

Enhancing Capacity In the Pacific Region — Using Invasive Species and Biodiversity Data for Informed Decision Making

Programme:BID

Project ID: BID-PA2020-003-USE

Project lead organization:Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

Project implementation period:1/7/2021 - 30/6/2023

Report approved: 2/10/2023

Final Narrative Report

Executive Summary

The project team has been involved with other stakeholders and members of the Pacific Regional Invasive Species Management Support Service. 'Predator Free Pacific' and 'Resilient Ecosystems Resilient Communities' are regional programmes for invasive species management run by the Pacific Regional Invasive Species Management Support Service (PRISMSS). The Secretariat of the Pacific Region Environment Programme (SPREP) is the coordinating agency of the PRISMSS and the lead technical partner for the Resilient Ecosystems Resilient Communities programme. Island Conservation is the lead technical partner for the Predator Free Pacific programme. These programmes required regional strategies to guide programme delivery and identify opportunities and priorities for potential investors. These strategies are now complete.

The invasive species data for 4 Pacific Island countries was reviewed, analyzed and broken down to produce individual lists for islands, archipelagos and protected areas. These datasets have been published to GBIF. The Regional Workshop was hosted at SPREP in Samoa in November 2022. David Bloom led the delivery of the workshop. 14 participants from 7 countries attended.

46 datasets were published containing 4,875 new records. One of the datasets has been referenced within the project implementation period.

A series of zoom meetings were held with the countries that had expressed an interest in joining GBIF and improving biodiversity data management. This was followed up at the Regional Workshop. The Project Manager and Coordinator then travelled to Tonga, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands. The Head of Delegation and the Coordinator travelled to Tuvalu and Niue to promote the MoU and Data Management Standard Operating Procedures and has hosted meeting with RMI Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce who have also been presented these documents.

Overall, the level of engagement from Pacific countries were low. The project happened at a difficult time for the Pacific with regards to the Covid 19 pandemic. The Pacific countries were slow to reopen. Even when movement became possible, there was a lot of caution amongst participants.

Progress against milestones

Has your project completed all planned activities?: Yes

Has your project produced all deliverables: No

Rationale:Target project countries still may sign the MoU and endorse the Data Policy and Standard Operating Procedures for Data Management. Countries were generally looking for more tangible benefits when considering the MoU.

Levels of engagement were down generally, due to the pandemic. We had fewer National Workshops than anticipated and lower participation at our Regional Workshop. As a result, we didn't get anywhere near the 200,000 records target. We also did not get 10 new publishing agencies.

We did get 52 datasets, however it was across the 3 BID projects. Some of the datasets were different to those identified in the Project Proposal, due to the wants, needs and preferences of the project participants.

Report on Activities

Summary of the implementation of the project activities

Both the Predator Free Pacific Regional Strategy and the Resilient Ecosystems Resilient Communities Regional Strategy have been developed. The project team was involved along with other stakeholders and members of the Pacific Regional Invasive Species Management Support Service. The development of these documents was an iterative process involving representatives from different agencies and it was facilitated by an external consultant. The consultant was funded by cofinancing provided by external stakeholders. This allowed more time for the Project Team to contribute to this activity.

GBIF data will be used to support prioritization of islands, atolls, archipelagos and protected areas for Predator Free Pacific activities and Resilient Ecosystems Resilient Communities activities. The data for the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu was reviewed and subsequently published. The exercise will inform stakeholders where to focus their energy to extract the maximum utility for their efforts. In turn, these prioritizations will be used to support applications for funding to enable operational delivery.

Both the PFP and the RERC strategies were developed as high-level documents. The next stage of development involved using existing data to prioritize islands and areas for Predator Free Pacific and Resilient Ecosystems Resilient Communities activities at a national level. The process for achieving this is still being developed with the prioritisation template now developed. We are working with Richard Griffiths from Island Conservation, David Bloom from Vertnet and Shyama Pagad from ISSG to help us to develop the process needed. In terms of this project the development is being co-financed by the GEF6 Regional Invasives Project and the Managing Invasive Species for Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific project.

The development of national prioritization as part of the strategies will lead to on the ground management actions becoming aligned to national, regional and global objectives such as those identified by the CBD.

The invasive species data is a critical part of the process. Shyama has been working to disaggregate and publish the national lists by island, archipelago, and protected area basis. This information complements available occurrence biodiversity data. This process helps to identify gaps in existing knowledge and illuminate where further investment is needed.

The Regional Workshop was hosted at SPREP in Samoa in November 2022. David Bloom led the delivery of the workshop. 14 participants from 7 countries attended. Data mobilization skills were developed by participants. Their knowledge of GBIF and data use for decision making was dramatically increased. For those with prior knowledge, the skills and understandings were reinforced and consolidated. Each participant published at least one dataset during the workshop. However, the number of participants, their levels of engagement and the data that was published are all reflective of the broader situation previously described. We did get 52 datasets; however, it was across the 3 BID projects. Some of the datasets were different to those identified in the Project Proposal, due to the wants, needs and preferences of the project participants. Participants practiced data retrieval via the Pacific Biodiversity Information Facility by following the steps in the Battler Series publication titled "Share Invasive Species Data using GBIF".

A series of zoom meetings were held with the countries that had expressed an interest in joining GBIF and improving biodiversity data management. This was followed up at the Regional Workshop. The Project Manager and Coordinator then travelled to Tonga, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands. The Head of Delegation and the Coordinator travelled to Tuvalu and Niue to promote the MoU and Data Management Standard Operating Procedures. Moreover, meetings with RMI and Samoa to discuss voting participation and present MOU and SOP have been delivered. We continue to provide support and follow up to these countries for the signing of the MOU.

Overall, the level of engagement from Pacific countries were low. The project happened at a difficult time for the Pacific with regards to the Covid 19 pandemic. The Pacific countries were slow to reopen. Even when movement became possible, there was a lot of caution amongst participants with regards to travel and gathering. Consortium partner agencies were overwhelmed with higher priority needs.

Completed activities

Activity: Free Pacific Regional Strategy is developed by identifying data needs.

Description: Unpublished data is mobilized, analyzed and the data solutions are then integrated into strategy development.

Start Date - End Date: 1/7/2021 - 30/7/2023

Verification Sources: The Predator Free Pacific Strategy is attached

Activity: Resilient Ecosystems Resilient Communities Regional Strategy is developed by identifying data needs.

Description: Unpublished data is mobilized, analysed and the data solutions are then integrated into strategy development

Start Date - End Date: 1/7/2021 - 30/6/2023

Verification Sources: The Resilient Ecosystems Resilient Communities Strategy is attached

Activity: Promote data use for decision making through the Regional Data Mobilization Workshop

Description: Promoting institutionalization of biodiversity data use for decision making processes into Pacific organizations.

Start Date - End Date: 14/11/2022 - 18/11/2022

Verification Sources: Report Attached

Activity: Promote data use for decision making while visiting countries to support new Pacific voting participants.

Description: Promoting institutionalization of biodiversity data use for decision making processes into Pacific organizations.

Start Date - End Date: 1/1/2022 - 31/5/2023

Verification Sources: Events Report

Activity: Promote and participate in data use for decision making activities while visiting countries to support the institutionalization of Data Policy and Standard Operating Procedures

Description: Promoting institutionalization of biodiversity data use for decision making processes into Pacific organizations.

Start Date - End Date: 30/6/2022 - 31/5/2023

Verification Sources: Travel reports

Report on Deliverables

Deliverables - Summary

The Regional Workshop was hosted at SPREP in Samoa in November 2022. David Bloom led the delivery of the workshop. 14 participants from 7 countries attended. Data access and utilization skills were developed by participants. Their knowledge of GBIF, data mobilization and data use for decision making was dramatically increased. For those with prior knowledge, the skills and understandings were reinforced and consolidated. Each participant published at least one dataset during the workshop. However, the number of participants, their levels of engagement and the data that was published are all reflective of the broader situation previously described. We did get 52 datasets; however, it was across the 3 BID projects. Some of the datasets were different to those identified in the Project Proposal, due to the wants, needs and preferences of the project participants. It is hoped that the datasets identified in the project proposal will be published in the future.

Deliverables produced by the project**Dataset deliverables**

Other deliverables

Deliverables - Project planning phase

Deliverables - Project data mobilization phase

Predator Free Pacific Regional Strategy is developed by identifying data needs

Dataset type: Checklist

Dataset scope: Invasive species checklists by islands, atolls, archipelagos and protected areas for the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tonga, Niue and Tuvalu

Number of records: 4,875

Data holder: Various Data Holders

Data host institution: SPREP
% complete: 100%
Status update: Published
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15468/2tz4rm>
Expected date of publication:

Resilient Ecosystems Resilient Communities Regional Strategy is developed by identifying data needs

Dataset type: Occurrences
Dataset scope: Invasive species checklists by islands, atolls, archipelagos and protected areas for Tonga, Niue, RMI and Tuvalu
Number of records: 4,875
Data holder: Various Data Holders
Data host institution: SPREP
% complete: 100%
Status update: Completed
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15468/2tz4rm>
Expected date of publication:

Deliverables - Project evaluation phase

Events

GBIF Networking Lunch - Vanuatu

Dates: 2022-09-21 - 2022-09-21
Organizing institution: SPREP
Country: Samoa
Number of participants: 22
Comments: A follow up event delivered while the Project Manager and Coordinator were visiting Vanuatu to discuss the MoU, Data Policy and SOPs
Website or sources of verification: Report

Events

GBIF Networking Lunch – Solomon Islands

Dates: 2023-03-01 - 2023-03-01
Organizing institution: SPREP
Country: Solomon Islands
Number of participants: 35
Comments: A follow up event delivered while the Project Manager and Coordinator were visiting Solomon Islands to discuss the MoU, Data Policy and SOPs
Website or sources of verification: Report

Events

GBIF Networking Lunch – Tuvalu

Dates: 2023-03-29 - 2023-03-29
Organizing institution: SPREP
Country: Tuvalu
Number of participants: 15
Comments: A follow up event delivered while the Head of Delegation and Coordinator were visiting Tuvalu to discuss the MoU, Data Policy and SOPs
Website or sources of verification: Report

Events

Pacific Regional GBIF Workshop

Dates: 2022-11-14 - 2022-11-18
Organizing institution: SPREP
Country: Samoa
Number of participants: 20
Comments: Promoting institutionalization of biodiversity data use for decision making processes into

Communications and visibility

The Project Team includes a communications specialist. Jordan Schuster was recruited in 2021 as part of a cofinancing project. His role is to manage project communications through the project activities. Initiatives utilise the SPREP regional media channels, SPREP website and social media. We have the logo's for the EU and GBIF and are familiar with the visibility requirements from the Phase 1 BID funded project. All materials supplied to partners included the European Union logo as per the BID Communications Guidelines and included the phrase "This project was funded by the European Union".

"Share Pacific Invasive Species data using GBIF" was reviewed and updated to include information about the Pacific Biodiversity Information Facility. This includes a significant section on how to access data to support more informed decision making added to the set of existing Battler Series publications. These aim to take technical and scientific information and present these in a way that is accessible, engaging and educational for Pacific people. The guide is available in French also.

SPREP has a separate Communications Team who manage the SPREP website. <https://www.sprep.org/> has a regional focus and is a recognised platform for sharing relevant information. The SPREP Communications Team have a web of networks through the Pacific. SPREP published a story titled "Enhancing capacity in the Pacific to digitise biodiversity data" to its website <https://www.sprep.org/news/enhancing-capacity-in-the-pacific-to-digitise-biodiversity-data>

We developed the concept of PBIF Ambassadors and supplied the regional workshop participants with branded shirts.

The project webpage provides another opportunity for project visibility. We have reviewed the page and have nothing further to add at this stage.

Monitoring and evaluation

Final Evaluation

Overall, the level of engagement from Pacific countries was low. The project happened at a difficult time for the Pacific with regards to the Covid 19 pandemic. The Pacific countries were very slow to reopen. Even when movement became possible, there was a lot of caution amongst participants with regards to travel and gathering. Consortium partner agencies were overwhelmed with higher priority needs.

Best Practices and Lessons learned

The development of the RERC and PFP Strategies was a difficult process as it involved many stakeholders. The National Prioritisation Process remains a work in progress, however, we recognize GBIF data to help determine biodiversity values when carrying out prioritization exercises .

Post Project activities

I hope that some or all of the countries will sign the MoU and become GBIF members. I think that the skills and knowledge acquired as a result of project activities will be useful to the participants. When we have not had a country sign the MOU yet, we are hopeful to have RMI, Tuvalu, and Niue sign up as a voting participant by the end of 2023. Senior officials from respective countries have confirmed the MOU is in circulation within local government, with plans to facilitate the MOU signing shortly after this process has completed.

Sustainability

Sustainability Plans

The sustainability plan from the project proposal was accurate. RMI and Tuvalu engaged in the BID project and representatives developed new data retrieval skills to support more informed decision making. Their knowledge of GBIF and data use for decision making was dramatically increased. The

links with the GEF6 Regional Invasives Project proved productive and allowed for co financing of activities and travel. We expect that the personnel involved will look to publish the data arising from subsequent GEF6 RIP. They may need further support to do so, but SPREP will be on hand to assist. This is the same for other aligned projects. Success in this regard is easily demonstrated by the activity on the SPREP IPT.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on project implementation

Despite the challenges and uncertainty, we managed to get the project activities completed. However, as previously described, the levels of engagement were not what we had anticipated or hoped for. For many Pacific Island communities, the pandemic presented existential challenges with severe economic impacts due to the loss of tourism, travel and commercial activity generally. When the borders finally opened, many of our partner agencies were forced to prioritise engagement and activities in extreme ways.

During the project implementation period, our partner countries faced cyclones, volcanic eruptions, civil unrest, earthquakes, tsunamis, infrastructure failure and a global pandemic.

Due to the travel restrictions, the window for many of the project activities was very limited and the road to recovery for many of the Pacific Islands will be very long.

GBIF leads the Biodiversity Information for Development (BID), a programme funded by the European Union. The programme provides supplementary support for activities addressing the needs of regional researchers and policymakers through mobilization and use of biodiversity data.

