Fifth Meeting of the Regional Project Steering Committee
for the SOPAC/UNDP/UNEP/GEF Project:
*"Implementing Sustainable Water Resources and Wastewater
Management in Pacific Island Countries"*

Nadi, Republic of Fiji Islands, 11th – 15th November 2013

*Analysis of Lessons Learned from the Operation of the GEF Pacific IWRM
Project's National Demonstration Projects*

1. Background and Context

The Global Environment facility's (GEF) Integrated Water resource Management (IWRM) Project must report on its progress to the responsible GEF Implementing Agencies (UNDP and UNEP) on a quarterly basis. As part of this reporting, the Project Coordinating Unit has requested that the participating countries submit quarterly reports; one component of those reports emphasises the capture of lessons learned throughout the quarter.

This document contains an analysis and review of the lessons learned throughout the lifetime of the project (2009 -2013).

During the project the Lessons Learned reporting process went through several iterations. Initial forms allowed managers to describe the theme of their story and identify whether it was a success or required improvement and to detail the particulars of the story. After a revision at the 2011 Regional Steering Committee, a streamlined version was put into practice in order to generate more meaningful and significant data (Appendix 1). Part of this was achieved by creating categories of story themes that managers define their story by. In order to develop these categories a review was conducted of Lessons Learned to 2011 and main and sub themes identified in an extensive list. These were then grouped into the following eight categories:

1. Capacity and Performance
2. Coordination and Integration
3. Project Management
4. Stakeholder Engagement
5. Technical
6. Political
7. Socio-Cultural
8. Communications

Though the nature of stories under each heading can differ broadly, these categories provide a useful tool for analysing data over time to see generally where the greatest success is and where there is need for improvement.

A grading system was designed that would allow for the Lessons Learned to be evaluated and compared against each other. Graded reports were then to be returned to project managers for review and consideration. A peer review system was also set up to encourage those countries that performed lower on the grading system to be helped by those that performed higher. This system was designed to build capacity among the project managers. Unfortunately these processes lapsed at the departure of the Knowledge Sharing and Monitoring Facilitator who had designed and monitored the reports.

The only consistent data over the entire project period that can be utilised is that found in the Lessons Learned Quarterly Reports. The evaluation grading criteria will be used to identify good Lessons Learned stories that can be used as best practice case studies or experience notes.

2. Analysis of Lessons Learned Reporting Data: 2009 – 2013

This section discusses the trends highlighted through analysis of the Lessons Learned reports submitted during the project period (2009 Q2 – 2013 Q2). Data was collected from each country's quarterly Lessons Learned report about the category of story and whether it was a success or required improvement. These were analysed in MS Excel.
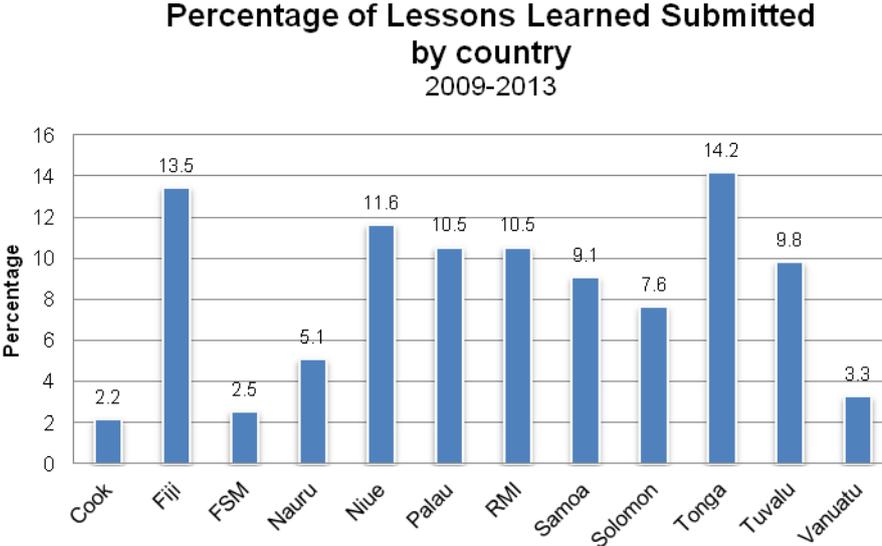
Lessons Learned Submitted

Figure 1:% Lessons Learned by Country

A total of 275 Lessons Learned reports were submitted during the project period (Q3 2009 – Q2 2013). Factoring in changes in the reporting requirements it was expected that approximately 300 – 600 possible Lessons Learned should have been submitted. The actual amount is much lower than this and highlights the inconsistent reporting from countries over the project lifetime. The distribution of these is uneven across the countries which could be a result of many different variables (Figure 1). Tonga (14.2%) submitted the highest amount of Lessons Learned followed by Fiji (13.5%). Cook Islands (2.2%) submitted the least followed by FSM (2.5%). It is important to remember these inconsistencies in numbers of submissions across countries when analysing the data for major trends. Issues that might predominantly occur in Tonga could be overrepresented compared with issues in Cook Islands and skew any regional analysis trying to determine commonalities.
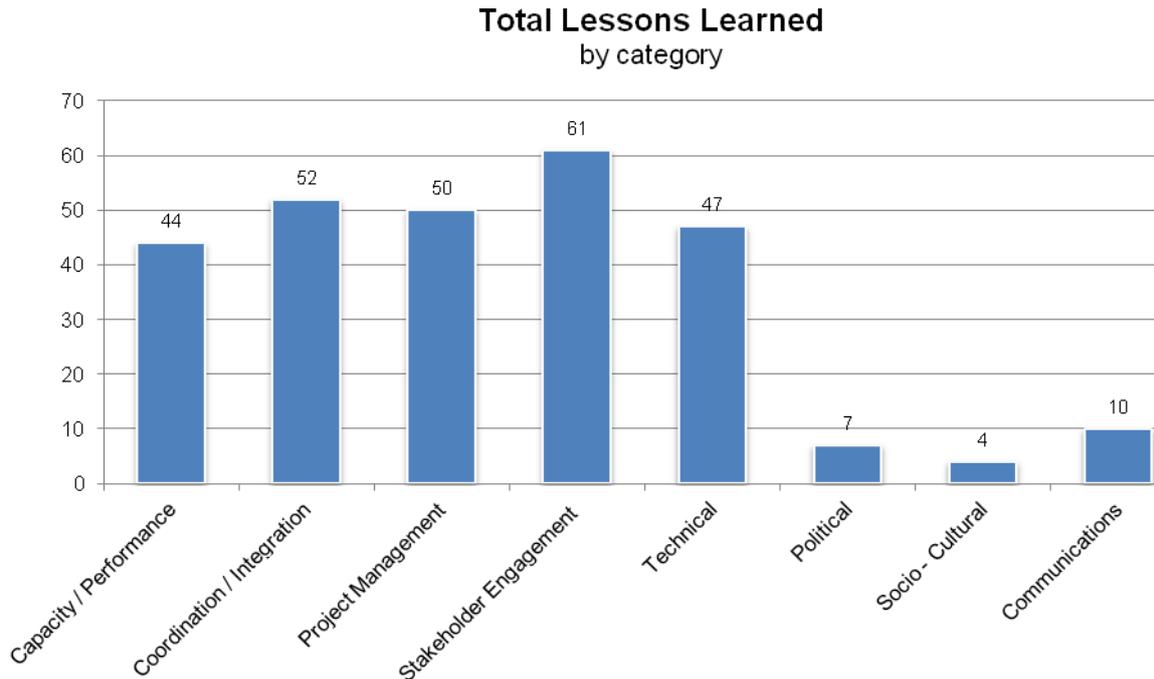
Total Lessons Learned
by category

Figure 2: Total lessons learned

Over the project period the majority of Lessons Learned have been clustered around five categories; Capacity/Performance, Coordination/Integration, Project Management, Stakeholder Engagement and Technical (Figure 2). Stakeholder Engagement occur most often and is a reflection of the focused work that PMU's undertake in engaging communities, agencies, government departments and other project teams. Many of these stories are about the innovative solutions that PMUs come up with to address barriers to and continue relationships throughout the project lifetime. After Stakeholder Engagement are Coordination/Integration and Project Management. It is interesting to note that in the 2012 analysis of Lessons Learned these are the same top three reflecting the exposure that PMU's have to the realities of implementing integrated approaches to water resource management in small island contexts and their ongoing learning of how to effectively manage a highly complex project.

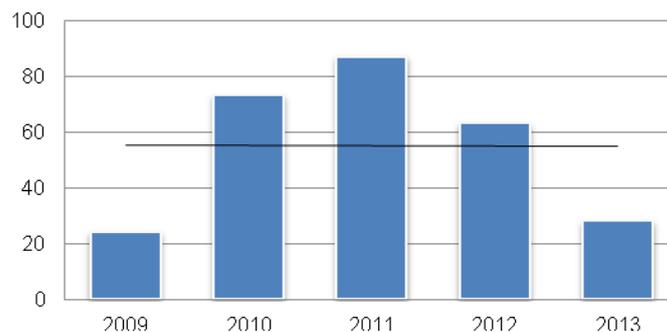## Number of Lessons Learned Submitted
2009 - 2013

Figure 3 shows the total number of lessons learned separated over the project period. Submissions peak in 2011 which may be attributable to the presence of a dedicated Knowledge Sharing Facilitator. It is interesting to note this peak in submissions as Project Managers as part of their compulsory reporting were required to submit initially between 2-4 reports and then after the 2011 revision, 1-2 reports every quarter. A decline in the quantity of reports is then to be expected; however the trendline shows that submissions have stayed almost constant over time. This is a representation of the low participation from some countries versus the high participation of others as mentioned above.

When we break this data down further to show submissions by each category over time (Figure 4) we see several spikes in submissions. In 2010 there is a peak in Stakeholder Engagement reflecting the inception phase of the project where a lot of focus was on generating interest in the projects objectives and garnering support from various stakeholder groups. In 2011 there are fairly even peaks in Stakeholder Engagement, Capacity/Performance and Technical. This indicates the emphasis on implementing the demonstration infrastructure aspects of the project and the capacity required to do so as well as the ongoing involvement of stakeholders. What is interesting to note is the constant level of Project Management and Coordination/Integration over the years. In previous Lessons Learned analysis it was anticipated that Project Management issues might lessen as the projects evolved however we can see that this has not been the case and that in fact each phase of the project presents different management issues that might be viewed as learning experiences for the PMU's. The steady level of Coordination/Integration is a reflection of the importance to PMU's of collaborating with partners and the increasing or constant difficulties they face in keeping partners engaged and motivated.
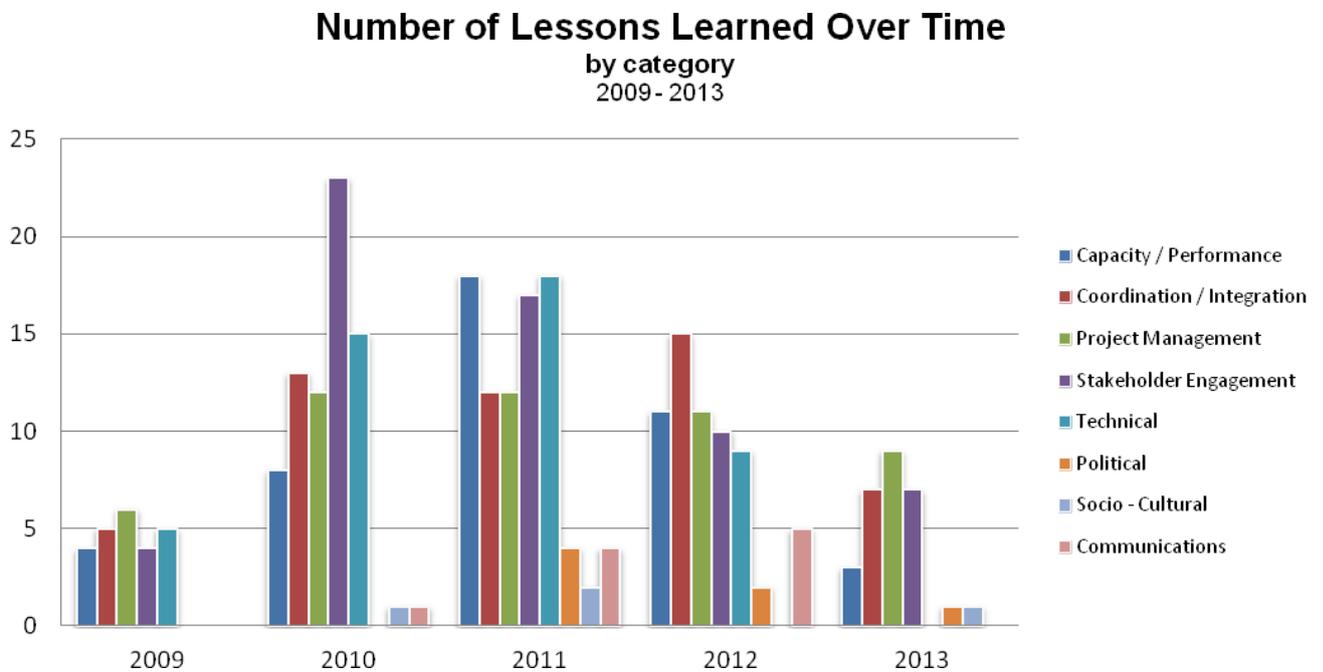

Figure 4: Lessons learned over time by category

Success and Improvement Stories

**Success vs. Needs Improvement Stories
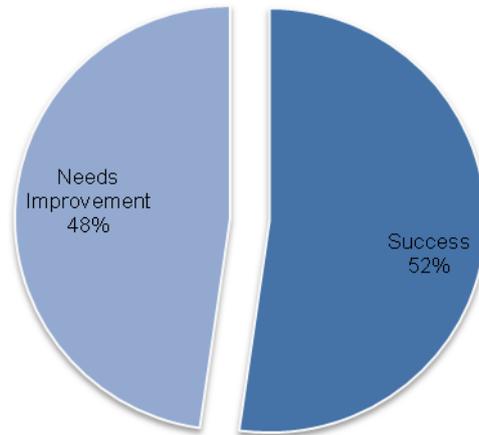2009-2013**

Needs
Improvement
48%

Success
52%

Figure 5: Percentage of success vs. improvement stories

As mentioned above, project managers were initially required to submit 2-4 and then 1-2 lessons learned. Part of this requirement is that one story is a success, one an improvement and an optional extra of their choosing. Based on this we would expect to see a relative balance between the two types of stories and this is reflected in Figure 5 where there is only 4% more success stories than improvement stories over the project lifetime.
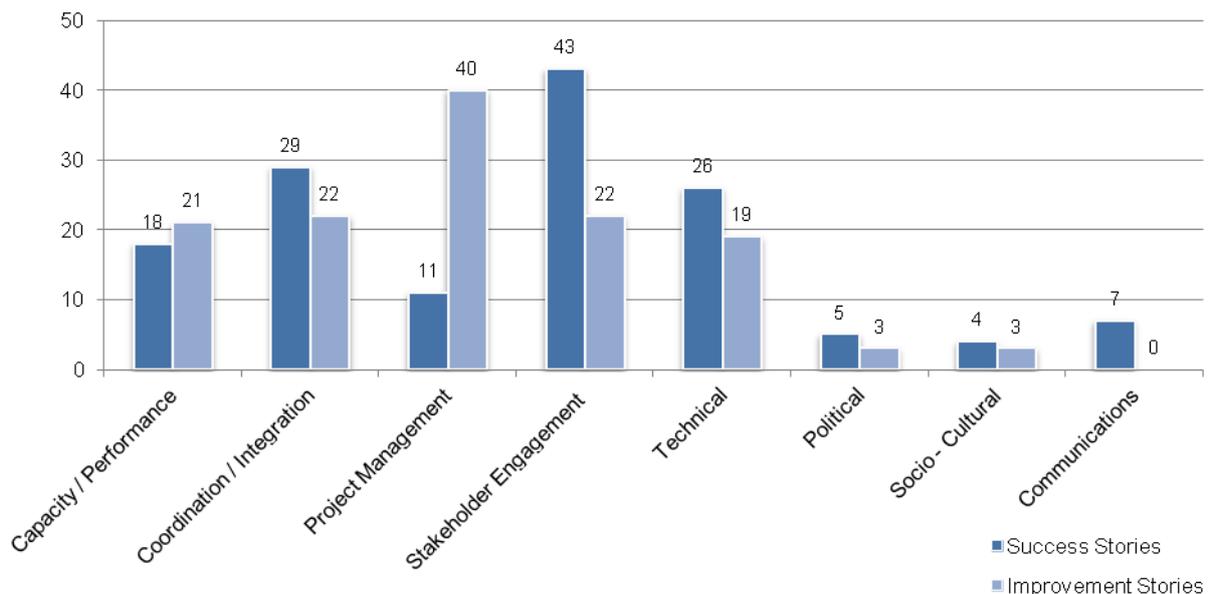
**Success & Improvement Stories
2009-2013**

Category	Success Stories	Improvement Stories
Capacity / Performance	18	21
Coordination / Integration	29	22
Project Management	11	40
Stakeholder Engagement	43	22
Technical	26	19
Political	5	3
Socio - Cultural	4	3
Communications	7	0

■ Success Stories
■ Improvement Stories

Figure 6: Number of success vs. improvement stories across categories

It is interesting to note which categories have the most success and improvement stories as it provides insight into where the project can focus capacity building resources and where there is an opportunity to gather best practice stories. Figure 6 shows clearly that the greatest need for attention lies in the Project Management category and that in Stakeholder Engagement there is a tremendous amount of success stories occurring and so potential to gather significant best practice stories. In the remaining six categories we see a much more level comparison and only in Capacity/Performance does improvement again outnumber success.

Looking at the success and improvement stories submitted over time, an interesting picture begins to appear about the progression through project phases and what aspects are playing an important role in the success of the project.
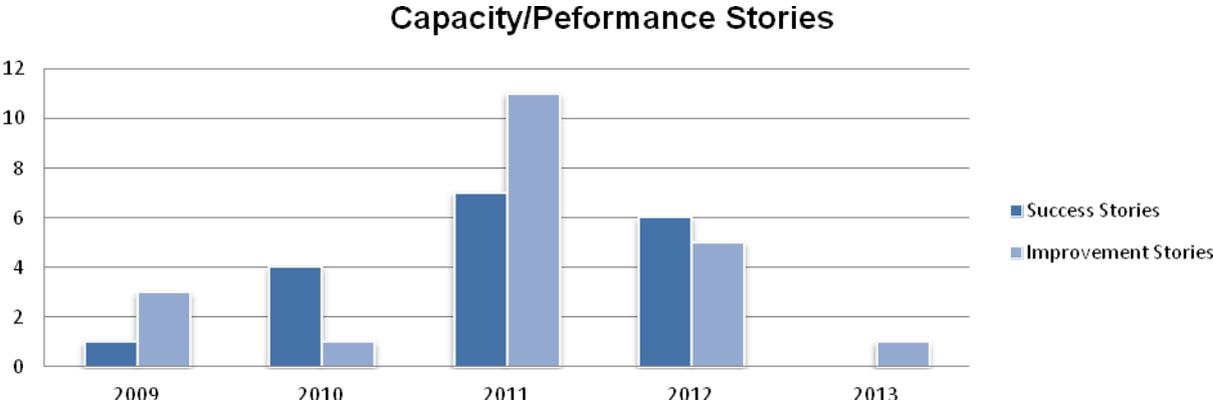

Figure 7: Capacity/Performance stories over time

Starting with Capacity/Performance (Figure 7), in 2009 success stories are very low reflecting the newness of the PMU's to managing a complex project and working with various stakeholders. Over time stories have become more numerous and peak in 2011 when the Graduate Certificate was held in Cook Islands enhancing the understanding of project managers about IWRM concepts. Here is also the highest number of improvement stories that on review are related to issues with having available human capacity and expertise in the country to complete technical and project management activities. Other issues that require improvement relate to accessing sites in difficult terrain with limited supplies,
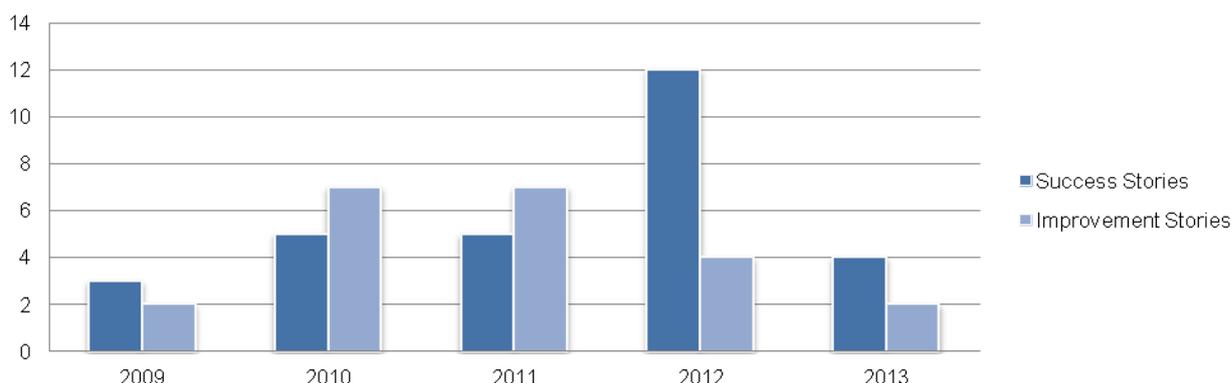
Coordination/Integration Stories

Figure 8: Coordination/Integration stories over time

Coordination/Integration (Figure 8) is low in 2009 when PMU's were just beginning to engage with stakeholders and understand the scope of each partner's support. During 2010-2011 while the committee's were being set up and PMU's begin to understand the importance of collaboration and keeping partners interested in the project there are more improvement stories than success. In 2012 there is a large peak in success stories representing the years of previous hard work put into fostering good partnerships.
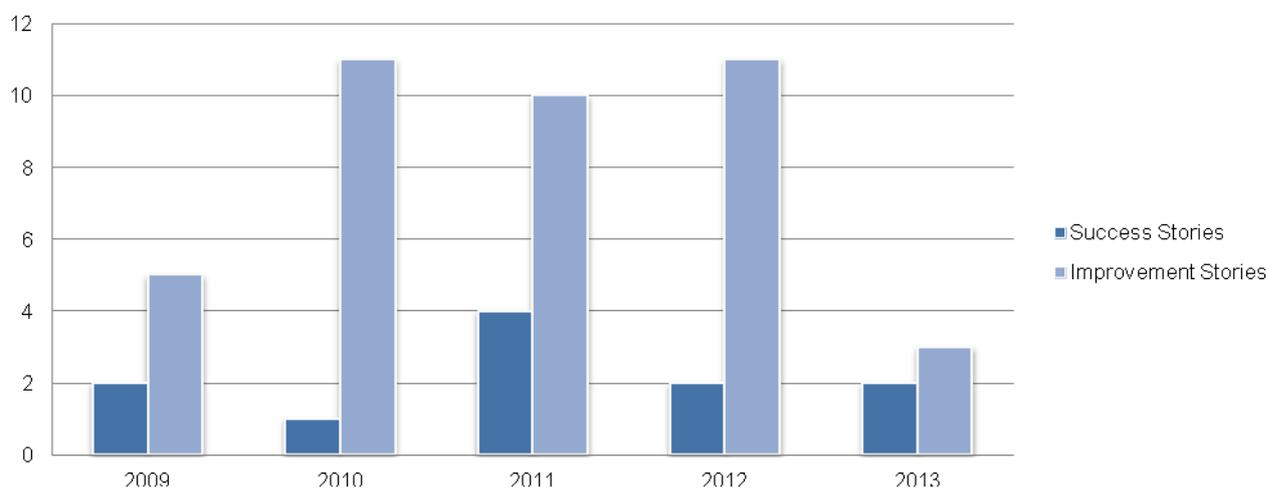
Project Management Stories

Figure 9: Project Management stories over time

Improvement stories in Project Management (Figure 9) are high and steady over time. As mentioned it was anticipated that these might decrease over time as PMU's became more familiar and confident with management process and their capacity grew. This graph however shows us that this is not the case and that there are consistent issues with project management over time. It must be noted that many of the improvement stories recorded for Project Management could also be interpreted as success if turned around; there is a subtle tendency to think critically about what went wrong rather than what worked well in a situation. It could also reflect the changing nature of project management over time; issues come to the fore that were not present of at the start of the project. Despite this there

is definitely awareness among PMU's of their performance and how this affects the project outcomes. There needs to be a stronger Lessons Learned feedback system to increase the capacity of the PMU's as there are many similar issues being raised across the region such as addressing the challenge of audits; having appropriate paperwork, informing finance divisions; and issues of financial reconciliation. Other examples of improvement stories include those surrounding time management and how to allocate sufficient time, how to provide timely reports and awkward financial arrangements that make accessing funds in a timely fashion difficult.
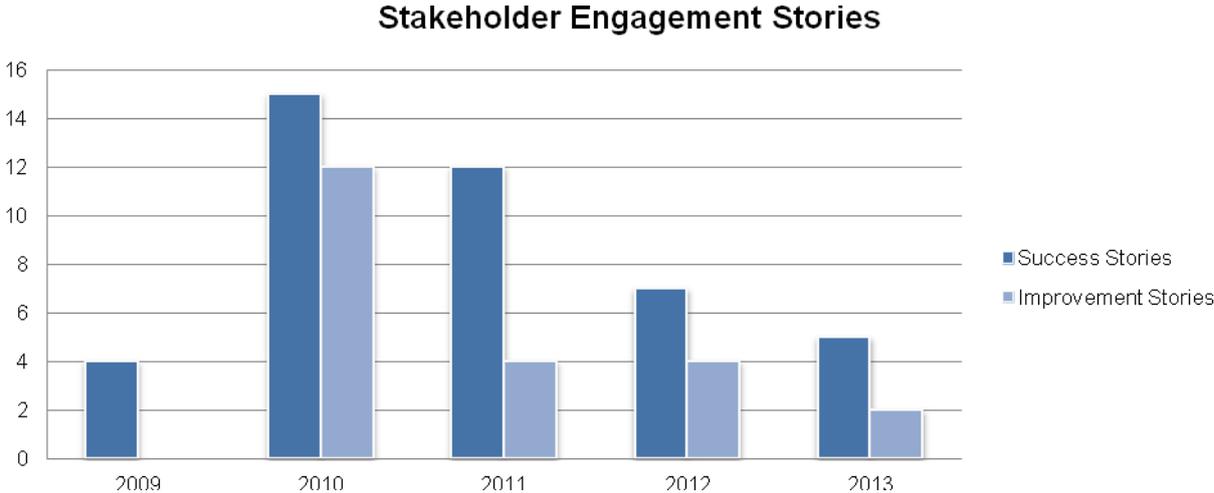
Stakeholder Engagement Stories

Figure 10: Stakeholder Engagement stories over time

Success stories in Stakeholder Engagement are high across the years (Figure 10). Most countries have reported great Lessons Learned about engagement, many of which will be described later on as case studies. The peak in 2010 is related to initial engagement and introducing the project objectives and techniques to communities, government and partner stakeholders. Here we also see the most improvement stories. Interestingly this number drops dramatically the following year suggesting that PMU's have put their lessons into practice. Perhaps this is because engagement is such a critical aspect of the project. Without stakeholder buy in the projects could not be a success. It may also be a representation the immediacy of the issues arising from personal interactions that require attention. A review of the countries shows many similarities that include learning the importance of keeping communities well informed of up-coming events, inviting the appropriate leaders (traditional or governmental), engaging community with interesting activities and providing for entertaining learning experience for youth groups. Many stories of success and improvement have come from all countries regarding the World Water Day events. Most of these celebrations involve youth groups and adult members of the community and project managers have learned over the years how best to engage all groups of the community successfully.
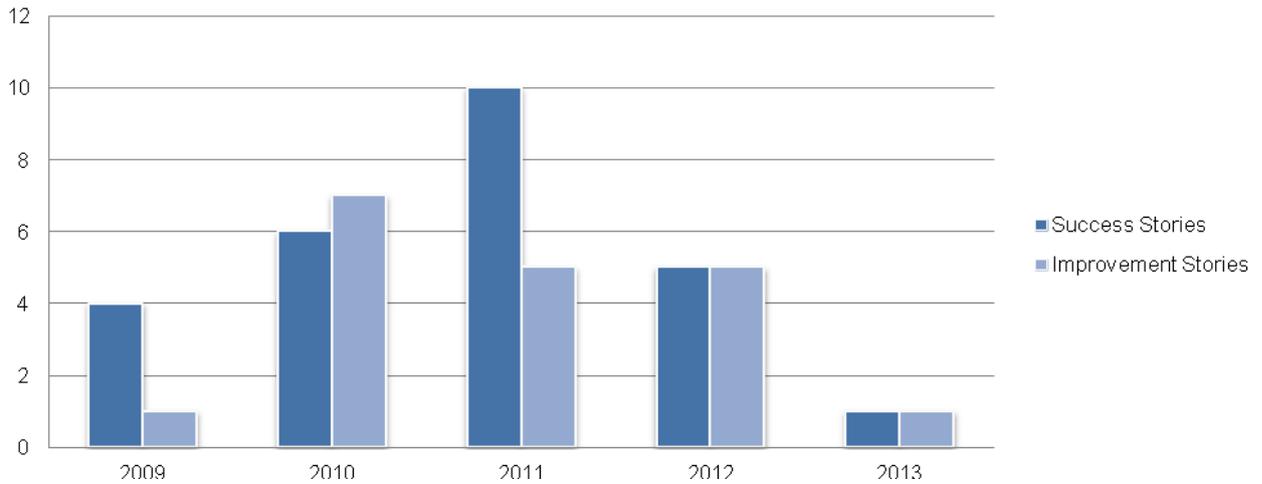
Technical Stories

Figure 11: Technical stories over time

Technical improvement stories are high in 2010 coinciding with the implementation of demonstration infrastructure and the challenges that PMU's faced. These remain relatively consistent over 2011-2012 when improvement stories about construction, material availability, human resource and structure designs are common threads across the countries. The peak in 2011 can be attributed to the successful construction of composting toilets at several country demonstration sites. Particular stories of note include those that relate to the timely provision of materials, hiring and training skilled contractors and/or labourers, allowing for sufficient and effective assessments prior to any technical operation such as construction,

The remaining three categories show little correlation over time or among success/improvement. The total success and improvement stories over time (Figure 12 & Figure 13) shows that these stories do not really appear until 2011, suggesting that PMU's are slowly starting to become more aware of issues that involve Political, Socio-Cultural or Communications issues.
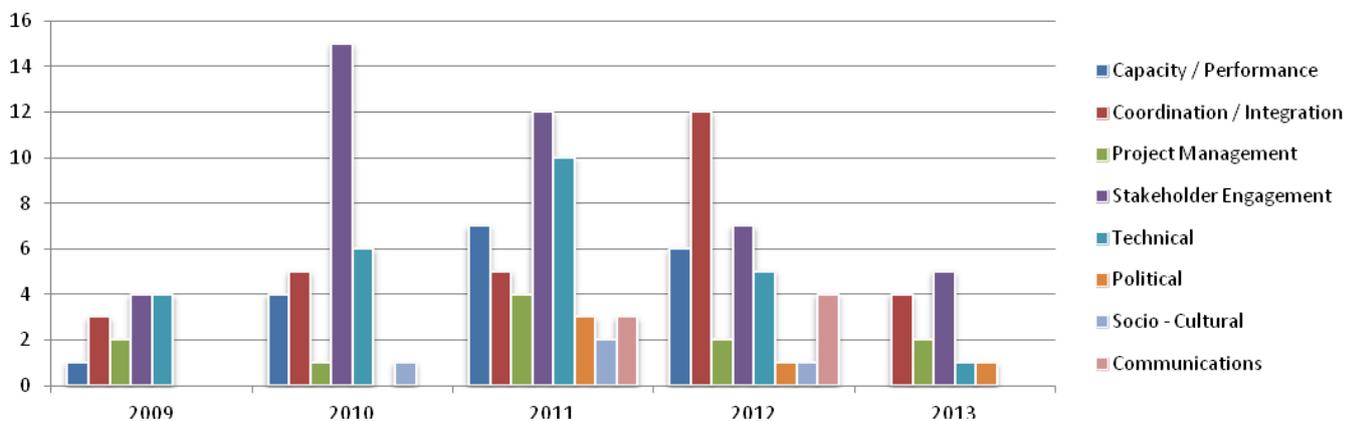
Success Stories Over Time
by category

Figure 12: Total number of success stories over time

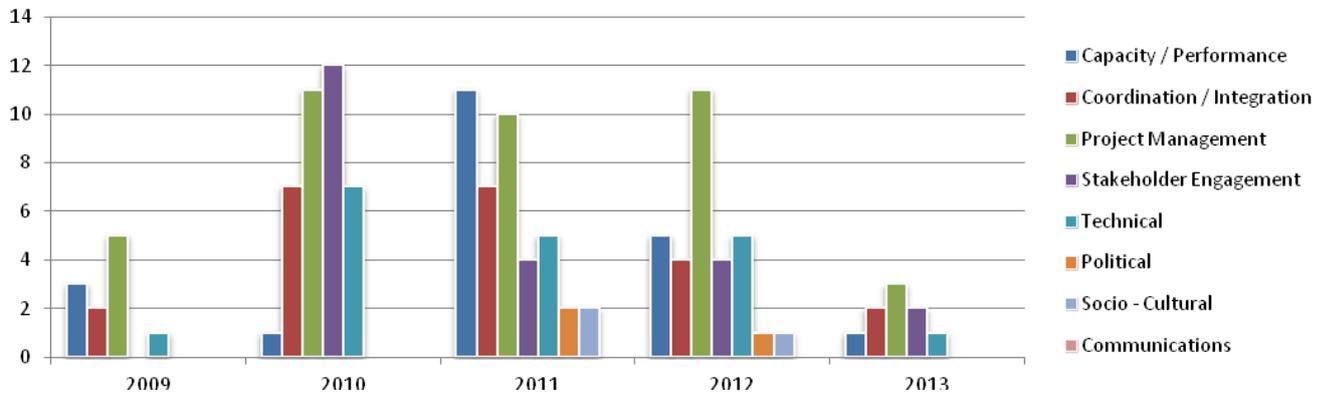# Improvement Stories Over Time
by category

Figure 13: Total number of improvement stories over time

3. Case Studies

Without a careful assessment of each lessons learned report the data it produces is a shallow examination of "how much of what". This is useful for tracking trends over time, however a closer review is required to draw out what are some similar lessons across the region and what are "eureka" moments for some PMU's that should be shared with other teams. The following tables highlight some of the similar lessons learned from the countries across the five major categories.

Capacity Building				
Country	**Year**	**Issue**	**Outcome**	**Lesson**
Samoa	Q3, 2011	IWRM Graduate Certificate	Through the certificate PMU was able to utilise new knowledge on watershed management has enabled the project to explore buffer zones as a rehabilitation measure.	This enhancement in capacity is a product of the excellent incentive by the IWRM PMU to invest in the IWRM Post Graduate Certificate and should continue to allow country teams to study without having to travel far from home. It also builds capacity of our workforce instead of relying on international consultants.
Niue	Q2, 2011	Technical Community Training	PMU, Public Works Dept. and Health Dept. Conducted targeted water leak training at two communities. Participants learned about the importance of water and how to help mitigate leaks and report them to authorities.	Through collaborative planning with PWD and Health the project delivered a high quality training that has increased the understanding of water issues and the skills of people to identify issues in their homes and village. This is easily replicated across the countries

Coordination/Integration				
Country	**Year**	**Issue**	**Outcome**	**Lesson**
Fiji	Q3, 2011	Tree planting program	Through collaboration with the Forestry Department and Water Authority of Fiji the project implemented a successful tree planting program targeted at involving rural school children. It helped to increase education of watershed practices	Engaging with key aligned agencies whose core business functions are somewhat related to the IWRM project objectives provides a good platform to implement programs together, saves resources, time and an integrated approach on knowledge/expertise.

Country	Year	Issue	Outcome	Lesson
			amongst children and community and rehabilitated an area with fruit trees.	
RMI	Q3, 2011	Committee Meetings	Informed steering committee of progress within the Policy making aspect of the project and progress made in other projects in the area. Remind the committee that they are part of a large coordinated effort to tackle water issues.	Keeping steering committee informed of the progress being made in all aspects of the project as well as what is happening in other development projects keeps people interested and dedicated to the projects objectives.

Project management				
Country	**Year**	**Issue**	**Outcome**	**Lesson**
Palau	Q4, 2010	Audits	Money had been reported as spent at PMU level but not paid out for through finance. This lead to a disparity in actual expenditure. Difficulties working with lead agency/finance to reconcile finances in time for audits.	Expenditures that have been recorded on our side need to be verified by the Finance office as to their payment before it can be reported as expenditures to SOPAC. Implement a communications coversheet to keep track of when the requisition is submitted to when the vendor is paid. Ensure internal controls are firmly in place and agreed upon at start of project.
Tonga	Q1, 2012	Audits	At the time of audit verification/approval documents were not available for the auditors.	Keep verified copies of all transactions, contracts, expenditures, receipts etc for auditors. Compile a book-keeping system to track all documents.
Tonga	Q3, 2012	Committee motivation	There is a challenge to keep committee members interested and motivated in the project.	Always update them with any news, progress and what is happening in the other IWRM projects. Don't lose their interest through

				lack of communication.

Stakeholder Engagement				
Country	**Year**	**Issue**	**Outcome**	**Lesson**
Tuvalu	Q4, 2011	Gender Mainstreaming	IWRM Tuvalu convened meetings with a range of women's groups on Funafuti (capital island) and women's delegation from the outer islands to discuss falevatie, its uses and what women would like to see in the design and maintenance of the falevatie.	Engaging Women's groups leads to a differing perspective on the use of composting toilets that will be incorporated to enhance the sustainability of the IWRM project.
Palau	Q2, 2012	World Water Day Celebrations	Collaboration with local partners for activities and inviting all community members resulted in a large turn out for the event. Targeted activities for school students resulted in an interesting and fun day for all involved.	Thoughtful planning with partners who have similar objectives results in an informative yet fun day that highlights the importance of water and the role of the IWRM and partners in working to secure it. Taking the time to research what the community will find interesting on the day ensures that they will be present and enjoy it, spreading the word amongst other community members of what they have learned.
Fiji	Q2, 2013		Partnerships with local businesses to provide prizes for the high school quiz have resulted in their committing to next years WWD event.	

Technical				
Country	**Year**	**Issue**	**Outcome**	**Lesson**
Nauru	Q3, 2010	Pollutant Source Survey	The project manager undertook the pollutant source survey himself. Through this he saw the extent of pollutant sources himself as well as being able to interact personally with householders. The survey was completed and followed up with large community	Personal interaction through a technical activity at the beginning of the project creates a basis of trust amongst communities, increase project visibility and informs them at the same time of project objectives.

			meetings where people were already well informed.	
Solomon Islands	Q1, 2011	Bore Drilling	A contractor was hired to drill bore holes to assess water quality and quantity. Due to the malfunctioning equipment only 3 out of 4 bore holes could be drilled and those were 4m less than the required depth. The project monitored the 3 bore holes and found they were of adequate depth and adjusted contract payment accordingly.	Often there are technical difficulties with equipment performance or availability. In these instances, assessing what has been done and changing project course accordingly is often the only way of addressing the situation.

Appendix One: 2011 Revised Lessons Learned Template

INSTRUCTIONS

Purpose
The national GEF-IWRM demonstrations are piloting the IWRM approach throughout the Pacific. One purpose of a pilot is to learn lessons about what works well and what does not work so well. Lessons can be successes for repeating or issues for improving. They can be about processes (how things were done) or products (outputs). By analysing our experiences and documenting these lessons, other IWRM practitioners can learn

from our experiences, build on our successes, and (hopefully) avoid the difficulties that we had. Replication of the IWRM approach in other districts, regions or country-wide will then start from a stronger base.

Process

Think about lessons learned during the quarter about IWRM implementation that can help other practitioners. This lesson could be:

**A successful implementation experience

**Something that did not work so well and where planning or actions would need improvement if the same activity was approached a second time

For each lesson, analyse what contributed to the success or the lack of success. *Make clear recommendations for the steps that others should follow to repeat the success or to improve upon the outcome*.

** Select one Main Theme and one Sub Theme from the lists provided or enter your own theme in the space provided. *A description of each of the 8 identified themes has been provided below for clarification.*

** Enter the Year and Quarter Submitted and Select whether the Lesson you are presenting is a success story or one that needs improvement.

** Select up to 5 keywords from the list or enter your own in the space provided.

** Describe, in detail, the lesson learned, the issue/event, and the expected outcome vs actual outcome.

** Analyse what the PMU could have done differently to correct the situation, or what they did successfully to ensure the positive outcome.

** Provide recommendations and advice for other IWRM practitioners unfamiliar with this project.

Major Themes

CAPAPCITY/PERFORMANCE
Human capacity in terms of ability, availability, technical knowledge (training required), or willingness to perform required tasks; Performance in terms of attendance, active participation, and delivering on commitments

COOPERATION/INTEGRATION
Willingness or ability of agencies, people, organizations, and communities to work together across sectors, to coordinate their actions and activities, to collaborate, and to share knowledge freely

PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Management and oversight of administrative tasks, project staff, building partnerships, leading project tasks, scheduling, budgeting, reporting, communicating, etc

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
Engagement with all relevant stakeholders from Community to Cabinet (including minority and marginalized groups, all levels of government, NGOs, business, agriculture, etc), raising awareness, generating project support and buy-in, active and equitable participation

TECHNICAL
Availability of technical expertise to complete construction, scientific surveys, IT support, graphics and multimedia advertisement etc as necessary

POLITICAL
Political constraints that either enhance or limit project functions

SOCIO-CULTURAL
Traditional customs/behaviours that impact the project, i.e., equal participation/representation across genders, taboos, ideas about sanitation and hygiene, traditional land ownerships rights, tribal histories, etc.

COMMUNICATIONS
Sharing information freely in the appropriate languages and formats so that it is accessible to and understood by intended audience, effective communication with partners, staff, project team, RPCU

Country: **Prepared by:**
Year: **Quarter:**

Main Theme: *Select 1 theme by double-clicking on box to the left of the appropriate theme name -*
Under default value select "Checked"

☐	Capacity / Performance	☐	Technical
☐	Coordination / Integration	☐	Political
☐	Project Management	☐	Socio – Cultural
☐	Stakeholder Engagement	☐	Communications

Other: (if other, enter your own Main Theme here) _____

Sub Theme:

☐	Capacity / Performance	☐	Technical
☐	Coordination / Integration	☐	Political
☐	Project Management	☐	Socio – Cultural
☐	Stakeholder Engagement	☐	Communications

Other: (if other, enter your own Sub Theme here) _____

Recipe for Success or What to Avoid?: *Select whether this lesson tells about something that went well or whether this is a lesson about something that went wrong, differently than expected, or just didn't work, and the course of action to ensure a better outcome. Then, if necessary, explain the reasoning behind your decision.*

Success Story: **Needs Improvement?**
(Optional): Why: _____
_____

Keywords: *Select up to five (5) keywords by double-clicking on box to the left of the word -*
Under default value select "Checked"

☐ Adaptability
☐ Awareness Raising
☐ Capacity Building
☐ Collaboration
☐ Communication
☐ Community Consultation/ Engagement/ Participation
☐ Coordination
☐ Cultural traditions
☐ Event (Workshop/ Survey/ Library Week/ Exhibition)
☐ Funding

☐ Gender
☐ Human Capacity
☐ Incentives
☐ Information/ Knowledge (Sharing/Access/Management)
☐ Integration
☐ Leadership
☐ Monitoring/Evaluation
☐ Ownership
☐ Participation
☐ Partnership
☐ Performance

☐ Planning/Scheduling
☐ Project Management
☐ Recruitment
☐ Reporting (Logframes etc)
☐ Stakeholder Engagement
☐ Steering Committee
☐ Technical Expertise
☐ Time Management
☐ Traditional Governance
☐ Transparency

Other: (if other, enter your own keyword(s) here) _____

NOTE: Word ranges are estimates. Feel free to write more, but try not to write much less.

Lesson Learned: (about 20-30 words) *Ask yourself: What is the lesson that I learned through my implementation efforts? Answer that question in one summary line here.*

Issue/Event: (about 75 words) *Provide a description and background information about the issue or event that you will be analysing. What is the IWRM project aiming to do and how is this event important to the overall implementation of the IWRM project? What was the purpose of the event (in the context of the project)? Be careful to avoid using abbreviations for the benefit of those unfamiliar with the project and local organizations. Remember that others reading this might not know much about the particular project you are working on.*

Expected Outcome: (about 100 words) *Explain what you expected or hoped would happen. WHY did you expect things to work out that way? What evidence, knowledge or experience do you have that lead you to believe this was the expected outcome?*

Actual Outcome: (about 150 words) *Explain what actually happened, giving details about HOW and WHY things happened the way they did. If applicable, explain HOW and WHY the actual outcome differed from what you expected or hoped would happen.*

What PMU would do next time [to repeat the success or improve on the outcome]? Decide which scenario (A/Success or B/Needs Improvement) most accurately represents what happened and then respond to the associated instructions/questions. (about 200 words)

What advice can you offer to other practitioners (who might be unfamiliar with the details of your project)? What should they do next time [to repeat the success or improve on the outcome]? (about 200 words)
Now that you have all of this great experience, you can share your advice for how to succeed, or for what mistakes to avoid, with other IWRM practitioners around the world. Assume that the other practitioners are unfamiliar with your particular project work and describe the key things they should consider when implementing similar projects.