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## An update on Green Climate Fund Regional Tuna Project

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## An update on Green Climate Fund Regional Tuna Project

### *Background*

1. For over 40 years, nearshore fish aggregating devices (FADs) have played a critical role in supporting small scale artisanal fisheries across Pacific Islands countries and territories (PICTs), enhancing both food security and financial returns. In 2023, a study was commissioned to explore the potential for scaling-up national fish aggregating device programmes in 14 Pacific Island countries. This study has provided a foundation for developing a targeted strategy under the Regional Tuna Project (RTP), aimed at improving food security for the region's growing coastal and island communities.
2. Since 2019, Conservation International (CI), the Pacific Community (SPC), the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and 14 Green Climate Fund (GCF) eligible Pacific Island countries - namely Cook Islands, Federated states of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu - have collaborated on developing a project titled "*Adapting tuna-dependent Pacific Island communities and economies to Climate Change*", also known as the *Regional Tuna Project (RTP)*.
3. This project is in the final approval stages by Green Climate Fund (GCF) and comprises two main components:
  - i. **Component 1:** Adaptations to harness tuna for food security of Pacific Island communities as coral reefs are degraded by climate change.
  - ii. **Component 2:** Adaptations to reduce risks to Pacific Island economies from climate-driven tuna redistribution.
4. This paper provides an update on Component 1 of the project.
5. The goal of the project is the "*Improved resilience of ecosystems and ecosystem services by reducing the degradation that results from heavy fishing pressure on coral reefs.*" The project has a duration of seven years, with a budget for component 1 of USD ~35 million. Implementation will be a joint effort by Conservation International (CI), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Pacific Community (SPC), and the national fisheries agencies of the 14 GCF-eligible Pacific Island countries.

### *Key findings of the 2023 study on scaling-up FAD programmes in 14 PICs*

6. The 2023 study on scaling-up national fish aggregating device (FAD) programmes across the 14 Pacific Island countries (PICs) revealed that nearshore FADs have been deployed on an *ad hoc* basis in all 14 countries over the last 40 years. A lack of formal integration of FAD programmes into national policies addressing food security, health, and community well-being has resulted in these programmes largely being project-based, lacking sustained government and community coordination, and support for long term implementation.
7. Building on past lessons, Component 1 of the proposed GCF Regional Tuna Project (RTP) aims to be transformative by ensuring the following:

8. **Inclusive FAD infrastructure design:** The design of FAD infrastructure will be a collaborative process, involving input from government authorities, stakeholders, and local communities to ensure solutions meet diverse needs.
9. **Comprehensive legal and policy reform:** National FAD management plans will be strengthened through broad government policy reform, supported by appropriate legislation and regulations, to drive the development, management, and sustainability of FAD programmes.
10. **Community-driven project implementation:** Project activities will focus on local communities, developed and executed in collaboration with national fisheries agencies and relevant institutions to ensure community engagement and support.
11. **Information and knowledge management:** A strong focus on knowledge sharing and information management will be established at all levels, enabling both national fisheries agencies and communities to access, utilise, and contribute to project data effectively.
12. **Capability development:** Training and capacity building will be prioritised to enhance skills at all levels of participation, from local to regional, ensuring sustained project impact.
13. **Regional sector support:** Support for FAD programmes will extend across the sector, covering not only design, deployment, and fishing support but also broader aspects of regional FAD programme management.
14. **Innovative data systems:** New data systems, such as the user-friendly web-based Ikasavea platform, will facilitate data collection, storage, and analysis, improving data accessibility and accuracy.
15. **Comprehensive FAD programme monitoring:** Monitoring efforts will expand beyond optimising FAD design and placement for catch efficiency. Baseline data for pre-FAD deployment locations and assessments of community benefits will also be included to measure the broader impact of FAD programmes on food security and local economies.
16. This approach aims to enhance the sustainability, effectiveness, and community relevance of nearshore FAD programmes across the region.

### *Summary of activities under Component 1.*

17. Component 1 of the Regional Tuna Project (RTP) encompasses four key areas of work:
  - I. **Strengthening national FAD programmes:**
    - a. Establish dedicated sections within each national fisheries agency focused on designing and implementing sustainable national FAD programmes.
    - b. Provide increased training for small-scale fishers on safe, effective FAD-fishing techniques, and equip them with essential boating safety gear.
    - c. Facilitate access to improved vessel designs for small-scale fishers, enabling safer, more efficient fishing farther from shore.
    - d. Build national administrations' capacity to manage risks associated with climate-driven impacts on small-scale fishers who rely on FADs.
    - e. Support cyclone-prone countries in maintaining reserves of FAD materials and secure storage for deployment vessels, ensuring communities can quickly replace lost FADs.

- f. Train coastal communities, especially in remote areas without refrigeration, in simple post-harvest techniques (such as drying, smoking, and canning) to extend the shelf life of tuna caught around FADs.

**II. Pathways to minimise climate-driven supply disruptions:**

- a. Develop strategies to mitigate disruptions to tuna and bycatch supplies essential for food security in urban areas, utilising transshipment from industrial fishing fleets in regional ports.

**III. Enhanced market and supply-chain facilities:**

- a. Improve infrastructure and systems to better support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the distribution of tuna from transshipment operations to urban markets, encouraging local economic participation.

**IV. Community awareness campaigns:**

- a. Launch campaigns targeting both coastal and urban communities to raise awareness about climate change's impact on coral reef fish availability and emphasise the health benefits of incorporating more tuna into diets.

*Next Steps*

- 18. SPC and RTP partners are aiming to finalise the grant funding agreement with Green Climate Fund (GCF) by the end of the first quarter of 2025. Following this, an initial disbursement is scheduled for mid-2025 to fund RTP partners and national fisheries agencies for project implementation. An RTP inception workshop is planned for June/July 2025, aimed at providing executing partners and national fisheries agencies with an overview of project activities, desired outcomes, fund usage conditions, financial reporting requirements, and disbursement timelines.