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Republic of Marshall Islands

Country case study report

February 2025



Independent Evaluation of the GCF's Result Area "Health and Wellbeing, and Food and Water Security" (HWFW)

GREEN CLIMATE FUND
INDEPENDENT EVALUATION UNIT

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COUNTRY CASE STUDY REPORT: REPUBLIC OF THE
MARSHALL ISLANDS

02/2025

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First Edition

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Citation

The suggested citation for this evaluation is:

Independent Evaluation Unit (2025). *Independent Evaluation of the GCF's Result Area "Health and Wellbeing, and Food and Water Security" (HWWF)*. Country case study report: Republic of the Marshall Islands (February). Songdo, South Korea: Independent Evaluation Unit, Green Climate Fund.

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Printed on eco-friendly paper

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACWA	FP112 “Addressing Climate Vulnerability in the Water Sector in the Marshall Islands”
AE	Accredited entity
APR	Annual performance report
CCA	Climate change adaptation
CCD	Climate Change Directorate
COFA	Compact of Free Association
CWC	Community water committee
DFI	Development financing institution
DRM	Disaster risk management
ESS	Environmental and social safeguards
FAA	Funded activity agreement
FP	Funding proposal
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross domestic production
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GoRMI	Government of the RMI
GRM	Grievance redress mechanism
HWFW	Health and Wellbeing, and Food and Water Security
IAE	International accredited entity
IEU	Independent Evaluation Unit
JNAP	Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation & Disaster Risk Management 2014–2018
NAP	National adaptation plan
NDA	National designated authority
NDC	Nationally determined contribution
PREP II	FP066 “Pacific Resilience Project Phase II for RMI”
RA	Result area
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
RPSP	Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme
SIDS	Small island developing State
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

A. INTRODUCTION

This case study was undertaken as part of the independent evaluation of the Green Climate Fund's (GCF) Result Area (RA) "Health and Wellbeing, and Food and Water Security" (HFWF). The evaluation was launched in April 2024 by the GCF Independent Evaluation Unit, with the objectives of reporting on the GCF's HFWF results and progress towards targets, while also shedding light on why results have been achieved or not, and how the GCF's interventions can be improved. These objectives fulfil the accountability and learning functions of this evaluation. The evaluation also explores the value addition of adopting an RA approach. To do so, the evaluation has adopted a mixed-methods approach, which includes six country case studies.

The present case study report provides insights from the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). This case study was informed by a one-week, in-country field visit, from 8 to 12 July 2024. The field visit entailed site visits to both of the country's GCF HFWF RA-tagged projects and a series of interviews undertaken with the national designated authority (NDA), government representatives, delivery partners, civil society organizations, accredited entities (AEs) and beneficiaries. Stakeholder engagement was complemented by an in-depth document review of programme documents and country-level strategic/policy documents.

B. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1. OVERVIEW OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

a. Geography and climate

Located in the central-northern Pacific, the RMI covers an area of approximately 2 million km², although with only 181 km² of total land area (Kiste, 2024; United Nations Development Programme, 2023). It is classified as a small island developing State (SIDS). The RMI consists of 29 coral atolls and five low-lying coral islands. The atolls form two parallel chains, 200 kilometres apart: Ratak in the east and Ralik in the west (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). On average, the RMI's atolls are no higher than two metres above sea level (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). The country has a tropical climate with a mean annual temperature of 27°C (World Bank Group, 2023). Annual precipitation rates vary, with southern atolls receiving between 300 to 340 centimetres of rain, three times higher than the amount received by northern atolls (World Bank Group, 2023).

b. Demography

The RMI has a population of 41,996 (World Bank Group, 2024d). Population growth has been declining, indicated by a negative growth rate between 2003 to 2022 with a slight reversal in 2023, which saw a growth rate of 1 per cent (World Bank Group, 2024c). Slightly over one fifth of the population is under 15 years of age (21.4 per cent), with the majority of the population aged between 15 and 64 years (74.2 per cent). Two thirds of the RMI's population resides in the country's two urbanized atolls: Majuro, the capital city, and Ebeye (Kiste, 2024). In all, 79 per cent of the population lives in urban areas, and 21 per cent resides in rural areas (World Bank Group, 2024g). Marshallese and English are the RMI's two official languages; however, only a minority are fluent in English (Kiste, 2024).

c. Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous Marshallese society is matrilineal, with land passed down through the mother (Southeastern National Tuberculosis Center, 2022). Traditionally, although individuals had a birthright to land, land belonged to the *bwij*, or clan, which shared communal rights and responsibilities (Alik and others, 2014). Society was organized hierarchically (Alik and other, 2014). At the top of the social hierarchy were the *iroij* (chiefs), who presided over communities, overseeing land-use and settling disputes, with their influence covering sections of entire atolls. Although the family and clan structure of traditional Marshallese society can still be found in outer atolls, traditional customs and practices are changing and have largely disappeared from urban areas (Alik and others, 2014; Inside Out Media, n.d.). Today, all land in the RMI is held privately, and laws prevent non-Marshallese from purchasing land (United States Department of State, n.d.). Traditional Marshallese religion was polytheistic, but today most Marshallese follow Christianity, introduced by missionaries in 1857. By the end of the nineteenth century, virtually the entire population had converted to Christianity, making it rare to find Marshallese practising traditional religious rituals (Alik and others, 2014). In terms of traditional livelihoods, harvesting and fishing were among the most important skills people learned, with all men required to learn how to fish. Over 25 traditional Marshallese fishing techniques have been identified (Alik and others, 2014).

d. Economy

The RMI had an estimated gross domestic production (GDP) of USD 259.3 million in 2023 and is listed as an upper-middle-income country under the World Bank country and lending groups classification (World Bank Group, 2024a; 2025). The country's GDP growth has been slow to recover from the pandemic period and was -3.9 per cent in 2023 (World Bank Group, 2024b). Unemployment jumped during the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing from 6.3 per cent in 2019 to 9.8 per cent in 2021 (World Bank Group, 2024f). Post-pandemic unemployment statistics are not yet available for the RMI. In 2019, 7.2 per cent of the population was living below the national poverty line (World Bank Group, 2024e). Poverty is concentrated in rural areas: 21.2 per cent of the rural population lives below the poverty line, compared to 2.3 per cent of the urban population (World Bank, 2021). In 2020, services accounted for 67.2 per cent of the country's GDP, followed by the agricultural sector at 21.8 per cent and industry at 12.8 per cent (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). Agriculture in the RMI is predominantly subsistence-based, with copra and breadfruit being the main commercial crops (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). The RMI's fishing industry has expanded following government investments that promoted export-oriented industrial fishing in the 1990s. Commercial fisheries represented 6.6 per cent of the country's GDP growth between 2000 and 2018 (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). Industry in the RMI is limited to tuna processing and handicraft and copra production (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). Additionally, the RMI also earns lease payments from the United States for using Kwajalein Atoll as a US army base and missile testing range. These payments and employment at the base contribute significantly to the country's GDP (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). The RMI's economy remains heavily dependent on foreign aid and development assistance, with the majority of aid coming from the United States under the Compact of Free Association (COFA). In 2023, the RMI and the United States renewed their COFA, a 20-year agreement worth USD 2.3 billion (Reuters, 2023). Under the COFA, the United States is responsible for the RMI's defence and provides economic support in exchange for exclusive military access to strategic parts of the ocean within RMI territory. The 2023 COFA extends US assistance for education, health care and infrastructure (Reuters, 2023).

e. Politics

The RMI has a mixed presidential–parliamentary political system in free association with the United States (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). A unique feature of the RMI's political system is the Council of Iroij. The Council comprises 12 Indigenous chiefs that have a consultative and advisory role regarding issues pertaining to customary law, traditional practices and land tenure (World Bank PREP II Project, 2023). The Council plays a key role in ensuring that the traditional rights and practices of the Marshallese are not violated in national legislation (World Bank PREP II Project, 2023). In January 2024, Hilda C. Heine was officially sworn in as President for her second non-consecutive term. She had previously served as President from 2016 to 2020. Heine is the first Marshallese woman to be elected as President (Reklai, 2024). The RMI's political history is marked by the detonation of 67 nuclear bombs on, in and above Bikini and Enewetak atolls between 1946 and 1958. On 1 March 1954, the particularly destructive Bravo Test took place, which generated nuclear fallout and radioactive waste across a nearly 130,000 km² area, covering several populated atolls (Rose Johnston and Takala, 2016). The radioactive fallout has caused significant health issues among the Marshallese, including birth defects and increased cancer rates (United Nations Development Programme, 2023).

2. HFWW SECTORS' CLIMATE CHANGE CONTEXT

Ranked 187th globally in terms of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the RMI contributed 165,000 MtCO₂e in 2020, accounting for only 0.01 per cent of global emissions. This makes the country one of the world's smallest GHG emitters (Boyle, 2024). As of 2020, the major sources of the RMI's emissions were energy, waste and industry, constituting 66.7 per cent, 19.8 per cent and 13.5 per cent of total GHG emissions, respectively (Boyle, 2024). Transportation generated the highest energy-related emissions, followed by electricity/heating and the construction industry (Boyle, 2024). As a SIDS, the RMI is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The country scores 39.6 on the ND-GAIN Index and is classified as having "high vulnerability and low readiness" in terms of climate change preparedness (Boyle, 2024).

The RMI faces significant health challenges, including high obesity rates, hypertension, diabetes, tuberculosis and cancer. Obesity is linked to the increased consumption of imported and highly processed foods rich in sugar and fat, driven by climate change-induced disruptions in local food systems (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). The RMI's sanitation system has also not been well developed. As a result, most houses have their own septic tanks that risk overflowing during floods. This can lead to groundwater resources being contaminated, causing outbreaks of diseases such as gastroenteritis and cholera (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). Additionally, climate change is expected to lengthen disease transmission periods and their geographic range due to changing precipitation patterns and temperatures.

Saltwater intrusion from rising sea levels, recurring king tides and storm surges is contaminating fresh water sources and increasing soil salinity levels, limiting the viability of the RMI's agricultural systems (World Bank Group, 2021a). Variations in precipitation, recurrent droughts and salt spray from tidal surges are already affecting the crop yields and productivity of copra, taro, other coconut products, pawpaw and breadfruit (World Bank Group, 2021a). Crops such as breadfruit may become difficult to grow if temperatures continue to rise (World Bank Group, 2021b). Additionally, the productivity and availability of nearshore fish stocks are declining due to a combination of rising ocean temperatures, ocean acidification and fish migration (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). As a result, the Marshallese are losing a key local source of protein (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). While the traditional Marshallese diet was based on self-

sufficient agriculture and locally caught fish, today 80–90 per cent of food consumed is imported (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). This dependence on imported food has left the RMI vulnerable to supply chain disruptions and spikes in food prices (United Nations Development Programme, 2023).

Sea levels have been rising rapidly in the RMI, posing a serious threat to the country's water security and infrastructure. Between 1993 and 2011, sea levels rose by approximately 7 mm each year in the RMI, far exceeding the global average (World Bank Group, 2021a). Consequently, coastal flooding and inundation are becoming more frequent. In fact, between 1993 and 2016, 18 significant inundation events were recorded in Majuro alone, with more than half of them occurring since 2013 (World Bank Group, 2021a). A one-metre rise in sea levels would put 37 per cent of Majuro's and 50 per cent of Ebeye's existing buildings at risk of inundation. A two-metre rise in sea levels would put Majuro's entire stock of buildings, including essential infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and government buildings at risk of permanent inundation (World Bank Group, 2021a).

Characteristic of low-lying atolls, the RMI has no rivers, streams, lakes or ponds, making fresh water sources scarce and the country heavily reliant on rainwater harvesting and groundwater aquifers (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). As salinity levels rise in fresh water sources, the RMI's water sources are being rendered non-potable (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). Rising temperatures are also likely to increase evaporation from reservoirs, further depleting fresh water sources (World Bank Group, 2021b). Furthermore, 90 per cent of the RMI's water supply is sourced from precipitation, which is compromised by intensifying drought conditions (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). In 2013 and 2016, the RMI declared a state of emergency due to prolonged droughts, which caused critical water shortages in addition to damaging food crops and compromising public health (United Nations Development Programme, 2023).

As food and water insecurity worsen with climate change, internal migration is expected to increase in the RMI (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). High rates of internal migration from outer atolls to urban centres such as Majuro and Ebeye are putting pressure on already densely populated areas. This is likely to lead to increased competition for resources such as food, land, water and economic opportunities (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). The decline in population in outer atolls is also linked to worsening regional income inequality (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). Additionally, as populations shrink, outer atolls may be deprioritized in terms of resource and service distribution, creating a vicious cycle that drives further migration (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). International migration to the United States is expected to increase with climate change. The COFA allows Marshallese to live and work in the United States without a visa, and two out of every four Marshallese currently live there. This rampant outmigration is associated with negative impacts such as the "brain drain" of skilled workers and raises issues of cultural preservation.

3. CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

The RMI has adopted a range of policies and plans to build resilience to the impacts of climate change. The RMI has a Climate Change Directorate (CCD), which is housed within the Ministry of Environment. The CCD oversees the coordination and implementation of national climate change policies and plans alongside the National Climate Change Committee, which is responsible for interministerial and inter-agency coordination on climate change issues. Relevant RMI policies related to climate change are identified below.

- **National Climate Change Policy Framework (2011):** This framework outlines the country's commitments and responsibilities for addressing climate change, while ensuring that opportunities for sustainable development are not compromised. The framework aims to build resilience among the Marshallese, while guiding a national plan of action to address current and short-, medium- and long-term climate change effects using an integrated, nationwide response. This framework outlines five strategic goals for doing so: (i) strengthen the enabling environment for climate change adaptation (CCA) and mitigation including sustainable financing; (ii) adaptation and reducing risks for a climate resilient future; (iii) energy security and a low-carbon future; (iv) disaster preparedness, response and recovery; and (v) building education, awareness and community mobilization, while being mindful of culture, gender and youth (Marshall Islands, 2011).
- **Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation & Disaster Risk Management 2014–2018 (JNAP):** This action plan provides a detailed and updated strategy for addressing risk and building resilience in the RMI, including actions to address climate change. Its strategic goals include (i) establishing and supporting an enabling environment for improved coordination of disaster risk management (DRM) / CCA; (ii) public education and awareness; (iii) enhanced emergency preparedness and response at all levels; (iv) improved energy security; (v) enhanced local livelihoods and community resilience; and (vi) an integrated approach to development planning considering climate change and disaster risks. This plan identifies key national priorities for reducing risk in the RMI, which include water resources, health, agriculture, fisheries and coastal infrastructure. It also emphasizes building productive partnerships across the public and private sectors (Marshall Islands, 2014).
- **Tile Til Eo 2050 Climate Strategy (2018):** The strategy declares the RMI's goal of achieving net zero GHG emissions and transitioning to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2050 as part of a wider agenda of building climate resilience. The strategy lists a series of activities, implementation measures and a financing plan. Priority sectors include energy, transport, waste management and agriculture. Capacity-building and mainstreaming gender and human rights are also emphasized in the strategy. Key recommendations for the country's national adaptation plan (NAP) are also made (Marshall Islands, 2018b).
- **National Strategic Plan 2020–2030:** The RMI's National Strategic Plan identifies climate change and resilience as a strategic and cross-cutting issue (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). The plan aims to boost resilience, identified as a development necessity, in all of its dimensions, including social, environmental and economic. It also aims to integrate climate considerations into national planning processes. The plan has five pillars or national priorities, each with its own strategic areas (24 in total) and associated policy objectives: (i) social and culture; (ii) environment, climate change and resilience; (iii) infrastructure; (iv) economic development; and (v) governance. Key sectors for action include health, education, energy, food security, water, agriculture, fisheries and infrastructure (Marshall Islands, 2020a).
- **Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (2015), Nationally Determined Contribution (2018), and Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (2020):** The RMI was the first SIDS to formally submit its intended nationally determined contribution (NDC), doing so in 2015 (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2015). In 2018, the RMI was the first country to submit its second NDC (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2018). In 2020, the RMI reaffirmed its commitment to reducing GHG emissions by 32 per cent below 2010 levels by 2025, by 45 per cent by 2030, and achieving net zero emissions by 2050. The 2020 update states that the RMI is committed to reducing emissions

from the domestic shipping sector by 40 per cent below 2010 levels by 2030 and to achieving full decarbonization by 2050 (Marshall Islands, 2015; 2018a; 2020b).

- National Adaptation Plan (2023):** The NAP is the RMI's blueprint and strategic framework for climate action that aims to reduce the country's vulnerability to climate change impacts, integrate adaptation strategies into national planning, policies and programmes, and outline an adaptation pathway for the short and long terms. The NAP divides its timeline for action into four periods, with decision points based on sea level rise projections. This plan lays out how the RMI will respond to climate change from now until 2150 and has three overarching goals: (i) building adaptive resilience across human and ecological systems; (ii) strengthening the enabling environment for NAP activities; and (iii) adopting a self-determined approach that honours the country's heritage and benefits future generations (World Bank PREP II Project, 2023).

4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND GCF PORTFOLIO

In the RMI, the NDA sits within the Ministry of Environment in the CCD. In the CCD, work with the GCF is headed by the Director of the CCD and supported by a small team of two other staff members. Although the NDA team is small, there has been retention and consistency of critical staff members, ensuring institutional memory and acute understanding of how the GCF works. Although limited in terms of personnel, these latter factors contribute to strengthening the ability of the NDA to act in its role effectively. To date, the RMI has eight AEs that are working in the country context for GCF funded activities. These include six international accredited entities (IAEs) and two regional AEs. The IAEs are the Asian Development Bank, World Health Organization, World Bank, Conservation International Foundation, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Programme. The two regional AEs are the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme and the Micronesia Conservation Trust. Notably, the RMI does not have a direct access entity; however, stakeholders in-country report that the country's Ministry of Finance is currently pursuing accreditation with the GCF.

Two projects have been identified as relevant for this case study and are presented in Table 1 below. Internally at the GCF, both these projects are HWFW RA-tagged projects and thus are explored as part of this case study.

Table 1. Case study portfolio overview

PROJECT NAME	AE	GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	STATUS	GCF FINANCING
FP066. Pacific Resilience Project Phase II for RMI (PREP II)	World Bank	RMI	Fully disbursed	USD 25,000,000
FP112. Addressing Climate Vulnerability in the Water Sector (ACWA) in the Marshall Islands	UNDP	RMI	55% disbursed	USD 18,631,216

FP066 "Pacific Resilience Project Phase II for RMI" (hereafter referred to as "PREP II") is a fully disbursed project with four main components: (i) institutional strengthening, early warning and preparedness, (ii) strengthening coastal resilience (including the construction of a seawall to protect

the coastline of Ebeye), (iii) contingency emergency response, and (iv) programme and project management.

FP112 “Addressing Climate Vulnerability in the Water Sector (ACWA) in the Marshall Islands” (hereafter referred to as “ACWA”) plans to construct community rainwater harvesting and storage structures across 24 outer islands and atolls, as well as to strengthen and build community capacity. For more information on the main objectives of these two HFWF RA-tagged projects, see Appendix 1.

In addition to the projects identified in Table 1, another project, FP147 “Enhancing Climate Information and Knowledge Services for Resilience in 5 island countries of the Pacific Ocean”, and one Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme (RPSP) grant “Enhancing the resilience of health systems to climate change and emerging pandemics in the Republic of the Marshall Islands” were also noted by the NDA as having relevant HFWF co-benefits – namely, key health co-benefits. For example, the RPSP grant’s objective is to strengthen the RMI’s health sector through adaptation planning and scaling up of interventions to lessen the health impacts of climate change (Green Climate Fund, 2021b). In addition, the funding proposal 147 (FP147) outlines several social co-benefits of the project, including health impacts (Green Climate Fund, 2020b). The proposal makes the link between the project’s interventions of enhancing resilience to climate-related hazards and positive health benefits. Furthermore, FP147 indicates an HFWF co-benefit between one of its results (improvement in weather forecasting) and better crop management/ harvests, which helps reduce financial losses resulting in “socio-economic related health impacts” (Green Climate Fund, 2020b). Given that these projects are not HFWF RA-tagged projects, specific project components will not be covered in this case study. However, insights from consulted key stakeholders related to both FP147 and the RPSP grant and relevant information from available project documents are included in sections of this case study, such as sections C.2, C.3 and C.7.

C. KEY FINDINGS

1. RELEVANCE AND RESPONSIVENESS

In the RMI, the projects in the HFWF RA are highly relevant to the adaptation-themed mandate of the GCF and respond directly to the needs of the country. Given the RMI’s high vulnerability to the effects of climate change and low levels of GHG emissions, its adaptation is essential in order to keep the country and its various low-lying islands and atolls habitable in the future. The dangers of climate change are so immense for the RMI that the 2023 NAP outlines critical decision points leading up to an ultimate possibility of shifting focus to population migration and relocation, rather than continued adaptation and mitigation (World Bank PREP II Project, 2023). Indeed, climate change is not a future problem but rather a contemporary reality and a matter of survival for the Marshallese.

Both the PREP II and ACWA projects focus on building climate resilience within communities. For the PREP II project, its second component (construction of a seawall on Ebeye) will further adaptation by protecting the Ebeye population from rising sea levels. The land on the island of Ebeye is increasingly limited, due in part to the continued increase in urban density given migration from outer atolls, which is in turn due in part to the effects of climate change. The country’s internal migration to Ebeye heightens the relevance of the project’s objective to protect the already limited available land area on Ebeye. For the ACWA project, the main component of building community rainwater harvesting and storage structures is intended to help community members prepare for

periods of drought. With periods of drought becoming more frequent due to climate change, increasing the water security of households is a key component of adaptation for the Marshallese; the ACWA project responds directly to this need.

The two HWWF RA investments in the RMI also exemplify the GCF's principle of country ownership, particularly through their alignment with the RMI's national commitments and priorities and through active engagement with stakeholders at different stages of the project.¹

At the time of both projects' funding approval, these two investments in the HWWF RA were highly aligned with the RMI's national commitments and priorities. Approved in 2018, the FP PREP II notes direct relevance to JNAP. The FP outlines alignment of the project to the following goals (1, 2, 3, 5 and 6) of the JNAP:

1. Establish and support an enabling environment for improved coordination of disaster risk management [DRM] / climate change adaptation [CCA] in the Marshall Islands
2. Public education and awareness of effective CCA and DRM from local to national level
3. Enhanced emergency preparedness and response at all levels within the Marshall Islands
4. [...]
5. Enhanced local livelihoods and community resilience for all Marshall Islands people
6. Integrated approach to development planning including consideration of climate change and disaster risks"

(Marshall Islands, 2014)

In particular, component one of the PREP II project (institutional strengthening, early warning and preparedness) clearly supports the JNAP objective to create and support an enabling environment for DRM and CCA. PREP II works with key ministries and committees such as the National Disaster Management Office, Chief Secretary's Office and the National Disaster Committee in order to support institutional strengthening and create an enabling environment.

The ACWA project, on the other hand, is aligned to key RMI policies and strategies by playing a complementary role focused on building national and local capacity. Approved in 2019, the ACWA FP mentions key RMI policies and strategies such as the RMI Water and Sanitation Policy and Proposed Action Plan, the Strategic Development Plan "Vision 2018", JNAP and National Climate change Policy Framework (2011) (Green Climate Fund, 2019a). However, the FP discusses that many of these relevant policies/strategies are relatively new or "have yet to be effectively implemented", highlighting a key gap that remained to be filled at the time of project approval (Green Climate Fund, 2019a). The ACWA project is complementary to these policies/strategies, filling in the capacity gap to strengthen water security and resilience while these policies and strategies develop further in the background. Furthermore, the ACWA project is highly aligned with the JNAP's fifth strategic goal of enhancing local livelihoods and community resilience through its various components such as the construction of community rainwater harvesting and storage structures and community capacity-building activities.

Both HWWF RA-tagged investments also show evidence of systematic stakeholder engagement, integral to advancing this concept of country ownership. Both HWWF RA-tagged projects have steering committees that include government stakeholders, civil society organization officials and

¹ Although, it should be noted that the implementation of the PREP II project has raised issues around country ownership (see section C.3).

others. In part, these steering committees are used to update and inform these stakeholders about progress of the projects. Having clear and organized structures/plans for community engagement at various levels (community, high-level government, etc.) enhances the national stakeholders' sense of country ownership and the project's alignment and coherence with national climate priorities. In fact, the office of the current project manager of PREP II is even located in the RMI Ministry of Finance's office, creating opportunities for shared learning exchanges and progress updates on an ad hoc basis. In the ACWA project, ownership has also manifested within local communities. The ACWA project team reportedly actively consults with communities regarding logistical plans for the construction of the community rainwater harvesting storage structures. Key stakeholders reported that the team accommodates community needs, such as avoiding construction during local funerals, demonstrating sensitivity and enhancing community ownership. In particular, one government stakeholder reported that the ACWA project's efforts to hold numerous consultations with local councils have helped manifest and strengthen country ownership over the project.

Through community and stakeholder engagement at different project stages, both HFWF RA-tagged investments also show evidence of being relevant and responsive to the exact priorities and needs of beneficiaries. In the FP PREP II, various design options were outlined for component two, the construction of the seawall. The FP notes the final design of the seawall has been based on several factors, balancing the cost-effectiveness of the different options as well as input from stakeholders, including community members (Green Climate Fund, 2018). Initially, the FP proposed two preferred design options, both only protecting "key 'hotspots' of higher risk [on Ebeye] and areas in between" (Green Climate Fund, 2018). However, according to in-country stakeholders, the community consultations that were held influenced key design elements of the project to better align with beneficiary needs. These included, for example, the decision to cover the **entire** Ebeye coastline (not just "hotspots") and the inclusion of access ramps in parts of the seawall to allow for maintenance and continued access to the sea.

Despite such responsiveness to community needs in the PREP II project, a majority of the diverse stakeholders consulted expressed mild dissatisfaction with the overall stakeholder engagement process. In particular, some key informants expressed that the consultation process was too lengthy and took up disproportionate amounts of the budget and time of the overall project. Against the backdrop of rising sea levels and the need for immediate adaptation and resilience measures such as a seawall, the lengthy consultation process was seen as excessive and redundant at times from the perspective of the local communities. The project was approved in March 2018 and is expected to be completed by 3 December 2025. As of the field visit in July 2024, construction had yet to break ground. While stakeholders broadly acknowledged the usefulness of such an inclusive process, some also commented on the need to improve the mechanisms by which community contributions were elicited through a more community-centred approach.

The ACWA project also showed extensive evidence of responding to community needs through stakeholder engagement. The original FP details that the project planned to cover 77 rural communities across 23 atolls and islands, to reach communities with five households or more (Green Climate Fund, 2019a). Both the documents reviewed² and the key informants consulted confirm that the original selection criteria for the rural communities changed during the early stages of project implementation, based on the results of a technical design survey conducted in communities. The final revised project design and selection criteria now also include communities with fewer than five households, as these are the communities noted to be especially vulnerable.

² Documents included the project's interim evaluation (2023). Interim evaluations are GCF internal documents.

This key change also highlights how the project design embeds principles of “just transition” and its key principle of “no one is left behind”. The concept and scope of just transition is recognized in the Paris Agreement. In relation to the HFWW-relevant sectors, the concept of just transition is primarily linked to including marginalized groups in transformation and ensuring equity and accessibility for all. In the health and wellbeing and water sectors, the two HFWW sectors most relevant to the ACWA project, the principle of just transition manifests primarily through the concept of leaving no one behind. For the health and wellbeing sector, a just transition incorporates the key principle of prioritizing “people’s social, physical, and mental wellbeing and leav[ing] no one behind” (Narayan, 2022). To ensure a just transition and transformation in the water sector, climate action results must also be “socially fair and inclusive” (Strambo and others, 2023). For the ACWA project to change design and target the most vulnerable households shows clear alignment with upholding these principles.

2. COHERENCE AND COMPLEMENTARITY

In the RMI, the GCF’s investments in the HFWW RA show minimal evidence of coherence within the larger GCF portfolio of investments in the RMI and in light of the context of the GCF country programme and its outlined national priorities. The FP for each of the HFWW RA-tagged projects, PREP II and ACWA does not mention how these projects would build off of or complement other GCF funded projects in the RMI. However, this may be due to their early approval dates and their having been some of the first GCF projects in the RMI. In fact, PREP II was only the second GCF funded project in the RMI. There was also no evidence from qualitative data to suggest that there was intentional coherency of the two HFWW RA-tagged projects within the larger GCF portfolio of RMI investments. Despite this, there is some evidence of coherence in the sense of operational synergies (cost-sharing and strategic logistics planning) that are occurring informally and largely being driven by in-country government stakeholders (see section C.4).

There is some evidence of complementarity in HFWW RA-tagged investments between the GCF and other climate/development finance delivery channels and institutions, although this is mostly done through co-financing. Both HFWW RA-tagged projects receive co-financing from various sources. Because the World Bank is the IAE associated with PREP II, the World Bank’s International Development Association regional and national funding co-finances the project, along with the GCF grant (Green Climate Fund, 2018). There is also evidence of scaling of World Bank financing for the PREP II project due to a request from the Government of the RMI (GoRMI) (see section C.5). For the ACWA project, the FP outlines that the project will be co-financed by the GoRMI itself (Green Climate Fund, 2019a). The FP further states that after implementation, the GoRMI intends to continue to cover costs of the project through in-kind contributions for a period of 18 years, ensuring the lifespan of assets (Green Climate Fund, 2019a).

According to stakeholders consulted and triangulated with project documents, including the interim evaluation, the ACWA project faced financing challenges due to COVID-19. The GoRMI co-financing disbursement plan could not be carried out according to the original timeline as the government had to prioritize budget allocations to COVID-19 response activities (Green Climate Fund, 2023a). Thus, the European Union was identified as the new co-financing partner and the GoRMI’s co-financing portion would be rescheduled. As of November 2022, a European Union Committee meeting approved the European Union’s contribution of funds on behalf of the RMI. However, as the project’s interim evaluation states, due to financing arrangements and institutional requirements, a change in co-finance arrangements will be required either to (i) decrease the original

total government co-financed amount, or (ii) add the European Union as a co-financier for the project, triggering administrative requirements from the GCF.

As mentioned, the technical design survey identified additional gaps in the original project design of the community rainwater harvesting storage structures. According to stakeholders with knowledge of the ACWA project, the survey's results revealed that there was a need to purchase and construct additional materials. Given the perceived long bureaucratic process of the GCF to make amendments and changes to the original FP and the funded activity agreement (FAA), key stakeholders reported that the decision was made to look for parallel funding/financing from other sources. In 2022, the Government of Australia committed AUD 2 million as parallel funding to address the identified design gaps (United Nations Development Programme, Pacific Office, 2022); this parallel funding was pitched to fund a new project. The interim evaluation of the project reports that while these two projects (the GCF funded ACWA project and the Australian parallel-funded project) are different, the two projects will streamline processes such as "procurement, transportation and installation", thereby expediting implementation of some of the ACWA project's activities.

Within the relevant HWWF sectors, key stakeholders reported that although the GCF HWWF RA-tagged projects primarily focus on water security (with health and wellbeing seen as co-benefits), food security projects are primarily being funded by other funds and organizations, including the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Given the HWWF RA approach of the GCF and food and water security issues being priorities for the RMI, key stakeholders mentioned that there is no explicit reasoning behind why food security issues are not being addressed by finance from the GCF, although it should be noted that there is a project in the pipeline that hopes to address the adaptation needs of tuna fisheries in the RMI and other Pacific Island Communities. Across the development financing institution (DFI) landscape in the RMI, coherence and complementarity appear to be driven by in-country government stakeholders – namely, the RMI's Ministry of Finance and its Division of International Development Assistance. Country government stakeholders reported that the Division of International Development Assistance has mapped the various climate DFIs and which projects they are financing in the RMI. Stakeholders consulted state that this mapping not only helps them identify redundancies but will also enable them to streamline and better identify the right DFI for certain projects and needs. Having the Ministry of Finance leading this process is notable given that the Ministry is reportedly in the process of applying to be a direct access entity with the GCF.

In terms of comparative advantage of the GCF, country government stakeholders reported that the GCF is seen to be stricter and less flexible than other climate and development financing institutions due to its lengthy and burdensome processes and procedures. This can be seen, for example, in the ACWA project's decision to seek parallel funding from the Government of Australia instead of pursuing changes to the original FAA. Issues with lengthy requirements and process times to make small changes were echoed by another key government stakeholder as an issue unique to the GCF compared to other climate funds such as the GEF. A key stakeholder reported that most ministries are inclined to try to access GEF funding, noting that the disbursement of finances from the GEF is much quicker than with the GCF. Despite this, **the GCF is perceived by some stakeholders to be a catalyst for additional funding.** In particular, in-country stakeholders reported that GCF funded projects help serve as exemplar case studies to showcase to other donors. One country government stakeholder perceived that the European Union's decision to help contribute to the ACWA project on behalf of the GoRMI provides a good example of the GCF's catalytic effect.

3. EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT

Core results are noted by the GCF performance measurement framework's adaptation indicators and three HFWW-specific core Fund-level impact indicators. These are listed below:³

- Adaptation indicators:
 - Total number of direct and indirect beneficiaries
 - Number of beneficiaries relative to total population
- HFWW-specific indicators:
 - A2.1: Number of males and females benefiting from introduced health measures to respond to climate-sensitive diseases
 - A2.2: Number of food secure households (in areas/periods at risk of climate change impacts)
 - A2.3: Number of males and females with year-round access to reliable and safe water supply despite climate shocks and stresses

Across the HFWW RA-tagged investments in the RMI, there is moderate variability on actual reporting between the HFWW RA-tagged projects, making it difficult to measure progress made in achieving results. In addition, **given the stage of implementation of both HFWW RA-tagged projects, there is currently limited reported progress towards core results; although there are high levels of impact potential. Within the HFWW RA-tagged investments in the RMI, progress is made primarily in the sector of water security, with health and wellbeing portrayed mostly as a co-benefit. There is minimal to no reported progress made towards food security.**

Regarding the PREP II project, although internally at the GCF the project is tagged as an HFWW RA project, the FP in fact does not mark the HFWW RA (Green Climate Fund, 2018). Instead, two other RAs are selected, likely causing the lack of reporting on progress made towards HFWW-specific Fund-level impact indicators (see section C.7). The addition of the HFWW RA was likely done after the project had been approved, although interviewed stakeholders in-country with knowledge of the PREP II project were unaware of how this change came to be. Of the adaptation Fund-level impact indicators (number of direct and indirect beneficiaries) for the PREP II project, given the early stage of implementation, the reported numbers in available annual performance reports (APRs) (2019, 2020 and 2022) remained unchanged from the baseline. However, it should be noted that the target numbers of both direct and indirect beneficiaries did change and were reflected in the amended FAA (Green Climate Fund, 2021a). In particular, the expected number of direct beneficiaries increased by 23,800 and the number of expected indirect beneficiaries decreased by 12,200 (Green Climate Fund, 2020a). Despite the lack of quantitative data available from reviewed APRs, qualitative data from stakeholder interviews point to perceived potential benefits in the protection of water management systems and the health and wellbeing of community members. As the seawall construction component of PREP II would protect the community from rising sea levels, stakeholders perceived that this would relate to the HFWW RA in the following ways: (i) protect individuals from flooding or other risks associated with rising sea levels, and (ii) protect water management resources from damage, especially household water tanks.

³ Both HFWW RA-tagged investments in the RMI were approved before the publication of the Integrated Results Management Framework.

The ACWA project reports on two HFWW-specific Fund-level impact indicators A.2.1 and A.2.2. Given the fact that the ACWA project is also in the early implementation stages, much of the reporting on these HFWW-specific Fund-level impact indicators report no changes other than adjustments in the baseline values (Green Climate Fund, 2023a). Qualitative data, however, point to positive high potential impact. During a project site visit to the E nubuj community in July 2024, community members spoke of the many positive future benefits of the recently installed community rainwater harvesting storage structure. Although no one had used the community rainwater harvesting storage unit yet due to many recent rainfalls that had provided enough water for individual households, focus group discussions with both women and men reported that this project will be of great importance to them. Beneficiaries stated that the project will help ensure a reliable source of water, especially during future droughts because droughts have reportedly become more frequent. Furthermore, project-related stakeholders spoke of how the design is slated to increase access to **clean** water. For one, the community rainwater harvesting storage unit was constructed with a cover to protect the rainwater from exposure to dirt and other elements. This stands in stark contrast to some individual household-level rainwater harvesting systems, which are sometimes left uncovered and exposed to outside elements (see Appendix 2). For another, the design of this rainwater harvesting structure also includes a first flushing system to help clean the water before it is harvested and stored in the covered unit. Project-related stakeholders noted the potential positive health benefits associated with having clean water available for drinking and cooking.

Although the ACWA project has clear health links, health impacts are only identified as a social co-benefit in the 2022 APR. Health as a co-benefit was also reported in project FP147. Although FP147's APR 2022 partly captures the project's health impacts and progress of interactions with the health sector within the description of social co-benefits, discussions with stakeholders on the ground it emerged that the full impact on the health of vulnerable communities is likely not fully captured (see section C.7 for more reporting challenges) (Green Climate Fund, 2023b).

Other key co-benefits identified are as follows:

- **Economic co-benefits:** In the context of the RMI, economic co-benefits are incredibly important. Job creation is critical, with many Marshallese migrating either internally in the RMI or to the United States to find suitable jobs. Both the PREP II and ACWA projects create or will create jobs. The PREP II project will primarily create construction jobs from building and maintaining the seawall infrastructure. The ACWA project includes several aspects that have economic co-benefits. The ACWA project hires project site coordinators for all sites where community rainwater harvesting storage structures will be built. These project site coordinators are paid part-time and receive skill-building training (e.g. on how to repair the community rainwater storage structure, on how to use different tools), thereby increasing their satisfaction in participating in the project and their sense of ownership. Similarly, the ACWA project builds the skills of the community members themselves by teaching community volunteers how to build and repair the community water tank. This further supports the sustainability of the project. Moreover, the value of job creation in the RMI, even if paid only part-time, should not be underestimated. It should be noted, however, that the creation of maintenance and construction jobs will likely benefit mostly men. In-country stakeholders consulted noted that in Marshallese culture, although women are not formally restricted from taking up construction-related work, construction work typically attracts men.
- **Potential environmental co-benefits:** The APR 2022 of the ACWA project suggests that construction of a community rainwater storage structure would likely result in a reduction of plastic waste stemming from bottled water used during droughts (Green Climate Fund, 2023a).

- **Gender equality / female empowerment co-benefit:** This co-benefit appears most strongly in the ACWA project, which has created community water committees (CWCs). As noted in the project's interim evaluation, CWCs are critical to project implementation, as they are the decision makers in the community for water safety planning and maintenance of the rainwater harvesting storage structures. According to the project's gender action plan, a target was set to have all CWCs include 50 per cent women and youth, with 50 per cent of youth being girls (Green Climate Fund, 2019b). Stakeholders across different category types reported that the engagement of women in this project has been strong. For example, in the Enubuj community, women actively volunteered to join the CWC, unprompted by project staff. Similarly, project-related stakeholders also spoke of their efforts to ensure that women were involved in separate women-only community discussions and to try to achieve a relatively equal number of female and male project site coordinators.

The major factor contributing to the achievement of results for both HWFW RA-tagged projects was stakeholder engagement, which helped align the projects more specifically to beneficiary needs (see section C.1). On the other hand, multiple factors have contributed to undermining the achievement of results, including the following:

- **COVID-19:** According to stakeholders consulted and the project documents reviewed, COVID-19 caused project implementation delays for both the HWFW RA-tagged projects in the RMI. Due to travel restrictions, project personnel were unable to travel to the RMI for an extended period of time. For the ACWA project, COVID-19 also created financing concerns (see section C.2).
- **Hiring of qualified project personnel:** According to stakeholders with knowledge of the ACWA project, implementation delays were associated with difficulties in hiring staff. Although not an HWFW RA-tagged project, FP147 project documents echo these challenges (Green Climate Fund, 2022b). It should be noted that the case study team heard about the general challenges with the procurement of goods and services, including consultants, that the RMI faces as a remote, small island country.
- **Staff turnover:** According to government stakeholders consulted in-country, staff turnover of the project management unit and consultants for the PREP II project created implementation delays. Stakeholders perceived that staff turnover of the project implementing unit amid community consultations lowered the morale of the project, leaving participants feeling as if they had to start from scratch. There was a perception that newly onboarded staff members on the project implementing unit were not adequately brought up to speed on decisions previously made, creating the need to re-discuss and re-open issues, causing further delays.

In terms of unintended results, the most significant one identified was an issue of balancing AE procurement policies, environmental and social safeguards (ESS) considerations, and country ownership. Almost all consulted country government stakeholders across various levels of government mentioned the same issue of procurement related to the PREP II project. National stakeholders consulted reported the overwhelming desire to use locally collected rocks (also referred to as aggregates) to build the seawall on Ebeye, component two of PREP II. Stakeholders reported that using local aggregates follows local practices used in other RMI seawalls and would be more cost-effective (by avoiding high shipping costs associated with shipping foreign aggregates). However, given the procurement rules and regulations of the World Bank, including its ESS policies, the decision was made that local aggregates could not be used. It was reported by stakeholders that rocks would be shipped in from Dubai, noting that this is consistent with project

documentation such as the 2022 interim evaluation, which states that aggregates will be **imported** from “environmentally sustainable sources”.

The interim evaluation also mentions that the project is adhering to its environmental and social management framework in order to mitigate environmental risks. However, the report shows that the environmental and social risk level **increased** from moderate to high. Importing aggregates has reportedly increased project costs, leading to trade-offs and compromises in the seawall design. It is important to note that the total project budget, and specifically the World Bank’s International Development Association budget for this component, has increased since the approval of the FP; although this is likely due to the expanded coverage of the seawall along the entire coastline of Ebeye (see sections C.1 and C.5). This decision regarding the use of local versus foreign aggregates highlights the complexities of ESS considerations and procurement policies, showcasing that, at times, they can undermine national ownership and leave stakeholders feeling as though they are simply conforming to external guidelines and policies.

There are signs of the paradigm-shift potential in the RMI linked to the two HFWF RA-tagged projects. As outlined earlier in section B.4, the PREP II project component one consisted of institutional strengthening and early warning and preparedness. The institutional strengthening included producing a draft of the NAP, which has been now formally adopted by the GoRMI. The NAP is reportedly perceived to outline the groundwork for joint understanding and a shared vision across ministries and stakeholders. With a NAP clearly identifying which stakeholders need to work together to produce results (World Bank PREP II Project, 2023), the GoRMI has a clear road map informed by community consultations with key stakeholder buy-in. With implementation of the NAP remaining to be seen, only the paradigm-shift **potential** of this project output can be signalled (see also section C.5).

Additionally, the most recent available APRs (2022) for both HFWF RA-tagged projects state the paradigm-shift potential of knowledge learning and sharing (Green Climate Fund, 2023a; 2024). Both projects are working to achieve this paradigm shift through awareness-raising activities in the hope that increased awareness and knowledge will remain in the country and communities beyond the lifespan of both projects. For PREP II, there has reportedly been enhanced awareness of “climate threats and risk-reduction processes” of key stakeholders, and the ACWA project notes that the knowledge base of community members has been broadened (Green Climate Fund, 2023a; 2024). Interviewed stakeholders from different stakeholder types, in particular government stakeholders and project-related stakeholders, mentioned knowledge-sharing and learning occurring to varying levels and extents. Given the early implementation stages of both projects, the realization of a paradigm shift in regard to knowledge learning and sharing also remains to be seen.

4. INNOVATIVENESS IN RESULT AREAS

Although there is no evidence that the GCF has fostered innovation and deployed diverse financial instruments for the HFWF RA-tagged investments in the RMI, **innovation is largely driven by in-country government stakeholders through the pursuit of operational synergies such as cost-sharing and strategic logistics planning.** The RMI has several unique challenges, such as the immense distance between the RMI and other countries as well as between its various islands and atolls. This, coupled with the high costs of fuel prices, makes shipping to, from and within the RMI costly and difficult, requiring strategic logistics planning. Stakeholders reported that to overcome these unique challenges, the NDA has informally suggested ways for projects to piggyback on each other and share fuel prices and trip costs. The NDA is thereby playing a key role in cost-sharing and logistics planning among GCF projects. The need to be innovative in the RMI, especially in regard

to transportation and shipping, was also underscored in government stakeholder interviews. Although the examples of projects in which stakeholders reported this occurring were not HFWF RA-tagged investments, they highlight the innovativeness of in-country stakeholders as they work to overcome the RMI's unique challenges. Additionally, this serves as an innovative example of coherence and complementarity, presenting an opportunity for AEs to work together in the RMI in a way that could be beneficial to AEs while also enhancing coherence across the HFWF RA investments and the GCF portfolio more broadly. In addition, such piggybacking for cost-sharing is also reportedly built into proposed budgets to DFIs. This results in lowering transportation and shipping costs from the outset, as in-country stakeholders assume that this local coordination and piggybacking will occur informally.

5. SUSTAINABILITY, REPLICABILITY AND SCALABILITY

The potential for sustainability is likely for both HFWF RA-tagged investments in the RMI.

In the interim evaluation for the PREP II project, financial and socioeconomic sustainability was rated as likely. However, it was noted that the lack of human resources limiting institutional capacity is of particular concern to the project's sustainability. As discussed in section C.3, the difficulty in hiring qualified personnel has hindered the impact and effectiveness of GCF funded projects. Notably, the RMI does not have a university on its islands, spurring many Marshallese to leave the RMI to pursue higher education. This contributes to the country's underlying issue of brain drain. The interim evaluation for PREP II underscores these human resources issues and frames it "as the most important component of sustainability", with there being a need for continued efforts towards professional development and capacity-building to ensure sustainability and "long-term impact" of the project. This key aspect of human resource issues limiting institutional capacity is especially notable for one of the project's outputs, the NAP, which has high potential to achieve a paradigm shift in the country. Achievement of a paradigm shift and the sustainability of the benefits of this output rest on the NAP's implementation and, therefore, the institutional capacity of various ministries. Although one government stakeholder reported that for their ministry the NAP outlined activities that were already being conducted or that were in their ministry's current plans for the future – which creates a relatively straightforward path to implementation – it remains to be seen if the NAP will be fully implemented in the coming years. In part, this would be due to the limited institutional capacities of various ministries.

The other HFWF RA-tagged project, the ACWA project, builds sustainability into its design elements. According to key stakeholders, material for the construction of the community rainwater harvesting storage units was specifically chosen for sustainability and to avoid rusting. Rusting and erosion, according to consulted stakeholders, are highly problematic for all infrastructure in the RMI, given the close proximity of the Pacific Ocean. According to stakeholders, other design elements, such as the placement of pipes underground and capacity-building and maintenance training within communities, also help increase the likelihood of sustainability. The interim evaluation for this project rates sustainability as moderately likely, noting as one of its key recommendations the need to create a financial exit strategy, "including a resource mobilisation plan" for the project to ensure financial sustainability and "continued operation".

Potential for scalability and replication is also moderate to high between the HFWF RA-tagged projects in the RMI. According to the APR 2022 for the PREP II project, there is high potential for both scalability and replicability, providing evidence of steps already taken towards both (Green Climate Fund, 2024). For example, as noted in the project's interim evaluation, after a request from the GoRMI, additional financing was approved in 2020 by the World Bank Board in

order for some project activities to be scaled up, leading to an increase of the total project budget. On the other hand, the APR 2022 for the ACWA project notes that scaling up and replication of the physical assets within the RMI are limited given that the project plans to build these community water tanks in all 24 inhabited atolls and outer islands (Green Climate Fund, 2023a). However, the APR 2021 notes that there is scope for this intervention to be replicated in other SIDS because the project is “technically simple and cost effective” (Green Climate Fund, 2022a). Similar to the PREP II project, there is the possibility that the total co-financed amount in the ACWA project may increase. The interim evaluation for the project mentions the expectation that the total co-finance would match or be slightly higher than the original amount, to account for additional needs and associated costs identified in the technical design survey.

6. GENDER AND SOCIAL EQUITY

Both HWFW RA-tagged projects in the RMI have considered ESS at project conception stage, with evidence of strong stakeholder engagement. Both HWFW RA-tagged projects have also implemented grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs) that are in line with GCF policies. In the FPs of both HWFW RA-tagged projects, environmental and social risks were considered, with the PREP II project classified as category B and the ACWA project categorized as moderate risk (Green Climate Fund, 2018; 2019a).

The ACWA project developed an environmental and social management framework, included as an annex in the FP, and also underwent an environmental screening procedure to comply with UNDP and GCF standards (Green Climate Fund, 2019a). Although PREP II did not include an environmental and social management framework in the FP, the document notes that one was prepared in alignment with the World Bank’s safeguard policies (Green Climate Fund, 2018). Furthermore, future plans of the PREP II, as outlined in the FP, include the implementation of the environmental and social management framework through an ESS adviser, as well as the submission of an environmental impact assessment before construction of the seawall commences (Green Climate Fund, 2018).

As mentioned in above sections, project documents and qualitative data gathered across stakeholder categories for both projects provide evidence of extensive community engagement. As noted in its interim evaluation, the PREP II project developed and updated a stakeholder engagement plan, in line with the GCF’s policies. According to the ACWA FP, stakeholder engagement began at project concept phase, noting that stakeholders “were consulted and participated in the developing of the project” (Green Climate Fund, 2019a).

The interim evaluations of both the ACWA and PREP II projects also provide evidence of functional GRMs. In line with the GCF’s ESS standards, AEs of GCF funded activities are required to establish or maintain activity-level GRMs in order to receive any community complaints and resolve them (Green Climate Fund, 2021c). In PREP II, the earliest available APR (2019) reports that the GRM is operational and that it has been publicized among community members (Green Climate Fund, 2020a). In all project documentation reviewed, there have been no reports of registered grievances. However, further information is not provided on how community members are made aware of the GRM process. In light of the mild dissatisfaction noted from some consulted stakeholders regarding the mechanisms by which community engagement on Ebeye was conducted, **how** the GRM is publicized to the Ebeye community members would be key to qualifying how functional the PREP II GRM is. In regard to the ACWA project, a stakeholder engagement plan including a GRM was drafted and reported on in the APR 2021. The following APR 2022 reported that the GRM was updated into a two-tiered structure: complaints to be resolved at the project level

or, if more complex, to be escalated to the Grievance Redress Committee (Green Climate Fund, 2023a). The APR details various ways in which concerns can be collected, including installation of a suggestion box placed in each community/project site or through in-person delivery to site coordinators (Green Climate Fund, 2023a). Having site coordinators (who are themselves members of these communities) as a channel to receive grievances or complaints can enhance the accessibility of the GRM. This approach could make the process more personal and accessible because some individuals are likely to feel more comfortable addressing concerns with someone they know. The latest available APR (2022) reported on two grievances received, one resolved and one pending. Given that implementation is in its early stages, the interim evaluation report of this project recommended that the practicality of the GRM should be “reassessed and updated as needed”.

Despite the GCF’s Gender Policy being adopted after or in the same year as the approval of the RMI’s HFWW RA-tagged projects, both projects incorporated gender equity priorities in line with GCF gender-related requirements. The two HFWW RA-tagged projects developed gender action plans and gender assessments or similar analyses. Although the PREP II project was approved in 2018, a year before the adoption of the 2019 GCF Gender Policy (which requires a submission of a gender assessment), the FP made note that a gender analysis was undertaken and even informed the writing of the project proposal (Green Climate Fund, 2018).

Mainstreaming of gender is more strongly apparent in the ACWA project than in the PREP II project. The number of gender-related targets included in the two gender action plans reflect the latter point: there are only three targets included in the PREP II gender action plan, compared to 14 in the ACWA’s. Furthermore, incorporating gender balance in meaningful ways of implementation, such as in the CWCs, also provides evidence of efforts to mainstream gender. However, both projects have made progress in achieving outcomes noted in their gender action plans. The APR 2022 of the PREP II project notes that outcomes of the gender action plan are on track to being achieved. Indeed, there has been reportedly strong participation of women in community engagement, with designated women- and youth-only meetings (Green Climate Fund, 2024, p. 202).

Available evidence points to HFWW RA-tagged projects in the RMI incorporating priorities of traditional leadership through consent, customs and stakeholder engagement. In the RMI, traditional leadership and culture remains strong, especially surrounding land rights. As noted in the FP PREP II, land ownership is embedded in the country’s constitution and held by traditional leaders, known as chiefs (Green Climate Fund, 2018). The project design of PREP II notes that the World Bank’s safeguard policies OP4.12, Involuntary Resettlement, and OP4.09, Physical Cultural Resources, were triggered. This necessitated community stakeholder consultations to obtain consent for the implementation of component two, the construction of the seawall (Green Climate Fund, 2018).

In-country consultations with government and project-related stakeholders also provide evidence on the various ways in which traditional customs and cultures have been woven throughout aspects of the two HFWW RA-tagged projects. For example, the NAP, as a PREP II output, incorporates the Reimaanlok approach process, which is a culturally sensitive approach to decision-making (World Bank PREP II Project, 2023). Interviews with government and project-related stakeholders point to the ACWA project’s efforts to observe local traditions and customs, such as ensuring consent from traditional leadership and holding blessing ceremonies.

7. EFFICIENCY

There is an inconsistent approach to reporting on HFWW core benefits. There is a likelihood of underreporting of core and co-benefits within the HFWW RA-tagged projects in the RMI,

partly driven by a lack of understanding of the HFWW RA and of the RA approach more broadly. There is high variability between the HFWW RA-tagged projects' reporting on the progress made regarding HFWW RA core results.

Importantly, as previously mentioned in section C.3, the FP PREP II does not mark the HFWW RA (Green Climate Fund, 2018). Instead, two other RAs are selected: "Most Vulnerable People and Communities"⁴ and "Infrastructure and Built Environments". Thus, the FP does not indicate that reporting will be done on any of the HFWW-specific Fund-level impact indicators. It is unclear how or when this change in RAs occurred or what the reasoning was behind the addition of the HFWW RA. Stakeholders consulted who have knowledge of the PREP II project were unaware of this inconsistency, highlighting a lack of understanding on possible reporting implications when RAs are changed during implementation.

Indeed, none of the APRs available (2019, 2020 and 2022) report on the HFWW-specific Fund-level impact indicators. The APR 2022 of the PREP II project, however, reports on project/programme-level outcome and output indicators that are marked in the HFWW RA (Green Climate Fund, 2024). Therefore, despite the PREP II project being marked internally within the GCF as HFWW RA, it is not reporting on **any** of the HFWW RA-specific Fund-level impact indicators, creating challenges and inconsistencies in reporting of results for the HFWW RA more broadly.

On the other hand, project documents reveal that the ACWA project has consistently reported on the same indicators identified in the FP, two of which are HFWW-specific Fund-level impact indicators. Interestingly, multiple AE stakeholders consulted were not always aware of which RA they were reporting on or the RAs initially selected in the original FP.

This underscores a critical gap in understanding among AE country-level stakeholders responsible for reporting, as they lack clarity about the broader RA approach. A lack of full understanding of the RA approach can lead to underreporting of impact or inconsistencies in the approach to reporting across AEs. In fact, none of the AE stakeholders consulted were involved with the original FP process and, therefore, selection of the RAs, which also partly contributes to the gap in understanding of the RA approach within their projects.

This disconnect and lack of understanding of the broader RA approach can lead to missed opportunities. In one instance, a consulted key stakeholder noted that, in hindsight, it would have been desirable to link food security with some of these HFWW RA-tagged projects. However, due to the RMI's urgent need for some of these projects, linking food security could have delayed the project origination and approval process and therefore would not have served the immediate needs of the country. Therefore, possible linkages to other relevant issues within the HFWW RA were not incorporated at the time of project design, because linking various sectors requires thorough planning and consideration.

There were mixed perceptions on the APR reporting structure's utility and alignment to AEs' own reporting structures. Some AE stakeholders noted that the GCF reporting structure of APRs is thorough, and they were generally satisfied with how the APR captures project results. However, it was noted that there was room for improvement in how APRs capture qualitative data. Some AE stakeholders mentioned that they would be willing to report more, and the current APR structure may not be fully capturing all the qualitative and narrative benefits of the project.

At the same time, multiple project-related stakeholders commented that the APRs require a lot of energy and were a resource-intensive process, although it was unclear if this was incommensurate

⁴ The name of this RA has since been changed to "Livelihoods of People and Communities".

with the level of funding. Stakeholders noted several ways in which the reporting structure could be streamlined. For one, the structure of the APR itself was reported to be too complex. One AE stakeholder reported that there were too many sections, highlighting a desire for simplification. Other AE stakeholders also reported the lengthy process needed to acquire data for APRs. This process had additional challenges due to the timing of the APR submission, which required project-related stakeholders to collect data and work on reporting during the holiday season. In particular, for AEs that have their own reporting requirements, some AE stakeholders noted that the APR system had a duplicative burden on them. They emphasized a desire to streamline and align AE reporting requirements with those of the GCF.

One AE stakeholder also reported that delays in receiving GCF comments on submitted APRs can cause delays in the disbursement of the next tranche of funds because APR comments need to be addressed **before** the next disbursement. It is unclear where possible delays originate from. As reported by some AE stakeholders, the reporting process to the GCF can be complex, requiring internal reviews at multiple levels within the AE before final submission to the GCF. In some cases, it was reported that APRs start with the project team, get sent to regional teams, then to headquarters, before headquarters submits the final APR through the GCF portal. These management structures mean that project teams for some HFWW RA-tagged projects do not have direct contact with the GCF Secretariat, reportedly leading to misunderstandings on GCF policies and procedures, such as how to report or how to inform the GCF on project-level changes. According to one stakeholder, these inefficiencies do not align with the speed that is needed for project implementation.

D. CONCLUSIONS

The RMI presents an interesting case study, one in which the realities of climate change and the country's vulnerabilities to the effects of climate change are increasingly apparent. As a SIDS that contributes minimal amounts of GHG emissions, the relevance of the GCF's adaptation projects is high. While all three sectors reflected in the HFWW RA are relevant to the needs of the country, the investments within the HFWW RA in the RMI focus primarily on results around water security.

The two HFWW RA-tagged investments in the RMI provide clear evidence of responsiveness to the needs of both the country and beneficiaries, given the implementation of stakeholder engagement throughout multiple stages of the projects. Although the country has limited institutional capacity, there is evidence of in-country government stakeholders driving efforts towards coherence and complementarity as well as pursuing cost-saving and efficiency-producing innovations.

Across the HFWW RA-tagged investments of the GCF in the RMI, inconsistencies in reporting and lack of understanding on the RA approach have led to difficulties in measuring progress towards achieving core HFWW results, with a likelihood of underreporting of core benefits and co-benefits. The HFWW RA-tagged investments in the RMI point to significant potential impact in core HFWW results, with some paradigm-shift potential of key project outputs.

Appendix 1. PORTFOLIO REVIEW

Table A - 1. GCF funded projects portfolio

PROJECT	PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	THEME	COUNTRIES	AE	PROJECT TIMELINE	FINANCIAL INSTRUMENT
FP066	Pacific Resilience Project Phase II for RMI	The project will focus on enhancing the resilience of coastal infrastructure in the densely populated areas of the capital Majuro and the island of Ebeye. It will include strengthening institutions and improving access to early warning and disaster preparedness. The proposed coastal infrastructure intervention has been shown to be the only feasible option to protect people and assets against sea level rise and storms.	Adaptation	Marshall Islands	World Bank	Pipeline – 04 Jan 2017 – 422 days Approved – 01 Mar 2018 – 338 days Under implementation – 01 Feb 2019 Legal opinion on AE's Internal Approval – 01 Feb 2019 FAA effective – 13 Feb 2019 Disbursement – USD 25,000,000 – 09 Dec 2020 To be completed – 3 Dec 2025	100% disbursed GCF financing Instrument amount - Grant USD 25,000,000 Total GCF financing USD 25,000,000 Co-financing Co-financer instrument amount Co-financing grant USD 34,888,000 Total co-financing USD 34,888,000
FP112	Addressing Climate Vulnerability in the Water Sector (ACWA) in the Marshall Islands	This project will increase the resilience of water resources for drinking and hygiene in the Marshall Islands. Planned interventions include improving household and community rainwater harvesting and storage structures; and securing groundwater resources from seawater intrusion. The project will also strengthen the technical capacities of national and subnational	Adaptation	Marshall Islands	UNDP	Pipeline – 22 Jun 2018 – 382 days Approved – 08 Jul 2019 – 236 days Under implementation – 28 Feb 2020 FAA effective – 28 Feb 2020 Disbursement – USD 2,323,131 – 27 May 2020 Disbursement – USD 4,302,691 – 25 Aug 2022	55% disbursed GCF financing Instrument amount - Grant USD 18,631,216 Total GCF financing USD 18,631,216 Co-financing Co-financer instrument amount - Co-financing grant USD 6,116,092 Total co-financing USD 6,116,092

PROJECT	PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	THEME	COUNTRIES	AE	PROJECT TIMELINE	FINANCIAL INSTRUMENT
		institutions and key stakeholders to integrate climate change risks into water governance processes.				Disbursement – USD 3,689,288 – 24 Oct 2023 To be completed – 28 Feb 2027	

Source: GCF DataLab Tableau server [iPMS – Projects – ResultArea_Long_B39].

Table A - 2. RMI RPSP proposals

ID	PROJECT TITLE	DELIVERY PARTNER/AE	SUBMISSION DATE	COMMITTED AMOUNT (USD)	ENDORSEMENT DATE	APPROVAL DATE	DISBURSED (USD)	AGREEMENT TYPE
1706-14747	Republic of Marshall Islands NDA Strengthening and GCF engagement Readiness Project	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)	2017-04-30	563,813	2017-10-20	2017-12-11	306,941	General grant agreement
2009-16466	Enhancing the resilience of health systems to climate change and emerging pandemics in the Republic of Marshall Islands	World Health Organization	2020-12-23	399,802	2021-12-07	2021-12-30	170,964	General grant agreement
2106-16798	Republic of the Marshall Islands GCF Readiness 2 Strengthening of the NDA and Direct Access Entities	SPREP	2021-06-15	522,500	2021-12-09	2022-01-01	325,000	General grant agreement

Source: GCF DataLab Tableau server [iPMS – Projects – ResultArea_Long_B39].

Appendix 2. PHOTOS FROM FP112 SITE VISIT

Rainwater catcher



This photo depicts examples of how households in the E nubuj community are typically catching rainwater that will be used for drinking water or for cooking. As it shows, this is not the most sanitary way of catching water as the catchment is open, exposing it to outside elements such as leaves and dirt. © Samantha Coronel

Rainwater harvesting and storage structure



These two photos show a water tank, roof, gutters, filter and first flushing system that the FP112 project built in the Enebuuj community. The white gutter (lefthand image) captures rainwater and connects underground to the water tank (righthand image). At the top of the rainwater gutter, there is a tiny filter for removing leaves and other large debris. After filtering, water is diverted to the first tube to collect the first flow of water and any remaining particulates that have settled on the roof between rains. Once the first flush pipe is full, the cleaner rainwater that follows runs into the larger tank (righthand image). This stands in stark contrast to the previous photo, which does not provide any sanitary measures to clean the water before it is collected. © Samantha Coronel

Appendix 3. PHOTO FROM FP066 SITE VISIT

Future seawall site



This photo shows part of an area on the ocean side of Ebeye Island where the FP066 seawall will be built. On the lefthand side of the photo are residential houses that are extremely close to the Pacific Ocean and that will be directly affected by rising sea levels. Implementation of the seawall has yet to start, but this photo shows the relevance of this project and just how vulnerable those living on Ebeye are. © Samantha Coronel

Appendix 4. CONSULTED STAKEHOLDERS

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	POSITION	ORGANIZATION
Adde	Rolandon	Readiness Project Support Officer	Ministry of Environment
Anjolak	Jeman	N/A	Enubuj Community
Anjolak	Bien	N/A	Enubuj Community
Arelong	Abon	Disaster Response Manager	Kwajalein Atoll Local Government
Bejan	Nono	N/A	Enubuj Community
Capelle	Kinda	N/A	Enubuj Community
Cepelle	Alki	N/A	Enubuj Community
Davis	Kieren	Chief Technical Adviser	UNDP
Edwards	Florence	Deputy Director	Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority
Iyadomi	Keiske	Senior Climate Change Specialist	World Bank Group
Jacob	Billy	N/A	Enubuj Community
John	Nano	N/A	Enubuj Community
Johnson	Yolanie	Gender & Youth Specialist	UNDP
Kabua	Bernadette L.	Climate Change Coordinator	Ministry of Environment
Kabua	Anjo	Executive Director	Kwajalein Atoll Development Authority
Karben	Nathan	Climate and Health Coordinator	Ministry of Health
Kassai	Rusty	N/A	Enubuj Community
Kemem	Gerda	N/A	Enubuj Community
Kijiner	Catalino	Deputy Chief Secretary	Office of Chief Secretary
Kumamaru	Koji	Project Manager	UNDP
Langdrik	Amera	N/A	Enubuj Community
Langdrik	Nedi	N/A	Enubuj Community
Langdrik	Etlina	N/A	Enubuj Community
Langdrik	Nevi	N/A	Enubuj Community
Langdrik	Emily	N/A	Enubuj Community
Langdrik	Ballon	N/A	Enubuj Community
Lanwi	Gery	Project Site Coordinator	ACWA project (FP112)
Lautiej	Shalmer	N/A	Enubuj Community
Liao	Xiawei	Co-Task Team Leader	World Bank
Maddison	Marie	Adviser	Women United Together Marshall Islands
Mannix	Patrick	Project Manager for GCF FP066 PREP II project	World Bank Group
Milne	Lani	GCF Readiness Coordinator	Ministry of Environment
Moses	Anjetob	N/A	Enubuj Community
Myazoe	James	PMU Manager	Ministry of Public Works,

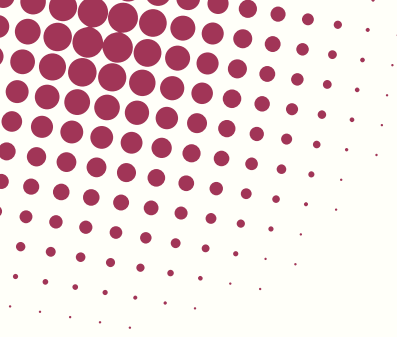
LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	POSITION	ORGANIZATION
			Infrastructure & Utilities
Ned	Jina	N/A	Enubuj Community
Nenam	Robert	City Clerk	Kwajalein Atoll Local Government
Note	Danyia	Executive Director	Women United Together Marshall Islands
Phillip	William	N/A	Enubuj Community
Robert	Isidore	Director	National Disaster Management Office
Samuel	Clarence	Director	Ministry of Environment
Santiago	Ariston	Civil Engineer	Kwajalein Atoll Development Authority
Saunders	Angela	Head	International Organization for Migration
Tarwillin	Malie	Assistant Secretary	Ministry of Finance
Unknown	Lakang	N/A	Enubuj Community
Wang	Qing	Co-Task Team Leader	World Bank Group
Zackious	Thomas	Project Manager	United Nations Environment Programme

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