



Most Significant Change The GEF Pacific STAR R2R Project - FSM



Enhancing and Strengthening Management of Protected Areas in Chuuk



Vincent Rikat and aquaculture trainer

My name is Vincent Rikat. I am from Sapuk, Weno. I started working in conservation as a community conservation officer for the Soponoch community. Although I had never received any formal training for conservation, I did my best to ensure our existing natural resources were not exploited but maintained for our children and their children.

I came to know about the FSM Ridge to Reef (R2R) project through a workshop held a few years ago, with the Soponoch community, on the Marine Protected Areas Management Effectiveness (MPAME) tool. The Chuuk State R2R Coordinator conducted a presentation on the project, and that's how I learned about it. Since then, I have been working closely with the R2R team in Chuuk on enforcement and management of Protected Areas (PAs). When the R2R project announced the PA Ranger position, I applied in hopes that I would be considered. Fortunately, I was hired as one of the four PA Rangers and became a member of the team.



Field team at the aquaculture farm



Clam aquaculture training

Some of the changes that have resulted from the project include communities gaining more interest in conservation work, more ownership over activities from PA communities, and communities exploring other opportunities to enhance their PA work e.g. aquaculture, etc. However, I would say that the biggest impact created by the R2R project is the fact that it has helped unlock opportunities that have helped enhance and strengthen management of PAs in Chuuk.

When I first started working with the Soponoch community, half of the time our meetings circled around where we can source our funding from and who we should talk to, but they never got us anywhere. Working with R2R has helped open up many avenues for myself and my community. These opportunities include introducing us to the Coconut for Life initiative, helping us establish and maintain a clam farm in Soponoch, and securing the construction of a

guardhouse for Soponoch, something we've wanted for a long time but couldn't secure the resources for. Most significantly, through the project we've been able to complete the first draft of our management plan. Since becoming a R2R PA Ranger, I have attended multiple trainings to build my capacity as a ranger. I have a support system in place for the technical aspect of the work I do. I am now also able to financially support my family while continuing to be a caretaker of our resources. All of these were made possible by the R2R project and its never-ending support to my community and other communities in Chuuk.

As the year comes to an end and R2R phases out, I am proud to say I can continue supporting my community in caring for and managing our resources. The R2R project showed us that we are capable of managing our PA without heavily relying on outside assistance. Impossible is an obstacle we create for ourselves. If we believe that we can do it and have the persistence to do so, nothing can stop us.



Clam aquaculture training

