year of implementation could have better reflected the shortcomings evident with respect to the development of outputs and their relation to the overall PDO.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Moderately Unsatisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The complex intervention architecture was only moderately reflected in the M&E design. With no explicit theory of change and complex implementation arrangements, the indicators defined across the project did not adequately reflect the contributions made by the project. The design of a more explicit M&E architecture would have been instrumental in facilitating timely progress and results monitoring during implementation. For example, the original results framework did not capture significant results that are important for strengthening shared management of institutional reforms, and better fisheries monitoring, compliance, and surveillance infrastructure. Following restructuring indicators reflected the delivery of outputs (objective 2) or outcomes (objective 1) and not the quality of implementation. The project did not include an M&E Plan and/ or manual with operational details about what, how, who, and when to monitor project progress and results indicators (for example, precise indicator definitions, data collection methodologies, monitoring and reporting arrangements, templates for [technical] progress reporting, data management, and learning and adaptation reviews).

b. M&E Implementation

The challenges of M&E implementation highlight that there were weakness in project design. It was assumed that the regional Forum Fisheries Agency would be able to coordinate M&E, but it only attempted to fulfill its agreed responsibility for coordinating the verification of DLIs. Coordination of capacity strengthening in project M&E at the country level did not materialize (ICR paragraph 94). This meant that monitoring was not clearly linked to country deliverables before restructuring, though for DLIs it was collected and analyzed in a methodologically sound manner.

After restructuring in 2018, M&E responsibility shifted to the country, and again reflected project implementation challenges. ICR reports (paragraph 95) that project progress reports by the Project Management Unit were irregular . Therefore, progress against other indicators had to be sought out by the task team through informal channels.

No evidence of the implementation of an evaluation study, beyond the completion of the ICR is provided.



c. M&E Utilization

The evidence presented in the ICR is that the absence of systematic progress and results data collection, documentation, and reporting, the M&E utilization is consequently low. The indicators before restructuring did not provide evidence upon which the country or World Bank could make decisions, while after restructuring, the indicators did capture project management information. A more useful system would have demonstrated how outputs delivered were utilized to help assess the quality of implementation. This would have assisted in better understanding project success. Consequently, the project was only moderately able to demonstrate the validity and evidence for the underlying linkages in the results chain using systematic monitoring processes.

M&E Quality Rating

Modest

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

As discussed in the ICR. All safeguards policies were complied with. The project was classified Category B-partial assessment at appraisal, triggering the World Bank Operational Policies:

(a) OP 4.01: Environmental Assessment was triggered because some planned investments may generate minor to moderate site-specific and time-bound adverse environmental impacts. Activities were screened for environmental and social impacts and mitigation measures put in place to address potential site-specific impacts such as noise, waste, health and safety risks for workers, and discharges to the marine environment.

(b) OP 4.04: Natural Habitats was triggered because program activities took place in marine areas (coastal and ocean) which are known sites rich in biodiversity. All program activities were designed to enhance positive and sustainable returns to these important habitats.

(c) OP 4.36: Forests was triggered because the broader PROP includes technical assistance to support the development of financing mechanisms for marine protected areas and ocean finance mechanisms (through the FFA PROP), both of which could influence conservation incentives for coastal communities to conserve mangrove habitats. The project had no reported impact on mangroves in the RMI.

(d) OP 4.12: Involuntary Resettlement was triggered because project activities may have required small-scale coastal land acquisition. However, this was not required during the project as no resettlement occurred.

A program-level ESMF, incorporating a Resettlement Policy Framework and Process Framework was initially prepared and disclosed, on October 23, 2014, before appraisal. It was updated and re-disclosed in June 2015 and June 2018 after multiple rounds of additional consultations with participating PICs. Although a Resettlement Policy Framework and Process Framework was prepared, no land acquisition, resettlement, or compensation took place during the life of the project as project activities did not require it. A grievance redress mechanism was established, but no grievances were received. The World Bank environmental and social specialists provided guidance to the PMU and the DIDA CIU international safeguards consultant



provided support, therefore environmental and social risk management for the project progressed well until project closing.

In-shore FADs were funded by the project; these were screened and identified as low risk with mitigation measures, since they would be managed by community-based protocols and therefore unlikely to encourage over-fishing. There were no environmental incidents under the project and no physical works were funded. No occupational health and safety incidents were reported during implementation. The project completed and complied with the environmental and social requirements described in the ESMF.

b. Fiduciary Compliance

The World Bank fulfilled its fiduciary role with the ICRs and aide memoirs providing evidence of consistent financial monitoring, review and support and remediation where needed. For example, to mitigate risk a project accountant was employed by MIMRA Further performance improvement plans were implemented for project management unit staff where needed. All audit reports were unqualified.

To address procurement issues the World Bank procurement specialist conducted procurement training sessions and provided hands-on support to the PMU. Despite struggles with the procurement of goods and services and the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the contracts under the project were successfully delivered before the project closing date.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

The ICR reports that documentaries about the Reimaanlok process for Bikar and Bikak can increase global visibility and understanding about community-led conservation efforts at RMI atolls (see for example, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Dm2fcfiA20> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7TMjmsobcY>). These can have a positive effect on MIMRA’s ability to secure continued commitment and additional funding for conservation efforts targeted at the atolls of the outer islands.

d. Other

11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	
Bank Performance	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	There were moderate shortcomings in quality at entry



Quality of M&E	Modest	Modest
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial

12. Lessons

This review reiterates the lessons provided in the ICR (paragraphs 120-126), with some minor additions though no recommendations are provided.

1. Long-term engagement. Pacific Islands Regional Oceanscape Program (PROP) and implementation in RMI need to be considered as a long-term multiphase process and engagement. While the original intentions of the program were and continue to be relevant, they need to be realistically stretched across multiple phases of successive projects under the program. This review would also add that they need to be grounded first in a diagnostic of country issues rather than overall regional issues. Where this project in the Marshall Islands made the most advances, it connected to issues where there was a local demand, such as monitoring, compliance, and surveillance.
2. PROP was the World Bank's first engagement in Pacific Islands' oceanic and coastal fisheries. Participating countries and institutions had little to no experience managing World Bank-financed projects. Region-specific challenges, in part due to the fragile institutional context there are capacity constraints, significant hands-on support needed, and the overall challenges of reaching stakeholders beyond capital cities due to the dispersed nature of the countries, must also be considered at design.
3. The theory of change was overly complex and not well articulated in design. It employed a hub-and-spoke regional model where a country-led approach could have avoided the need for restructuring in 2018. The program's theory of change was demanding, complex, and ambitious given the client country's institutional capacity, time, political, geographical, and financial constraints. The idea of leveraging regional institutional capacities (from the FFA, SPC, and others) to effectively implement national project results chains was weakly developed, poorly understood, and owned by countries and thus operationalized sub-optimally. The underlying assumptions of the ToC were not communicated among partners, and collaboration opportunities were missed with other development partners.
4. There was minimal consideration of gender equality in the project design, which is a critical dimension when implementing effective CBRM. Continued financing of the CBRM process through the MFMR and project can be informed by (a) new research and lessons learned about the adoption of CBRM in the region; (b) consultation with SPC's 'Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling up Community-based Fisheries Management: 2021–2025', to assess how to best engage in either direct community-based fisheries management or/and its enabling work; and (c) recent analytical work about gender inequalities in access to productive resources, assets, services, and opportunities, such as the Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector in Solomon Islands, conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and SPC in 2019.2
5. Consensus building in coastal fisheries management needs time and requires continued support. Engaging communities and local government on fishery resource management and conservation



issues and building a trusted relationship with MIMRA teams require investment in time and resources due to the remoteness of the atolls and related transportation needs and travel time.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR provided relevant details and explanations on the development and implementation of the project. The ICR is candid on shortcomings in implementation. Three areas where the ICR could have provided more details are:

(i) what outputs were achieved before restructuring and how these influenced or were incorporated post restructuring as the details are not clear. For example both Table 3 and 4 are confusingly labelled 'Overview of Original Indicators, Targets, and Actual Values Achieved at Project Closing - Outcome 1'

(ii) It was not clear how outputs had changed pre and post restructuring in the ICR the aide memoirs needed to be referenced to better understand the evolution of the project.

(ii) the procurement delays throughout the project, aide memoir's consistently report confidence that important procurement processes will be completed only for them to be delayed or downscaled. Commenting on these could have helped identify further lessons on development commitment, cooperation and coordination arrangements for the second phase project.

a. Quality of ICR Rating Substantial