

Minutes of the Fifth Board Meeting on Enhancing Disaster and Climate Resilience in Palau through improved Disaster Preparedness and Infrastructure Project

West Hotel, 8:30am, 10 November 2020

Present:

Executive

Kevin Petrini* UNDP Deputy Resident Representative a.i.

Senior Beneficiary

Mr. Waymine Towai Executive Director, National Emergency Management Office (NEMO)

Ms. Indira Daniels Special Assistant, Vice President Office

Development Partner

Mr. Shu Momose Third Secretary, Embassy of Japan in Palau

Project Assurance

Ms. Merewalesi Laveti* UNDP Monitoring & Evaluation Analyst

Project Manager & support team

Ms. Nasantuya Chuluun* Operations Support Advisor

Ms. Yoko Ebisawa* UNDP Project Manager

Ms. Shivani Devi* Finance Officer

Ms. Ana Beramaisuva* Project Assistant

Mr Ronald Kumar* Procurement Analyst

Palau in country team

Ms. Aleyda Valdes UNDP Country Project Coordinator

Ms. A. Rose Maidesil UNDP Finance/Admin Officer

* Virtual Attendance

1. Introduction

- The Chairperson, Mr. Kevin Petrini, UNDP Deputy RR a.i. formally opened the Board Meeting by welcoming everyone and adopting the agenda.
- The welcome was followed by an opening prayer, introduction of both the Board members, UNDP staff and reading and adoption of the previous meeting minutes.
- During the adoption of the agenda, Mr Towai suggested to include a new COVID 19 response funding that reflected the EDCR project. The additional item was accepted by the board members as part of the Agenda.

2. Project Overview and Progress-April to Present

- Ms. Aleyda Valdes, UNDP Country Project Coordinator, presented the Project progress from July 2020 until the present for each of the three outputs, including visual documentation and communication presence in local media and the UNDP cooperate website. (Refer to the attached).
- Ms. Yoko Ebisawa, UNDP Project Manager, reported the project's total expenditure is \$1.6 million as of September 30, 2020. Added that the project has also committed some contracts in the amount of

1.2 million including the Elliptical tanker and the Fire truck. With respect to risks, she highlighted that 8 activities are affected by COVID19 and the project is seeking supports from the counterpart to permit some essential persons to enter Palau.

- Ms. Ebisawa reported that the lessons learned are the same as the previous quarter.

3. Discussion on the Progress

- Regarding the delays in the acquittal from Activity 3.2 which involves the Bureau of Cultural and Historical Preservation, BHCP, Mr Towai, acknowledged the merit of this activity. However, he does not want to see one activity which hinders the progress of the entire project. He added that UNDP has been very lenient with their process of trying to rectify this issue and was wondering if there exist a process where UNDP can set a firm timeframe for a settlement of this issue.
- Mr. Towai further suggested that prior to acting in terms of suspending this activity, the Project Manager as well as the Project Coordinator should set a meeting with the relevant counterpart soon and state firm deadlines for the settlement of this issue. If non-compliance continues, then there had to be some type of contingency plan that should take effect when there lacks adherence to approved agreements. The project cannot continue to wait for the counterpart's availability to move forward.
- Mr Petrini, advised that a formal letter from the Resident Representative had been forwarded to the BHCP to do the acquittal of the funding or reimburse the funds to the UNDP account. Once the funds are deposited to the UNDP account, UNDP can always replenish the fund, and the activity do not lose any funding at all. He tasked the Project Management Unit to continue with the follow up and if non-compliance continues.
- Mr. Shu Momose also agreed that an immediate settlement of this issue is very important. The Embassy of Japan offered its support in communicating with the relevant parties.
- Regarding Activity 3.5, Mr. Towai asked if there exist some type of contingency plan where UNDP can revoke the company that has been awarded with the supply of vehicle 3.5-ton truck and relaunch the bid.
- Ms. Nasantuya Chuluun reported that no advance payment was made to the awarded contractor. UNDP have concluded that there are obvious shortcomings which have confirmed that there are issues with this procurement. UNDP will officially cancel this order by writing an official letter to the company and relaunch the procurement process.
- Mr. Momose expressed concerns for 1.3 (Installation Automatic Weathers Stations) and 1.4 (Installation Wave Rider Buoys) due to the quarantine process of 14 days process with additional costs. Ms. Valdes confirmed that a flexibility of time was requested by the stakeholder during the 5th Stakeholder meeting held on 27 October 2020. Mr. Towai asked if there will be some type of quarantine contingency fund, but we would like to wait until we are certain that we would have to pay for quarantine to which Mr. Momose stressed that it is not recommended to use funding to pay for quarantine.
- Mr. Momose acknowledged and thanked UNDP for the videos and pictures being circulated via media. He requested to notify the Embassy of Japan on future media postings related to this Project as they also could further disseminate the post. Additionally, he proposed that media materials which were captured the activities to be composed at the end of the Project. Mr. Petrini agreed.

4. Update on COVID-19 JSB Funds

- Referring to the concern raised from the last board meeting regarding a potential shortfall of funding, Mr. Petrini provided a status update of the COVID19 Project which was accepted by UNDP Japan Desk in HQ. He officially informed the Board that the funding can be used toward the EDCR Project, however, not in its entirety. Thus, a separate meeting may be necessary to further discuss in detail. Additionally, some of this fund can be used to meet the objectives of the EDCR Project.
- Ms. Ebisawa provided detailed budget that had been allocated based on the priorities set during the discussions between UNDP and relevant officials from Palau. She informed that minor items

requested from the Palau MoH were shipped today to Palau. Pending request from MoH are the industrial carts and a request for cargo van which cost more than the available budget for MoH.

- Mr. Towai raised a concern regarding the COVID19 JSV Funding. The notion revolved around COVID-19; however, the siren system was under budgeted at the time where there was a discussion on whether to seek additional funding and purchase a low quality that serves the entire country or use the available budget to procure a high quality that only serve the east coast of Palau. Per the email exchange between him and Mr. Noud Leenders from UNDP Pacific Center in Fiji, he put forth a request to accommodate the procurement of a high-quality siren system. Mr. Towai further raised a question on whether the budget allocation is based on the original intent of the proposal or is it based on UNDP's concerns regarding the Project cost extension as well as the other Project activities that are under budgeted. He was not clear on where those two paths intertwined and inquired why the communication between Mr. Leenders and himself has discontinued.
- Mr. Towai added that he understood the Project team has downsized and that it has extended beyond expectation and there must be funds associated with it. He asked if the two funding sources are being merged. Mr. Towai said that the project has not expend more than \$5 million dollars and he is sure that there will be some savings. He inquired about a plan.
- Mr. Petrini clarified that the COVID-19 JSB Fund is managed separately from the EDCR funds. This board is overseeing the EDCR Funds and thinks we need to maintain the Project with the resources that we have at hand as well as timelines, etc. Due to lack of clarity on how the additional funding will be used for, Mr. Petrini suggested for a further discussion between the Office of the Vice President and UNDP for clarification. Further informed that the proposal was considered by the UNDP HQ for confirmation on whether it was acceptable in the context of COVID19 Funding, which it was. Therefore, the proposal that we are having now which we have agreed on is the one that was developed by the representative of the Vice President's Office. Additionally, the discussion on how these two funding sources is integrated will surely happen and will be presented to the Board in terms of the way forward.
- Mr. Momose informed that the Embassy of Japan saw the draft proposal in August 2020 and did not make any comments as it was already been agreed upon between the stakeholders and the relevant officials. Referring to the MoH's request for the cargo van, Mr. Momose clarified that the purpose of this funding is to assist COVID19 response so all requests related to COVID19 responses are priorities. However, if the Government of Palau agree to use the funding for other significant responses beside COVID19, it can do so. He advised UNDP to take serious consideration for MoH requests and prioritize them if they are related to COVID19 responses. He further requested UNDP to share some documents stating the updated status of the funding.
- Mr. Petrini tasked the Project Management Unit to work closely with the Office of the Vice President where the proposal originated from to further clarify the specific use of the funding taking into consideration what Mr. Momose has just stated as well as Mr. Towai's concerns. This is to clarify and confirm that the funding is being invested accordingly as we move forward. He further requested that this communication between UNDP PMU and the Office of the Vice President take place as soon as possible and, also findings be shared with the Board on the next Board meeting. Mr. Momose advised that MoH be included in the discussion as well.
- Regarding this COVID19 Funding, Yoko asked how she is going to officially update on the progress and status of the COVID19 JSV Funding. Shall she continue using the occasions such as board meetings to report updates officially?
- Mr. Towai responded that another official board or committee is not necessary. The proposal was designed by the very specific contacts, that is, MoH and the Bureau of Budget and Planning. The Vice President specifically mentioned that the funding should be given to the MoH to accommodate their requests, and whatever balance we have can be used to accommodate those EDCR activities which are under budgeted. We are currently communicating with Ms. Ritter at MoH regarding the needs of

MoH and I am hoping the communication with this person continues in addressing this issue rather than the Vice President's Office.

- Ms. Ebisawa advised that a proposal received from the Vice President's Office indicated a budget to MoH in the amount of \$55,000. MoH had put additional request for a cargo van as well, which the in-country team had obtained quotations to. However, UNDP has not committed to the request due to budget concern. We are still discussing on how to move forward. Mr. Petrini encouraged Ms. Ebisawa to keep this Board informed.

5. Annual Work Plan for 2021 and Revised Timeframe

- Ms. Ebisawa provided Annual Work Plan (AWP) for 2021. Based on the revised timeline, October 2021 is the target month to have the activities completed as discussed with each stakeholder during the Stakeholder Meeting held on 27 October 2020. With this target, she proposed that UNDP would present an official request for the Project extension to the Government of Japan until December 2021 (which includes additional months as buffer).
- She also summarized the main changes of AWP from the previous board meeting: quarantine costs for international consultants and experts were reflected; operation cost was included until 3rd quarter of 2021; LOA with Ministry of States was added as agreed during the previous meeting; Adjustment of budget for radio installation, siren system, activity of cultural heritage site was made; and some contingency for upcoming procurements was included.
- The board agreed on the suggested timeframe and request for extension to the Government of Japan as well as the AWP for 2021.

6. Key Agreements

- 1) The Board supports that the request of Project extension would be made to the Government of Japan
 - 2) The Board approved Annual Work Plan for 2021.
 - 3) The Board requested the Project Management Unit to inform the status regarding the COVID-19 JSB Fund.
 - 4) The Board requested the Project to notify the Embassy of Japan on media posting and final video product of the project by compiling the previous communication materials.
 - 5) Next Board Meeting will be scheduled for the first week of February 2021.
7. Mr. Towai shared that the new Administration will be coming in with new priorities and of course Palau is expecting some changes. However, he further assured that the milestones that the partnership has set for this Project will remain on course. In case there will be changes, they will be minor changes that we will be able to accommodate with.
 8. Mr. Momose assured that changes may be expected but the importance of disaster response will remain. He encouraged everyone to proceed with the Project as planned even during this pandemic. He understands the difficulties we may go through due to flight restrictions. He further encouraged everyone to keep up the discussions with the stakeholders and relevant parties.

Meeting concluded at 10:30 am Palau time.

Chairperson



Kevin Petrini
UNDP Deputy Representative a.i.

Date 19-Jan-2021

Secretary



Analee Maidesil
Finance and Administrative Officer

Date 20/01/2021