

FINAL REPORT

on the

End of Project Evaluation

Raising Pacific Voices (RPV)

Reference: CSO-LA/2016/374/324



Submitted by EcoConsult Pacific Pte Limited

To

Oxfam in the Pacific

Suva, Fiji

29 August 2021

Contents

Ch	Title	Page
	Acronyms	4
	Acknowledgements	5
	Executive Summary	6
1.0	Introduction	11
2.0	Evaluation Objective, Methodology and Challenges	13
3.0	Genesis of the Project	14
4.0	Project Relevance and Design	15
5.0	Efficiency	17
6.0	Effectiveness	21
7.0	Impact	27
8.0	Sustainability	28
9.0	Conclusions	29
10.0	Key Recommendations	32
11.0	References	33
Annexes		
1	List of Persons interviewed / consulted	35
2	EcoConsult Pacific Evaluation Team Introductory Message	36

Acronyms

AGM	Annual General Meeting
AMAK	Aia Mwaea Ainen Kiribati
AUD	Australian Dollar
BIMBA	Boutoka Inaomataia ao Marurunga Binabinaine (Kiribati)
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
Chuuk NYC	Chuuk National Youth Council (Federated States of Micronesia)
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DSE	Development Services Exchange
EDF	European Development Fund
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GLA	Governance Leadership & Accountability
GoV	Government of Vanuatu
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
ICAT	Influencing Capacity Assessment Tool
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
KANGO	Kiribati Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
KiriCAN	Kiribati Climate Action Network
KRA	Key Result Area
MFF	Ma'a Fafine Moe Famili Inc. (Tonga)
MVM	Mal Vatu Mauri (Vanuatu)
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NMU	Nei Mom Uprising Inc (Kiribati)
NSA	Non-State Actors
OAU	OXFAM Australia
OCAT	Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool
OCDP	Organisational Capacity Development Plan
OiP	OXFAM in the Pacific
PDF	Pacific Disability Forum
PIANGO	Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations
PICAN	Pacific Islands Climate Action Network
PIFS	Pacific Island Forum Secretariat
PRNGO	Pacific Regional Non-Government Organisations Alliance
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PWA	Partnership Working Agreement
REACH-MI	Radiation Exposure Awareness Crusaders for Humanity - Marshall Islands
RIAP	Regional Influencing Advisory Panel
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
RPV	<i>Raising Pacific Voices</i> (Project)
SICAN	Solomon Islands Climate Action Network
SSF	Shared Services Facility
SPSV	<i>Shifting Power, Shifting Voices</i> (Project)
SUNGO	Samoa Umbrella for NGO's
TANGO	Tuvalu Association for NGO's
TLA	Tonga Leitis Association
TNCC	Tonga National Council of Churches
TNYC	Tonga National Youth Congress
ToT	Training of Trainers
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States Dollar

Acknowledgments

If they are to be effective, evaluations should involve in-country in-person meetings to listen to stakeholders and beneficiaries and determine what has been achieved in those places where the project matters most. This is especially so for projects such as the RPV that rely heavily on close and regular interactions with the many people who are the CSOs and drive them. We had intended – hoped – that we could do at least some personal interviews, and perhaps, even one or a few country visits. The ongoing Covid-19 restrictions prevented all these from happening. We could not even visit any of the Fijian beneficiaries or stakeholders, despite some being located right in Suva. Out of necessity, we had to use virtual meeting tools for our interviews, which are so ‘un-Pacific’ and have their limitations, and at times can be frustrated by connectivity issues. All in all however, we believe we’ve managed to capture most of the essentials of the project to make a qualified assessment of how it fared under these unique, and very constrained circumstances.

We thank all those who made themselves available for virtual interviews. The information you provided, the comments and suggestions you gave have helped us develop a good picture of the environment the project operated in, and of the ways it worked with stakeholders and beneficiaries in delivering the outputs and achieving the outcomes. And although the project is all about people, we have come to accept that working with them is not always easy.

Vinaka vakalevu

Sivia Qoro and Wilco Liebrechts

Suva, Fiji

Executive Summary

The Raising Pacific Voices (RPV) project arose from the Pacific Regional Indicative Programme (PRIP) 2014-2020 that describes the development assistance provided by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF11) for regional activities in the Pacific to a total of Euro 166m. The PRIP includes an allocation of Euro 18m for 'Inclusive and Accountable Governance and the respect for Human Rights' which includes support for cross-cutting issues including gender, youth, persons with disabilities and Non-State Actors. The RPV project was arrived at through a negotiated procedure and funded through a grant of Euro 2.3m from the PRIP allocation and a contribution by Oxfam of Euro 255,556. The Grant Agreement was signed on 21 December 2016, with an anticipated start of activities on 23 January 2017. A first Amendment deferred the start to 27 February 2017.

The RPV project's Overall Objective is *'To strengthen the capacity of Community Service Organisations (CSOs) to influence the development and maintenance of inclusive and accountable government in the Pacific region'*. The Specific Objective is *'To improve the effectiveness of national and regional CSOs in bringing diverse voices of poor and marginalised groups and on key development issues into selection national and regional policy-making processes'*. To achieve this, the project has identified four key result areas for support: (1) Capacity development programme to strengthen governance and transparency of national CSOs developed, tested and implemented in Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia sub-regions; (2) Capacity development programme to strengthen the capacity of selected national level CSOs to effectively represent constituency voice in relevant local and national level governance spaces developed, tested and implemented in Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia sub-regions; (3) Capacity development programme to strengthen collaboration between national level umbrella CSOs and regional level CSOs to research, develop and implement influencing strategies targeting regional and global policy making that are evidence-based and inclusive developed and implemented; (4) Mechanisms to support sharing of knowledge and resources across Pacific regional CSOs developed and implemented.

Genesis of the project

The origins of the Raising Pacific Voices project are of key importance to understand the project's progress over its 4.5 years implementation period, and its ability to produce the outputs and deliver the objectives. It also provides lessons learned in relation to fundamental issues that can affect the impact and sustainability of outcomes when not adequately considered and addressed at an early stage of the project cycle.

Following the signing of the EDF11 allocation for the PRIP, the EU Delegation in Suva, Fiji (EUD), initiated discussions with key stakeholders in the region, including PIFS, Oxfam in the Pacific (OiP), members of the Pacific Regional Non-Government Organisations (PRNGO) Alliance, and the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO). PIANGO functions as the Pacific region's body for national umbrella NGO/CSO organisations, and provides a platform for training, influencing and advocacy at the regional and international levels.

Although OiP had only recently (2015) been established in the Pacific, the EU considered it the preferred NGO to take on the role of Lead Partner for this grant funding, in partnership with PIANGO and working with PRNGO to implement a project focused on improving governance of national-level CSOs in 10 Pacific Island Countries, to build capacity to help elevate the voices of the most vulnerable groups to national, regional and international audiences. The project essentially relied on PIANGO's outreach through its network of national NGO umbrella organisations that would be the key contact points for in-country assistance delivery and as target groups for capacity building in at least three of the four pillars of the RPV project.

However, as the development of the project proposal progressed issues started to appear between EUD, Oxfam and PIANGO, and internally within the latter, that led to PIANGO's last minute withdrawal of from the partnership. PDF, which had participated in the design of the project as Chair of PRNGO

agreed to become the implementing partner. PIANGO's withdrawal directly and indirectly affected the project throughout, from securing strong support from PRNGO Alliance members to its implementation, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Key Findings

Project Relevance and Design

The project is highly relevant. The multiple roles that CSOs play as promoters of democracy, defenders of rights holders and of the rule of law, social justice and human rights are acknowledged and widely recognised. CSOs are widely considered as key players in empowering, representing and defending vulnerable and socially excluded groups, and in triggering social changes. Many however faces challenges of internal governance and capacity, dependency on external funding and particularly, in making their voices heard.

The project design is very good however slightly overambitious. It considers the prevailing environment in which the CSOs operate, and the mentioned key areas where support is most needed and useful. The initial 3-year timeframe however limits the potential for effectiveness, impact and sustainability of outcomes as working with national agencies requires the development of trust and long-term coaching and mentoring support. Projects of this type should be designed with a duration of a minimum of 4 years, and ideally also provided with an option for a follow-on project to build on the initial outcomes.

Efficiency

The withdrawal by PIANGO undermined the partners' efforts to attain an adequate level of implementation efficiency throughout the project. Consequentially the partners had to spend considerable efforts on managing relationships and developing and nurturing collaboration and cooperation with regional organisations. Much time was also spent during the first 2 years on developing and piloting the OCAT and other tools and in-country partner consultations.

With the exception of the Finance Manager who was employed from February 2017, recruitment for most of the key positions in the project took too long. By August 2017, 9 months after the signing of the Grant Agreement, and with 25% of the implementation period already passed, the recruitment of the Team Leader, Capacity Building Advisor, MEL Advisor and the PRNGO Programme Officer had not yet been concluded, with some positions even requiring re-advertisement. OiP should have started project staff recruitment processes well before the signing of the Grant Agreement. The Programme Officer for PDF was not filled until April 2018, well after a year into the project, which affected the partner's capacity to fulfill its commitments. Staffing issues were especially prevalent in the period between mid-2018 and the 1st quarter of 2019 – just when activities should have been at their most intensive. It is also of concern that the Team Leader position has been filled by 4 different persons during the project. Four Amendments that extended the implementation period of the project – often just a few days before the scheduled termination date of the project - also did not help in building and maintaining confidence among RPV staff to help plan and commit to project activities, as well as certainty about their jobs.

Having lost that much time during start-up has a significant and lasting effect on the project's efficiency; and time lost cannot be made up for in a project of 3 years' duration – and especially not in a project that works with a poorly developed and capacitated CSO sector.

Overall fund utilization was good: 86% of the available funds had been utilized by 31 July 2021, generally within the respective budget lines. Main activities that were not implemented included the financial support to 3rd partners (CSOs) and the project's mid-term evaluation; whilst several major workshops (for PRNGO members and Training-of-Trainers, and the RPV project exit workshop) that were scheduled for the last year of the project could not be held due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Effectiveness

Initial introductory partner country visits were conducted in late 2017 and early 2018 in the Marshall Islands (REACH MI), Vanuatu (Vatu Mari Consortium - VMC) and Tonga (Civil Society Forum of Tonga - CSFT). Pilot initiatives in RMI and Vanuatu were started in 2018; CSFT had withdrawn as it expected a wider involvement and funding for its participation, and in 2019 the vacated opportunity was taken up by the Tuvalu Association of NGOs (TANGO). These included Organisational Capacity Assessment workshops (using the OCAT tool developed by the RPV project), and the subsequent development of their Capacity Building Plans to help the CSOs develop and strengthen the structures and processes that had been identified in these exercises as wanting. Activities mostly focused on addressing issues that were considered fundamental to their successful operations and progressive development in strengthening members' voices (such as their Constitutions and financial management systems). In 2019 a 2nd phase was started providing support to CSOs in Samoa (1), Kiribati (4), Tonga (3), Federated States of Micronesia (1) and Solomon Islands (2), and continued assistance to Vanuatu, RMI and Tuvalu. Support was also provided to 6 CSOs in Fiji where the OCAT workshops were held by RPV staff, however these were co-funded from the Australian Aid-funded Shifting Power Shifting Voices project that was also implemented by OiP.

Follow-up activities in coaching and mentoring to support and monitor implementation and review of development plans by targeted CSOs were not fully conducted. Several main factors were the cause of this: RPV staffing constraints and the limited implementation time left of the project; and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic that prevented all international travel from March 2020 onwards.

Encouraging collective and collaborative action to increase CSOs engagement and influencing capacity in national and regional policy development and implementation has not been fully realized. The Blue Economy research paper that was commissioned under the RPV project was welcomed by PRNGO Alliance members but was not adopted as a strategic policy influencing priority.

The NGO Capacity Assessment Study commissioned by RPV in late 2020 produced a report of poor quality that does not provide the anticipated update on the 2009 UNDP assessment of the capacities and constraints of a selection of CSOs in the region. The information reflected in the report is not sufficient to obtain a reliable and accurate overview, and therefore does not help in assessing any progress made since 2009, nor by the RPV project at the end of its implementation period.

In terms of collaborative mechanisms to support sharing of knowledge and resources across the Pacific regional CSOs developed and implemented: The OCAT Tool and other tools developed by the project are hosted for online access through the Distance Flexible Learning (DFL) unit at USP. Trials to assess and improve their accessibility and usability for registered clients have shown very encouraging results. Although the DFL delivery mode remains heavily biased towards OiP consideration needs to be given to make these services available on a wider scale to other service providers and users. The Shared Services Facility (SSF) feasibility study conducted in early 2021 provided five options for the establishment and management of an SSF for the Pacific region, including an assessment of each option's advantages and constraints. Although the report and the options appear Oxfam-centered, they are best presented in a more neutral way whereby the hosting of the facilities and other support structures remain open to facilitate discussion among PRINGO Alliance partners and enable the adoption of a strong and wider ownership of the useful facility.

Overall, most of the outputs delivered are considered to be appropriate and of good quality.

Impact

Ultimately the project responds to some of the longstanding critiques and perceptions about Pacific CSOs, about their constituency-base, the lack of financial management and governance systems in place and the opportunities provided through enhanced collaboration amongst CSOs to influence national and regional government decision making processes.

The RPV project has supported and strengthened the capacities of a number of CSOs to capitalise on opportunities to respond to emerging issues at national levels. This will contribute to more inclusive and accountable governance in their respective countries, and the region overall. The piloting the OCAT with Radiation Exposure Awareness Crusaders for Humanity (REACH - MI) in Majuro resulted in the Digital Storytelling Bootcamp creating a cohort of youth engaged as influencers. In Samoa, SUNGO effectively used its RPV grant funds in implementing OCAT workshops with 16 rural member CSOs and at the same time raising awareness on controversial legislation proposed by the then government in early 2021. Such initiatives not only generate a direct effect, but also contribute to empowering communities to engage in other policy influencing activities and advocacy processes to shape and influence changes in Samoa.

The range of tools developed by the project is available through the USP DFL facility, where it can be accessed remotely by registered users for civil society organisational strengthening activities. As such they will continue to support the promotion of effective representation of constituency voices in relevant local and national level governance spaces and for collective influence. In the long term, the application of the OCAT and OCDP tools will help guide CSOs to determine their own development priorities and how to address them, to assess key internal organisational functions critical to inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and effectiveness for enhanced constituency representations.

Effectively representing the diverse voices of the Pacific peoples, particularly the poor and marginalized in key regional and national polices needs to be further strengthened. Specific examples, however, demonstrated specific evidence of accomplishments. KIRICAN has worked on translating and publishing the OCAT tool in the iKiribati language and working with the Kiribati Community Initiative Association (KCIA) to restructure and developed its Constitution to better serve its communities. Re-engagement with members has resulted in SUNGO increasing its membership, indicating a strong interest from CBOs and CSOs to contribute to and benefit from the organisation's initiatives, and thereby strengthening its sustainability. Amendments arising from reviews of Constitutions are proposed to members of CSOs, strategic plans have been reviewed and are in the process of updating, and improved financial management plans and structures have been proposed and, in some cases, already endorsed by CSO management boards. SUNGO, as perhaps one of the better capacitated CSOs, has demonstrated how CSO capacities to engage in public policy discussions can be promoted and strengthened in a sustainable manner.

Sustainability

Tools developed by the RPV project have been made available using the Moodle software and hosted with the Distance Flexible Learning Facility hosted by USP. Some 125 persons associated with national and regional CSOs have been registered on the site to access the facilities. The availability of these tools through the DFL platform also provides opportunities for networking and facilitates a wider reach of their application and use. The use of the Moodle platform allows easy access and application for remote consultations, collaboration and trainings and will contribute to the continued capacity development and strengthening of national and regional CSOs. Although the annual subscription required by Moodle could be considered a hindrance to accessing the platform, OiP has confirmed its commitment to continue payment of the annual fee for up to 200 registered users so that the facilities remain accessible to OiP project partners and associates.

Despite the achievements, it is obvious that this project has been a pilot initiative in which the usefulness of the outputs and the potential of achieving a much wider impact has been demonstrated. Heeding the learnings from this project – and that includes the lessons and experiences prior to project start up – will greatly help in preparing a follow-on project that can further expand on the outputs and achievements of the RPV project, and that should include the piloting of a Shared Services Facility for Pacific CSOs. For this to be successful it will require broad support as well as shared ownership by key

regional NGO members of the PRNGO Alliance. Necessarily, this will require wide consultations to create a genuine partnership of the willing, and an open mind that is focused on making a significant contribution to improve the influencing capacities and confidence of the CSOs and the communities to raise their Pacific voices and making them heard in their countries, the Pacific region, and the world.

Key Recommendations

1. Urgently provide further support to continue the CSO capacity building initiatives piloted by the RPV project, to enable the widening and intensification of the initiatives started, and regain the momentum achieved in 2020
2. The follow-on project should have a wider range of suitable regional NGO partners (including but not necessarily PRINGO agencies) to take on the responsibility of leading, implementing and facilitating in-country capacity building activities
3. In contrast to the options identified in the 2021 SSF Feasibility Study which promote a strong – and nearly sole – leadership role by Oxfam in the Pacific, leadership of the SSF should involve a much wider base of Pacific regional NGOs to ensure strong and widespread ownership leading to better effectiveness, wider impact and longer sustainability.

1.0 Introduction

Pacific Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) are considered to play a crucial role in informing people on a wide range of issues including governance, climate change and its mitigation and adaptation thereto, health, sustainable development, and social and socio-economic issues. However, their capacity in carrying out these functions is often inadequate as they lack common policy positions and influencing strategies, technical expertise, and financial resources to participate in effectively contributing to discussions on these topics, and issues relating to their own governance structures. Their voices are rarely heard at the national platform, and to an even lesser extent at regional or international ones.

Empowering NGOs and CSOs to take a wider and more intensive role in representing their stakeholders is therefore of fundamental importance in the process of promoting good governance and issues concerning Human Rights, equality, and equal rights.

The EU Council recognizes that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) play a critical role in ensuring the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the EU Global Strategy, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It therefore reaffirms EU support to CSOs to feature more prominently in all partnerships by promoting their mainstreaming in all external instruments and areas of cooperation through a more strategic engagement. This includes in particular in EU Development Policy, the European Neighbourhood Policy¹ and the EU Enlargement Policy. It considers that strengthening the capacities of CSOs to operate and in defending an enabling environment including through political and policy dialogue with partner countries are activities that need to be pursued and build upon.

The EU is a major donor to the Pacific region and its island states. Its support is largely provided through the European Development Fund (EDF) facility. The EDF is guided by multi-annual Pacific Regional Regional Indicative Programmes (PRIP), which are prepared in close consultation with Pacific regional intergovernmental organisations under leadership of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS). The PRIP for the current 11th EDF (EDF11) covers the period 2014-2020². It provides an allocation of Euro 166m for support to three priority areas: (1) Regional Economic Integration (Euro 50m); (2) Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the Environment and the Management of Waste (Euro 52m); and (3) Inclusive and Accountable Governance and the Respect for Human Rights (Euro 18m)³ which includes cross-cutting issues including gender, youth, persons with disabilities, and strengthening of the capacity of Non-State Actors (NSAs) to participate effectively in regional policy making processes and to influence the development and maintenance of inclusive and accountable governance. By extension this also covers initiatives which advance the participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and community-based organisations in the scope of the first and second priority areas⁴.

¹ EU, 2012. *Improving The EU Support for The Civil Society in Its Neighbourhood: Rethinking Procedures, Ensuring That Practices Evolve*. EU, 2012.

https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/EU%20Study_decembre-2012.pdf

² PIFS, 2014. *The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat – European Union: Pacific Indicative Programme 2014-2020*. <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Pacific-Regional-Indicative-Programme-2014-2020-signed.pdf>

³ In addition, Euro 46m is available for the promotion of investments in the first two priority areas to make up the total budget allocation of Euro 166m

⁴ Ditto

The 'Raising Pacific Voices' project falls under this 3rd priority area of PRIP and was arrived at through a negotiated procedure for funding through an EU grant (No. CSO-LA/2016/374-324) of Euro 2.3m (90% of the total project cost) and a contribution by Oxfam of Euro 255,556. The Grant Agreement was signed on 21 December 2016, with an anticipated start of activities on 23 January 2017. A first Amendment deferred the start to 27 February 2017. The project has an implementation period of just over four years, and activities concluded in May 2021.

The RPV project follows a large number of earlier initiatives supported by donor agencies over the years and specifically aims to support capacity building of key regional NGOs and national umbrella CSOs in the Pacific region, to help them reach out and support national and (sub)regional NGOs in doing the same to their constituent NGOs and CSOs, and thereby provide a multiplier in achieving a much wider impact that reaches the grassroots in each PIC.

The project seeks to support national and regional umbrella CSOs in building capacity to help themselves reach out and capacitate CSOs in participating Pacific Island Countries, through a range of interventions and activities in building transparent and responsible governance, and strengthen their capacity to influence local and national level government: in fact, helping to *make their voices heard*.

The RPV project's Overall Objective is *'To strengthen the capacity of Community Service Organisations (CSOs) to influence the development and maintenance of inclusive and accountable government in the Pacific region'*. The Specific Objective is *'To improve the effectiveness of national and regional CSOs in bringing diverse voices of poor and marginalised groups and on key development issues into selection national and regional policy-making processes'*. To achieve this, the project has identified four key result areas for support: (1) Capacity development programme to strengthen governance and transparency of national CSOs developed, tested and implemented in Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia sub-regions; (2) Capacity development program to strengthen the capacity of selected national level CSOs to effectively represent constituency voice in relevant local and national level governance spaces developed, tested and implemented in Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia sub-regions; (3) Capacity development program to strengthen collaboration between national level umbrella CSOs and regional level CSOs to research, develop and implement influencing strategies targeting regional and global policy making that are evidence-based and inclusive developed and implemented; (4) Mechanisms to support sharing of knowledge and resources across Pacific regional CSOs developed and implemented.

Although the initial design of the project focused on KRA 3 – to help strengthen CSOs influencing capacities, and KRA4 - to help raise their voices, the EU suggested the incorporation of two additional KRAs that would enable the project to take a bottom-up approach by helping build the capacity of national CSOs at the grassroots level and supporting the development of their influencing abilities. This made sense, as those local CSOs are most familiar with the conditions and sentiment in the communities they serve and are better able to identify the issues that do, can or might affect them over the near- or long-term future. This would then link in with the development of capacities of the larger regional CSOs and the International NGOs (the INGOs) under KRA3 and KRA4 to conduct in depth analyses to determine the root causes and their potential and actual effects and provide a wider picture of relevant issues in the Pacific that could help raise and galvanise regional and international awareness and support.

This end-of-project evaluation report assesses the project on its design, its implementation, and the achievement of results to determine the project's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and coherence, as well as any community added value.

2.0 Evaluation Objective, Methodology and Challenges

2.1 Evaluation Objectives

An evaluation involves an assessment, as accurate, systematic and objective as possible, which focuses on the design, implementation and results of one or more activities that are related to each other. The aim is to determine the relevance, fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability and to learn from these findings to help improve other ongoing or new activities.

2.2 Methodology

In this evaluation of the *Raising Pacific Voices* project, the team has made every effort to triangulate the findings from the various tools employed. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to generate reliable data and information. Where relevant, the tools selected were with a view to maximise the participation of all stakeholders identified. A range of M&E techniques were used in the process, including personal interviews and literature review, to identify issues and constraints, successes and shortcomings in the project's implementation processes, and assess the impact and sustainability of outputs and outcomes the project has delivered. The interviews also focused on determining stakeholders/target beneficiaries' ownership of the project, including their roles in planning and decision-making, implementation and monitoring. It was to also determine their perspectives of the project and the approaches applied by Oxfam and key implementing partner organisations, the project outputs and outcomes, as well as impact and sustainability indicators. Review tools that were used in the process include:

2.2.1 Literature (desk) review: A list of documents was identified and provided by OXFAM that formed the basis of the initial literature review. This included documents related to the project intervention such as project formulation documents, progress reports, activity/field trip reports, scoping and monitoring reports, some databases, etc. The team also carried out desk research of available literature in related areas to facilitate a well-informed assessment of the performance of the intervention including the implementation of its activities and of the organisation, to gain a further understanding and identify the status, best practices and possible constraints to the implementation of the project.

2.2.2 Interviews: Interviews were organized with a wide range of project stakeholders including OiP staff, representatives of national and regional umbrella organisations, regional networks and project beneficiaries, focusing on specific areas relevant to the project. Interviews were conducted with selected people, either in person or virtually using media including Zoom, MS Teams or Skype or at times, old-fashioned telephone calls. Following introductions, the team used semi-structured questions and prompts that provided opportunities to ask more follow-up questions, and to refine the qualitative data obtained during the evaluation process.

2.3 Evaluation Challenges

The evaluation team considered constraints raised by stakeholders in the context of the project by taking the 'Constructive Criticism' approach, to identify important issues that have, or may have led, to the mentioned constraints. This has allowed us to take into account the wider perspective and environment in which the project operated, as this in itself can be a critical factor that can boost as well as constrain output delivery and the achievement of outcomes. In this process, the extensive skills and experiences of both evaluators have been heavily relied on.

Although considered highly conducive to a sound evaluation exercise, visits to selected beneficiary organisations to conduct interviews with their key staff have been impossible due to restrictions imposed under the Covid-19 mitigation measures. Instead, the team had to conduct in-person

interviews through virtual means, which is far less efficient and effective, and in most cases prevents the team from establishing the trust and respect with those interviewed that promotes voicing their opinions more frankly and in earnest. Nevertheless, the team believes that it has been provided with the best information it could obtain under these circumstances.

Nevertheless, the team has been acutely aware that the RPV project by its nature aims to improve on how people work together, and how they communicate with one another. This requires open and frank communications between stakeholders, beneficiaries, intermediates, and RPV staff. This process should not have to entail *raising* one's voice physically, but rather ensuring that they are heard through reason, understanding and dialogue.

Evaluation findings have been presented in this report in both quantitative and qualitative terms. These findings have informed the team to identify the lessons learned to help ensure that experiences can be used to enhance the effectiveness of OiP, PRNGO Alliance members and their implementing partners and critically to improve the design, quality, performance and impact of future projects. The findings have also provided us with the basis for substantive, evidence-based conclusions and recommendations reflected in this report.

3.0 Genesis of the Project

The origins of the Raising Pacific Voices project are of key importance to understand the project's progress over the life of the project over the 4.5 years it was implemented, and its ability to produce the outputs and deliver the objectives. It also provides lessons learned in fundamental issues that can affect the impact and sustainability of the project's outcomes if not taken into account and addressed at an early stage.

Oxfam is a large international NGO with a worldwide network of affiliates and agencies. Over many years it has gained a strong reputation in implementing development assistance programmes, and its established financial management and accountability procedures enable it to attract substantial donor support. Its entry in the Pacific in 2015 propelled it to a seat among the large International NGOs (INGOs) already active there, and caused some concern from the smaller, regional CSOs that commonly have a much lower capacity to access and manage donor support. To some degree there may also have been some concerns of becoming overwhelmed by a large player that is new to the region.

Following the signing of the EDF11 allocation for the PRIP, the EU Delegation in Suva, Fiji (EUD), initiated discussions with key stakeholders in the region to identify potential opportunities for CSO capacity building and influencing that could be considered for major funding under the PRIP's 3rd focal sector. These stakeholders included PIFS, Oxfam in the Pacific (OiP), members of the Pacific Regional Non-Government Organisations (PRNGO) Alliance. It also included the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO), as the Pacific region's body for national umbrella NGO/CSO organisations and a full member of the PRNGO Alliance, and which was considered a key player in the development of a platform for training, influencing and advocacy at the regional and international level.

During 2016 these stakeholder discussions progressed, and the focus and format of the regional project became more clear. At that stage the RPV concept provided a good compromise for fulfilling the PRIP's focus on supporting capacity building of NSAs, NGOs and CSOs in the Pacific, and providing the assurance for reliable financial management and accountability of the project, while supporting PIANGO in strengthening itself as the umbrella NGO for national NGOs and CSOs in the Pacific Islands Region.

Although there are well established NGOs that have widespread representation in the region, their capacity, reach, mandates and focal intervention areas are restricted. Moreover, an organisation's capacity to provide a substantial security bond prior to the release of funds is often a deciding factor in securing major funding from donors, in particular the European Union.

The establishment of Oxfam in the Pacific (OiP) in Fiji provided an opportunity to channel funding through a well-endowed international NGO focused on governance and capacity building initiatives in many developing countries, and with accredited accountability standards. Although the 'new kid on the block' in the Pacific arena of regional NGOs, OiP was considered by the EU to be best qualified to take on the role of Lead Partner for this grant funding and by having the ability to provide the required security bond of Euro 0.895m, offered the best assurance for financial accountability.

During the later months of 2016 issues started to appear in communications between the EUD, OiP and PIANGO, and internally within PIANGO, in particular between the CEO and its Board. Unrealistic expectations also had been raised among the PIANGO Board that it would be controlling a major part of the project funding. Although a considerable part may be attributed to inadequate communication between the three main stakeholders, an initial resistance from PRNGO Alliance members to Oxfam establishing itself as a substantial player on the regional NGO scene may also have contributed to the broader discord that eventually led to PIANGO's last minute withdrawal from the project partnership. Oxfam thereafter consulted with the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) that had participated in designing the project and at that time chaired the PRNGO Alliance, which subsequently agreed to become the implementing partner representing the Alliance.

Nevertheless, the damage was done. As an influential member of the PRNGO Alliance, PIANGO's withdrawal directly and indirectly affected the project in securing strong support from other members; moreover, the continued uncertainty about Oxfam's positioning in the region provided grounds for PRNGO Alliance members to even antagonise the project at times, especially during its first few years. This affected the project's relationship with this group of important stakeholders, and reduced the effectiveness of deliverables foreseen under KRAs 3 and 4 in particular.

4.0 Project Relevance and Design

The project has been highly relevant in addressing the fundamental issues that affect CSO governance and management in the Pacific, and albeit to a somewhat lesser extent, in improving their influencing capacities. Comments from stakeholders and beneficiaries during interviews clearly confirmed that significant contributions have been made in strengthening the capacities of targeted organisations in a range of areas including improving governance and institutional structures, human resources development and, to an extent, financial management and fundraising capacity.

The multiple roles that CSOs play as promoters of democracy, defenders of rights holders and of the rule of law, social justice and human rights are acknowledged and widely recognised. CSOs have an extensive community outreach and are widely considered as key players in empowering, representing and defending vulnerable and socially excluded groups, and in triggering social changes.

In acknowledgement of this, governments increasingly are strengthening their engagement with CSOs, although the relationships are often strained or delicate. Limited dialogue still prevails in many countries and far too often the space for civil society remains narrow.⁵

⁵ EC, 2012. *Communication from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee Of The Regions: The roots of democracy and sustainable*

On the other hand, many CSOs face challenges in making their voices heard that arise from shortcomings in internal governance, resource capacity, and a dependency on external funding. A detailed CSO capacity assessment conducted by UNDP in 2009 identified six core challenges faced by CSOs to deliver effectively on their mandate. These include organisational development, information sharing and communications, NGO sustainability and funding, stakeholder relations, legal and regulatory frameworks, and advocacy. Issues relating to governance and accountability in particular and including difficulties in effectively consulting and representing constituencies may affect the legitimacy of CSOs.

Moreover, the absence of effective collaboration with other CSOs, driven by competition or attitudes of individual members demonstrates itself in siloed and disconnected efforts on shared issues and a failure to recognise and appreciate the effectiveness of harmonising agendas for engaging in policy processes. Too often this produces fragmented CSOs voices and approaches, where only the loudest voices make the noise, however overall, with lesser impact than could be.

The '*Raising Pacific Voices*' initiative strongly responds to the needs of national and umbrella CSOs. Its design considers the prevailing environment in which these operate, and identifies the key areas where support is most needed and useful. In fact, such support is long overdue.

Considered from a general perspective the project design and including its logical framework is very good. It aims to strengthen capacities of CSOs to engage in policy and to effectively represent the diverse voices of the Pacific peoples, particularly poor and marginalised groups, in key national and regional policy processes and service deliveries to their respective constituencies. Beneficiaries include at the regional level the PRNGO Alliance network based in Fiji, at the national level three umbrella CSOs and, network or membership based CSOs in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Tonga, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Cook Islands and Fiji, as well as selected members of the PRNGO Alliance.

The project is implemented by Oxfam in the Pacific (OiP) as the Lead Partner and the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) as co-partner. The project budget provides for the hiring of a substantial complement of skilled and experienced staff and includes an allocation for PDF for the hiring of a Programme Officer to support the implementation of activities under Result 3, as well as for the contribution of its CEO in providing project oversight.

Quite ambitious in describing the indicators and targets for the Specific Objective and the intended outcomes, the project design does not sufficiently appreciate the intensity of support needed for mentoring, handholding and backstopping CSO partners to ensure their delivery and sustainability to achieve the required long-term impacts. This particularly relates to the issues on travel in the Pacific islands region, where flight costs are high, and options are often limited and infrequent, with travel-time consuming unmatching flight schedules. Considering the dynamics of CSOs and their governance issues, this support should as much as possible be provided through site visits and frequent person-to-person consultations to provide coaching and mentoring opportunities, and importantly help build the trust that is so much needed. This is expensive, but worth the costs as it significantly enhances sustainability, and impact delivery.

A major criticism is therefore also on the initial duration of the project, which is considered insufficient to ensure the achievement of the Specific Objective, and certainly of ensuring sustainability of outcomes and the delivery of a meaningful impact. Although initial timeframe limitations dictated by the EU formats for grants often limit the initial implementation period to three years, projects of this

development: *Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0492:FIN:EN:PDF>

type should have a duration of 4 years at a minimum and provided with an option for a follow-on project to build on the outcomes achieved initially. This comes also with the consideration that for this type of activities the provision of – perhaps less intensive - support over a longer period is much more effective than intensive support over a shorter one, particularly when one seeks to improve overall governance and influencing capacities and capabilities of CSOs. Fundamental to this however is the need to strengthen the human resource capacities to complement the organisational capacity building efforts supported by the project. Both of which are influenced by the enabling environment – the structures of power and influence and the institutions – in which they are embedded, which may take some time to transform. One must also take into account that some interventions may need to start at an even deeper level by identifying specific issues that may need to be addressed, such as a dominating influence by founders, trustees or some members of the CSO on the day-to-day management.

For example, a review of a CSO's Constitution will first require helping the members to realise its need and benefits, which is followed by the actual review, and the subsequent approval of the revisions by the Board, and ultimately, the membership through a General Meeting. Sustainability here is at least as much focused on ensuring that the correct processes (for consultation and decision-making) are followed when further reviews are deemed necessary by the CSO membership, as on the delivery of the end result (a revised Constitution that has been approved by the members).

5.0 Efficiency

After the serious and deep- and long- ranging issues experienced during the genesis phase of the project, it is unrealistic to expect achieving a high level of implementation efficiency, even with the best efforts. The damage was done. PIANGO's withdrawal directly and indirectly affected the project as it missed out on PIANGO's outreach in the Pacific and its membership comprising of national NGO umbrella organisations as the key contact points for in-country assistance delivery, and in all likelihood, as key target groups for capacity building as part of at least three of the four pillars of the RPV project. Securing strong support from the PRNGO Alliance became even more difficult as uncertainty about Oxfam's positioning in the region continued and provided grounds for members to even antagonize the project during its first years. This impacted on the project's relationship with this group of important stakeholders and reduced the effectiveness of deliverables under KRAs 3 and 4 in particular.

The flow-on effect of the withdrawal contributed to a poor start of the project. OiP, PDF and RPV staff were required to spend much time in trying to develop and manage relationships with PRNGO Alliance members, and too often in attempting to mend fences. It did not help that PIANGO staff successfully applied for positions with OiP, which further soured relations between the two organisations. In addition, RPV project staff reported that at times they faced unwarranted and excessive criticism from individual PRNGO Alliance members which caused them much frustration and stress. It must be emphasized here that the CEO of PDF, as Chair of the PRNGO Alliance, often intervened to mediate on contended issues between PRNGO Alliance members and OiP/RPV and was instrumental in helping smoothen relations and progress the RPV project.

Recruitment of project staff. With the exception of the Finance Manager who was recruited in February 2017, the filling of other key positions in the project took much too long. By August 2017 – 9 months after the signing of the Grant Agreement, and with 25% of the implementation period passed - the recruitment processes for the Team Leader, Capacity Building Advisor, MEL Advisor and

the PRNGO Programme Officer had not yet been concluded, with some positions even requiring re-advertisement. Having lost that much time during start-up has a significant impact on the project's efficiency, particularly for a project with a 3-year implementation period. Such an amount of time lost cannot be made up for in the remaining time – and especially not a project that works to build capacity of people and their organisations in an already poorly developed and capacitated CSO sector in the Pacific. OiP should have been much more pro-active in identifying potential candidates for these positions, in particular the Team Leader: this process already could have started well before the signing of the Grant Agreement to enable candidates for key positions in the RPV team to be identified and confirmed well before the formal start of the project.

For most of its duration, the project experienced considerable staff turnover levels, especially in the Team Leader position which was filled by four different persons over the project's duration. Vacancies and changes in the team were especially notable during the 2nd half of 2018 and 1st quarter of 2019 – just when activities should have been at their most intensive. In fact, it was only the position of RPV Finance Manager that held steady for the duration of the project without any change.

The project proposal anticipated that a RPV Project Officer would be based with PDF to support the implementation of activities towards KRA3 in which PDF as project partner and PRNGO Chair played a major role. This position was only filled in April 2018 and was gradually relocated to the RPV team based at OiP. The officer however resigned after 9 months and although temporary staff were hired in the meantime, the position remained vacant until June 2019, when a new staff was hired for a year. To effectively support PDF in carrying out its responsibility to deliver this KRA3, much more emphasis should have been given to expediate recruitment for this position, and to ensure that the position remained based at PDF. At the same time, PDF's partnership should have enabled it to more strongly assert its responsibilities to implement activities, as well as its entitlement to receive funding directly from the project to pay wages of the RPV Project Officer. This would also have enabled it to claim relevant expenses for associated operational and management costs, including a 10% contribution to the wages of the CEO, as indicated in the project budget.

Extension of project duration: 4 Amendments made to extend the project's implementation period by 1 month (to February 2020); by another 6 months (to mid-2020); by an additional 6 months (to end 2020); and lastly by a further 5 months (to end May 2021). The Amendments for the last three extensions were signed resp. a month before the end of the project (3rd Amendment); a day before the end of the project (4th Amendment); and the day before Christmas 2020 (5th Amendment). The signing of the latter three Amendments for such short extensions and so near to their termination date does not provide much confidence to RPV staff to plan their career and personal future, nor to schedule and commit to project activities over the medium and long term. This likely would have created uncertainty about their ongoing work with the project and further added to staff frustrations arising from the poor relationship with PRNGO Alliance members.

Much time was spent during the first 2 years on developing and piloting the OCAT and other tools, in-country partner consultations, and the formalizing of partnerships with CSOs for the pilot initiatives. A key tool in the capacity building initiatives implemented under KRA1, the '*Organisational Capacity Assessment Guide for Pacific Civil Society Organisations*' underwent an extensive consultation and pilot-testing effort before it was finalised in late 2018. One would have expected that existing modules and tools developed by Oxfam for use in other regions could be used in the Pacific region with only minor adaptations, which could have significantly shortened its preparation and adaptation efforts. Instead, it seems that a considerable part of the Guide was re-invented, a process that took up considerable time. Other tools – including the Organisational Capacity Development Assessment and planning tool, and the '*RPV Finance Management Guide for Financial Assistance Recipients*', were developed after that, but CSO training activities on their use could not be fully implemented due to

the limited time remaining of the project, and in particular to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic from February 2020.

Following the identification of national CSO partners to participate in piloting the RPV concept in each of the three countries (Tonga, Vanuatu and Marshall Islands), RPV staff conducted in-country consultations in late 2017 to introduce the project and the outline of the pilots and confirm their commitment to participate. Whilst the Vatu Mari Consortium (VMC) of Vanuatu and the Radiation Exposure Awareness Crusaders for Humanity – Marshall Islands (REACH-MI) readily agreed, the Civil Society Forum of Tonga (CSFT) declined after protracted consultations as it expected to receive funding for staff wages and contributions to office space and activity costs. Although grant conditions did not allow such use of funds, OiP requested dispensation from EUD which was eventually granted, but by that time CSFT had already declined their participation. The Tuvalu Association of Non-Government Organisations (TANGO) then accepted the invitation to participate in the pilot initiatives.

Follow up visits by staff were made several months later, and although project support was very well received and appreciated by the beneficiary CSOs, these visits by RPV staff should have been made more quickly after the signing up of the CSO's and with more intensive frequency to develop and maintain momentum through workshops and in-country coaching and mentoring of CSOs. The hiring from mid-2018 of in-country resource consultants on a full-time basis for Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, and Polynesia as a region intended to help guide the CSOs in piloting their application of the learnings from the OCAT and OCDP trainings through local hands-on and backstopping support over a period of 1.5 years. However, such support was not provided to CSOs in the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati, FSM, Samoa and Tonga that joined the project at a later stage. Moreover, the contract with the consultant for Vanuatu however was terminated in January 2019 following a disagreement between OiP and the consultant on the eligibility of expenditures incurred for customary and traditional protocols during the execution of his tasks.

In-country activities commenced in 2018 on a pilot scale with CSOs in the Marshall Islands (REACH MI) and Vanuatu (Vatu Mari Consortium - VMC) and were being intensified following their OCAT assessments and the subsequent development of their Organisational Capacity Building Plans to help them develop and strengthen structures identified in these exercises. The project provided small grants that enabled CSOs to develop and strengthen fundamental aspects in order to boost their successful operations and their progressive development in building and strengthening their members' voices such as their Constitutions and financial management systems. In 2019 the project was extended to include CSOs in the Solomon Islands (2 CSOs), Kiribati (4), Tonga (3); Federated States of Micronesia (1) and Samoa (1). Following a request from the OiP implemented *Shifting Power Shifting Voices* (SPSV) project, the RPV project in 2020 organised and held week-long workshops on Organisational Capacity Assessment and Capacity Development Planning for 6 Fijian CSOs. The SPSV project is funded by Australian Aid through the Fiji Women's Fund.

Implementation of project activities related to achievement of KRA3 and KRA4 were particularly frustrated by the apparent antagonism from PRNGO Alliance members. Despite continuous efforts from PDF to mediate and resolve these issues, that included multi-stakeholder collaboration training and a retreat aimed at building and strengthening the relationship this continued for most of the project's duration, and only gained some traction in 2020. By then it was too late to make a significant impact under these KRAs.

In April 2018 the PRNGO alliance agreed on the Blue Economy as the focus for its research and influencing, and as an opportunity for cross sectoral dialogue and learning space. It however acknowledged that a better understanding and deeper awareness of this concept was needed to determine how this related to the CSOs and the people they represented, and how best to reflect their voices in influencing opinion- and decision-making. This led to the organization of several RPV-supported activities in mid-2018 and followed by the commissioning of a research study to assess main

sentiments on issues relevant to the Blue Economy principle among communities in three countries, which was presented to the PRNGO Alliance in 2020. Consultancies for the 'CSO State of Governance Report' and the feasibility of a Shared Services Facility (SSF) were only implemented in the 4th quarter of 2020 and the 2nd quarter of 2021, respectively, and too late to have any meaningful impact on improving or influencing the direction of the RPV project.

Project Governance. Key governance structures were established to provide oversight, guidance and advice to different aspects of the project, and endorse updates and revisions to the outcome indicators and targets reflected in the logical framework matrix. Oversight of the RPV project was provided by the Project Steering Committee (PSC) which comprised of representatives from OiP, PDF, PACFAW (representing PRNGO Alliance), PIFS and Oxfam Australia, with the chair alternating between OiP and PDF. PSC meetings were generally held at half yearly intervals and provided opportunities for discussing the progress of the project, the setting and reviewing of the targets for progress indicators, and address arising issues and agree on the way forward. The membership of PIFS also helped ensure a broader alignment with PIFS-facilitated initiatives at the regional level, and as coordinator for regional intergovernmental initiatives that provided influencing opportunities for regional NGOs. At its meeting in September 2017 the PSC also agreed to invite PIANGO to join, although its first attendance was only at the penultimate meeting in December 2019. This followed the appointment of a new PIANGO CEO, who indicated that she only attended to fill in for PACFAW as the designated PRNGO representative to the PSC. Whilst she confirmed interest for PIANGO to participate as a full member of the PSC, it would still require approval from the PIANGO Board. Although it is common practice for the EU to attend the PSC meetings as an observer where they are updated on the project and where they can provide advice and comments on matters of importance, it was not until the PSC meeting in April 2019 that their representative attended. Their earlier attendance could have provided opportunities to express any concerns about the slow start of the project, encouraged the earlier participation of PIANGO, and help identify opportunities for improving the project's relationship with the PRNGO Alliance.

The Terms of Reference for a Regional Influencing Advisory Panel (RIAP) delegated it to advise on the direction of joint research, influencing, advocacy and policy development and implementation under the RPV project. The RIAP comprised of representatives of the University of the South Pacific, Pacific Conference of Churches, PIFS, Pacific Youth Council and World Wide Fund for Nature. Although it would not have a mandate for overall decision-making; it would provide crucial advice and guidance to the PDF Project Officer responsible for KRA3 to help ensure that all voices are heard at crucial junctures in the project cycle. The RIAP, a six-member team, was to have met at least once a month in accordance with its TOR. As reported, however, it was only able to meet a few times to discuss and select the consultants for the Blue Economy research study, and later to discuss the findings of the report. The RIAP has not gained any further traction and members' interest seem to have waned considerably.

A Regional Peer Advice Group was also set up in first six months of project made up of peer-to-peer networks across different organisations; and attempts were made to set up PRNGO Alliance Working Groups in Vanuatu, Tonga and RMI; these however did not work out.

Overall fund utilization by the RPV project during the first 32 months was poor, as expenditures had only reached 49.5% of the total budget available. By July 2021 – after 53 months – expenditure had picked up and reached 86% of the budget had been utilized, generally within the respective budget lines. Main activities that were not implemented included the financial support to 3rd partners (national CSOs) and the project's mid-term evaluation; whilst several major workshops (for PRNGO members and Training-of-Trainers, and the RPV project exit workshop) that were scheduled for the last year of the project could not be held due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Utilisation of small grants provided by RPV to CSOs: Following a budget reallocation in 2019 that incorporated new budget lines to enable strengthening of selected CSOs from mid- to late 2019

onwards. Of the CSOs that participated in the pilots, only three (TANGO; SUNGO - Samoa Umbrella for NGOs; and KIRICAN – Kiribati Climate Action Network) fully utilized their grant funds (respectively AUD 40,196.63, Euro 30,000 and AUD 8,500). REACH-MI and VMC, which received early RPV support utilized respectively 65% (USD 42,707 of a total of USD 66,120) and 25% (Vatu 610,552 of a total of Vatu 1,831,657). Overall expenditure levels of grants to 13 CSOs averaged 63% of the funds available. Overall it appears that the late start of the support, and the limited time available before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic from March 2020 affected the quality of the support provided by the RPV team.

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on project operations. Already on a tight implementation timeline by the end of 2019, the onset of the COVID- 19 pandemic from March 2020 had a highly significant impact on the project. The unexpected sudden imposition of international travel restrictions prevented project staff from carrying out their plans for country missions to train, coach and mentor partner CSOs through face-to-face meetings. CSOs in the Solomon Islands, FSM, Kiribati, Tonga and Samoa had to develop their own OCDPs with planned remote OiP support. This was not an ideal situation given the level of capacities within these countries which required a lot more hand-holding. Important to note however, that corrective actions were taken to as much as possible address these issues with on-line work explored and a switch to virtual mode to facilitate trainings, meetings and advisory support to partners.

6.0 Effectiveness

‘The RPV project arrived at the right time. Following the training in the use of OCAT we translated the manual into Samoan, and with the RPV grant support we applied our knowledge and skills to conduct trainings with 15 rural community CSOs to help raising their voices on several items of important legislative changes that were proposed by the Government.’

Fuimaono Vaitolo Ofoia, CEO, Samoa Umbrella for NGOs

The outputs delivered by the RPV project were of good quality overall. Adopting a phased approach to the implementation of the project, initial scoping visits were followed by participatory in-country assessments of CSO governance using the OCAT and ICAT toolkits that had been developed, and thereafter by the preparation of the OCDPs. The delay in the implementation of the project and further exacerbated by the onset of COVID- 19 from March 2020, resulted in a serious impact on the roll-out of the project activities; a limited number of visits affected the number of opportunities for face-to-face meetings added to this. Follow-up activities in coaching and mentoring to support and monitor implementation and review of development plans by targeted CSOs were therefore not sufficiently implemented. RPV staffing constraints and the limited implementation time left for the project also contributed considerably to this.

This had a cumulative effect on the project’s ability to achieve the required progress in the delivery of outputs and achievement of outcomes in the four key result areas (KRAs). Following the onset of Covid-19 project in March 2020 activities were fast-tracked to complete delivery of the required outputs. This included developing of on-line access to tools developed by RPV using Moodle software, which are now hosted and managed by the USP’s Distance Flexible Learning (DFL) facility.

The first two KRAs centered on organisational and influencing capacity development work of CSOs. The project focused initially on 10 countries with sub-regional focus on Melanesia – Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu; Polynesia – Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Micronesia – Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia. Cook Islands showed a lack of response to the planned training of trainers (ToT) workshop and eventually led to its non-participation in the programme.

Whilst not a direct focus, six Fiji based organisations also benefited from the tools developed and trainings provided by RPV staff through cross-linkages with the *Shifting Power, Shifting Voices* (SPSV) project that is also implemented by OiP.

At the outset, the project created spaces for national and umbrella CSOs to work together, within the agreed partnerships or in a workshop environment, jointly conducting self-reflections, assessing their needs and identifying areas for capacity building through participatory approaches as means to progress towards a more transparent, open and accountable organisation. For example, the workshop in Kiribati facilitated the convening and brokering of relationships between six organisations: the Kiribati Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (KANGO), Kiribati Climate Action Network (KIRICAN), Kiribati National Council of Women (AMAK), Boutoka Inaomataia ao Marurunga Binabinaine (BIMBA), Nei MOM – A CSO for single and teenage mothers, and K-WIMA – Kiribati Women in Maritime Association.

KRA 1: To strengthen the capacities of national/regional networks and platforms (also including issue-based networks) to ensure CSOs effectively represent the diverse voices of Pacific peoples, particularly poor and marginalized groups, in key national and regional policy processes.

A suite of capacity development packages was identified and developed to help address the gaps in governance, capacity and transparency that had been identified during consultations with CSOs. This includes: Organisational Capacity Analysis Tool (OCAT), an Organisational Capacity Assessment Guide for Pacific CSOs (for use by CSOs to conduct a self-assessment of their financial management capacity); a Capacity Planning Tool, an Organisational Influencing Capacity Tool, Governance Leadership & Accountability (GLA) modules & Business Model Tool, Training materials for GLA modules and Training of Trainers (ToT) package; and a RPV Finance Management Guide for Financial Assistance Recipients (to assist RPV grant recipients in the financial management of their funds).

These packages were then tested and implemented in the Melanesia, Polynesia & Micronesia sub-regions. Starting with capacity assessments using the OCAT in the three pilot countries (RMI, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) and five other countries⁶ (refer to Table 1), further assessments were held on requests from Solomon Islands Climate Action Network (SICAN) and Pacific Islands Climate Action Network (PICAN). This was followed by the participatory development of Organisation Capacity Development Plans (OCDPs) for national and umbrella organisations (with the exception of PICAN). The OCDPs included planning for the phasing of inputs and the support from RPV grants. These activities helped improve governance structures and processes of the participating CSOs. Using the ICAT, influencing capacity assessments were conducted for the partners' organisations in five countries of the sub-regions. Partnership Working Agreements (PWAs) as well as the safeguarding principles were developed and finalised for the eight countries, including the three pilot countries.

The progress made by the project in these aspects is considered successful. CSOs have shown a keen interest in participating in the RPV activities, and in progressing and applying the outcomes that relate to their individual organizations. Momentum has been created and there is strong enthusiasm among CSOs to progress further in strengthening their governance, capacity and financial management, as well as their influencing capacities and capabilities. In Samoa, for example, SUNGO was enabled to exercise its advocacy role on the Judicature Bill 2020 and Constitution Amendment Bill 2020 which proposed changes to the Lands and Titles Court system. As shared by the SUNGO representative, *“we are very grateful to OiP because the capacity building initiatives and financial assistance came at the right time. Without the support from the Raising Pacific Voices Project we would not have been able to go out and explain the repercussions of these Bills to society; and this clearly is SUNGO’s advocacy*

⁶ FSM, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Samoa and Kiribati.

role. We also provided trainings and have built the capacity of our members to use the OCAT tool and other modules developed by RPV, such as managing organisations, climate change, good governance and project design and management”. So this is just the start. In the terms of OCAT, the seedling stage has been reached, but at this stage the achievements remain very fragile. There is now a strong need to guide, support and protect its growth through follow-up visits and remotely delivered means as well as mentoring, coaching and monitoring activities. This is especially so, when considered against an often long history of inefficient and ineffective governance systems and structures with which these organisations have operated, and may find it too convenient to fall back on if left without such support.

As time constraints became more pressing during the later phases of the project, and further affected by issues related to RPV staff changes and turnover, the planned phased approach envisaged at the start of the project was abandoned. The RPV adopted a more practical and expedient approach where the inception and assessment field visits were merged into one. In certain countries such as the Solomon Islands, FSM, Kiribati, Tonga and Samoa, the CSOs had to develop their own OGDPs with remote assistance from RPV staff. As shared during the interviews, monthly reviews were not possible for Tuvalu, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. In the Solomon Islands the local Oxfam office was able to backstop and provide some oversight to RPV-supported CSOs there.

Table 1: Overview of RPV Activities Conducted with Individual CSOs

Country	Partner	OCA	Rebberlib	OGDP	ICAT	PWA	M&E	Safe guarding	Strategic Plan
Kiribati	AMAK	X		X		X		X	X
	KANGO	X		X		X		X	X
	BIMBA	X		X		X		X	X
	Nei Mom Uprising Inc	X		X		X		X	X
	KiriCAN	X		X		X		X	X
RMI	REACH-MI	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Samoa	SUNGO	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Solomon Island	DSE	X		X	X	X		X	
	SICAN	X							
Tonga	MFF	X	X	X		X	X	X	
	TNCC	X	X	X		X		X	
	TLA	X	X	X		X		X	
Tuvalu	TANGO	X		X		X		X	
Vanuatu	Vatu Mauri Consortium	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
FSM	Chuuk Youth Council	X		X	X	X		X	
Pacific Regional	PICAN	X	X					X	
	PRNGO Alliance	X	X	X		X	X		X

KIRIBATI: AMAK- Aia Mwaea Ainen Kiribati, KANGO-Kiribati Association for NGO's, BIMBA-Boutoka Inaomataia ao Marurunga Binabinaine, Nei Mom Uprising Inc (NMU), KiriCAN-Kiribati Climate Action Network (KIRICAN), **REPUBLIC OF MARSHALL ISLANDS:** REACH-MI - Radiation Exposure Awareness Crusaders for Humanity - Marshall Islands, **SAMOA:** SUNGO-Samoa Umbrella for NGO's, **SOLOMON ISLANDS:** DSE-Development Services Exchange, **TONGA:** MFF-Ma'a Fafine Moe Famili Inc.; TNCC-Tonga National Council of Churches, TLA-Tonga Leitis Association, **TUVALU:** TANGO-Tuvalu Association for NGO's, **VANUATU:** Vatu Mauri Consortium, **FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA:** Chuuk NYC-Chuuk National Youth Council, **PACIFIC REGIONAL:** PICAN – Pacific Islands Climate Action Network

Due to the pandemic, opportunities for on-line support were explored and a switch to virtual mode was made to facilitate on-going meetings with partners and provide on-line support to in-country activities. Development of distance flexible learning and shared services facilities was fast tracked to further support the delivery of remote assistance by the project.

KRA 2: To strengthen the voices and capacities of in-country CSOs and enhance their engagement in domestic public policy both service delivery and also policy advocacy.

Activities implemented under this KRA were focused on helping strengthen CSO capacities in strategic communication and advocacy to enable them to better listen to their constituents and effectively represent them.

The Influencing Capacity Development Package developed for this purpose was made up of the Capacity Analysis Tool, Capacity Planning Tool, GLA modules & Business Model Tool, Training materials for GLA modules, and ToT Package. Using the capacity analysis tool, influencing assessments would be carried out jointly with CSOs and ratings applied. This was followed by the joint development of an influencing capacity building plan (ICBP) that addresses the priority areas of influencing. To ensure implementation and/or a commitment to the plan, both parties are required to sign off on the Plan in which CSOs committed to provide the influencing capacity building inputs set out in Plan, and stipulated RPV support to this process. Whilst signing off on the Plan may not provide a full guarantee for CSO commitment and compliance, it however reflects their intentions to address the issues identified and acknowledged as needing improvements.

Similar to the development of the organisation capacity building package, the influencing capacity building package was developed and tested in two pilot countries (Vanuatu and Marshall Islands) and thereafter refined further based on feedback and inputs. A Train-the-Trainer (ToT) Package for influencing was also developed for representatives from the eight countries and has been planned for delivery through the online Distance Flexible Learning facility before the conclusion of the project.

ICAT workshops were implemented in five out of eight countries targeted: Federated of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. All CSOs who participated reported that they used the skills they had gained from the workshops to more effectively engage in advocacy and public policy dialogues at their national, and regional and global levels.

As reported in the progress report⁷ submitted and elaborated on during the interviews with senior RPV staff, the Chuuk National Youth Council (CNYC) played an influencing role in the identification of a national representative to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) meeting held in New York and, through the government, proposed a Northern Pacific candidate to UN Women to attend to HLPF as an advocate for climate change. As a result, the CNYC has received direct funding from the FSM Government to support their activities. In Vanuatu, an ICAT training was undertaken for the VMC, which then used the experience to lobby and advocate with the Government of Vanuatu which led to the inclusion of West Papua and Climate Justice in the Agenda of the Pacific Forum Leaders meeting in Tuvalu in 2019. Given that the Forum Leaders Meeting aims to provide an exclusive space for the Leaders to discuss and make decisions that are then expected to be implemented by various stakeholders, the former PIFS NSA Adviser highlighted that this in itself is a significant achievement and demonstrates the willingness of Leaders to listen to and consider Pacific CSO voices.

Following the trainings, SUNGO with a small grant from the RPV project, was able to apply the newly gained skills and use the OCAT module to work with several local/rural CSOs to conduct community

⁷ OiP Programmatic Up-date to RPV PSC (March 2020)

awareness on the three parliamentary bills proposed by the then government. These were considered to have the potential to undermine the judicial independence and rule of law. This demonstrates the usefulness of the training that enabled CSOs to engage with their stakeholders in policy debates to help influence decision-makers.

Support was also provided to six CSOs in Fiji where the OCAT workshops were facilitated by RPV staff. These CSOs were part of the Australian Aid-funded *Shifting Power Shifting Voices* (SPSV) project and also implemented by OiP. Services provided included organisational capacity assessment, influencing strategies and safeguarding (Table 2).

Table 2: Overview of RPV Activities Conducted with Individual CSOs in Fiji

Fiji Based CSOs supported by the RPV project								
Fiji	OCA	Rebbelib	OCDP	PWA	Influencing	M&E	Safe guarding	Strategic Plan
SSVT ¹	X	X			X		X	
RBtR ²	X	X			X		Reviewed existing policy	
WiFN ³	X	X			X		X	
RPF ⁴	X	X			X		X	
PCDF ⁵	X	X			X		X	
PCP ⁶	X	X			X		X	

1: SSVT - Soqosoqo ni Vakamarama ni Taukei;

2: RBtR - Rise Beyond the Reef;

3: WiFN - Women in Fisheries Network;

4: RPF - Rainbow Pride Foundation;

5: PCDF - Partners in Community Development Fiji;

6: PCP - Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding

KRA 3: To increase CSOs’s engagement in national and regional policy development and implementation through encouraging collective and collaborative action.

Based on evidence collated and interviews held, it appears that the issues that already had been identified in the 2010 UNDP study⁸ – the absence of effective collaborations, driven by competition, with siloed and disconnected approaches to shared issues and a failure to recognise the effectiveness of jointly engaging in policy processes - are still prevalent among Pacific CSOs. This is demonstrated once again by the experience of the PRNGO Alliance in relation to the Blue Economy research that manifested itself in the ongoing constraints in its relationship with OiP, instead of focusing on the issues that affect its various constituents. This resulted in the deferment of the Blue Economy Research Paper, despite the approval of the TORs by the PRNGO network. In moving forward, OiP has now engaged a consultant to rework the research paper into a Technical Report with the intention to publish it in a relevant journal and make the information available to a wider audience.

For all intentions and purposes the achievement of KRA3 has not been satisfactory. Although the outputs were delivered from a physical perspective, the limited engagement of the PRNGO Alliance affected the achievement of the stated outcome to influence regional decision-making levels. It therefore begs the question of the purpose and effectiveness of such regional networks to collectively lobby and advocate for its member organisations. This is in stark contrast with the CSOs operating at

⁸ UNDP, 2010. *A Pacific Assessment of CSOs in the Pacific*. UNDP Pacific Centre, Suva. Fiji.

the national level, that have worked together to influence decision making levels at national, regional and even at global levels.

The Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) as the co-applicant, representing PRNGO, in the partnership was directly responsible for the implementation of KRA 3. The withdrawal of PIANGO's as co-applicant to the proposal, directly and indirectly affected the project throughout, from securing strong support from PRNGO Alliance members to its implementation, impacting the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project. In addition, the staff turnover in PDF Project Officer position and the late recruitment of the first substantive post holder also impacted the effective implementation of KRA 3 in trying to build up the fractured relationship that existed from the start of the project.

The Regional Influencing Advisory Panel was appointed to identify and provide oversight to the research process. The PRNGO Working Group did not work out and there was no PRNGO Alliance meeting during the time of the research. Scoping visits and surveys for the Blue Economy research were undertaken in three countries (Tuvalu, Solomon Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia). Findings were presented as a research paper to the PRNGO Alliance, which advised that it would be considered as a technical paper. OiP is now re-working the research report into a journal publication.

KRA 4: Collaborative mechanisms to support knowledge sharing of knowledge and resources across Pacific regional CSOs developed and implemented.

Several achievements can be mentioned here that the project has contributed under this KRA. The OCAT Tool and other instruments developed by the project are hosted for online access at the Distance Flexible Learning (DFL) facility hosted at the USP website and managed by a team of professional USP staff. The DFL facility uses Moodle software, which requires annual subscription fees commensurate with the number of registered users. Although the DFL delivery mode remains heavily biased towards OiP consideration needs to be given to make these services available on a wider scale to other service providers and users. To promote and aid in the use of the services short videos have been produced to assist in the application of Learning Event Reflections (LER). Trials to assess and improve accessibility and usability for registered clients have shown very encouraging results.

The Draft Report on the Shared Services Facility (SSF) feasibility study that was conducted in early 2021 provided several options for the establishment and management of an SSF for the Pacific region, and assessed each option for its advantages and constraints. Although the report and the options appear Oxfam-centered, they would be best presented in a more neutral way whereby oversight, management, and hosting of the various options and any of their support structures remain open to invite discussion among PRINGO Alliance partners. This likely would contribute to a more equitable discussion to determine the most feasible option and possibly reach consensus among the members on the way forward. This certainly would result in a stronger and wider ownership of the SSF in whichever form it would take, and enhance its overall sustainability.

Another initiative that needs mention here is the website *Pasifika Rising* which was developed by the RPV project and is reportedly used by the CSO partners and OiP, and the project itself. The usability and accessibility of the website by the stakeholders, however, was not further analysed in this evaluation.

A CSO Leaders Dialogue was undertaken with VMC facilitating the sharing of knowledge and resources in bringing together representatives from West Papua, Kanaks, FLNKS and Maohi Nui. This is an exemplary initiative in challenging the current thinking on regional issues and in terms of inclusivity where the Pacific is concerned.

The NGO Capacity Assessment Study commissioned by RPV in late 2020 produced a report of rather poor quality that does not provide the anticipated update on the 2009 UNDP assessment of the capacities and constraints of a selection of CSOs in the region. This makes it impossible to determine whether any progress has been made over the past decade or any substantial wider impact was achieved.

Encouraging collective and collaborative action to increase CSOs engagement in national/regional policy development and implementation has not been fully realized. The Blue Economy research as a strategic policy influencing priority at the regional level has not been finalized.

PIFS encourages the CSOs to identify and select specific areas for their influencing activities at high level regional meetings, and has helped create a special space for them to present and discuss their concerns to the Forum Leaders during their annual meeting. But if these issues of concern are to be heard they must be packaged and presented in a way that they achieve the most effective results and impact. As shown by the PRNGO Alliance focus on the Blue Economy however there is much that remains to be improved. Whereas the project's initiatives to assessing the perceptions of the Blue Economy concept at the grassroots level have provided some indications, the efforts remain far from delivering any real substance that could significantly boost influencing at the highest levels to support advocacy for ensuring the safeguarding of peoples livelihoods in the Pacific.

7.0 Impact

'Over the past decade grant funding to TANGO gradually decreased to some 20% of what it was before. The training by the RPV team in the use of OCAT and other CSO management tools indicated that a main obstacle to improving our funding from development partners was that our annual accounts had not been audited for a long time. Grant support from RPV helped us to implement the audits and TANGO is back on the right track'

Teresa Lifuka-Drecala, ex-President, Tuvalu Association of NGOs

The project has contributed to the on-going governance reforms of targeted national and umbrella CSOs. The revision of their Constitutions, integrating safeguarding principles and the convening of their respective AGMs has far reaching effects and impacts for CSOs such as DSE, VMC, REACH-MI, Chuuk National Youth Council and TANGO. A testament of the overall increased legitimacy and credibility of the national umbrella organisations where members are concerned. The convening of the AGMs for many of these CSOs is adhering to the Charitable Organisations Act or other legal requirements under which they are established or registered under in their respective countries. As shared by the former President of TANGO – *"in 2018 when I joined TANGO there were no resources compared to government where I came from. Legislation needed to be reviewed. Main challenge was finance and auditing had not been done in eight years and the main reason why funding had gradually decreased, from around AUD100,000 to less than AUD18-20,000. TANGO's governance system also was very weak, in fact everything that was in place was not working. With support from the RPV project in early 2019 we invited members and interested CSOs and NGOs to participated in the OCAT training. We concluded that TANGO was still in the seedling phase, largely because processes and procedures were not up-dated or simply not followed. Our response was quick. Thanks to OCAT and RPV everyone was able to see the gaps that existed within their own organisations. Through their assistance we were able to do an outline of the various areas in our organisation that need strengthening. The first one was our Audit. TANGO was able to receive technical and financial assistance through RPV"*.

Several project-supported CSOs have already demonstrated their capacity and willingness to capitalise on opportunities to respond to emerging issues at national levels and promote for more inclusive and accountable governance. This is exemplified best by Radiation Exposure Awareness Crusaders for Humanity (REACH - MI) in Majuro whose participation in the piloting of the OCAT led to the Digital Storytelling Bootcamp that helped create a cohort of youth who as influencers will continue to raise awareness on the negative effects of nuclear testing on Marshall Island peoples.

In Samoa, SUNGO was very impressed with the OCAT workshop and translated the manual into the Samoan language. It then used the RPV small grant funds to implement 16 OCAT workshops with community-based organisations in as many communities during May-June 2020 to identify and address weaknesses in their governance and management. These workshops also provided opportunities to raising the awareness, advocating and engaging the communities as active participants in the regulatory process to shape and influence policy changes in Samoa, in particular concerning the proposed amendments to the legislation, that were considered to undermine the independence of the judiciary. SUNGO was able to help raise these voices to influence national policy development.

VMC through its collaboration with the Vanuatu government was able to influence the PIFS regional meeting held in Tuvalu by advocating the inclusion of the West Papua and Climate justice in its statement and to bring to bear on Leaders' meeting the plight and issues faced by West Papua. The Forum Communique reflects the Leaders position on the issue.

As a follow on from the OCAT workshop in Kiribati, KIRICAN was able to restructure its governance systems which included reducing the number of Board members to eight. The Kiribati Community Initiative Association (KCIA) which is made up of community based organisations (CBOs) was supported in developing a new Constitution (which was subsequently approved by its AGM), and institutionalizing the organization of regular monthly meetings of the Association. KIRICAN also translated the OCAT manual into the i-Kiribati language for use during the workshop with KCIA. Members of KIRICAN representing the i-Kiribati diaspora are using the OCAT approach to train their communities in New Zealand and the Rabi island Council in Fiji, with more trainings planned for village communities there.

RPV support helped the Chuuk National Youth Council secure budgetary support from the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia that enabled it to play an active role in the identification of a national representative to the HLPF and in the nomination of a Northern Pacific candidate to UN Women to advocate for climate change at the HLPF.

Ultimately the RPV project responds to some of the longstanding perceptions and concerns about Pacific CSOs, their constituency-base, the shortcomings of their governance and financial management systems, and the absence of strong collaboration amongst them that affect their capacities to influence national and regional government decision making processes.

8.0 Sustainability

The range of tools developed by the RPV project are of good quality which will promote their continued use for strengthening many aspects of civil society organisations. This certainly will contribute to a more effective representation of their constituencies' voices at local and national levels. In the long term, the application of the OCAT will assist CSOs in assessing key internal organisational functions that are critical to ensuring inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and effectiveness, and in determining their own development priorities and how these are best achieved. More specifically in Kiribati, KIRICAN has taken this a step further and translated the OCAT into iKiribati

language and has distributed to the members of the KCIA at the same time implementing a restructure separating KIRICAN from KCIA which has over 600 members and developing its constitution to guide the organization.

The tools and manuals developed by the RPV project are available to registered subscribers at the Distance Flexible Learning (DFL) platform that is hosted by the University of the South Pacific (USP). Some 125 subscribers associated with national and regional CSOs have already been registered on the site who can access the facilities. The use of the commercial Moodle software allows easy access to applications that facilitate remote consultation and collaboration between stakeholders and trainings of target groups. This will help continuing capacity development and strengthening of national and regional CSOs. Although the annual subscription required by Moodle could be considered a hindrance to accessing the platform, OiP has confirmed its commitment to continue payment of the annual fee for up to 200 registered users so that the facilities remain accessible to its project partners and associates for the long term.

Training of Trainers (ToT) was not undertaken. Strategically located Trainers who have been trained under the ToT programme, can replicate training in sub-regional countries, and thereby contributing to the sustainability of the project outcomes. The plan to now conduct this ToT training on-line can contribute to building a pool of trainers in the three sub-regions for the sustainability of project results.

Although the project has helped strengthen institutional and human resource capacities of a good number of CSOs, the achievements remain fragile and will need continued support to ensure that they will last. Given the long history of inefficient and ineffective governance systems and structures of these organisations this support must involve aspects of mentoring, coaching and monitoring. Doing so will also contribute to creating an enabling environment that is supportive of capacity building.

There is a further need to build and strengthen the monitoring functions of the targeted CSOs. Capacity development should be monitored, and its impacts assessed on a regular basis, so that existing gaps could be filled to help ensure constant progress. Not to do so would lead to lack of growth and possible regression from the gains that have been made.

The lack of support from PRNGO members have contributed to the lack of sustainability of project results at the regional level, and the PRNGO Alliance has missed out on an opportunity to strategically effect influence at the regional level. In contrast, individual national members of umbrella CSOs have benefited considerably.

A Shared Services Facility (SSF) is seen as an opportunity to make specific and the most needed high-quality services available to CSOs in the region in a more efficient and effective way. It will especially benefit smaller national umbrella CSOs which can access support that is tailored to their needs at an affordable cost. A SSF is also considered as a means to further the sustainability of the project's benefits and achievements. It therefore is a pity that the feasibility study for the SSF was implemented only in early 2021, with its final report yet to be approved. The study report offers various options for the establishment of a SSF, and extensive consultations with stakeholders will be required to determine the option deemed most likely to succeed.

9.0 Conclusions

Although there is abundant mention of 'CSO' all throughout this report, a project like this is all about people. People who are working together in some form of formal or informal grouping and who motivated to maintain, safeguard or improve their wellbeing, their livelihoods, and their environment,

that of others. Often just using the means they possess, have developed or have been supplied, they seek to get their voices heard to influence decisions that directly or indirectly affect them locally, nationally, regionally and internationally. But lacking many of the skills, the knowledge and the tools to efficiently and effectively raise their voices only too often frustrates the efforts to secure the desired attention and appreciation from those who make the decisions.

With the title of *'Raising Pacific Voices'*, the project aims to help to raise the voices of CSOs to help influence decision-making about matters that affect them directly or indirectly in the short or long term. It worked with groups of people keen in finding out where new skills and improvements could be useful to help their CSOs raise their voices and making them heard, and then helping make those improvements. This is a long process, as it often takes time to develop the respect and trust that is needed to study and analyse the intricacies of CSO governance and management, and then to help identify and encourage the changes that are needed. This project therefore is all about people, and it forms the first step in a journey to make their voices heard by the people who need to hear them.

Despite the RPV project being highly relevant and well designed, issues that happened shortly before the start of the project and that have been extensively discussed in this report regrettably made sure that the project didn't get off to the good start it deserved.

Started with significant delays in filling the key positions, staffing issues remained of concern throughout the project. These could have been prevented if OiP had considered to start their recruitment processes much earlier, once there were strong indications that the project would be approved. Pro-active identification of candidates for the key positions should have delivered a near-complete RPV team to hit the start button shortly after signing of the Grant Agreement in January 2017. This did not happen, and by the time the key positions had been filled (September 2017) nearly 25% of the project's implementation period had passed already. One cannot make up for such an amount of time lost – not even with project extensions. And certainly not with extensions of some six months at a time that were signed at the last minute.

The contracting of in-country resource consultants was a very good initiative. In hindsight however it is doubtful whether providing this support full time was more effective than if it had been done so on a part-time basis – for example 1 or 2 days a week - which might have allowed the support to be given over a longer period of time. The latter approach would have enabled a less intensive and imposing coaching and mentoring of participating CSOs, and allow them to adopt any improvements at their pace whilst still conveying some sense of urgency. It would also have allowed the consultants to focus more on strategies to explain and convince, rather than contributing directly to the work at hand, and at the same time place less pressure on the CSO management that comes with the consultant not being around on a daily basis. Moreover, it possibly could have attracted a wider range of skilled and experienced specialists keen to support and share their skills and who otherwise for any reason might not have been interested, or available, in a full-term commitment.

Throughout the project, the RPV suffered from insufficient and inadequate support from the PRNGO Alliance. This affected output delivery and achievement of outcomes under KRA3 and KRA4 – which are those that would help build and expand influencing capacities within PRNGO members in particular at regional and international levels. PDF must be commended for its exhaustive efforts to calm the waters, mediate and gain the Alliance's support, but it remained a frustrating task. Meanwhile, RPV staff themselves also continued to experience many frustrations arising from conflicting demands and criticism from PRNGO Alliance members, as well as from at times unrewarding efforts to progress the project.

The incomplete utilisation of the grant funds provided to CSOs by the RPV project was clearly due to the time constraints imposed by the limited time remaining of the project. Had these grants been available to them over a longer period – an earlier start or a later end, or both – spending would certainly have increased. However, their limited utilization also points at the limited capacities of the CSO grantees to better utilise the funds for the intended purposes that jointly had been identified and agreed. Better and more frequent in-country consultations and backstopping by RPV staff would certainly have helped in supporting the CSOs in this process. Since RPV staff were quite stretched in providing this support – especially to those CSOs that started their participation after mid-2019 – the addition of one or two positions for support staff would have been appropriate to best deliver the support that the pilot initiatives required.

Whilst CSOs had signed up to the project with a keen interest to learn and better their capacities in influencing, the OCAT and OCPD workshops indicated that much more fundamental flaws needed to be addressed and remediated before any progress could be made in building and strengthening their influencing capacity at national and regional level. These flaws included the very basics: their governance, their implementation capacities, and their financial management. Critical aspects of governance for example required the project to encourage CSOs to study and review their constitutions to bring these in line with government requirements, and seeking approval from their members through the prescribed processes of formal consultations and general meetings. Similarly, financial management and accountability appeared to be a similar area where improvements were much needed to bring the CSOs to a level where they could become eligible for support from donor agencies. For several CSOs this meant that the RPV support was dedicated in part to fund annual audits that had been outstanding for a number of years, and help to set up systems to ensure that these were henceforth conducted on a regular basis. And this is what the project did. It developed the tools that helped CSOs identify their assets as well as their shortcomings, and gain the realisation that these are all linked to one another. And thereafter it assisted them in addressing and overcoming these flaws. By the end of 2019 and in early 2020, and albeit quite late in the implementation period, the project was making very good progress.

And then Covid-19 happened.

The reaction from Pacific Island countries to the pandemic was immediate: international flights were suspended, and borders closed for an unlimited time. Without any prior experience in handling pandemics at this scale in the modern era countries were grappling to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. Uncertainty prevailed on how long the measures would need to last, and before life as we knew it could return in some form or another. Out of necessity project activities with the countries were halted while awaiting the pandemic to blow over.

It soon became clear that that would not happen anytime soon. The project then took the unprecedented steps to focus on assisting CSOs remotely by organising virtual meetings and making the tools, training materials and other documentation available online. This required considerable adaptation and a major change from the modus operandi that the project had been designed for, and with a much-increased risk of not adequately delivering the project outcomes and achieving the intended impact.

As it turned out, the project has been most effective in the delivery of outcomes of KRAs 1 and 2. It did realise that many of the selected CSOs the project partnered with were much more fundamental needs than had been anticipated initially and prioritising to resolve these helped a good number of them build and strengthen their basic operations and enhance the respect from the communities they serve. Considering the circumstances, the pilots have been quite successful, and have created a considerable momentum.

Despite the notable achievements of the RPV project it is obvious that this has been a pilot initiative in which the usefulness of the outputs and the potential of achieving a much wider impact has been demonstrated. Heeding the learnings from this project – and that includes the lessons and experiences from the months prior to project start up – will greatly help in preparing a follow on project that can further expand on the outputs and achievements of the RPV project. This should also include the consultation processes on the selection of design of a Shared Services Facility for Pacific CSOs, and piloting its implementation. For this to be successful however it will require broad support as well as shared ownership by key regional NGO members of the PRNGO Alliance. This will involve wide consultations to create a genuine partnership of the willing, and an open mind that is focused on making a significant contribution to improve the influencing capacities and confidence of the CSOs. It is only then that voices raised by communities in the Pacific can be heard in their countries, the Pacific region, and the world.

10.0 Key Recommendations

The main recommendations are largely arising from the observations and the lessons learnt by the project. They are considered important in improving the design and implementation modalities of follow-on and future activities aimed at achieving similar objectives with CSOs target groups in the Pacific region.

1. Urgently provide further support to continue the CSO capacity building initiatives piloted by the RPV project, to enable the widening and intensification of the initiatives started, and regain the momentum it had achieved in early 2020 prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic
2. The follow-on project should have a wider range of suitable regional NGO partners (including but not necessarily PRNGO Alliance members) to take on the responsibility of leading, implementing and facilitating in-country capacity building activities
3. In contrast to the options identified in the 2021 SSF Feasibility Study which appear to promote a strong – and nearly sole – leadership role by Oxfam in the Pacific, leadership of the SSF should involve a much wider base of Pacific regional NGOs to ensure strong and widespread ownership leading to better effectiveness, wider impact and longer sustainability.
4. Any new project should seek to start the recruitment process for key staff positions well before the start of the project to identify suitable candidates at an early stage to allow their immediate engagement at the start of the project.

11.0 References

- A State of Governance Study of Nine-country Pacific CSOs. OiP. 2021
- Crystal Clear Consulting. *Shared Services Facility Feasibility Study*. OiP. 2021.
- EC. *Communication from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee Of The Regions -The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in External relations*, EC, Brussels, 2012. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0492:FIN:EN:PDF>. 2012
- EU. *Improving The EU Support for The Civil Society in Its Neighbourhood: Rethinking Procedures, Ensuring That Practices Evolve*. 2012.
- Final Final Master Baseline Spreadsheet 24.11.2020. RPV project.
- Finance Management Guide for Financial Assistance Recipients 2018
- Organisational Influencing Assessment Tool
- Organisational Capacity Assessment Toolkit
- Organisational Capacity Assessment Guide for Pacific Civil Society Organisations. Oxfam in the Pacific. 2018., 32pp.
- Oxfam in the Pacific Regional Strategy 2020-2030
- Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. *The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat – European Union: Pacific Indicative Programme for the period 2014-2020*. <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Pacific-Regional-Indicative-Programme-2014-2020-signed.pdf>. 2014
- Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. *Fiftieth Pacific Islands Forum Funafuti, Tuvalu – Forum Communiqué*. 2019
- Programmatic Update April – November 2019 (November 2019)
- Programmatic Update to RPV PSC (March 2020)
- Programme Steering Committee, Minutes of PSC Meetings of 1 August 2017; 8 May 2018, 8 October 2018, 15 April 2019, 5 December 2019, 1 June 2020.
- REACH-MI, RMI Organisational Capacity Assessment, 2018
- RPV Programme Annex 1 – Financial Assistance Summary and Background
- RPV Programme Annex 2 - Financial Grant Recipients - Monthly Expenditure Tracking Report
- RPV Programme Annex 4 - Completion Report Template
- ROM Report (Draft). Raising Pacific Voices Reinforcing Pacific Civil Society. Project Reference C-374324, by Raimondo Bertoli. 19.11.2018.
- Raising Pacific Voices – Grant Contract including Budget for the Action CSO-LA/2016/374-324
- Raising Pacific Voices - Addendum No 1 to Grant Contract CSO-LA/2016/374-324
- Raising Pacific Voices - Addendum No 2 to Grant Contract CSO-LA/2016/374-324
- Raising Pacific Voices - Addendum No 3 to Grant Contract CSO-LA/2016/374-324
- Raising Pacific Voices - Addendum No 4 to Grant Contract CSO-LA/2016/374-324
- Raising Pacific Voices - Addendum No 5 to Grant Contract CSO-LA/2016/374-324
- RPV Programme – TANGO Organisational Capacity Development ACTION PLAN
- RPV Programme – KANGO Organisational Capacity Development ACTION PLAN
- RPV Programme – KIRICAN Organisational Capacity Development ACTION PLAN
- RPV Programme - Development Services Exchange *Capacity Development ACTION PLAN*
- RPV Programmatic Update to RPV PSC April-November 2020
- RPV Programmatic Update to RPV PSC – March 2020
- RPV Programme - Safeguarding Institutional Toolkit
- RPV. Terms of Reference – Regional Influencing Advisory Panel. 2019.
- UNDP. A Pacific Assessment of CSOs in the Pacific. UNDP Pacific Centre, Suva. Fiji, 2010.

Update – RPV Work with Pacific CSO’s Institutional Capacity. Undated.

Various Country Field Reports – Federated States of Micronesia, Tuvalu, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Vanuatu

Online References

Pasifika Raising <https://www.pasifikarising.org>

CSO on-line learning platform: <https://www.pasifikarising.org/civil-society-benefit-from-launch-new-online-learning-platform/>

Annex 1: List of People interviewed / Consulted

Name	Position	Organisation	Contact details
Raijeli Nicole	Regional Director	OiP, Fiji	rnicole@oxfampacific.org
Filipo Masaurua	Oxfam Multi-Stakeholder Lead (Previously RPV Team Leader (previously Capacity Building Advisor)	OiP, Fiji	fmasaurua@oxfampacific.org
Alanieta Vakatale	DFAT/ANCP Grant Coordinator (formerly RPV Team Leader & MEL Officer)	OiP, Fiji	avakatale@oxfampacific.org
Sushil Narayan	RPV Finance Manager	OiP, Fiji	snarayan@oxfampacific.org
Rodney Yee	RPV Consultant (formerly RPV Team Leader)	Independent consultant	rodneycfpm@gmail.com
Tarusila Bradburgh	Formerly RPV Project Officer for KRA3	APTC, Fiji	Tarusila.bradburgh@aptc.edu.au
Ricardo Morris	Former RPV Communication Officer	SPC, Fiji	ricardomorris@gmail.com
Douglas Orr	Ex-Business Dev. Manager, OiP	Oxfam Australia	douglasorr@fastmail.com
Setareki S. Macanawai	CEO	PDF, Fiji	Setareki.macanawai@pacificdisability.org
Francesco Ponzoni	Programme Officer	EU Delegation, Fiji	Francesco.PONZONI@eeas.europa.eu
Katarina Atalifo	Former NSA Adviser	PIFS	katarinaa@forumsec.org
Emeline Siale 'Ilolahia	CEO (formerly with Civil Society Forum of Tonga)	PIANGO, Fiji	siale@piango.org
Emele Duituturaga	Ex-CEO	PIANGO, Fiji	
Rev. James Bhagwan	General Secretary	Pacific Council of Churches, Fiji	jamesb@pcc.org.fj
Rev. Ikani Tolu	General Secretary	Tonga National Council of Churches, Tonga	Ikani_tolu@yahoo.com
Teresa Lifuka-Drecala	President	TANGO, Tuvalu	tuvalutango@gmail.com
Meera Joseph	Former General Secretary	KANGO, Kiribati	rameejoseph@gmail.com
Tereao Teingia Ratiti	President	KANGO, Kiribati	Tereao.teingiaratite@usp.ac.fj
Pelenise Alofa	Coordinator	KiriCAN, Kiribati	Pealalo13@gmail.com
Vivian Koster		Pacific Youth Council, Fiji	viviankoster@gmail.com
Fuimaono Vaitolo Ofoia	CEO	SUNGO, Samoa	ceo@sungo.ws
Anne Pakoa		Vatu Mari Consortium, Vanuatu	Anne.vanhrcoalition@gmail.com
Maureen Penjueli	Coordinator	PANG, Fiji	coordinator@pang.org.fj
Shamanda Hanerg	President	REACH-MI, RMI	Shanerg05@gmail.com
Desmond Doulatram	Ex-President	REACH-MI, RMI	desmonddoulatram@gmail.com
Florence Swamy	CEO	PCP, Fiji	Florence.swamy@gmail.com
Adi Finau Tabakauoro	President	SSVT, Fiji	ftabakauoro@gmail.com
Jennifer Wate	General Secretary	DSE, Solomon Isl.	generalsecretary@dse.org.sb
Marama Tuivanua	Project Officer	WiFN, Fiji	marama@womeninfisheriesfiji.org
Cherie Morris	Board Member	WiFN, Fiji	Cherie.morris@usp.ac.fj
Irene Yee Chief	Consultant	USP, Fiji	Irenemary.chief@usp.ac.fj
Evan Naqiolevu	Consultant	USP, Fiji	Evan.naqiolevu@usp.ac.fj
Rajneel	Consultant	USP, Fiji	rjnlj@gmail.com

Annex 2: EcoConsult Pacific Evaluation Team Introductory Message



Oxfam in the Pacific Final Evaluation of the Project ‘Raising Pacific Voices’

Oxfam in the Pacific has contracted EcoConsult Pacific, a Suva-based consulting company, to undertake the final evaluation of the ‘Raising Pacific Voices’ project. EcoConsult Pacific has extensive expertise in a wide range of areas relevant to the Pacific, in particular in Monitoring and Evaluation of projects and programmes. It also operates ‘Pacific Vacancies, a job announcement service to inform thousands of Pacific Island nationals and residents about hundreds of employment opportunities in the region.

The evaluation will take place during June and July 2021, and will be implemented by two experienced consultants: Mr. Wilco Liebrechts and Ms. Sivia Qoro.

Wilco Liebrechts is Managing Director of EcoConsult Pacific Pte Ltd, and has worked for 37 years in the Pacific Islands region. He is highly experienced in all aspects of the project management cycle, from identification, design, management and implementation to M&E and evaluation. He has worked for a large number of organisations, government institutions and NGOs at the national and regional level, and is familiar with all countries where the RPV project is implemented. As an independent consultant, he has monitored over 70 donor-funded projects implemented in the Pacific, Caribbean, Africa and Asia. Wilco also has at several times assisted Fiji-based NGO applicants for EU grants with training in project planning and project cycle management.

Sivia Qoro is a gender and social inclusion specialist with strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) skills. She has more than 40 years of work experience in the Pacific, Africa and the Middle East in areas including gender policy and development, gender mainstreaming, conducting participatory gender needs assessment and analysis, and gender responsive stakeholder consultations. Sivia is particularly proficient in research and policy development including gender policy issues and rights-based development, and has worked extensively in government, with international, regional and national organisations and at community level and with CBOs and NGOs.

Wilco and Sivia are keen to conduct the evaluation and assess the project’s overall relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. They will interview and consult with you on your role in the project as a partner organization in helping plan and implement the activities and deliver the outputs, and want to hear from you on how the project has worked for you and delivered for your organization. They are also keen to interview the organisations who were involved in making the project work in their specific countries, and that are the main beneficiaries of the project.

Since this evaluation comes at the end of the project, it will also focus on the lessons that can be learned from this project – for Oxfam, for project partners, and for the regional and national CSOs, but also for the European Union that funded a considerable part of the project’s budget. The information that will be collected will help improve on the planning and implementation of future projects that may follow on from this project, so that they will be better designed, more efficiently implemented, and deliver more appropriate - and sustainable - outcomes that build on those that the Raising Pacific Voices project has achieved.

Over the next weeks the consulting team are looking forward to meeting with civil society partners to hear their comments and views, to obtain a good understanding of the overall project and to assess the degree to which the project has delivered to what it set out to do. They will deal sensitively with any information you provide and your views will be held in confidence.

The contact details of the team are:

Wilco Liebrechts – ecoconsult@connect.com.fj; and Sivia Qoro – jetsfiji2007@gmail.com