

In-country Assistance to Kiribati for development of GEF Ridge-to-Reef Project

25 September-10 October

Vainuupo Jungblut, Ramsar Officer Oceania at SPREP participated in an in-country assistance mission to assist the Kiribati Government to develop their Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), administered by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) with the support of SPREP for project formulation and implementation. This first joint mission by SPREP and FAO was to initiate information gathering and stakeholder consultations. It was the first of three missions planned for the formulation phase of this project.



Meeting with community members on Abaiang Island

The Kiribati project, titled “Resilient Islands, Resilient Communities” is part of the broader Pacific Islands National Priorities Multi-Focal Area ‘Ridge-to-Reef’ (R2R) Program under GEF, which aims to maintain and enhance Pacific Island Countries’ ecosystem goods and services through integrated approaches to land, water, forest, biodiversity and coastal resource management that contribute to poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience.

During the mission, a national inception workshop was conducted to introduce the project, engage key government stakeholders and seek their feedback on the proposed focus of the project. There was a good turnout from the Ministries of Lands, Fisheries, Environment, Commerce, Office of the President, Internal Affairs, Agriculture, Minerals, Finance, New Zealand High Commission and Phoenix Island Protected Area (PIPA) office. The inception workshop was successfully convened and stakeholders gained a good understanding of the project and their potential roles in its implementation, project sites were discussed and agreed to. It is highly likely that one of the project sites will be the Nooto-North Tarawa Ramsar Site and there may be resources allocated through the project to expand the boundary of the Ramsar Site to cover the whole of North Tarawa and also to develop the site’s management plan.

Individual stakeholder consultations were carried out for those who could not make it to the inception workshop to introduce the project, gather specific information, secure co-financing support for the project and gauge interest to engage in implementation, once the project begins. There was also

productive consultations and information gathering with the outer island councils and community on the project (Abaiang Island).



National inception workshop participants

Next steps are to complete the write up of needed documentation and costing of activities under component 1 of the project on Protected Areas, which SPREP will be implementing; preparation for the second project mission (late January 2015); and assisting local consultants with the write up of component 2 on mangroves; await Cabinet decision on final sites for the project.

Vainuupo also used the opportunity to work closely with the national administrative authority on their Ramsar SGF project extension and due reporting. The report has been finalized and is in the process of being officially transmitted to the Ramsar Secretariat.

Report and photos by Vainuupo Jungblut, Ramsar Officer Oceania