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BACK TO OFFICE REPORT (BTOR)

Submitted by Jean Lindsay Azie

Title: Project Manager

Date Submitted: 27 June 2022

Title of Mission: First project Mission to Rodrigues for the ‘Supporting the economic empowerment of the artisanal fishing community of the Republic of Mauritius’ project

1. Mission - Places visited and Period (incl. of travel days): Rodrigues from the 12 – 18 June 2022

The objective of the Mission:

- a) To have all stakeholders (policy, technicians, artisanal fishing community) buy-in for the UNDP-ECOFISH project,
- b) To undertake extensive communication/ sensitization campaigns with the Rodrigues population as requested in PSC 1,
- c) To palliate all technical burdens that may come across the project implementation,
- d) To undertake Gender analysis among the artisanal fishing community in Rodrigues, and
- e) To share notes about outcomes for the most recent UNDP Ecofish team mission to Seychelles

2. Mission Members:

- 1) Jean Lindsay, Project Manager
- 2) Raksha Ramloll Project assistant
- 3) Wendie Lambin Operation Assistant
- 4) Jean Yan Norbert Communication Assistant
- 5) Sunil Panrey Beeharry, Chief Technical Officer
- 6) Vibhushan Senedhun, Representative of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping

Cost:

Air Ticket and DSA, except for the Chief Technical Officer

3. Background

The ‘Supporting the economic empowerment of the artisanal fishing community of the Republic of Mauritius’ EU funded and UNDP implemented commonly known as Mauritius-Ecofish project falling under the wider Regional Ecofish Programme was initiated in 2020 and is due to be completed in 2024. The project’s aim is to empower the artisanal fishers of the Republic of Mauritius in getting out of poverty by improving their economic situation through the provision of advanced technology or identification and exploration of new fishing grounds.

The action will assist the artisanal fishers in moving out of the over-exploited lagoon to more sustainable fishing grounds. The government is already providing grants and loans for the purchase of off-lagoon fishing vessels. This project complements the government’s initiative by filling a gap that prevented an essential outcome from being reached. An improved catch will lead to a better economic situation for the fishers and will be followed by better social inclusion. A higher catch will also provide additional work for the youth and women who are mostly involved in post-harvest processing.

The project involves 3 phases:

- 1) UNDER OUTCOME 1: HARVEST phase: Assembly and deployment of FADs and training of fishermen in their use,
- 2) UNDER OUTCOME 2: POST HARVEST INFRASTRUCTURE phase: Fish Landing Station (FLS) improvement, fitting of green equipment (solar panel, solar ice-making machine, rainwater harvesting system, solar chiller) and training in the operation of these equipment, and

3) UNDER OUTCOME 3: POST HARVEST PROCESSING phase: Training in fish hygiene, fish processing and marketing.

The Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries & Shipping (MoBEMRFS) is a co-applicant to the project and is directly supporting the project implementation on Mauritius while the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) is assisting for relevant activities being undertaken in Rodrigues.

The Mauritius-Ecofish project team has undertaken its first mission to Rodrigues Island together with the project's Chief Technical Adviser, a co-applicant's representative, the UNDP Gender Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, and the Communication Officer.

4. Mission Activities and key meetings:

The Mauritius ECOFISH team planned a series of meeting with the key project stakeholders who are playing an important role in the project implementation in Rodrigues.

The team had shared activities with the Accelerator Lab team members which were in Mission in Rodrigues during the same period. These activities are referred to as “**join-activity**” in this report.

Day One – Monday 13 June 2022

a) Meeting with Departmental Head (DH) of the Commission of Fisheries of Rodrigues

The meeting with the Mr. Genave Thomas, Departmental Head of the Commission of Fisheries and Mr. Sylvio Perrine, the acting head of the department of fisheries, was a joint activity whereby the Mauritius ECOFISH Project Manager (PM), Mr. Jean Lindsay Azie, introduced the delegation members to the administrators, and presented the ECOFISH project. The following were reported:

1. The project Agreement signature took place in June 2020 and the Inception Workshop was held in August 2021.
2. The project aim, objectives, activities, and the expected outcomes with an emphasis on the activities to be implemented in Rodrigues were shared as below:
 - Component 1: There shall be Installation of one Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) equipped with the Satellite (GPS) and Biomass sensors in Rodrigues. Provision has also been made for development of training materials under the project that shall be used for training of artisanal fishing community of Rodrigues on how to locate the FADs and best practices of fishing around FADs. Under this component, a mobile application will be developed to help the fishers to locate the FADs using GPS and biomass data. This application will be open to the registered fishers of Rodrigues as well.
 - Component 2: Upgrading of a Fish Landing Station (FLS) which includes the installation of a rainwater harvesting system to produce ice, installation of an ice-making machine using solar energy, and installation of solar lights.
 - Component 3: Provision is being made for development of training materials in post-processing that will be shared with RRA for training of artisanal fisher of Rodrigues.

The PM highlighted that the project also aims at encouraging more women and youth to be in the artisanal Fishing profession to ensure sustainability and encourage other fishers' family members to join the business and increase their income.

The Departmental head was glad to learn more about the project and was enthusiastic to implement the relevant activities in Rodrigues as it is in line with the objectives of the commission for fisheries and that of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA). The administrators also shared that there has been provision to renovate the infrastructure of the “Maison des Pecheurs” which is connected to the selected Fish Landing Station (Pointe Monier) in Rodrigues. Relevant procurement is thus underway. The Departmental Head mentions that he is looking for the Mauritius ECOFISH project to complement the work being done at the chosen site. Mention was also made about the RRA's

willingness to renovate 12 fishing vessels as one of its highest priorities, to enhance fishing activities outside the lagoon and around FADs. The RRA is aiming at increasing the number of the catch so that the excess fish can be processed for further income generation for the fisher community.

Sharing of knowledge and experience

The team shared the challenges in the fishing industry which include the lack of qualified skippers and Boat mechanics. In Rodrigues, there are around 10 qualified skippers. However, there was only one boat mechanic who is retired now. For any mechanic needs, the service is imported from Mauritius. There is a need for knowledge transfer. Rodrigues is trying to address this situation by providing training and providing a certificate of attendance.

The Accelerator Lab gave a brief introduction of their role in UNDP. Ms. Ayooshee Dookhee shared that there is an existing project being funded by HSBC costing approximately MUR 10 million to train 17 youth in boat mechanics/maintenance. These youth come from underprivileged families from Mauritius.

Mr. J.L. Azie shared the recent learnings from Seychelles regarding the training of youth in Fisheries. The Seychelles Maritime Academy (SMA) train the youth as from 16 years old in the fisheries and maritime-related activities.

The Departmental Head (DH) shared that the Fisheries Research and Training Unit (FRTU) is being restructured to become the Marine Academy & Research Centre (MARC) which will also take into consideration research and training of fishers. The DH expressed his willingness to have exchange between Rodrigues and Seychelles to investigate the technical aspect of implementing the Maritime Academy and would be grateful if UNDP could provide any assistance.

b) Planning of the Fishers workshop in North and South Regions of the island

With the help of the administrators, the project team finalized the protocol part of the agenda and worked on the tentative workflow and invitation for the workshop.

The PM requested a Courtesy meeting with the Commissioner of Fisheries before the end of the Mission in Rodrigues.

c) Meeting with technical Officers of the Department of Fisheries

The first in-person meeting with the technical officer was hosted at the office of the Fisheries Research and Training Unit (FRTU) being restructured to the Marine Academy and Research Centre (MARC) at Point Monier. The PM gave a very brief overview of the ECOFISH project. The Acting Head Fisheries mentioned that the Fisheries department consists of the FRTU (MARC) and the Fisheries Protection Services (FPS). The Commission is planning to establish the Maritime Academy and Research Centre of Rodrigues which will do the following:

1. Training
2. Marine Resources and Licensing
3. Aquaculture and Research and Development

Technical discussion on the project Components 1 and 2

The Head of the Department, Mr. Perrine explained the current implementation of FADs in Rodrigues and the technical aspect of it in terms of the type of FADs being used in Rodrigues and choosing the FADs locations based on the topology of the island, having the right equipment and facilities for maintenance (such as the vessel). Mr. Perrine also mentioned about the upgrading work which will be done to the Maison de Pecheurs, aiming to improve the fishers' catch by providing them the required amenities and ice to preserve their catch.

FRTU has installed 19 Rosary Type FADs around the island at depths varying from 70m, 400m and 1000m. However, due to lack of maintenance and no availability of vessels to take the maintenance team to the FADs, some may have drifted. The topology of the island being different from Mauritius is more challenging for the fishers to go to FADs as they must travel for more than 1 hour to reach the FADs.

FRTU has hands on experience with the Single Buoy FADs equipped with Satellites at the depth of 400m. They have installed one (1) already which is working well so far. The concept of using ice to preserve the catch of fishers is well understood by the buyers and fishers and the latter would fully use the ice-making machine at Maison de Pecheurs when the same was operational.

It was highlighted that the skipjack and bait fish is abundant in the water of Rodrigues.

d) Planning of the Fishers workshop in North and South Regions.

Mr. Ravanne has been assisting in the preparation of the workshops in collaboration with the Project and Operations Assistants. During the meeting, the logistics of the workshop were finalized, and the lists of invitations were discussed for finalization.

e) Site Visit of Fish Landing Station, Pointe Monier

The Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) and the representative of the Ministry visited the Fish Landing Station which will be upgraded by the project at Point Monier. During the visit, the existing facilities such as the gutting system, water supply, electricity, roof of the infrastructure and the space available for making provision for PV panels, Rainwater harvesting and ice-making machine were identified. The visit enabled to better understand the Rodriguan context for improved planning and works to be carried out.

Day Two – Tuesday 14 June 2022

a) Preparation of Workshop

The Project and Operation Assistants worked with the technical officer, Mr. Ravanne to complete administrative and logistic work for the fishers' workshop in the North Region which includes:

- Invitations were completed and dispatched, and
- Site visit at Pandanus, Baie Malgache to discuss the set-up of the conferencing venue

b) Sustainable Integrated Development Plan for Rodrigues (SIDPR) workshop at Cotton Bay

The Project Manager was invited to attend a workshop by the local authority dedicated to review the UNDP initially prepared Sustainable Integrated Development Plan for Rodrigues (SIDPR). The review is being financed by the European Union and included the fishery sector. The PM attended to the launching ceremony and then proceeded with the dedicated mission activities thereafter.

c) Meeting with Baie Malgache FADs Fishers

The project team was accompanied by Mr. Ravanne to meet the artisanal fishers of Baie Malgache whereby some insight into their ways of working were gathered. The fishers shared their main challenges which include the increasing cost of equipment, fuel, and bait among others. The fishers of that region use a fishing technic called the Vertical Longline to catch albacore tuna, like in Mauritius.

d) Interview of the Project Manager by the MBC TV Rodrigues

As part of the Communication strategy under the Mauritius Ecofish the project, the PM gave an interview to the MBC TV Rodrigues introducing the project, its objectives, activities and expected results with an emphasis on the activities to be implemented in Rodrigues.

Day Three – Wednesday 15 June 2022

a) Courtesy meeting with the Chief Commissioner

Upon request from the RRA, the project team had a brief courtesy meeting with the Chief Commissioner whereby the PM presented the project team and the project briefly, laying emphasis on the activities to be implemented in Rodrigues. He also explained how the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is a key implementing partner in the project.

The Chief Commissioner was very pleased with the project as it complements projects in the pipeline to be implemented in Rodrigues and the project activities aligned with the RRA's vision for the fisheries sector.

b) Meeting with the Commissioner of Tourism and Information Technology and Communication

The meeting with the Commissioner of Tourism was a joint activity with the Accelerator Lab team. There has been a brief introduction of the Mauritius ECOFISH project and the Accelerator Lab teams. The PM briefly presented the project putting emphasis on activities to be implemented in Rodrigues and highlighting the development of the Mobile Application which will be used by the artisanal fishers of Rodrigues to geo-localized the FADs and read biomass data.

The Commissioner welcomed the idea of having the mobile application and believes that the application will be helpful for the fishers. He further shared the experience of the launch of the new application on tourism in Rodrigues.

c) Meeting with the Commissioner of Fisheries and Agriculture

Following the meeting with the Head on Departmental Head on Monday 13 June 2022, the Commissioner for Fisheries invited the project team to share more on the Mauritius ECOFISH Project. The Commissioner shared his appreciation for the contribution of the UNDP projects to Rodrigues fishers. He shared his vision for the Fishing industry of Rodrigues and mentioned how the project and the donors are supporting the initiatives.

He further iterates that the project objectives are in line with his Commission's policies, and he is looking forward to a fruitful collaboration and successful implementation. The Commissioner pointed out how deeply the Commission believes that fishing skills and training should be given to youth at an early age. The Commission is working towards establishing the Maritime Academy which will allow the training of young people in the Maritime field including fisheries. The Commission also envisage to provide training to all Fishers irrespective to their registration status.

Mr. Azie shared about the experience and knowledge gain during the recent Mission in Seychelles, whereby the project team had the opportunity to visit the Seychelles Maritime Academy. The latter enrolls youth as from the age of 16 years to train them in the Maritime field such as skippers and fishing.

d) Radio intervention on MBC Radio Rodrigues

In line with the project's communication's strategy, the Project Manager had the opportunity to participate in a one-hour radio show on the MBC Radio Rodrigues. During the intervention, the PM introduced the project and breakdown in detail the components of the project. The project activities linked to Rodrigues Island were gone through with particular emphasis on the need for sensitizing Rodriguan population.

e) Setting up of the Conferencing facilities at Le Pandanus, Baie Malgache

The Mauritius Ecofish together with the Accelerator Lab team members visited the Le Pandanus late afternoon to do the logistics set-up for the Workshop with the artisanal fishers of the Northern region of Rodrigues which was scheduled for Thursday 16 June 2022; together with the Youth Dialogues with the youth of Rodrigues.

Day Four – Thursday 16 June 2022

a) Workshop with artisanal fishers of the Northern region of Rodrigues

The first workshop with the artisanal fisher of Rodrigues was organized at Le Pandanus, Baie Malgache. There were 34 of fishers out of which 31 were males and 3 were females aging between 25 to 65 years.

The opening of the workshop was done by the Commissioner of Fisheries, Mr. Louis Ange Perrine, during the protocol session which was attended by the hereunder guests:

1. Mr. Thomas Genave, Departmental Head of the Commission of Fisheries and Agriculture
2. Mr. Christian Leopold, Chairperson to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly
3. Mr. Rosaire Perrine, Chairman
4. Mr. Georges Herman Claire, Administrative Officer, Deputy Chief Commissioner's office

The Commissioner, Mr. Louis Ange Perrine, in his speech, gave an overview of the vision of the Commission for the Fisheries sector. He shared his expectations from the Mauritius Ecofish project team which is implementing activities in Rodrigues aligning with the Commission's vision and requested the participation and support of the fishers to make the initiative a success. He shared some of the key measures the Commission has planned for the years to come and explained the vision behind these commitments.

The Project Manager of the Mauritius ECOFISH project gave a brief presentation of the project on the overall objective of the project, the activities, and expected outcomes highlighting the activities to be implemented in Rodrigues.

Mr. Sylvio Perrine spoke about the status of the fisheries sector in Rodrigues and shed light on some of the key measures the Commission of fisheries is working to implement in Rodrigues in the coming years.

There was an interactive discussion session with the fishers and the hereunder are main points that were addressed:

- The modality of the distribution and pricing policy of the ice following the setting up of the ice-making machine,
- Provision for schemes for fishers to buy fishing vessels to fish outside the lagoon,
- Provision for the training of non-registered fishers,
- Use of technology such as social media and mobile applications for dissemination of information to fishers,
- Provision of training for fishers to use the mobile application to be developed under the project,

- Fishers expressed the language barrier they face when it comes to receiving information from the Government (for example the National Budget), and suggested that Creole is used for the dissemination of information for the fishers.

b) Gender Analysis Focus Group Discussions

The participants were organized into four (4) groups whereby the Gender Officer, Project team members, and the colleagues from Accelerator Lab facilitated the group discussions. During the discussions, the gender roles, contributions, and decision-making capacity of each gender in the sector of artisanal fishing were discussed.

c) Youth Dialogue with Accelerator Lab

The Accelerator Lab convened youth in Rodrigues to have a dialogue on Tourism. This activity was joined by the ECOFISH team. There were thirty-three (33) youth participants aged between 18 and 35 years. The discussion was focused on

- the future of the sector and the involvement of youth in the sector
- the choice of career path in Tourism
- the impact of COVID 19 on the sector from the lens of the youth
- potential solutions to make this sector sustainable and robust

d) Logistics Preparations for a workshop

The project team visited the venue, La Détente, Battue Madame where the workshop for the fishers of the Southern region was scheduled for the following day. Logistics arrangement finalized whereby testing of equipment such as sound system and projector was done.

Day Five – Friday 17 June 2022

a) Workshop with artisanal fishers of the southern region of Rodrigues

The second workshop with the artisanal fisher of Rodrigues was organized at La Détente, Battue Madame. There were 31 fishers out of which 20 were males and 11 were females aging between 20 to 67 years.

The project team started the workshop in the presence of Mr. Perrine and Mr. Ravanne from the FRTU. The participants present introduced themselves and expressed their expectations from the workshop.

Like the first workshop, Mr. Azie gave a brief presentation of the project about the overall project's objective, the activities, and expected outcomes highlighting the activities to be implemented in Rodrigues.

Mr. Ravanne on behalf of the FRTU team spoke about the key activities in the pipeline for the Commission for Fisheries and explained how working together with the Mauritius ECOFISH project team, shall enable those earmarked measures to successfully be implemented.

The interactive session with the fishers covered the hereunder:

- The fishers have very long hours of work when they must go to the FADs to fish. The existing FADs are located far from the southern coasts,
- The fishers of the southern region expressed the need to have a facility in the south to provide ice in the southern region of the island. It is expensive and time-consuming to go to Pointe Monier to collect ice. In terms of infrastructure, it has been suggested that a small fishing station/port can be established,

- The type of boat they use to fish outside the lagoon is different from the boat they use inside the lagoon. Therefore, fishers will have to upgrade their fishing vessels,
- Fishers requested more information on the schemes provided by the Government of Mauritius in support of the artisanal fishing community. and
- The sea in the South is rough and the weather is not always appropriate to go outside the lagoon to fish.

b) Gender Analysis Focus Group Discussions

The participants were organized into three (3) groups whereby the Gender Officer, Project team members, and the colleagues from Accelerator Lab facilitated the group discussions. During the discussions, the gender roles, contributions, and decision-making capacity of each gender in the sector of artisanal fishing were discussed.

c) Debriefing meeting with FRTU

The debriefing meeting was chaired by the Project Manager of the Mauritius ECOFISH project. The project team thanked the FRTU for their active support in the organization and implementation of the Mission activities, especially the Workshops.

The chairperson briefly discussed the main activities carried out during the Mission and discussed the way forward on the key follow-up actions as reproduced in the Actions to be section.

d) Dinner with the Commissioner and the FRTU

The delegation members were invited to a farewell dinner hosted by the Commissioner for Fisheries at Le Pecheur du Nord in Port Mathurin, whereby the project team, Gender officer, and the communication team attended. During the dinner, there was a friendly conversation about the project implementation in Rodrigues and the contribution of UNDP projects in Rodrigues. Concluding remarks as the strengthening of the existing relationship between the organization and working towards the well-being of the project beneficiaries has been at the center.

Actions to be taken	By Whom	Expected Completion Date
1) The Departmental Head of the Fishing Commission requested to increase the number of FADs to be installed in Rodrigues. The Commission will send a formal request to UNDP.	Commission of Fisheries (RRA) / FRTU	30 June 2022
2) In line with the upgrading work of the infrastructure of the Maison des Pecheurs at Pointe Monier, the Commission will share the work being done with the project and to request for an adaptation of the works to be carried out by the project.	Commission of Fisheries (RRA) / FRTU	30 June 2022
3) To share the Training syllabus of Fishers training on GPS.	Jean Lindsay	21 June 2022
4) The CTA to provide a brief assessment of the Fish Landing Station to be upgraded in Rodrigues	Sunil Beeharry	30 June 2022
5) The Fisheries, Research and Training Unit of the Commission of fisheries will provide the location to install the FADs in Rodrigues	FRTU	30 June 2022
6) Consolidating the Sensitization Campaign Report to include the Workshops carried out in Rodrigues	Raksha Ramloll	01 July 2022
7) Consolidating the Gender Analysis Report to include the focus group discussions carried out in Rodrigues	Farzina Lowtun-Boolakee	01 July 2022

PICTURES

1. Meeting with Departmental Head (DH) of the Commission of Fisheries of Rodrigues



2. Meeting with Baie Malgache FADs Fishers



3. Courtesy meeting with the Chief Commissioner



4. Meeting with the Commissioner of Tourism and Information Technology and Communication



5. Meeting with the Commissioner of Fisheries and Agriculture



6. Workshop with artisanal fishers of the Northern region of Rodrigues



7. Youth Dialogue with Accelerator Lab



8. Workshop with artisanal fishers of the southern region of Rodrigues

