

# Terminal Evaluation Report

**FINAL**

1 July 2022

## Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation and of the Enhancement of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage in Niue

Project Title:	Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation and of the Enhancement of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage in Niue
UNDP Project ID#:	5258
GEF project ID#:	5552
Evaluation timeframe:	March to July 2022
Date of evaluation report:	1 July 2022
Country:	Niue
Region:	Asia-Pacific
GEF Operational Focal Area/Strategic Program:	Biodiversity, International Waters
GEF Agency:	United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
Executing Entity / Implementing Partner:	Ministry of Natural Resources
Responsible Partners:	Department of Education Tāoga Niue Department of Public Works (Water) Office of the Premier Treasury Department
Evaluation team members:	Adrian Stokes

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Annexed in a separate file: Terminal GEF tracking tools

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

BTOR	Back-to-office reports
CCA	Community Conservation Area
CCR	Community Conservation Reef
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
EA	Executing Agency
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EOP	End-of-project
ESSP	Environmental and Social Screening Procedure
HS	Highly Satisfactory
HU	Highly Unsatisfactory
IA	Implementing Agency
IC	International consultant
LSMPA	Large-scale Marine Protected Area
LSMSP	Large-scale Marine Spatial plan
MCO	UNDP Multi-Country Office for Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau
ML	Moderately Likely
MNR	Ministry of Natural Resources
MP	Management plan
MPA	Marine protected areas
MS	Moderately Satisfactory
MTR	Management response
MU	Moderately Unsatisfactory
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NIUANGO	Niue Island United Association of Non-Government Organizations
NOW	Niue Ocean Wide
OFP	Operational Focal Point
PEB	Project Executive Board
PIR	Project Implementation Reports
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
POST	Project Oversight Steering Team
QPR	Quarterly Progress Reports
R2R	Ridge to Reef
RMAC	Resource Management Advisory Committee
SESP	Social and Environmental Screening Procedure
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-Bound
SMRA	Special Managed Reef Areas
SRPD	Sub-regional Programme Document
TE	Terminal evaluation
ToR	Terms of Reference
TT	Tracking tools
UA	Unable to Assess

# 1 Executive Summary

**Table 1:** Project Information Table

<b>Project Title</b>	Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation and of the Enhancement of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage in Niue		
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	5258	PIF Approval Date:	Mar 21, 2014
GEF Project ID (PMIS #):	5552	CEO Endorsement Date:	Apr 4, 2016
ATLAS Business Unit, Award ID, Project ID:	00078842 00088927	Project Document (ProDoc) Signature Date (date project began):	Apr 21, 2016
Country(ies):	Niue	Date project manager hired:	
Region:	Asia-Pacific	Inception Workshop date:	Jul 6, 2017
Focal Area:	Multi Focal Areas	Midterm Review completion Date:	Oct 8, 2018
GEF Focal Area Strategic Objective:	BD-1, BD-2, IW-1	Terminal Evaluation Completion Date:	Jul 1, 2022
GEF Operational Programme or Strategic Priorities/Objectives:		Planned Operational Closure Date:	Apr 20, 2022
Trust Fund:	GEF TF		
Implementing Partner (GEF Executing Entity):	Ministry of Natural Resources		
NGOs/CBOs involvement:			
Private sector involvement:			
Geospatial coordinates of project sites:	19° 3' 16.0020" S and 169° 52' 2.0388" W		

Financial Information		
PDF/PPG	at approval (US\$M)	at PDF/PPG completion (US\$M)
GEF PDF/PPG grants for project prep	140,000	140,000
Co-financing for project preparation	-	-
Project	at CEO Endorsement (US\$M)	at TE (US\$M)
[1] UNDP contribution:	200,000	150,206
[2] Government:	10,868,600	14,050,000
[3] Other multi-/bi-laterals:	-	-
[4] Private Sector:	-	-
[5] NGOs:	-	-
[6] Total co-financing [1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5]:	11,068,600	14,200,206
[7] Total GEF funding:	4,194,862	3,943,631
[8] Total Project Funding [6 + 7]	15,263,462	18,143,837

## Project Description

‘Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation and of the Enhancement of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage in Niue’ (PIMS 5258) is a six-year project (extended from five years) implemented by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) with the Department of Education, Tāoga Niue, Department of Public Works (Water), Office of the Premier and the Treasury Department as Responsible Parties. The project started on 21 April 2016 and was scheduled to finish on 20 April 2022 (extended from 20 April 2021). A midterm review was undertaken for the project and finalised on 8 October 2018.

The project was designed to enhance Niue’s capacity to effectively create and manage protected areas for biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, and safeguarding of ecosystem services. It focuses on the expansion of its protected estate on land and on its marine areas through a combination of community conservation areas and government-led protected areas.

This project has been designed to engineer a paradigm shift in the management of terrestrial, coastal and marine protected sites from a site-centric approach to a holistic ‘ridge to reef’ (R2R) comprehensive approach. The project also introduces the concept of connectivity between landscape and seascape in Niue.

The objective of the project is to ‘strengthen conservation and sustainable use of land, water and marine areas and their biodiversity by building on their cultural heritage values through integrated national and community actions’.

To achieve the project objective and address identified barriers, the project’s intervention has been organised into two components with associated outcomes.

Outcome 1: New community conservation and national protected areas established at different levels, thus reducing threats and improving biodiversity status of conservation areas through effective community management. This outcome identifies communities as the agents of management and monitoring. It comprises the major project interventions on the ground leading to protective measures at different levels.

Outcome 2: Strengthened community and cross-sectoral involvement of relevant national government departments to promote effective Ridge to Reef management by mainstreaming biodiversity and environmental concerns into plans and actions. This outcome is focused primarily upstream at the central and local government levels and it targets institutional strengthening, capacity building and other foundational elements

## Evaluation Ratings

Evaluation ratings are summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Evaluation ratings table

<b>1. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&amp;E)</b>	<b>Rating</b>
M&E Design at Entry	Satisfactory
M&E Plan Implementation	Moderately Satisfactory
Overall Quality of M&E	Moderately Satisfactory
<b>2. Implementing Agency (IA) Implementation &amp; Executing Agency (EA) Execution</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight	Satisfactory
Quality of IP Execution	Satisfactory
Overall Quality of Implementation/Execution	Satisfactory
<b>3. Assessment of Outcomes</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Relevance	Satisfactory
Effectiveness	Moderately Satisfactory
Efficiency	Moderately Satisfactory
Overall Project Outcome Rating	Moderately Satisfactory
<b>4. Sustainability</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Financial Sustainability	Moderately Likely
Socio-Political Sustainability	Likely
Institutional Framework and Governance Sustainability	Likely
Environmental Sustainability	Likely
Overall Likelihood of Sustainability	Moderately Likely

## Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Lessons Learned

### Findings

The project made good progress and had many important achievements. Progress against the Objective is assessed as Moderately Satisfactory, with one indicator achieved and two partially achieved. The engagement with the Niue community on cultural and traditional values, Niue knowledge, Niue intellectual sovereignty, and Niue practices and technology has been a priority and a highlight of the project; it is important that the information gathered is codified and made available in culturally sensitive ways. Also under the Objective, the project provided valuable support to the management and monitoring of the freshwater lens and commenced work with community members on working towards the sustainable utilisation of food species.



Achievements under Outcome 1 have been significant, with two indicators achieved and one partially achieved, and progress is assessed as Satisfactory. The three targets for the expansion of the protected area estate in terrestrial, marine and reef ecosystems were all exceeded. In particular, the Large-scale Marine Protected Area currently covers 40% of Niue's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (127,000 km<sup>2</sup>) and in April 2022 the declaration of the Niue Nukutuluea Multiple-Use Marine Park regulations completed the Niue Marine Spatial Management Planning framework, providing varying levels of protection over 100% of Niue's EEZ (317,500 km<sup>2</sup>), a step towards sustainable development that is of global significance. Management plans are in place or being finalised for each of these conservation areas. The project also commenced efforts for the recovery of species at risk.

Under Outcome 2, two indicators were achieved and one partially achieved and progress is assessed as Moderately Satisfactory. Local and central government now adopt a comprehensive, holistic approach to natural resources management, and biodiversity and natural resources are explicit in local and central government planning and engagement with the community. Finally, engagement and awareness raising have been a strength of this project, including working with the education sector to publish their Education Sustainability Guidelines curriculum and to build capacity, although the quantitative target for awareness levels was not reported against.

The project made some contributions to gender issues and gender mainstreaming, although these were limited because the project design did not include gender-disaggregated targets or gender-specific actions. However, gender equality was reported on in narrative form throughout the project, which shows that it was considered throughout, and activities were informed by a 'Gender Analysis and Recommendations' document after the midterm review. The project was designed and implemented in accordance with the Niue National Policy for Gender Equality and Plan of Action 2014–2018.

The project has made an important contribution to the Niue population by enhancing understanding of cultural and science-based approaches to the sustainable use of natural resources and by undertaking top-down and bottom-up planning to capture the communities' cultural etiquette and protocols, Niue knowledge, and Niue intellectual sovereignty, aspirations and priorities.

This terminal evaluation (TE) experienced significant limitations, especially because the IC was not in Niue for the mission. Also, there were delays in receiving many documents and information for the TE, with some key documents only being provided in the final days of this report being finalised. Finally, during the remote mission there were recurring challenges scheduling meetings, and some stakeholders who were scheduled for interview were not interviewed.

## Conclusions

The project provides a good example of engaging communities in combining cultural etiquette, knowledge, protocols and practices with science-based approaches to conservation and natural resources management. The engagement approach has been respectful and patient and has contributed to increased appreciation among the people of Niue of the importance and relevance of their cultural knowledge.

The project has also achieved some impressive achievements, especially with exceeding the targets for the establishment of new terrestrial, marine and reef conservation areas, developed via a participatory approach with the people of Niue.

Specific conclusions are provided in the Recommendations section, with associated recommendations.

## Lessons Learned

The following lessons learned were identified:

### ***Community engagement activities need time to build trust, understanding and participation***

Community engagement was a major component of this project, starting from a low level of awareness of R2R and related concepts. In addition to having low awareness, community members had early concerns about the project, especially relating to their traditional rights and practices and whether the project was seeking fundamental changes to these in pursuit of its conservation goals. The project did not rush the engagement, respected and discussed the views and concerns, and took the time to build trust and understanding, which ultimately led to high levels of participation in land use planning and conservation area planning.

### ***Niue culture and intergenerational knowledge are harmonious with the concepts of holistic planning and sustainable natural resources management***

The Niue people have been living sustainably on their land and waters for generations. Traditionally, the knowledge involved is passed between generations, ensuring that the culture continues, the resources continue to be available and significant areas in the landscape and seascape are protected and respected. It is clear that this knowledge system is harmonious with the scientific concepts of holistic planning and sustainable natural resources management.

### ***Participatory land use planning can be a crucial input to holistic landscape planning***

The project used a top-down and bottom-up land use planning process that involved all 14 villages, which included identifying important cultural and biological sites and areas, issues and opportunities, community conservation areas, and permitted uses and best practices in different land use categories. Together, these 14 land use plans comprise an integrated landscape plan for the entire country of Niue.

### ***Niue successfully delivered a \$4.2 million GEF project within the country***

This \$4.2 million R2R project was successfully delivered, with the Overall Project Outcome assessed as Moderately Satisfactory and 94% of the budget expended as of 30 April 2022. Given that this project was implemented under the National Implementation Modality, this shows that Niue has the capability to deliver large complex donor projects within the country. Key to this was the inclusion of multiple key agency stakeholders on the Working Group and the proactive participation and guidance of these Working Group members. The support of UNDP as the GEF Executing Agency was also key.

## Recommendations

The recommendations are provided in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Recommendations table

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
	<b>Category 1: Current project</b>		
1	<p><b>Finalise the terrestrial community conservation area management plans for each village, ensuring that they include village-specific information on habitats, species, natural resources and priority activities and that they are clear about their relationship with the coastal and marine resources plan and Resource Management Advisory Committee for each village</b></p> <p>The draft management plans for the terrestrial village community conservation areas do not yet contain detailed village-specific information on biodiversity, natural resources and priorities, which is vital content for these plans to be a practical and useful mechanism for villages to continue to deliver the results promoted by this project. Also, the draft plans are not clear about their relationship to the coastal and marine plans and the Resource Management Advisory Committee that have also been established for each village.</p>	PIU, MNR	Immediate
2	<p><b>Provide ongoing support to villages to implement their conservation area management plans and coastal and marine plans and to update them when circumstances change (such as new information, new village priorities, or new governance arrangements)</b></p> <p>The project and partners have built a strong model for the sustainability of results, including the sustainable financing mechanism, which will depend on continued support to villages from government. The management plans will also be more effective at continuing to deliver results if they are dynamic and updated in response to changing knowledge, priorities and other circumstances.</p>	MNR, other agencies, NOW Project	Immediate
3	<p><b>Ensure that all project products (including management plans, EIMS and Sustainability Strategy) meet the expectations of relevant stakeholders, include all key information and are endorsed by appropriate parties</b></p> <p>There has been a rush at the conclusion of the project as some key deliverables are finalised (especially the conservation area management plans). It is important to note that many of these delays were caused by factors largely beyond the project's control, especially COVID-19. The rushed finish creates a risk that the products do not meet the expectations of relevant stakeholders and/or do not include all key information. It is very important for the sustainability of results that all products and outputs are finalised to an appropriate standard and meet the expectations of relevant stakeholders.</p>	MNR	Immediate

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
4	<p><b>Continue to work with the NOW project to strengthen delivery of management plans by embedding the sustainable financing mechanism</b></p> <p>The strong sustainability model for the project includes a sustainable financing mechanism, being delivered through the NOW project, and a Resource Management Advisory Committee in each village. Sustainability of results therefore depends on the sustainable financing model becoming fully functional and the trust fund reaching a critical mass of funds. The collaboration between government agencies, the project and NOW has been excellent and the launch of the trust fund is expected in late 2022.</p>	MNR, other agencies, PIU, NOW	Immediate, medium and ongoing
5	<p><b>Work with Tāoga Niue to agree on the best way to codify the cultural knowledge and make it available to the community and decision-makers in a culturally sensitive way</b></p> <p>A key result from the project was the gathering of important information on Niue cultural knowledge and practices in natural resource utilisation. There was enthusiasm from stakeholders about the need for the cultural knowledge collected to be sensitively documented in a hard copy format available to the community and decision-makers, but there was lack of clarity about whether this was being done. There was also an expectation that there should be some tangible results from the extensive engagement that occurred. Two former R2R staff members have moved to Tāoga Niue at the conclusion of the project to progress this, which is very positive.</p>	Tāoga Niue, MNR, PIU	Medium
6	<p><b>Repeat the awareness questionnaire from 2018 and analyse to provide some insight into the results of the awareness raising</b></p> <p>Engagement and awareness raising was a strength of the project but there was no measurement of this (despite this being a quantitative target for Indicator 2.3); an awareness questionnaire was undertaken in 2018 but not repeated.</p>	MNR	Immediate
<b>Category 2: Future project implementation and oversight</b>			
7	<p><b>At the commencement of a project, clearly identify how achievement of each indicator and target will be measured, including agreeing on repeatable quantitative measurement techniques if required, and identify indicators and/or targets that are ambiguous and/or difficult to measure and that should be changed</b></p> <p>Reporting against the results framework was not clearly focused for some indicators and targets, and no measurements or reporting were made against three quantitative targets, which makes it difficult to evaluate some achievements. It is important at commencement to carefully consider each indicator and agree on how it will be measured and reported against. Also, some indicators and targets in the results framework were ambiguous and/or difficult to report against and the</p>	All	Ongoing

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
	project would have benefited by identifying these and making changes early.		
8	<p><b>Ensure that changes to indicators and/or targets are adopted (if required and appropriate) when project deliverables are changed and that these revised indicators and/or targets are clear in subsequent PIR reporting</b></p> <p>After the MTR, the number of project activities was rationalised and a revised work plan was approved by the Working Group and Cabinet; this significantly changed project deliverables, especially for Indicators 2.1 and 2.2, but the end-of-project targets were not changed to reflect this and PIR reporting continued against the original targets. This made assessment of some progress difficult.</p>	All	Ongoing
9	<p><b>Provide enhanced project oversight to countries with less experience in delivering GEF projects to ensure that project progress is being appropriately measured and reported</b></p> <p>There was a shortcoming in oversight because quantitative reporting was not done for three indicators with quantitative targets, baselines were not set for two indicators, and targets were not updated after significant changes to deliverables were endorsed by the Working Group and Cabinet. If these deficiencies had been identified and remedied early, this would have been of significant benefit to the project's M&amp;E.</p>	UNDP	Ongoing
10	<p><b>Finalise public project reports and other outputs and make them available on an easily accessible public knowledge products portal</b></p> <p>The project produced various reports and other outputs that would be of interest to the public and other practitioners. However, there were shortcomings with version control – the documents received for the TE were often labelled 'draft' or were undated. Also, there was not a point of public access for these project outputs – the project's Facebook page does not have a knowledge portal and there was no dedicated Niue R2R website for the concluding phase of the project (due to difficulties with the supplier for the original website). For future projects, it is recommended that clear version control protocols are followed, that final reports are dated and clearly marked as final, and that a public knowledge products portal be established.</p>	UNDP	Ongoing
11	<p><b>Prepare in advance for independent evaluations to ensure that all reporting and deliverables are available and to ensure that all stakeholders have equal opportunity to contribute</b></p> <p>There were delays in receiving many documents and information for the TE, with some key reporting not becoming available until the last week of finalising this report; this created difficulties in assessing some results and holistically evaluating the project's outcomes. In addition, during the mission there were recurring challenges scheduling</p>	All	Ongoing

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
	meetings and some stakeholders who were scheduled for interview were not interviewed.		
	<b>Category 3: Future programming</b>		
12	<p><b>Include consideration of climate change impacts in future updates of land use planning, species management planning and conservation area planning</b></p> <p>Consideration of climate change and its impacts was not included in the land use plans that were prepared (although it was discussed during early consultations). During interviews, it was apparent that local people are aware of climatic changes that are already underway (such as changes in cyclone and rainfall patterns). There are many likely impacts on biodiversity and natural resources from these changes in climate.</p>	MNR, other agencies	Ongoing
13	<p><b>Maintain the momentum of the R2R project by developing a follow-up project that builds other vital issues into the village planning and financing mechanism: sustainable utilisation of food species, sustainable alternative livelihoods, other species and ecosystem management approaches, and climate change</b></p> <p>The project has successfully conveyed the importance of a holistic approach to sustainable resource management and has seen significant results with cultural knowledge and practices, protected area establishment, management planning, Resource Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) establishment, and sustainable financing. The project was not strong on sustainable utilisation of food species and sustainable alternative livelihoods, which are vital considerations for Niue villages. The project also did not fully consider threatened species or climate change in its land use planning. The opportunity exists to build on the successes, structures and processes from this project (such as village plans, RMACs and sustainable financing) to focus on these factors. Such a project may be suitable for GEF 8 funding and should work closely with the proposed GEF 7 UNEP project 'Robust sustainable tourism and agriculture sectors in Niue supported by biodiversity mainstreaming and sustainable land management'.</p>	Niue government, UNDP	Medium

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Purpose and Objective of Evaluation

In accordance with the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this terminal evaluation (TE), the TE will assess the achievement of project results against what was expected to be achieved and draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming. The TE report will promote accountability and transparency and assess the extent of project accomplishments.

Further to this, the ToR states that the objectives of the evaluation will be to:

- assess the achievement of project results supported by evidence (i.e. progress of project's outcome targets)
- assess the contribution and alignment of the project to relevant environmental management plans or climate and biodiversity management policies
- assess the contribution of the project results towards the relevant outcome and output of the Sub-regional Programme Document (SRPD) for the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu)
- assess any cross-cutting and gender issues
- assess impact of the project in terms of its contribution to, or enabled progress toward reduced environmental stress
- examine the use of funds and value for money and draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP.

### 2.2 Scope

The scope of the TE is to assess any evidence available since project development that will assist in addressing the evaluation's objectives and purpose. The TE will assess project performance against expectations set out in the project's Logical Framework / Results Framework (see ToR Annex A).

### 2.3 Methodology

The evaluation was undertaken between March and July 2022 by an international consultant (IC).

The evaluation followed the document *Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects 2020*<sup>1</sup> ('UNDP-GEF TE Guidance' hereafter).

The evaluation was based on a detailed review of data and information and extensive stakeholder consultation, to develop evidence-based conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned. Multiple sources of data informed the evaluation, to ensure the collection of evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. A mixed methods approach was used, adopting a combination of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and instruments.

The two main data collection methods were desk reviews of documents and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. No site visits were possible due to COVID-19-related restrictions.

Where possible, evidence was triangulated against more than one information source to verify findings. Triangulation was undertaken by assessing the relevant evidence collected by at least two methods to determine if the same finding was reached.

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<sup>1</sup> ['Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects'](#)

This included quantitative components (assessing project reporting, such as PIRs, GEF Tracking Tools and other project reporting, and analysing and summarising other data sources, such as consultant reports) and qualitative components (note taking to summarise and analyse).

## 2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The following activities were included in the evaluation:

- Consultation with key project stakeholders between 6 April and 26 April 2022 (Niue time), using ‘semi-structured interviews’ in a conversational format (this period of interviews is referred to hereafter as ‘the mission’). Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the IC could not visit Niue and the interviews were held virtually via videoconferencing (using Zoom). The itinerary and interviewees for the mission are provided in Annex 2.
- A desk review of all relevant documents and information covering project design, implementation progress, and monitoring and review; this also included relevant government and UNDP strategic and planning documents; the list of documents and information is provided in Annex 3.
- An evaluation criteria matrix that details the evaluation questions to be answered and from where this information will come; this is shown in Annex 4.
- Assessment of the extent to which gender considerations were mainstreamed into the project’s design, monitoring, implementation and impact (more detail below).
- Assessment of other cross-cutting issues, including the contribution of the project to a human rights-based approach positive effects on the population, the contribution of the project’s activities to poverty reduction, and equality of access to the project for all Niue people.
- Assignment of an achievement rating for the project’s objective and three outcomes, and assessment of achievement of the end-of-project targets, using the project’s results framework.
- Assessment and assignment of a rating of the project against the following categories: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, overall project outcome, sustainability, M&E, and implementation / oversight and execution; ratings were assigned according to the scales prescribed in the UNDP-GEF Guidance document (see Table 4).
- Review of GEF Tracking Tools that were provided.
- Presentation of preliminary findings via videoconferencing on 3 May 2022 (Niue time).

To assess the extent to which gender considerations were mainstreamed by the project, the evaluation used the document review, stakeholder interviews and personal observations during the mission to analyse a range of matters, including:

- Were relevant gender issues addressed in the project document?
- Was a gender analysis undertaken and were gender-specific activities, targets and monitoring established?
- Were sex-disaggregated data collected relating to project activities and outcomes?
- Was there an appropriate gender balance in participation in project activities?
- Were gender specialists involved in project inception and implementation stages?



**Table 4:** Ratings scales (source: derived from Annex 9 of UNDP-GEF TE Guidance document)

Ratings scales	
Ratings for M&E, Implementation/Oversight and Execution, Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency	Sustainability Ratings
6: Highly Satisfactory (HS): There were no shortcomings; quality exceeded expectations 5: Satisfactory (S): There were minor shortcomings; quality met expectations 4: Moderately Satisfactory (MS): there were moderate shortcomings; quality more or less met expectations 3. Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): there were significant shortcomings; quality was somewhat lower than expected 2. Unsatisfactory (U): there were major shortcomings; quality was substantially lower than expected 1. Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe shortcomings Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment	4. Likely (L): little or no risks to sustainability 3. Moderately Likely (ML): moderate risks 2. Moderately Unlikely (MU): significant risks 1. Unlikely (U): severe risks Unable to Assess (UA): Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability
<b>Additional rating where relevant</b> Not Applicable (N/A)	

## 2.5 Ethics

The TE was conducted in accordance with the UNEG ‘Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation’ and the IC has signed the ‘UNEG Code of Conduct’ form (Annex 6).

In particular, the IC protected the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants at all times and has ensured that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Stakeholders were informed of this at the commencement of interviews.

The IC has been sensitive to issues of discrimination and gender equality and has presented results in a manner that clearly respects stakeholders’ dignity and self-worth.

## 2.6 Limitations to the Evaluation

The main limitations to the TE related to the COVID-19 epidemic and associated constraints, especially the inability for the IC to attend Niue. In addition, quarantine requirements for Niue people caused some challenges for scheduling discussions during the remote mission.

Virtual interviews proved difficult to schedule and some stakeholders who were intended as participants were not interviewed. Also, it was very difficult for the IC to meaningfully evaluate activities and results in the project area.

Despite these limitations, sufficient information was collected to enable an assessment of progress against the project’s results framework.

## 2.7 Structure of the Evaluation Report

This report structure follows the content guidelines provided in Annex 7 of the UNDP-GEF TE Guidance document.

Background information is first provided on the TE process (this chapter) and the project (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 then presents detailed findings in the categories assessed, under the following sub-headings:

- Project design/formulation
- Project implementation
- Project results.

Finally, Chapter 5 provides the main findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned.

Annexes provide additional information to supplement the contents of the main body of the report.

## 3 Project Description and Development Context

### 3.1 Project Start and Duration

'Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation and of the Enhancement of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage in Niue' (PIMS 5258) was a six-year project (extended from five years) with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as the Implementing Agency; the Ministry of Natural Resources as the Implementing Partner; and the Department of Education, Tāoga Niue, Department of Public Works (Water), Office of the Premier, and Treasury Department as Responsible Parties. The project started on 21 April 2016 and was scheduled to finish on 20 April 2022 (extended from 20 April 2021).

A midterm review was undertaken for the project and finalised on 8 October 2018.

### 3.2 Development Context

Niue is an upraised coral atoll island lying 480 km east of Tonga, 550 km southeast of Samoa and 2,500 km north of New Zealand. At 259 km<sup>2</sup> in area—the largest island of its type—it consists of a former lagoon surrounded by the remains of a reef rising to about 68 m above sea level, surrounded by an outer terrace at approximately 28 m above sea level. The outer terrace ends in steep cliffs which descend on to a narrow fringing reef.

Niue is dependent on its natural environment and ecosystem services for its quality of life and economic viability. The natural environment is a valuable economic asset as it provides the attraction for visitors and tourists which are the mainstay of the Niue economy. The environment also provides food and other necessities for residents of Niue, with about a fifth of Niue's GDP coming from the agriculture, fishery, forestry and hunting sectors. The environment is also the basis for subsistence lifestyles and has cultural significance. 70% of the country retains a cover of forest and 23% is in conservation areas, primarily the Huvalu Conservation Area.

The unique Niue environment, its biodiversity and its ecosystem services are under threat from both natural and anthropogenic impacts. The small size of Niue Island and the small population create a natural instability, common to many small island environments. Natural disasters such as cyclones can devastate a very high proportion of the land area and introduced animals or plants may rapidly become pests in an environment of relatively few native species.

In Niue, the ownership of land and understanding of the land tenure system must be foremost in efforts to protect and manage the environment, and this has created difficulties in the past, particularly as a result of many absentee owners residing in New Zealand and Australia. Traditional mores and customary principles of shared ownership need to be respected and this has created barriers in some instances.

There is a perception among Niue people that traditional forms of conservation can address environmental concerns. However, outside influences and economic pressures have led to an over-exploitation of some resources and targets of high tourist numbers could exacerbate these pressures if not carefully controlled.

Systematic management of natural resources is not well developed and there are few mechanisms to prevent over-use. The legal framework and procedures are mainly in place but implementation and enforcement are weak due to a shortage of human resources. Capacity, in terms of know-how, is available, although graduates need to be lured back to maintain the level of expertise. However, the small number of people means that the 'catchment' is small.

These threats to environmental values of national and global importance will have dire consequences if not adequately addressed. Prominent among these are: reduced tourism earnings, pollution of groundwater, erosion and loss of scarce topsoil, reduced ecosystem services and loss of productive land. In turn, these consequences will give rise to long-term impacts such as economic downturn, loss of biodiversity, reduced incomes and depressed welfare and livelihoods.

In the face of the above threats and in recognition of their potentially serious consequences and long-term impacts, the Niue government has taken a number of mitigation steps, often with the support of external donor agencies.

The project document noted that the Government of Niue had been supporting agriculture development and promoting sustainable land and water management through DAFF and that it had developed a Forest Management Plan, Fisheries Management Plan and an Integrated Water Resources Management Plan. Actions had also been undertaken to effectively manage waste in order to avoid contamination of the groundwater lens on which all residents depend for their drinking water supply.

### 3.3 Problems that the Project Sought to Address

Despite the significant government response to the identified threats, gaps remain and barriers stand in the way of further progress and the achievement of sustainability. The project document identified the following six main remaining threats to environment and biodiversity in Niue:

1. Unsustainable harvesting of wild resources
2. Land degradation
3. Pollution
4. Groundwater quality
5. Invasive alien species
6. Climate change.

The project design identified the following two main barriers to overcoming environmental impacts and threats.

#### **Barrier 1: Limited capacities and mechanisms for management on an integrated landscape and seascape scale**

- The values of biodiversity resources in Niue have not been properly documented
- Information on biodiversity status and hotspots is unavailable
- Social and cultural values of nature are being lost
- Interrupted transfer of these values from the older generation to younger ones
- Limited mainstreaming of environmental issues by different sectors leading to a fragmented sectoral approach to resources management
- Low population adds constraint to local capacity
- Ecosystems management primarily viewed as a sectoral priority (of Environment Department) and the multiple benefits of integrated production landscape management not maximised.

#### **Barrier 2: Limited integration of terrestrial and marine biodiversity conservation into government and community plans and actions**

- Most of the land resources of Niue are vested in extended families, under the stewardship of the family appointed *Levekis*
- Any creation of new protected areas (PAs) needs the consent of the families
- Traditional practices of setting aside strict protection areas (*Tapu*) or seasonal closures (*Fono*) are in danger of dying out or have not been formally supported by the government
- Local communities have under-recognised the benefits of conservation on their lives and livelihoods and the current threats to marine and terrestrial biodiversity
- Areas of land and reef set aside for permanent or periodic closures have been too small for effective biodiversity conservation
- These community set-aside areas are not formally designated as protected ecosystems

- Current conservation initiatives have not been implemented in a holistic manner (the Ridge to Reef (R2R) approach).

### 3.4 Immediate and Development Objectives of the Project

The objective of the project was to 'strengthen conservation and sustainable use of land, water and marine areas and their biodiversity by building on their cultural heritage values through integrated national and community actions'.

The project was designed to enhance Niue's capacity to effectively create and manage protected areas for biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, and safeguarding of ecosystem services. It focuses on the expansion of its protected area estate on land and on its marine areas through a combination of community conservation areas (CCAs) and government-led protected areas. In CCAs, both strict protection and sustainable use zones will be identified and planned carefully, using innovative protection tools recognising that tenure over most land areas is vested in local communities.

This project has been designed to engineer a paradigm shift in the management of terrestrial, coastal and marine protected sites from a site-centric approach to a holistic 'ridge to reef' comprehensive approach. Through this approach, activities in the immediate production landscapes adjacent to marine and terrestrial protected areas will be managed to reduce threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services stemming from key production activities (e.g. tourism and agriculture).

The project also introduces the concept of connectivity between landscape and seascape in Niue. Terrestrial protected areas will include a landscape that links strictly protected community areas (*Tapu*) to each other to enhance their integrity and to form a functional ecological corridor between them. Similarly, the creation of a marine protected area at Beveridge Reef would satisfy the integrated and holistic approach promoted by the project by recognising the link that is thought to exist between the Reef and mainland Niue through which the former serves as a source of recruitment for clams and other marine species that make up Niue's coral reefs.

### 3.5 Expected Results

To achieve the objective, the project had two components, each with an associated outcome.

Outcome 1: New community conservation and national protected areas established at different levels, thus reducing threats and improving biodiversity status of conservation areas through effective community management. This outcome identifies communities as the agents of management and monitoring. It comprises the major project interventions on the ground leading to protective measures at different levels and through different instruments thus reducing threats and improving biodiversity status. A large part of the work will be carried out primarily by empowering Village Councils and communities as owners.

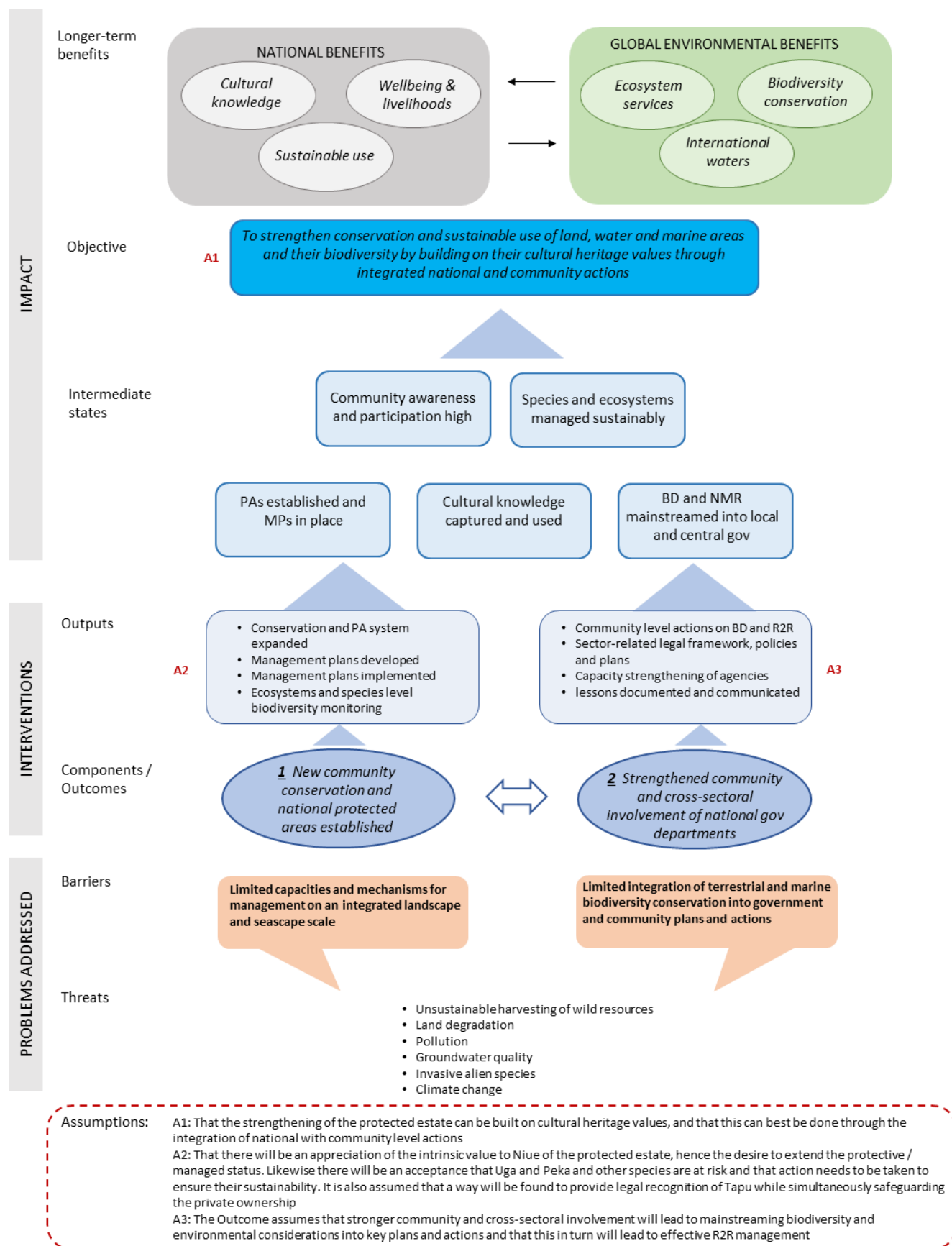
Outcome 2: Strengthened community and cross-sectoral involvement of relevant national government departments to promote effective Ridge to Reef management by mainstreaming biodiversity and environmental concerns into plans and actions. This outcome is focused primarily upstream at the central and local government levels and it targets institutional strengthening, capacity building and other foundational elements. At the local, Village Council level this outcome seeks a stronger institutional foundation and enhanced capacities; likewise among central government functionaries. Institutional strengthening will be achieved through policy and regulatory reforms at central level but also through by-laws at a local level. Capacities will be enhanced through the provision of expertise and know-how for land use planning and management, protected area management (including for eco-tourism), species protection and management, and sustainability. Under this outcome, the project will also make provision for information sharing, awareness raising, learning and outreach.

### **3.6 Main Stakeholders**

The project document contains a detailed stakeholder analysis, with stakeholders and their roles and involvement in the project identified. This assessment is summarised in Table 9 in Section 4.2.2 (Actual Stakeholder Participation and Partnership Arrangements).

### **3.7 Theory of Change**

A theory of change approach was not used for project development or M&E; therefore, a theory of change has been prepared by the IC and is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Project Theory of Change**

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Project Design / Formulation

#### 4.1.1 Analysis of Results Framework

Table 5 presents a critical analysis of the project's results framework, assessing how SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) the indicators and end-of-project (EOP) targets are. There have been no formal changes to the results framework during implementation, therefore this analysis is of the original results framework in the project document.

Note that this analysis is of the design of the results framework not project implementation.

**Table 5: SMART analysis: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound**

✓ Meets criterion      ✗ Does not meet criterion      ? Some ambiguity or clarification needed

#### Objective

Description of indicator	End-of-project target level	SMART analysis				
		S	M	A	R	T
0.1 Incorporation of cultural and traditional values and approaches in natural resources protection and management	Culturally significant species, habitats and methods of conservation are identified, recorded and being built upon	?	?	✓	✓	✓
0.2 The freshwater lens safeguarded in the long term	Biodegradable or certified organic agri-chemicals used exclusively; and at least 80% of septic tank effluent treated, such that risk of contamination of the freshwater lens controlled or removed	✓	?	?	✓	✓
0.3 Terrestrial and reef species are being utilized on a sustainable basis to an increasing number of community members	Access or utilization by communities for food and other uses increased by 25% but on a sustainable basis	✗	?	?	✓	✓

The EOP target for Indicator 0.1 could be more specific and measurable, because at project close there is some ambiguity about how 'identified, recorded and being built upon' should be measured.

For Indicator 0.2, it is not clear how '80% of septic tank effluent treated' would be measured and there is no reference to setting a baseline for such a measure (the baseline is simply 'Freshwater lens at risk from agricultural chemicals and septic tank effluent'). Also, the EOP target for 'biodegradable or certified organic agri-chemicals used exclusively' is likely to be unachievable for this project; finally, it is not possible to assess whether the EOP target to treat 80% of septic tank effluent is achievable.

For Indicator 0.3, the EOP target is not specific, because although the target for 25% increase in utilisation rate is specific, the condition that this should be 'on a sustainable basis' is not specific and it is not clear how this may be measured. Also, the indicator description refers to 'an increasing number of community members', but this is not captured in the EOP. Also, because of these issues, it is not clear whether the EOP target is achievable.



## Outcome 1

Description of indicator	End-of-project target level	SMART analysis				
		S	M	A	R	T
1.1 Extent of the protected estate in various forms and through different protective mechanisms	Additional 2550 ha of terrestrial ecosystems; additional 4500 ha of marine ecosystem; and, additional 200 ha of reef, protected by various instruments by the end of the project	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.2 Efforts in place for the recovery of species at risk	Species Recovery Plans for Hega and the olive small-scaled skink formulated, adopted and being implemented.  Species Management Plans for Uga and Peka formulated, adopted and being implemented.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.3 Status of completion and adoption of management plans for various conservation areas	Huvalu Conservation Area, Beveridge Reef MPA, Western Reef Conservation Area, and new Confluence Conservation Area, all with management plans adopted and being implemented	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Indicators 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 meet all SMART criteria; although challenges arose during implementation with accurately mapping terrestrial conservation areas for villages and reporting against these, these challenges could not be foreseen during project design.

## Outcome 2

Description of indicator	End-of-project target level	SMART analysis				
		S	M	A	R	T
2.1 Promotion of R2R approach by Village Councils and Government departments	New Village Development Plans, and reviewed existing ones, showing an explicitly comprehensive (R2R) and integrated approach towards land, water and natural resource management.  Corporate Plans, Annual Work Plans and similar key documents, showing an explicitly comprehensive (R2R) and integrated approach towards land, water and natural resource management; together will	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓

	collaboration across departmental boundaries.					
2.2 The extent to which biodiversity and natural resources are taken into account in central and local planning	Biodiversity considerations become an explicit element in policies, plans, strategies and similar instruments	?	✓	?	✓	✓
2.3 Level of awareness, sensitivity and understanding of the value and vulnerability of natural resources	An improvement of 20-50% in awareness and understanding as measured by a repeat survey.	✓	✓	?	✓	✓

For Indicator 2.1, the number of activities, plans and other documents captured by the EOP target in the project document was extensive and not realistic / achievable for the project.

For Indicator 2.2, the EOP target around ‘policies, plans, strategies and similar instruments’ is not specific and, therefore, it is difficult to assess whether it is achievable.

Indicator 2.3 meets most SMART criteria (noting that a repeatable methodology should have been developed at project inception and used to set a baseline), although it is difficult to assess whether the EOP target of 20-50% increase is achievable.

#### 4.1.2 Assumptions and Risks

##### Risks

The Project Identification Form (PIF) and project document identified five project risks and associated mitigation measures (Table 5 of the project document). Table 6 provides an assessment of this risk analysis at project closure.

**Table 6:** Assessment of the risk analysis in the project document

Risk description	Risk rating (Impact / Likelihood)	Evaluation comments
Low population and low capacities for project implementation	Moderate	<p>The risk and rating were realistic. Mitigation measures included assigning priority to the engagement of Niue citizens (including those residing abroad), but also seeking input from the international market if required; international experts would be required to mentor and partner local experts. UNDP support to the government was a part of the mitigation.</p> <p>These mitigation measures were generally effective, with a combination of using Niue citizens where possible and building country capability where required; this became problematic in 2020 and 2021 when international consultants could not visit and some key components (such as species conservation and management plans) could not be finalised. UNDP support was an important factor in Niue successfully implementing the project.</p>

Risk description	Risk rating (Impact / Likelihood)	Evaluation comments
Complex land tenure will make declaration of community conservation area difficult	Moderate	<p>The risk and rating were realistic. Mitigation involved ensuring that proper consultation (including with absentee owners) and tenure clarification (through review of the regulatory base) was undertaken, and that ownership of the project by communities was built.</p> <p>The planning for this risk was very good: tenure-related disputes and challenges did arise and these were managed through collaborative and respectful consultation.</p>
Significant distance between the island and Beveridge Reef will make it very difficult to ensure it is protected from passing ships / yachts	Moderate	<p>The risk and rating were realistic. Beveridge Reef is 200 km from Niue and it therefore not possible to manage the MPA as actively as the terrestrial PAs and the community reefs. The key mitigation is in the MPA management plan, which focuses on education and information as well as a code of ethics for boaties.</p>
Climate variability and change – especially natural disasters	Low	<p>The ‘low’ risk rating is unrealistic and the discussion was somewhat simplistic, as follows: ‘Sea level rise is not a threat to Niue. On the other hand, extreme weather events affect Niue and are difficult to predict. However, this is a natural phenomenon which has affected Niue ecosystems and increased their resilience. The project will ensure that actions taken (towards conservation and sustainable use) will lead to rapid recovery of the ecosystems in the aftermath of such events’</p> <p>Climate change was a consistent theme of R2R engagement and communications but was not included in land use planning.</p>
Coral bleaching and seawater acidification as a result of climate change	Low	<p>The risk and rating were realistic; the relevant risk to the project is very low and the project document did not specify mitigation measures.</p>

## Assumptions

The strategic results framework in the project document (Section II) included assumptions for the project objective and for the two outcomes. Table 7 provides observations regarding these assumptions.

**Table 7:** Observations regarding the assumptions in the project document

Assumption	Evaluation comments
<p>PROJECT OBJECTIVE</p> <p>– The Objective assumes that the strengthening of the protected estate can be built on cultural heritage values, and that this can best be done through the integration of national with community level actions.</p>	<p>– This assumption was justified, given that Niue culture has such a strong connection with natural resources and protection of areas, and given that terrestrial land is owned by families.</p>

Assumption	Evaluation comments
<p>OUTCOME 1</p> <p>– That there will be an appreciation of the intrinsic value to Niue of the protected estate, hence the desire to extend the protective/managed status. Likewise there will be an acceptance that Uga and Peka and other species are at risk and that action needs to be taken to ensure their sustainability. It is also assumed that a way will be found to provide legal recognition of Tapu while simultaneously safeguarding the private ownership.</p>	<p>– This assumption was very generic, because attitudes vary widely among the 14 villages and the different stakeholders. The assumption proved justified because the project’s engagement approach showed respect for traditional values and land tenure arrangements, built understanding of the benefits of sustainable approaches to utilising species, and used both a top-down and bottom-up approach to working with the community.</p>
<p>OUTCOME 2</p> <p>– The Outcome assumes that stronger community and cross-sectoral involvement will lead to mainstreaming biodiversity and environmental considerations into key plans and actions and that this in turn will lead to effective R2R management.</p>	<p>– This assumption was partially justified; due to Niue’s small size, effective engagement of communities means that the country’s 14 villages were all likely to collaborate in the land use planning and conservation area planning across the island. However, the assumption that this will also lead to mainstreaming biodiversity and environmental consideration into central government key plans and actions is less well justified.</p>

#### 4.1.3 Lessons from Other Relevant Projects

Some elements of the project design relied on previous experiences and projects, including:

- Offshore Fisheries Management Plan – Beveridge Reef closed for fishing (GEF)
- National Coastal Management Plan (national budget / SPC)
- Integrated Water Resources Management Planning Project – regulations developed for water quality protection (GEF)
- Huvalu Conservation Area (5,400 ha) – establishment, management, monitoring (GEF/SPREP)
- Solid waste management – domestic collection (national budget / AusAID)
- Invasive Species Management project (GEF/UNEP)
- Forest Protected Area Management project (GEF/FAO)
- Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change – PACC (GEF/FAO, GEF/UNDP, AusAID, EU)
- Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Project (UNDP/GEF).

#### 4.1.4 Planned Stakeholder Participation

The project document listed the proposed role in project implementation for each of the identified stakeholders (Table 8 of the project document). This is summarised in Table 9 in Section 4.2.2 (Actual Stakeholder Participation and Partnership Arrangements).

#### 4.1.5 Linkages Between Project and Other Interventions

The project document identified several other initiatives that the project would be coordinated with, including GEF projects, as follows:

- Pacific Ridge to Reef Regional Programme and other national R2R projects (GEF)

- Biodiversity Enabling Activity (GEF, supporting updating of the NBSAP and 5th National Report to the CBD)
- GEF-FAO PAS Forestry and Protected Area Management Project (and other FAO projects)
- UNEP-GEF PAS Prevention, Control and Management of Invasive Alien Species in the Pacific Islands
- Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management in Niue (Government of Niue, UNDP and GEF)
- The SSCF-UNDP Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change and the related IWRM Project in Niue.

#### 4.1.6 Gender Responsiveness of Project Design

Consideration of gender in project design was limited. No gender analysis or gender action plan were provided at design phase (noting that they were not required at the time of development), the project has few specific measures for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, and the results framework did not include any gender-disaggregated indicators or targets. It is not known whether gender specialists were engaged.

The project document includes a brief section 'Gender and youth strategy', in which a table (Table 7 of the project document) lists 'the involvement of women and youth in project implementation'. These define general approaches that will be used to involve women and youth, rather than identifying specific actions.

Overall, the gender responsiveness of the project document was low and the project would have benefited from a gender analysis and the input of appropriate gender expertise.

As described in Section 4.2.7, the SESP (Annex 4 of the project document) did not identify any safeguards management or other gender-related measures.

The project document noted its consistency with the Niue National Policy for Gender Equality and Plan of Action 2014–2018 and stated that it would address the policy's four main outcomes 'in an environmental context'. The outcomes are: 1) Enabling factors for healthy, safe and harmonious families and gender equality are in place. 2) The full potential of women and men for economic development and food security is developed. 3) Equitable participation of women and men in decision-making bodies and leadership positions in all sectors. 4) Gender-responsive government's policies and programs in all sectors.

#### 4.1.7 Social and Environmental Safeguards

An Environmental and Social Screening Procedure (ESSP) was prepared at project design in accordance with UNDP requirements at the time (Section 2.9 and Annex 4 of the project document); see Section 4.3.9 for an analysis of the ESSP.

### 4.2 Project Implementation

#### 4.2.1 Adaptive Management

In response to Recommendation 2 of the MTR (see also Table 8), a detailed review of project activities was undertaken during 2019. The result was that a revised 2020 AWP was approved by the Working Group (WG) and Cabinet. These changes were reasonable and an appropriate adaptive management response after the MTR. The changes particularly affected the content captured by Indicators 2.1 and 2.2, but the targets for these indicators were not changed to reflect this (see information under these indicators in Section 4.3.1) and subsequent PIRs listed the original targets while reporting on the revised deliverables. This resulted in a lack of clarity around how to assess achievement of the indicators.

The other major adaptive management response was adjustments through 2020 and 2021 to respond to the impacts on COVID-19 restrictions. This had particular impacts on those aspects of the project that required international consultants, and adaptive management measures included using virtual meetings

and training, adjusting consultant recruitment approaches, and reviewing work schedules. These adaptive management responses were appropriate.

Table 8 shows all 17 recommendations made by the MTR and the management response to those and provides observations by the IC. Note that the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) updated progress against these recommendations in each QPR after the MTR.

**Table 8:** Summary of MTR recommendations, management response, and evaluator comments

MTR recommendation	Management response comments	Evaluator comments
1. Streamline and accelerate procurement and administrative processes in order to avoid further delays that are impacting upon the implementation process	Agree with recommendation. The establishment of a new governance and oversight structure - the Project Oversight Steering Team (POST) – provides an opportunity to streamline processes, particularly as it meets every fortnight. Revised procurement and reporting/approval processes need to be developed to incorporate this change.	New processes were set up and the project was more efficient after the MTR.
2. Update and rationalise the numerous activities that were originally planned in order to streamline implementation, reforming work plan as needed and seeking effectiveness and high impact processes and products, maintaining planning of the project's second tranche focused on obtaining results, generating results-based incentives, effects and outcomes, as well as weaving in sustainability factors in all products and processes the project implements	Agree with recommendation.	Important recommendation to make deliverables more achievable. As described in the text, the numerous activities were rationalised and a revised 2020 AWP was approved; relevant EOP targets were not amended to reflect the changed deliverables.
3. Fully incorporate staff to Project Implementation Unit as needed (such as national technical staff) in order to have a completely functioning management unit with all needed personnel as soon as possible	Agree with recommendation.	Difficulties continued with filling the technical officer role due to limited potential national candidates; in 2021 decided not to continue recruitment attempts and Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) filled some of the role.
4. Strive to generate national capacity at all levels and in all areas (technical, project management, etc.)	Agree with recommendation.	Project established the practice of consultants working with local counterparts to pass on skills and experience, including through direct involvement, working with students, and workshops.

MTR recommendation	Management response comments	Evaluator comments
5. Establish and enhance work with communities being fully aware of their needs without creating false expectations, and without overburdening communities with activities. Imbed livelihood aspects and income generation issues related to comparative advantages of sustainable use of biodiversity	Agree with recommendation.	Project communicated realistically with communities. No reporting of promoting 'income generation issues related to comparative advantages of sustainable use of biodiversity'.
6. Impel work, analysis, concept notes, and other processes and mechanisms to deal with sustainable financing of the products and process the project is and will achieve	Agree with recommendation.	Sustainable financing mechanism developed by NOW Project and accepted by government.
7. Continue to promote linkages with different government departments as well as other related projects so that these linkages in turn support and anchor further collaborations and sustainability	Agree with recommendation.	WG was a well-functioning cross-agency mechanism that discussed collaboration and sustainability.
8. Generate an exit strategy/sustainability plan for all the implementing aspects of the project. This sustainability plan/exit strategy should outline explicitly what is needed for sustaining products, outcomes, and effects	Agree with recommendation.	A Sustainability Strategy 2022 was developed; this is of high quality and outlines explicitly what needs to be done to sustain impact.
9. Orientation mechanisms (presentations, inception-type meetings, written materials) should be developed at this mid-point stage	Agree with recommendation.	It is not clear what the intent of this recommendation was. The QPR reported this recommendation as completed with the following action: 'Develop report on Niue's biodiversity incorporating survey results (for general audience)'; it is not clear how this meets the recommendation.
10. Improve communication as well as dissemination of the information the project is and will be generating	Agree with recommendation.	A communication strategy was developed and implemented.
11. Start generating knowledge management mechanisms to promote the exchange of knowledge and expertise that is being created throughout the Project and sharing best practices and lessons learned	Agree with recommendation.	Important recommendation; reporting against this focused on development of the EIMS as the knowledge management mechanism.
12. Assure that gender issues are more than just participation of women. Interweave gender equality outlooks in all tools, studies, publications, etc.	Agree with recommendation.	A gender specialist was recruited and a 'Gender Analysis and Recommendations' document was developed.

MTR recommendation	Management response comments	Evaluator comments
13. Generate exit and sustainability strategies for all the implementing aspects of the Project	Agree with MTR Recommendation 13; this is linked to recommendations 7 and 8	See MTR Recommendation 8.
14. An extension should be requested for the Project	Agree with recommendation.	12 months extension approved to April 2022.
15. Generate exchange mechanisms (South-South, between and among Ridge to Reef Projects in the Pacific, etc.) sharing best practices and lessons learned as well as technical issues that arise out of the interventions	Agree with recommendation.	The project implemented some South-South cooperation and knowledge exchange, especially between other R2R projects and SPC. This included data and information sharing. Niue R2R project and MNR were invited to participate in UNDP project management workshop and Pacific R2R workshops and meeting; MNR personnel participated in these. Unfortunately, COVID-19 constraints severely limited interactions with other countries in 2020 and 2021.
16. Support staff and associated stakeholders in generating and obtaining capacity (both at the technical and at the organizational level and well as technical issues that arise out of the interventions	Agree with recommendation.	Support to staff and stakeholders was provided.
17. Having learned that whatever is or is not included in design of projects permeates into implementation and often in results, design should be specific in certain aspects and expected results	Agree with recommendation.	This recommendation was for design and future programming of GEF-funded UNDP-implemented projects, not for implementation of this project.



#### 4.2.2 Actual Stakeholder Participation and Partnership Arrangements

Table 9 provides a summary of the role and planned involvement of stakeholders identified in the project document and of their actual participation in the project.

**Table 9:** Project stakeholders, their roles in Niue and planned involvement in the project (from the project document) and their actual participation in the project

Stakeholder	Role and/or relationship with the project (from project document)	Relevant project component (in project document)	Actual engagement in the project
<b>PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS</b>			
1. Environment Department (DOE)	Lead government department for the development of the NBSAP; also ensures that waste and pollution management are carried out and deals with issues of biosafety and invasive species. One of two lead agencies for project implementation.	As a key department of the Ministry of Natural Resources which will serve as Executing Agency, DOE will be involved in work across both Outcomes and particularly under Outputs 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.2, and 2.3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As originally proposed; one of two lead agencies.</li> </ul>
2. Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF)	Primarily responsible for ensuring increasing agricultural productivity through agronomic research and extension and by supporting livestock rearing activities; also promote sustainable land management and forestry. In marine areas, largely focused on sustainable fisheries, promotion of fish aggregating devices and marine protected areas (MPAs). One of two lead agencies for the implementation of this project.	As a key department of the Ministry of Natural Resources which will serve as Executing Agency, DAFF will be involved in work across both Outcomes and particularly under Outputs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.2 and 2.3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As originally proposed; one of two lead agencies.</li> </ul>
3. Department of Justice, Lands, Survey and Community Services	The key government agency working on local development through the Village Councils (see next); currently supporting the development of sustainable development plans at the village level.	The Department will facilitate the involvement of Village Councils who are key partners at the local level involved in Outputs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 2.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As originally proposed.</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Role and/or relationship with the project (from project document)	Relevant project component (in project document)	Actual engagement in the project
4. Village Councils (14)	Locally elected bodies with a three-year term, responsible for developing and implementing local development plans. They are also legally empowered to make local by-laws. They receive a small grant annually from the national government, much of which is spent on beautification of the villages. The Village Councils are key partners together with DOE and DAFF.	See under Department of Community Affairs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in project engagement, land use planning, conservation area planning, management planning, and RMAC establishment.</li> </ul>
5. Tāoga Niue - Culture and Heritage	Will partner in the project to ensure that traditional knowledge, cultural traditions and special sites are identified and respected; to ensure that conservation activities complement cultural heritage sites management; and to educate and inform on traditional approaches to natural resources management	In addition to serving as the project's advisor on heritage, tradition and culture, Tāoga Niue will be involved specifically in Outputs 1.1, 1.4, 2.3 and 2.4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As originally proposed.</li> </ul>
6. Education Department/schools	Will lead in ensuring that the primary and secondary school curriculum includes modules on the R2R concept for conservation and sustainable use tailored for the Niue context to raise awareness and to build environmental management as one option for future career development of Niue students; will also work with the project to involve students in conservation actions such as survey and monitoring	Students will be involved in work under Outputs 1.1 and 1.4, whereas the Department will be involved primarily under Outputs 2.3 and 2.4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As originally proposed; project published the Education Sustainability Guidelines curriculum and schools participated actively.</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Role and/or relationship with the project (from project document)	Relevant project component (in project document)	Actual engagement in the project
7. Ministry of Infrastructure	Public Works Department (Water Section) involved in promoting integrated water resources management; role in project will be to ensure water pollution minimisation strategies in place and pollution reduction technologies are demonstrated to reduce pollution of both the underground water lens and marine areas (reefs)	Outputs 1.3, 1.4, 2.2 and 2.3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As originally proposed.</li> </ul>
8. Justice, Lands & Survey (L&S)	Critical role in resolution of land tenure disputes; has GIS capabilities and data for mapping, survey, GPS database, etc. These will be important in the creation of protected areas and their effective management. Will work with the project on EIMS.	Outputs 1.1 and 2.2 for land boundaries, and Output 1.4 for data management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As originally proposed.</li> </ul>
9. Niue Tourism Authority	Finalising its Tourism Strategy Plan, which aims to substantially increase the number of arrivals over time; recognises that Niue's environment is the drawcard for visitors and is therefore committed to its protection.	Outputs 2.2 and 2.3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As originally proposed.</li> </ul>
<b>SECONDARY STAKEHOLDERS</b>			
10. Chamber of Commerce and the private sector	Private sector is modest in size but important in the island's economy; main components include tourism, agriculture and fisheries sectors. Project can work with private sector within the constraints required for environmental sustainability; with the Chamber and the Tourism Authority will provide capacity building to the private sector particularly for the EIA Process.	Possibly under Output 1.3, but more likely under 2.2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under Output 2.2.</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Role and/or relationship with the project (from project document)	Relevant project component (in project document)	Actual engagement in the project
11. Niue Island United Association of Non-Government Organizations (NIUANGO)	All NGOs on Niue are affiliated with NIUANGO; the more active NGOs include the National Women's Council, promoting women's economic empowerment, and the Youth Council, promoting youth involvement in spiritual and other development. NIUANGO and its members can provide technical support to local communities and for different project activities.	Involvement will be across the spectrum of project scope, but especially under Outputs 1.1, 1.3, 2.1 and 2.4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various NGOs involved, including Tofia Niue through the Niue Ocean Wide (NOW) public-private partnership; Oma Tafua.</li> </ul>
12. Niue Island Organic Farming Association	Promoting organic vanilla and noni farming for export as a viable economic alternative to other farming that uses agrochemicals; this could be promoted to additional farmers for sustainable land and environment management to reduce pollution and increase household incomes.	Output 1.3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As originally proposed.</li> </ul>
13. University of the South Pacific (USP)	Operates a small campus in Niue, primarily as a distance learning centre; has library facilities, mentoring and guidance for students, and an effective teleconferencing facility. Project may support students, including post-graduates, in their research activities.	Outputs 2.1 and 2.4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited direct involvement.</li> </ul>

### 4.2.3 Project Finance and Co-Finance

The total committed budget in the project document was \$15,263,462, of which the GEF component was \$4,194,862 and co-financing contributions were \$11,068,600. The planned allocation of the GEF funds during the project is provided in Table 10.

**Table 10:** Summary of budgeted GEF funds (USD); source: project document

Funding source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Outcome 1	249,500	474,375	757,937	716,375	305,375	2,503,562
Outcome 2	159,000	333,000	434,000	399,000	157,000	1,482,000
Project Management	43,260	29,260	54,260	29,260	53,260	209,300
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>451,760</b>	<b>836,635</b>	<b>1,246,197</b>	<b>1,144,635</b>	<b>515,635</b>	<b>4,194,862</b>

### Expenditure

At 30 April 2022, total cumulative expenditure was \$3,943,631, which is 94.0% of the GEF funds allocated. The budgeted and actual expenditure by year is presented in Table 11. This shows low expenditure in 2016 and 2017, reflecting the slow project start, increasing in subsequent years as the project gathered momentum. The decision to grant a 12-month extension was a good result as it enabled significant final expenditure and delivery of important results.

**Table 11:** Budgeted (based on Annual Work Plan approvals) and actual annual expenditure (USD) of GEF funds in different years

Year	Budgeted expenditure	Actual expenditure	Actual as % of budgeted
2016	246,000	159,046	64.7
2017	816,635	393,667	48.2
2018	933,705	834,772	89.4
2019	1,018,088	838,596	82.4
2020	1,183,906	901,661	76.2
2021	880,151	637,274	72.4
2022	425,726	178,617	42.0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3,943,631</b>	<b>94.0</b>

Table 12 shows budgeted and actual expenditure for the different project components (project management and Outcomes 1 and 2). Actual expenditure for Outcomes 1 and 2 was 98.9% and 90.4% of budgeted respectively, which is a good result. Project management was only 69.1% of budgeted expenditure.

**Table 12:** GEF allocation budgeted and actual expenditure (USD) by component; source: MCO

Component	Budgeted expenditure	Actual expenditure	%
Outcome 1	2,503,562	2,477,210	98.9
Outcome 2	1,482,000	1,339,861	90.4
Project Management	209,300	144,643	69.1
Unrealised loss/gain	-	-18,082	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,194,862</b>	<b>3,943,631</b>	<b>94.0</b>

**Co-finance**

The actual co-financing contributions by UNDP and the Government are summarised in Table 13, which also shows the committed sums in the project budget. The reported co-financing from the Niue Government exceeded the amount committed to in the project document, which represents a valuable contribution and reflects the high level of ownership and participation by Government. The co-financing contribution from UNDP represents an important quality assurance role, supporting the PIU and IP by carrying out objective and independent project oversight and monitoring functions, and assisting with adaptive management responses to challenges such as those presented by COVID-19.

**Table 13:** Project committed and actual co-financing (USD); source: MCO, PIU

Source	Committed	Actual	%
Government	10,868,600	14,050,000	129.3
UNDP	200,000	150,206	75.1

Table 14 provides a breakdown of the confirmed sources of co-financing by name and type. In this table, the column 'Type of Co-financing' refers to whether the funding was a grant, loan, equity investment, public investment, guarantee, in-kind, or other; and the column 'Investment Mobilized' refers to whether the funding is investment mobilized (i.e. excluding recurrent expenditures) or recurrent expenditures (i.e. routine budgetary expenditures that fund the year-to-year core operations of the entity).

**Table 14:** Confirmed sources of co-financing for the project by name and by type (USD); source: MCO, PIU

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount (USD)
Recipient Government	Department of Environment	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2,000,000
Recipient Government	Department of Education	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2,000,000
Recipient Government	Department of Community Affairs	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	50,000
Recipient Government	Ministry of Infrastructure	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	500,000
Recipient Government	Department of Agriculture, Forests, and fisheries	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	4,000,000
Recipient Government	Tāoga Niue	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	500,000

Recipient Government	Department of Justice, Lands, and Surveys	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,000,000
Recipient Government	Tourism Authority	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,000,000
Recipient Government	Niue Public Service Commission	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	500,000
Recipient Government	Ministry of Natural Resources	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2,500,000
GEF Agency	UNDP	Grant	Recurrent expenditures	30,206
GEF Agency	UNDP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	120,000
<b>Total Reported Actual Co-financing</b>				<b>14,200,206</b>

#### 4.2.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

**Monitoring and Evaluation overall rating: MODERATELY SATISFACTORY**

##### Evidence

- ✓ M&E plan in project document was largely satisfactory
- ✓ Implementation generally followed the M&E plan well
- ✗ EOP targets not changed to reflect agreed changes to some key deliverables
- ✗ Shortcomings in reporting against some indicators, especially quantitative targets
- ✗ Project Terminal Report (in form of Sustainability Strategy) and TTs not provided until very late

**Monitoring and Evaluation design at entry rating: SATISFACTORY**

Section 6 'Project Monitoring and Evaluation' in the project document outlines the following core M&E activities:

- Project inception workshop
- Quarterly monitoring via Quarterly Progress Reports (QPRs)
- Annual reviews via Project Implementation Reports (PIRs)
- Periodic monitoring through site visits
- The GEF portfolio monitoring and tracking tool
- Midterm review (MTR)
- Terminal evaluation (TE)
- Project Terminal Report (to be prepared by the project team)
- Audits
- Learning and knowledge sharing.

An M&E Workplan and Budget is included, with budget against these components. This budget is US\$89,000, approximately 2.1% of the GEF grant, which is a relatively low percentage allocation to M&E. However, the only items with GEF budget against them are the inception workshop, MTR, TE and audits. The activities 'Measurement of means of verification of project results' and 'Measurement of means of verification for project progress on output and implementation' have no budget allocated; these were to be finalised during the inception workshop and as part of annual work plans, respectively.

Given that the project document envisaged making specific budget allocations during implementation for monitoring progress towards project results, the M&E plan is well prepared and has an appropriate budget.

As described in Section 4.1.1, there were some shortcomings in articulation of baseline conditions and EOP targets at the design stage. The baselines for two indicators (0.3 and 2.3) were to be set during the first year.

<b>Monitoring and Evaluation implementation rating: MODERATELY SATISFACTORY</b>
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In summary:

- The project inception workshop was held 6–7 July 2016 and an Inception Workshop Report was prepared.
- QPRs were completed regularly; the most recent viewed by the IC was from Q1 2022 (draft). These followed a consistent format throughout, addressing progress against outputs and associated indicators, financial progress, project risks and issues, lessons learned and good practice, gender equality, and sustainability planning. They also included appendices that provided detailed reporting on activities.
- PIRs were completed according to schedule in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. Reporting in these was realistic and they were used by the project manager, programme officer and RTA to flag matters that needed attention. Financial reporting of GEF funds was provided in the PIRs, although there was no reporting of co-financing.
- Periodic visits by staff from UNDP were conducted to project sites and back-to-office reports (BTORs) were prepared for these, showing the purpose, a summary and recommendations / actions to be undertaken. The IC viewed four BTORs; there were none in 2020 or 2021, due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Tracking tools (TTs) were prepared at CEO endorsement and midterm; final TTs were also prepared but were not received until the final days of completing the TE report, therefore were of limited value to the evaluation.
- In accordance with the M&E plan, independent auditing companies were engaged to complete spot checks and micro assessment reports on the IP (MNR). The IC viewed three spot check reports, two micro assessment report, and one internal control audit report. An HACT Macro Assessment Report (2015) and Internal Audit Report (2017) were also viewed.
- The GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP) was informed of project progress and reporting through participation in WG meetings; the OFP did not contribute to PIR reporting (which is optional).



- Inclusive and participatory approaches to monitoring were not used, because the project was focused largely on engagement, awareness raising, sustainable use of resources and collaborative planning, and did not establish significant monitoring systems.
- There are no gender-disaggregated project targets and there is no gender-disaggregated reporting of attendance at project activities. Reporting in the QPRs provides information on gender equality and women's empowerment during the reporting period.
- The MTR for the project was conducted between July and October 2018. Table 8 in Section 4.2.1 (Adaptive Management) summarises the MTR's recommendations and the management response and provides evaluation comments.
- The PIR overall ratings were generally consistent with the MTR and TE findings.
- The WG (as the effective project board) received QPRs, considered the MTR, endorsed the MTR management response, and endorsed the subsequent extension request. However, as described in Section 4.2.1, although minutes show that the WG supported changes to deliverables after the MTR (especially relating to Indicators 2.1 and 2.2), the relevant EOP targets were not changed.
- As described in Section 4.3.1, there were shortcomings in reporting against three indicators that included quantitative EOP targets (indicators 0.2, 0.3 and 2.3). This is unfortunate, because good work was undertaken in these areas but the reporting did not address the quantitative EOP targets and baselines were not set. This shortcoming in reporting was not raised in the MTR or in PIRs; the IC asked questions about this during mission interviews, but no insight was gained into why this reporting was not undertaken.
- A Sustainability Strategy was prepared that also served as the Project Terminal Report. This contains valuable self-reporting, especially in relation to 'status at project close' for the indicators in the results framework; however, this was not received until the final TE report was being completed so was of limited use during the evaluation. Part of the reasons for the delay with the Sustainability Strategy / Project Terminal Report were the passing of the first CTA, the loss of institutional project knowledge, and COVID-19 restrictions inhibiting the capacity of the new CTA to visit Niue and absorb the progress and workings of the project to reflect these in the report.
- In addition, a large amount of the evidence required for the TE was not readily available and was gradually accumulated over the course of the TE. This made it difficult to holistically evaluate the project's outcomes.

#### 4.2.5 UNDP and Implementing Partner Implementation / Oversight / Execution

**Overall Quality of Implementation/Execution rating: SATISFACTORY**

#### Evidence

- ✓ UNDP project oversight was good and its support to the IP and the project were important
- ✓ MNR had strong ownership and were forward looking
- ✗ Shortcomings with some reporting and baselines; EOP targets not updated

**UNDP Implementation/Oversight rating: SATISFACTORY**

The adequacy, quality and timeliness of UNDP support and oversight was generally good. During the mission, feedback from stakeholders on support by UNDP was consistently positive.

The main shortcoming in oversight related to reporting against the results framework: quantitative reporting was not done for three indicators that included quantitative EOP targets (indicators 0.2, 0.3 and 2.3), baselines were not set for two indicators, and EOP targets were not updated after significant changes to deliverables for some indicators were endorsed by the WG and Cabinet. If these deficiencies had been identified and remedied early, this would have been of significant benefit to the project's M&E (note that the MTR also did not identify the shortcomings with quantitative reporting and setting baselines). Enhanced oversight of such matters would be valuable for countries that have lower experience with implementing GEF projects.

Annual reporting through PIRs was candid and realistic. Implementation Progress was rated as Moderately Unsatisfactory in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 PIRs, and Moderately Satisfactory in 2020 and 2021, accurately reflecting improvements in the project's progress. The PIRs were used to note challenges and provide recommendations, which were followed up on by the PIU.

Risk management was adequate during project implementation, with the PIRs used to document risks and risk measures. COVID-19 was identified as a particular risk, especially for those aspects of the project that required international consultants, and UNDP assisted the project in adaptive management measures (such as assistance with conducting virtual meetings and adjusting consultant recruitment approaches). As described in Section 4.2.7, some new social and environmental risks were identified in PIRs and mitigation measures were documented; the SESP was not updated during the project, although the UNDP risk log in ATLAS was updated.

UNDP was responsive to implementation problems and the proactive support provided was an important factor in the successful delivery of the project by the Niue government.

Oversight of the management of social and environmental risks as identified through the SESP was adequate, noting that no specific safeguards management measures arose from the SESP (Section 4.2.7).

**IP Execution rating: SATISFACTORY**

The IP (MNR) had an appropriate focus on results and timelines and took strong ownership of the project's deliverables. Examples of this are the participation of agency staff in engagement and planning activities, and the driving of a model for sustainability of project results. MNR were forward looking, with a high awareness of the importance of planning early for the sustainability of project results.

Funds were used appropriately and government/MNR and UNDP procurement and contracting processes were followed.

Through the PIU, project risks were managed adequately, except that the SESP was not updated as discussed above. Risks were also discussed in WG meetings, attended by agency heads

MNR did not contribute to annual PIRs as IP, therefore the IC was unable to assess the candour and realism of MNR annual reporting as IP. The IC was advised that the Project Director (the Director General of MNR) had oversight of the PIU's annual reporting.

Management of social and environmental risks as identified through the SESP was adequate, noting that no specific safeguards management measures arose from the SESP (Section 4.2.7).

#### 4.2.6 Risk Management

The PIRs were used regularly to identify new risks and report on risk management measures taken.

The following critical risks were identified in the PIRs:

- 2017: Traditional and legislative restrictions and protective mechanisms for biodiversity not enforced (legal and literature review identified areas to strengthen and enforce; capacity building of relevant government sectors and communities reinforced compliance).
- 2018: Lack of interest or availability of appropriately qualified or suitable applicants for the Technical Officer role (the position was not filled, which left gaps in the team's capability; the new CTA filled some of this role during the final year).
- 2020 and 2021: COVID-19 delaying recruitment and travel of international expertise to assist in implementation (mitigation measures and adaptive management response described elsewhere).
- 2020: Project Oversight Steering Team (POST) replaced Project Executive Board (PEB) in 2018 as the project oversight authority; POST under review by new Government for effectiveness due to delays in processing by POST (by project end, POST was not involved and Cabinet were responsible for approvals after consideration by the WG).

The following new social and environmental risks were added in the PIRs:

- 2018: Increased use of fire to clear land (this was considered in subsequent project engagement and planning and did not arise again in reporting).
- 2018: Increased loss of Traditional Knowledge (addressing this was a key component of the project and did not arise again in risk reporting).
- 2020 and 2021: COVID-19 impacting procurement and travel of international specialists crucial to the successful implementation of the remaining outcomes of the project.

The most significant impact of the identified risks on project implementation was that of COVID-19 on recruitment opportunities throughout 2020 and 2021, on capacity building benefits from international consultants, and on delivery of some key results (e.g. species recovery plans and management plans and CCA MPs). The mitigation measures are described elsewhere.

The IC is not aware of any risks that were overlooked.

The PIU, MNR, UNDP CO and UNDP RTA were all involved in identifying and managing risks. The WG was made aware of critical risks when necessary.

#### 4.2.7 Social and Environmental Standards

At the time of project design, the project was subjected to the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP); the results are presented in Annex 4 of the project document and referred to as the Environmental and Social Screening (ESSP). This ESSP concluded that the project has many environmental and social benefits, and possibly some impacts and risks; however, while the benefits are long-term, the negative impacts are predominantly indirect and temporary.

Of the many screening questions under the three Principles and six Standards, the ESSP answered 'yes' to one, as follows:

<b>Standard 1: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Natural Resource Management</b>
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1.2 Are any development activities proposed within a legally protected area (e.g. natural reserve, national park) for the protection or conservation of biodiversity?
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Response: 'Yes but activities will conserve and protect biodiversity.'
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The ESSP replied 'no' to all four screening questions relating to gender, specifically: whether the project was likely to have adverse impacts on gender equality; whether the project would potentially reproduce discriminations against women based on gender; whether women's groups/leaders raised gender equality concerns regarding the project; and whether the project would potentially limit women's ability to use, develop and protect natural resources.

Consequently, no specific safeguards management measures arose from the SESP.

Some new social and environmental risks were identified in PIRs and mitigation measures documented (as described in Section 4.2.6); however, the SESP was not updated during the project.

The IC identified no significant issues relating to compliance with UNDP's SES.

## 4.3 Project Results and Impacts

### 4.3.1 Progress Towards Objective and Expected Outcomes

Below is the rating for the achievement of the project objective and two outcomes, with an accompanying evaluation of the achievement against each associated target in the results framework. A summary of delivery against the project's outputs is provided in Annex 5.

**Project Objective: To strengthen conservation and sustainable use of land, water and marine areas and their biodiversity by building on their cultural heritage values through integrated national and community actions**

**Objective Achievement Rating: MODERATELY SATISFACTORY**

As described below, the project met one of the three objective indicators and partially met the other two.

<b>Impact Indicator 0.1</b> Incorporation of cultural and traditional values and approaches in natural resources protection and management			
<b>Baseline</b>	<b>End-of-project Target</b>	<b>Status at TE</b>	<b>TE Assessment</b>
Cultural values and constraints are reported as being eroded away	Culturally significant species, habitats and methods of conservation are identified, recorded and being built upon	There has been extensive engagement on cultural and traditional values, knowledge and practices. This was reported on in QPRs and some is included in the village plans for coastal and marine management (see under Indicator 1.3).  (Source: documents, interviews)	<b>ACHIEVED</b>

Engagement with the Niue community around cultural and traditional values, knowledge and practices has been a priority and a highlight of this project. Many interviewees spoke positively of this aspect of the project and of the commitment of the R2R team. The R2R concept of holistic management and sustainable use of resources is consistent with many traditional Niue values and cultural practices. The project was effective at bringing these together to prepare management plans (MPs) that are supported by the villages and that incorporate cultural and traditional values and approaches in natural resources protection and management.

The project also funded a cultural heritage survey of historical sites in 2018 and a report was prepared to present the findings.

There is some ambiguity around whether the detailed cultural knowledge is being documented separately from the village plans that are being developed (see under Indicator 1.3), with some interviewees indicating that a written documentation was expected and others indicating that this was not expected.

Two former R2R staff members (the Communication Officer and the Community Liaison Officer) have moved to Tāoga Niue at the conclusion of the project. This is a very important measure to ensure that the project's work on cultural knowledge continues and is an important contribution to the sustainability of the project's results.

Impact Indicator 0.2 The freshwater lens safeguarded in the long term			
Baseline	End-of-project Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
Freshwater lens at risk from agricultural chemicals, and septic tank effluent	Biodegradable or certified organic agri-chemicals used exclusively; and at least 80% of septic tank effluent treated, such that risk of contamination of the freshwater lens controlled or removed	<p>Project has supported various relevant activities, including installing UV filters to provide safe drinking water at each village community hall, providing new water quality testing equipment at Niue hospital, and raising awareness.</p> <p>The project commissioned a report 'Development of Options for Centralised Treatment of Household Wastewaters In Niue' to present concept design options for the appropriate and compliant management of wastewater collected by Niue's sewage vacuum tanker.</p> <p>There has been no reporting against the use of agri-chemicals or the percentage of septic tank effluent treated (as per EOP target).</p> <p>(Source: PIRs, interviews)</p>	<b>PARTIALLY ACHIEVED</b>

The project has provided a range of valuable measures to help the Niue community manage and monitor the freshwater lens, a vital natural resource for the country. The report providing options for treatment of sewage vacuum tanker effluent is important, as a high number of previous reports have identified that the current disposal of sewage vacuum tanker effluent presents a high risk to the quality and safety of the freshwater lens.

The indicator is assessed as partially achieved because, although the reported activities were undoubtedly beneficial, the details in the EOP target have not been addressed, including the quantitative target for at least 80% of septic tank effluent to be treated.

It would have been preferable for this target to have been changed early in the project if agri-chemical use and septic tank treatment were identified as not being high priorities for project intervention.

<b>Impact Indicator 0.3</b> Terrestrial and reef species are being utilized on a sustainable basis to an increasing number of community members			
<b>Baseline</b>	<b>End-of-project Target</b>	<b>Status at TE</b>	<b>TE Assessment</b>
Some reef species such as Tridacna sp., and Holothuria sp., have been reported as diminished. Peka, Lupe and Uga populations have declined; utilization rates to be established during the first year	Access or utilization by communities for food and other uses increased by 25% but on a sustainable basis	Discussions on sustainable use of species were included in community engagement. Some improvements in the utilisation of species were reported, especially steps to reduce the unsustainable export of coconut crabs and the resumption of the sustainable take of flying foxes. The coastal and marine resource plans (described under Indicator 1.3) identify invertebrates and finfish that are village-level priorities for harvesting and management. The draft CCA MPs (described under Indicator 1.3) include an objective to 'Encourage Sustainable use of Natural Resources', but have no specific relevant actions or village-level priorities.  Utilisation rates not measured so baseline not set and progress towards quantitative EOP target not measured.  (Source: PIRs, interviews)	<b>PARTIALLY ACHIEVED</b>

The project undertook various surveys (including of Peka (Pacific Flying Fox) and marine ecological surveys) and engagement relating to the sustainable utilisation of species and some relevant measures are in the CCA and coastal and marine plans that have been developed.

However, quantitative monitoring against this indicator was not established during the project; this also means that a baseline was not set. For this reason, it is assessed as partially achieved. It would have been preferable for the indicator and target to be changed early during implementation to remove the quantitative component (although it should be noted that the MTR did not make this recommendation, despite the methodology and baseline not yet being established).

A substantial review of existing knowledge on population trends and utilisation of key species was compiled in 2019 as part of the Niue State of Environment Report 2019 (developed by the Niue Department of Environment and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)). This information may be useful in establishing a baseline for future assessments of trends.

**Outcome 1: New community conservation and national protected areas established at different levels, thus reducing threats and improving biodiversity status of conservation areas through effective community management**

**Objective Achievement Rating: SATISFACTORY**

Of the three indicators for this outcome, two were achieved and one was partially achieved.

<b>Impact Indicator 1.1</b> Extent of the protected estate in various forms and through different protective mechanisms			
<b>Baseline</b>	<b>End-of-project Target</b>	<b>Status at TE</b>	<b>TE Assessment</b>
Tapu areas are many but not all are known or acknowledged; Huvalu Forest Conservation Area (5,400 ha) and Namoui Marine Reserve (27.67 ha) are the only Protected Areas	Additional 2550 ha of terrestrial ecosystems; additional 4500 ha of marine ecosystem; and, additional 200 ha of reef, protected by various instruments by the end of the project	<p>Terrestrial: More than 17,000 additional ha has been committed as CCAs by the 14 villages.</p> <p>Marine: A Large-scale Marine Protected Area (LSMPA) covering 12,700,000 ha (40% of Niue's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)) was formalised in April 2020; and in April 2022 the declaration of the Niue Nukutuluea Multiple-Use Marine Park regulations completed the Niue Marine Spatial Management Planning framework, providing varying levels of protection over 100% of Niue's EEZ.</p> <p>Reef: More than 1,600 additional ha were identified during land use planning as Community Conservation Reefs (CCRs) and these are confirmed as SMRAs.</p> <p>(Source: PIRs, QPRs)</p>	<b>ACHIEVED</b>

The project and the national government have been very effective at building community support for new conservation areas while protecting traditional rights and practices. The targets have been exceeded and the commitment to establish an MPA across 100% of the EEZ is of global significance.

At this stage the CCAs and CCRs/SMRAs are outlined in the village land use plans and have been approved by the villages through this process; a process of gazetting and declaring the conservation areas is now underway (see under Indicator 1.3). Because the indicator and target refer to the new protected areas being established through 'different protective mechanisms' and 'various instruments', the indicator is considered achieved.



<b>Impact Indicator 1.2</b> Efforts in place for the recovery of species at risk			
<b>Baseline</b>	<b>End-of-project Target</b>	<b>Status at TE</b>	<b>TE Assessment</b>
Hega (blue-crowned lory) and the olive small-scaled skink are considered endangered  Uga and Peka are currently considered as threatened. Both are being harvested unsustainably.	Species Recovery Plans for Hega and the olive small-scaled skink formulated, adopted and being implemented.  Species Management Plans for Uga and Peka formulated, adopted and being implemented.	Some biodiversity surveys undertaken: land reptiles and sea snakes, Peka (Pacific flying foxes), cave fauna.  Species recovery plans and species management plans not developed. The CCA MPs (see under Indicator 1.3) include limited measures for some species. See also reporting under Indicator 0.3.  (Sources: reports, interviews)	<b>PARTIALLY ACHIEVED</b>

Work on this aspect of the project was underway in the early years of the project and was heavily reliant on expertise from outside Niue. Progress was initially slow and effectively stopped when COVID-19 constraints meant that international consultants could not go to Niue to complete the work. Consequently, the species recovery plans and species management plans have not been developed.

<b>Impact Indicator 1.3</b> Status of completion and adoption of management plans for various conservation areas			
<b>Baseline</b>	<b>End-of-project Target</b>	<b>Status at TE</b>	<b>TE Assessment</b>
Huvalu Conservation Area and Beveridge Reef – no Management Plan; Reefs covered somewhat by Coastal Management Plan	Huvalu Conservation Area, Beveridge Reef MPA, Western Reef Conservation Area, and new Confluence Conservation Area, all with management plans adopted and being implemented	Huvalu Conservation Area (CA): MP finalised and being implemented; launched separately in Hakupu and Liku villages in 2021. Will be gazetted when CCA and SMRA plans are gazetted.  Beveridge Reef: included in LSMPA described under Indicator 1.1; marine spatial planning undertaken and MP developed (through the NOW project).  Reefs: For each village a 'Plan for Sustainable Management of Coastal and Marine Resources' (C&M Plan) was developed, which cover all coast and marine resources including the identified SMRAs (see reporting under Indicator 1.1); each C&M Plan contains 10 objectives,	<b>ACHIEVED</b>

		<p>including 'Conservation of Marine Biodiversity' and actions for the SMRAs.</p> <p>Confluence: the five villages in the central confluence zone have each committed to CCAs and developed MPs, which cover 88% of Niue's primary forest; establishing a single 'Confluence Conservation Area' was determined as not a viable concept after village consultation.</p> <p>Terrestrial CCAs: Draft MPs developed for each village (except Hakupu and Liku, which are covered by the Huvalu CA MP); the sections that will contain village-specific information on biodiversity, natural resources and priorities have not been finalised.</p> <p>The intent is for the Huvalu CA MP, the other CCA MPs and the C&amp;M Plans to be gazetted together; the IC was advised that this in progress and that resources have been committed.</p> <p>(Sources: documents, interviews)</p>	
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The project and the national government have been very effective at building community support for managing planning that respects and protects traditional rights and practices. The target is considered achieved, although final sections of the CCA MPs are yet to be finalised; as described in Section 4.3.4 (Efficiency), developing these MPs was particularly affected by factors largely beyond the project's control.

**Outcome 2: Strengthened community and cross-sectoral involvement of relevant national government departments to promote effective Ridge to Reef management by mainstreaming biodiversity and environmental concerns into plans and actions**

**Objective Achievement Rating: MODERATELY SATISFACTORY**

Of the three indicators for Outcome 2, two were achieved and one was partially achieved.

<b>Impact Indicator 2.1</b> Promotion of R2R approach by Village Councils and Government departments			
<b>Baseline</b>	<b>End-of-project Target</b>	<b>Status at TE</b>	<b>TE Assessment</b>
There is currently no comprehensive, holistic approach applied by Village Councils or Government Departments to natural resources management	<p>New Village Development Plans, and reviewed existing ones, showing an explicitly comprehensive (R2R) and integrated approach towards land, water and natural resource management.</p> <p>Corporate Plans, Annual Work Plans and similar key documents, showing an explicitly comprehensive (R2R) and integrated approach towards land, water and natural resource management; together will collaborate across departmental boundaries.</p>	<p>Village Councils: The R2R approach has been explicitly incorporated into a Land Use Plan, a CCA MP and a C&amp;M Plan for each village, through extensive consultation; this was the agreed approach after the MTR recommended that the deliverables be simplified.</p> <p>Government departments: Many key documents explicitly mention R2R, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2015)</li> <li>- Niue's Sixth National Report Convention on Biological Diversity (2020)</li> <li>- Department of Agriculture, Forestry &amp; Fisheries – Corporate Plan 2020-2025</li> <li>- Department of Education – Corporate Plan 2020-2025</li> </ul> <p>(Source: documents, interviews, other documentation)</p>	<b>ACHIEVED</b>

In response to the MTR Recommendation 2 ('Update and rationalise the numerous activities that were originally planned in order to streamline implementation'), the detail under this indicator was rationalised. In particular, developing new and revised Village Development Plans was not considered efficient or appropriate, and revising government plans and documents was not considered an efficient use of R2R resources. This decision was made in 2019 and a revised work plan was approved by the WG and Cabinet in 2020; unfortunately the EOP targets were not formally revised and the original detailed target remains. Nevertheless, given the clear intent of the WG for the EOP target to be simplified, this indicator has been assessed as achieved because the villages and government now adopt a 'comprehensive, holistic approach ... to natural resources management'.

<b>Impact Indicator 2.2</b> The extent to which biodiversity and natural resources are taken into account in central and local planning			
<b>Baseline</b>	<b>End-of-project Target</b>	<b>Status at TE</b>	<b>TE Assessment</b>
Neither sector plans nor Village Development Plans can be said to have mainstreamed biodiversity considerations	Biodiversity considerations become an explicit element in policies, plans, strategies and similar instruments	<p>Local: Biodiversity considerations are an explicit element in the Land Use Plan, CCA MP and C&amp;M Plan for each village, and an RMAC has been established for each village to oversee their implementation.</p> <p>Central: Through discussions with government agencies, and from evidence of the participation of agencies in the project, it is evident that biodiversity and natural resources are explicit considerations for several departments. In addition, biodiversity considerations are an explicit element in many key documents, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Niue National Strategic Plan (2016-2026)</li> <li>- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2015)</li> <li>- Niue's Sixth National Report Convention on Biological Diversity (2020)</li> <li>- Department of Agriculture, Forestry &amp; Fisheries – Corporate Plan 2020-2025</li> <li>- Department of Education – Corporate Plan 2020-2025</li> <li>- Niue Meteorological Service (MNR) - Corporate Plan 2020-2025 (includes environmental sustainability)</li> </ul> <p>(Source: documents, interviews, other documentation)</p>	<b>ACHIEVED</b>

For local planning, as with Indicator 2.1, it was determined that developing new and revised Village Development Plans was not efficient or appropriate, and the agreed approach for local planning was to

focus on land use planning and conservation area planning; the RMACs are also an important component of this model.

For central planning, as with Indicator 2.1, it was determined that revising government sector plans and other documents was not an efficient use of R2R resources, and the agreed approach was to work closely with agencies to influence how biodiversity and natural resources are considered in their operations and planning.

As with Indicator 2.1, given the clear intent of the WG, this indicator has been assessed as achieved because biodiversity is an explicit consideration in local and central government planning and engagement with the community.

<b>Impact Indicator 2.3</b> Level of awareness, sensitivity and understanding of the value and vulnerability of natural resources			
<b>Baseline</b>	<b>End-of-project Target</b>	<b>Status at TE</b>	<b>TE Assessment</b>
There is a certain level of awareness but it is not deep. The baseline will be established through survey at the Inception Phase	An improvement of 20-50% in awareness and understanding as measured by a repeat survey.	<p>Levels of awareness of the value and vulnerability of natural resources throughout the community have been increased by the project through the extensive and prolonged engagement and awareness raising, especially with villages and Village Councils, schools, and resource user groups. Each village has participated in land use planning and management planning.</p> <p>Awareness levels not measured so baseline not established and progress towards quantitative EOP target not measured.</p> <p>(Source: various documents, interviews)</p>	<b>PARTIALLY ACHIEVED</b>

Engagement and awareness raising have been a strength of this project. Engagement with the education sector has been excellent, with a clear focus on mainstreaming environmental considerations and sustainable use of resources into education and the primary and secondary school curriculums in Niue<sup>2</sup>. The schools have been very effective, assisted by the R2R project, in fostering respect for traditional values and learning systems while integrating this with scientific knowledge systems and approaches to natural resources management. The contribution of the R2R project was greatly appreciated within this sector and included tangible resources (including assistance to publish the Education Sustainability Guidelines curriculum, posters, books and other resources) and other support (including capacity development for teachers and active engagement with students on cultural and other aspects).

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<sup>2</sup> Niue follows the New Zealand curriculum.

The engagement with villages in land use planning and management planning, and the establishment of RMACs, were very effective and would have raised awareness levels of the importance of natural resources management.

It is therefore unfortunate that a methodology and baseline were not established early and that reporting against the EOP target of 20–50% improvement was not provided. Furthermore, the EOP target explicitly states that the change in awareness levels is to be ‘measured by a repeat survey’. For this reason, the indicator is assessed as partially achieved.

The IC understands that a brief questionnaire on awareness levels was completed in 2018 but has not been repeated and a baseline was not set. It is recommended that this survey be repeated and analysed to provide some insight into changes in awareness levels.

#### 4.3.2 Relevance

<b>Relevance rating: SATISFACTORY</b>
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#### ***National priorities/strategies***

The project has been consistent with the Niue National Strategic Plan 2016–2026. The Strategic Plan has seven National Development Pillars, including ‘Environment and Climate Change: Sustainable use and management of Niue’s natural resources and environment for present and future generations’ and ‘Tāoga Niue: Promote, strengthen and integrate Tāoga Niue cultural heritage, language, values and identity’.

The project’s gender activities were consistent with the Niue National Policy for Gender Equality and Plan of Action 2014–2018 and with the following principle from the Niue National Strategic Plan: ‘Promoting gender equality and human rights through equal opportunities’.

At the time of project development, it was consistent with the Niue National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2001. A revised NBSAP was adopted in 2015, and the project has contributed positively to all of the NBSAP’s six goals:

1. Protection of biological diversity
2. Policy, planning and institutional frameworks
3. Local communities and customs
4. Institutional strengthening
5. Financial sustainability
6. Environmental education and awareness.

#### ***GEF programming***

The project contributed directly to the GEF 5 Biodiversity Focal Area and International Waters Focal Area, with the following alignment with GEF objectives:

- Component 1 aligned with the GEF 5 BD Objective 1 - Improve Sustainability of PA Systems, and Outcome 1.1 - Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas.
- Component 2 directly contributed to GEF 5 BD Objective 2 - Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors, as the project spearheads the integration of biodiversity considerations into several government sectors on a landscape basis while linking with community conservation initiatives.
- IW Focal Area Objective 1 - Multi-state cooperation on water uses in transboundary surface and ground water, Output 1.3 - Pollution Reduction, improved water efficiency, IWRM through the project’s activities under Component 2 on pollution reduction.

### ***UNDP programming***

The project contributed to the Sub-regional Programme Document (SRPD) for the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) 2013–2017 and has contributed to the current SRPD 2018–2022, especially the Regional Priority ‘Sustainable development that combines economic, social and cultural development in ways that improve livelihoods and well-being and use the environment sustainably’.

### ***Sustainable Development Goals***

The project was developed and approved prior to the adoption of the SDGs in 2015. Nevertheless, the project’s strategy and outcomes are relevant to the pursuit of several SDGs and related targets in Niue.

Designed primarily as a biodiversity, international waters project and sustainable resources management project (SDGs 14 and 15), the project has also contributed to ensuring food security (SDG2), clean water and sanitation (SDG6), equality (SDG10), responsible consumption and production (SDG12), climate action (SDG13) and partnerships for the goals (SDG17).

### ***Stakeholder engagement***

The engagement of stakeholders in the project was high, during both the development and implementation stages (see Section 4.2.2).

Because Niue has a small population, the project development process was able to connect deeply with all relevant stakeholders in the country, including in central government and local government (villages), and ensure that the project was formulated according to the needs and interests of stakeholders.

The project was also able to connect with most of the population during implementation. All 14 villages on the island were successfully engaged, through an engagement principle of treating all villages equally, regardless of size. The result is collaborative land use planning and conservation planning across the island, covering all villages.

### ***Relevance to and complementarity with other initiatives***

The project document identified several other initiatives that the project would be coordinated with, as follows:

- Pacific Ridge to Reef Regional Programme and other national R2R projects (GEF)
- Biodiversity Enabling Activity (GEF, supporting updating of the NBSAP and 5th National Report to the CBD)
- GEF-FAO PAS Forestry and Protected Area Management Project (and other FAO projects)
- UNEP-GEF PAS Prevention, Control and Management of Invasive Alien Species in the Pacific Islands
- Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management in Niue (Government of Niue, UNDP and GEF)
- The SSCF-UNDP Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change and the related IWRM Project in Niue.

#### **4.3.3 Effectiveness**

<b>Effectiveness rating: MODERATELY SATISFACTORY</b>
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As described in Section 4.3.2 (Relevance), the project made valuable contributions to the Sub-regional Programme Document, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan, GEF strategic priorities, and national development priorities.

The progress towards achieving the project objective was considered Moderately Satisfactory, with one indicator achieved and two partially achieved. Indicator 0.1 was met and is one of the project’s most

important achievements: a substantial contribution to the project's objective to 'strengthen conservation and sustainable use of land, water and marine areas and their biodiversity by building on their cultural heritage values through integrated national and community actions'. Sensitive documentation of the cultural knowledge collected to make it available to the community and decision-makers would add significant value. Indicators 0.2 and 0.3 made less substantial contributions to the objective.

Progress against Outcome 1 was particularly good and is assessed as Satisfactory. The targets for new conservation areas in the three ecosystem types were exceeded (Indicator 1.1) and management plans for these are nearing finalisation (Indicator 1.3). This success reflects the patient and respectful engagement that the project used, respecting traditional rights and practices and collecting and sharing information on the two knowledge systems and the benefits of sustainable use of natural resources and holistic planning. Less progress was made toward species recovery and management, due partly to difficulties accessing international experts to finalise this work due to COVID-19 constraints.

Progress towards Outcome 2 was Moderately Satisfactory. The deliverables were significantly less than those planned in the project document; as described elsewhere, these reduced deliverables were agreed to by the WG although the relevant EOP targets were not changed. Nevertheless, important progress was made 'mainstreaming biodiversity and environmental concerns into plans and actions'.

A constraining social factor that the project faced related to land ownership, access to resources (especially food species) and traditional practices (such as *Tapu*). There was some initial resistance to the project in the villages because people were concerned that these may be threatened. The project adopted a measured approach to the consultation, explaining that no changes to traditional rights or practices were proposed, and over the course of the project successfully engaged with all 14 villages.

Despite the project design containing limited consideration of gender issues and no gender-disaggregated targets or gender-specific actions, the project has maintained a focus on gender equality throughout, as demonstrated in QPRs.

#### 4.3.4 Efficiency

**Efficiency rating: MODERATELY SATISFACTORY**

##### Evidence

- ✓ Whole-of-country engagement and planning
- ✓ Niue successfully delivered this \$4.2 million GEF project
- ✗ Some key deliverables pushed to the very end of the project (some by factors beyond project's control)

Regarding resource allocation and cost effectiveness:

- Overall, the cost effectiveness is considered moderate relative to similar projects.
- Positive aspects are that, for GEF expenditure of \$4.2 million, all villages and relevant stakeholders in the country have been engaged, the most senior members of relevant central government agencies have been proactive leaders, large areas of the country have been protected in new conservation areas (including a new MPA covering 100% of Niue's EEZ), and substantial GEF funds have gone to interventions that will be sustainable (e.g. EIMS, GIS, education sector and capacity building).
- Also noteworthy is that this is the first time that Niue has implemented such a large international donor project, and it has done so successfully; this in itself is a major positive outcome.



- The cost effectiveness of the funding for specific projects on the ground is difficult to assess. However, it should be noted the IC could not attend Niue so there are severe limitations in the ability to assess this spend. It is important to note that these contributed to raising the profile of the R2R 'brand' and, therefore, may have brought more people into the engagement processes.
- The project aimed for cost effectiveness with engagement of consultants, preferring to engage local expertise (or Niue citizens living abroad) if possible, rather than international consultants.
- In working with villages and providing project funds, the project treated all villages equally, regardless of size.

Regarding project management and timeliness:

- A project extension was an appropriate adaptive management measure for this project, because there were delays in the first years in recruiting and settling in the PIU and associated processes. Also, the extension was valuable because it enabled the project to work closely with communities on engagement, bringing them from low levels of understanding (and some distrust) to the final positive results achieved in early 2022.
- The project management structure as outlined in the project document was effective, although a Project Board was not established as expected. Instead a Working Group, comprised of senior executives from the IP and Responsible Parties, convened regularly and filled most of the role of a Board. Because of the significance of the size of the project budget in Niue, work plan and budget approvals were approved by Cabinet. This did not create significant inefficiencies.
- The UNDP Multi-Country Office for Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau (MCO) based in Samoa in Samoa played an important supporting role to the project and Niue in both oversight and in advice and assistance.
- Although generally project funds and activities were delivered in a timely way, some key deliverables (such as the CCA MPs and the EIMS) have been pushed to the very end of the project, which creates a risk of the products being rushed or not fully consulted on. It is important to note that some of these delays were caused by factors largely beyond the project's control, especially COVID-19 (impacts on travel restrictions, delayed procurement and poor internet connectivity) and by the passing of the late project CTA. With regard to the CCA management planning, there were several unsuccessful attempts during COVID-19 to recruit a local consultant to undertake this work – Niue is a small country with a limited pool of local consultants. Also, the recruitment of a new CTA during COVID-19 was delayed, and this CTA could have provided more hands-on support to the PIU if he was able to travel to Niue.
- There were some shortcomings in M&E as described in Section 4.2.4; although these affected clarity of reporting and tracking of progress, they had limited negative impact on day-to-day project management.

#### 4.3.5 Overall Project Outcome

<b>Overall Project Outcome rating: MODERATELY SATISFACTORY</b>
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In accordance with the methodology in the UNDP-GEF TE Guidance for calculating overall project outcome (p.54), the rating is Moderately Satisfactory.

#### 4.3.6 Sustainability

**Overall Sustainability rating: MODERATELY LIKELY**

##### Evidence

- ✓ Project has been forward looking from the start with high government ownership
- ✓ Strong model: land use plans, conservation area management plans, RMACs and sustainability financing mechanism
- ✓ Very effective awareness raising and impact on education
- ✓ GEF financing well targeted to achieve additionality / sustainability
- ✗ Challenge to maintain villages' ownership of plans and process
- ✗ Challenge to successfully build quantum of funds for sustainable financing model

The project has been forward thinking from commencement, with a standard QPR section titled 'Sustainability Planning'. In response to a recommendation from the MTR, a Sustainability Strategy was developed and finalised in 2022; this is of high quality and outlines explicitly what needs to be done to sustain impact. A consequence of this forward-thinking approach and collaboration with other projects (especially the NOW Project) is the establishment of a sustainability model based around a sustainable financing mechanism and each village having a land use plan, a terrestrial conservation area MP and a coastal and marine resources plan. The challenges will be to ensure that the sustainable financing mechanism generates sufficient revenue and that villages continue to own the plans and feel that they benefit from the process.

##### **Financial**

**Financial Sustainability rating: MODERATELY LIKELY**

The project has worked closely with the NOW project and the government to establish a sustainable financing mechanism to fund the ongoing delivery of actions in the C&M Plans and CCA MPs. This comprises a trust fund managed by the government, with dividends being provided to the villages for implementation of actions. The target is for \$20 million to be obtained for the trust. The village RMAC will play an important role in this financing mechanism. The project's sustainability model is therefore based around a process with each village of inclusive land use planning, conservation area management planning, RMAC establishment, and application of the sustainable financing mechanism. The project (and the NOW project and government) is to be commended on this model.

There are some risks associated with this model. In particular, if the trust fund does not accumulate significant funds, then the delivery of actions will be limited. It will also be important for the villagers to have ownership and interest in the actions that are to be funded, which means that Village Council ownership of the C&M Plans and CCA MPs will be essential. Opportunities to link actions to sustainable livelihoods are likely to be beneficial as they will deliver biodiversity, cultural and socio-economic co-benefits.

The government has provided important support to the project, in the form of substantial co-financing, and has been a proactive IP. During interviews, government stakeholders stated that they intended to continue to work with the villages on the project's results, especially with the RMACs and the C&M Plans and CCA MPs. This will be essential to ensure that the plans remain live documents that are owned and valued by the villages.

## Socio-economic

### Socio-economic Sustainability rating: LIKELY

Ongoing ownership of the plans by Village Councils will be essential. This especially applies in terrestrial areas, where all land is family owned. Collaboration between this local level of government and the central government will be required to maintain this ownership.

The central government will continue to support the villages (and their RMACs) and other stakeholders.

Stakeholder engagement during the project has been at a high level for the duration of the project, therefore recognition of the R2R 'brand' is strong.

The PIU recorded 'lessons learned and good practice' in every quarterly report.

The project had a strong focus on gathering and sharing cultural knowledge and building communication and awareness around this knowledge within families and villages. It appears that this has led to elevated awareness of the importance of cultural knowledge and the importance of managing resources sustainably (although the quantitative target for improved awareness was not measured).

The project also worked closely with the education sector and achieved significant results influencing the curriculum, building capacity and raising awareness (see a summary under Indicator 2.3 in Section 4.3.1). This very positive influence on education in Niue makes an important contribution to the likelihood of results being sustainable.

## Institutional Framework and Governance

### Institutional Framework and Governance Sustainability rating: LIKELY

The project (with the NOW project and the government) has put in place a governance structure (based around establishment of an RMAC in each village) that is expected to create the mechanism for accountability, transparency and ownership around the ongoing delivery of results. The challenges to this are described under 'Financial Sustainability'. This mechanism is explicitly linked with local government governance processes (Village Councils).

The project has developed institutional capacity at the central and local government levels. At the local government level, the project worked with villages to undertake land use planning, develop management plans for terrestrial and reef conservation areas, and set up RMACs. At the central government level, capacity building includes development of the GIS and EIMS, direct capacity building and training, and the assistance to the education sector described elsewhere.

The project was effective at engaging with all 14 villages in the country, with all participating in land use planning and conservation area planning and all villages establishing an RMAC.

The senior executives from government on the project's WG were closely engaged with the project and have a good understanding of its philosophy and objectives.

## Environmental

### Environmental Sustainability rating: LIKELY

There are no environmental factors that represent a specific risk to the project's benefits. However, it will be important that the community is encouraged to be aware of changes in environmental threats such as climate change and pest plants and animals.

Climate change and its impacts were not included in the land use planning. During interviews, it was apparent that local people were aware of climatic changes that were already underway (such as changes in cyclone and rainfall patterns). There are many likely impacts of climate change on Niue biodiversity and natural resources, such as worsening impacts of cyclones; impacts on coastal resources and the freshwater lens from sea level rise; ocean acidification; and the impacts of ocean warming, including coral bleaching (Niue State of Environment Report 2019). It is recommended that future updates of land use planning and management planning consider climate change and its impacts.

#### 4.3.7 Country Ownership

The project has a very high level of country ownership. During interviews, the heads of government agencies displayed high levels of knowledge and enthusiasm for the project.

The WG has the most senior members of relevant central government agencies and this group was actively involved in project governance, including approving work plans and funding allocations. Because of the small population and the closely connected nature of Niue society, the department heads had direct working relationships with the PIU.

Cabinet is involved in final approvals of expenditure decisions.

Central government staff participated in the community engagement activities that the project organised. In addition, the project has made substantial improvements to the capacity and resources of some agencies, which means that the project is highly valued.

The Government of Niue has committed to continue to support the community in implementation of the plans that the project has developed and in the function of the RMACs that will be crucial to sustainability of the project's results.

An important demonstration of country ownership is the influence the project had on the primary and secondary school curriculums and the strong support for the project in the education sector (as described under Indicator 2.3 in Section 4.3.1).

#### 4.3.8 Gender

The project reported regularly on gender equality in Section 7 of each QPR, providing a narrative of matters relating to gender equality and women's empowerment during the reporting period. This shows that gender was a consideration throughout the project. Organisers of workshops and consultation endeavoured to achieve a balance of women, men and youth. Because the project design did not include gender-disaggregated project targets, there was no gender-disaggregated reporting of project activities.

The WG comprised more women representatives than men, and the chair of the WG was a woman.

Recommendation 12 of the MTR related to improving the project's approach to gender issues (see also Table 8). This was an important recommendation, because although gender was considered during implementation, there was until then no specific strategy to inform mainstreaming of gender outcomes in all components. In response to the MTR recommendation, a gender specialist was recruited and a 'Gender Analysis and Recommendations' document was developed. This document updated Table 7 of the project document ('The involvement of women and youth in project implementation'), providing 'additional remarks' for each project output to guide implementation for the remainder of the project. This was a valuable addition to the project's attention to gender matters.

The project was designed and implemented in accordance with the Niue National Policy for Gender Equality and Plan of Action 2014–2018.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4.3.9 Other Cross-Cutting Issues

The project is a good example of the convergence between UNDP environment-related and other development programming. Core to the project is achieving biodiversity conservation and enhancement of ecosystem services and cultural heritage. The project has made real contributions to combining economic, social and cultural development and to bringing together knowledge systems to plan for the sustainable use of natural resources.

The project had positive effects on local populations by enhancing understanding of traditional and science-based approaches to the sustainable use of natural resources and by undertaking top-down and bottom-up planning to capture the knowledge, aspirations and priorities. The participatory land use planning and conservation area planning ensured that there was engagement with each village in Niue. The awareness of the importance of sustainable natural resources management has been raised and the understanding of the importance of Niue cultural knowledge has also increased.

As described in Section 4.3.2 ‘Relevance’, the project is consistent with the Sub-regional Programme Document.

Climate change was included in some consultations and discussions, although it was not built into the land use plans for each village. During evaluation interviews, it was apparent that local people are aware of climatic changes that are already underway (such as changes in cyclone and rainfall patterns). There are many likely impacts on biodiversity and natural resources from these changes in climate. It is recommended that climate change impacts be considered in future updates of land use planning, species management planning and conservation area planning (Recommendation 12). This would include consideration of likely impacts of climate change on food and other natural resources and associated planning for adaptation and resilience.

The project worked with each of the 14 villages in Niue, providing equal resources to each and nurturing traditional cultural knowledge. As described in Section 4.3.8, the project considered gender throughout and reported quarterly on gender issues; the main shortcoming from a gender perspective was in the project design, which did not include gender-specific actions or targets. The project also endeavoured to involve youth in activities. The project’s partnership with the Education Department was significant in positively shaping Niue’s curriculum and learning environment.

The environmental conservation activities of the project contributed to poverty reduction by building knowledge and planning around the sustainable use of natural resources. The project worked with existing government governance structures (and with other projects) to build structures and processes that aim to empower villagers and improve management of natural resources in Niue.

The project implemented some South-South cooperation and knowledge exchange, especially between other Pacific R2R projects (in response partially to a recommendation from the MTR). This included in-person workshops, in which Niue R2R and MNR personnel participated. Data and information sharing was also important, through the Pacific R2R regional knowledge platform. Unfortunately, COVID-19 constraints severely limited interactions with other countries in 2020 and 2021.

The project contributed to a human rights-based approach by respecting the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of the Niue population. For example, there were some early concerns about the project among villagers, especially relating to their traditional rights and practices and whether the project

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<sup>3</sup> This 2014–2018 policy and plan has not yet been updated but the IC understands that it is being considered for review by the Niue Government.

was seeking fundamental changes to these in pursuit of its conservation goals. The project put in place patient engagement, respected and discussed the views and concerns, and took the time to build trust and understanding, which ultimately led to high levels of participation in land use planning and conservation area planning.

As described in Section 4.2.7, the project did not include any specific social and environmental safeguards management measures that arose from the SESP.

#### 4.3.10 GEF Additionality

The project was approved before the December 2018 adoption of 'An Evaluative Approach to Assessing GEF's Additionality', therefore this TE is not required to provide evidence of GEF additionality along the dimensions defined in the UNDP-GEF TE Guidance document (p. 60).

The following observations are provided with regard to GEF additionality:

- Institutional / governance additionality: the GEF funding provided transformational support for all 14 villages in the country to undertake collaborative land use planning, develop management plans for terrestrial and reef conservation areas, and set up RMACs to oversee maintenance and implementation of these plans.
- Socio-economic additionality: the GEF funding enabled traditional cultural knowledge and practices to be identified and brought together with science-based approaches to conservation and sustainable use of resources; this will improve livelihoods and social and cultural benefits.

#### 4.3.11 Catalytic Role / Replication Effect

It should be noted that, because of the small size of Niue, the project's activities reached all villages and all relevant stakeholders in the country.

The project demonstrated good scaling up and replication by determining appropriate processes / templates and applying them nationally. For example, the land use planning process was piloted early in the project before being rolled out to all 14 villages and ultimately providing a comprehensive land use plan for the whole country. Also, the Huvalu Conservation MP was finalised and identified as an appropriate management plan template for the other conservation areas.

The project participated with other projects to add value to the project. In particular, participation with the NOW Project on marine aspects of the project and on the sustainable financing mechanism was an important element.

The project built capacity of central government agencies, including through the provision of important outputs that will provide sustainable benefits, such as the GIS and EIMS. The project adopted an approach to the engagement of international consultants where they actively participated in knowledge transfer to maximise the capacity building and training benefits to Niue (although international consultants could not visit Niue during 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19).

The project produced various project result documents, although there were shortcomings with version control – the versions received for the TE were often labelled 'draft' or were undated. Also, there was not a single point of access for these project outputs – the project's Facebook page does not have a knowledge portal and there is no dedicated Niue R2R website (the Pacific R2R website has a 'Knowledge Products' page for Niue but this contains few documents). For future projects, it is recommended that clear version control protocols are followed and that a public knowledge products portal be established. The EIMS that is being finalised may be suitable for this.

The project developed a Sustainability Strategy, as described in Section 4.3.6 (Sustainability).

As described elsewhere, for the scalability and replication to be successful it is vital that the central government continues to work with Village Councils to ensure that the CCA MPs and C&M Plans are implemented and owned by villages.

#### 4.3.12 Progress to Impact

The project made the following significant progress toward impacts:

- Cultural and traditional values are incorporated in plans adopted by the Village Councils, which is expected to strengthen conservation and sustainable use of land, water and marine areas
- Increases in terrestrial, marine and reef ecosystems in protected areas and management plans in place for these, which is expected to reduce threats and improve biodiversity status
- RMACs established in villages
- High levels of awareness in the community of R2R and the importance of cultural and scientific knowledge
- Education curriculum includes content around traditional cultural knowledge, scientific knowledge and sustainability, and education sector capacity improved, which are expected to lead to younger generations having greater understanding and respect for these.

No significant unintended impacts of the project were identified.

The major barriers and risks to further progress towards long-term impact are those described elsewhere around ownership by villages of land use plans, CCA MPs and C&M Plans and the effectiveness of the sustainability model in place, especially the sustainable financing mechanism.

## 5 Main Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons

### 5.1 Main Findings

The project made good progress and had many important achievements. Progress against the Objective is assessed as Moderately Satisfactory, with one indicator achieved and two partially achieved. The engagement with the Niue community on cultural and traditional values, Niue knowledge, Niue intellectual sovereignty, and Niue practices and technology has been a priority and a highlight of the project; it is important that the information gathered is codified and made available in culturally sensitive ways. Also under the Objective, the project provided valuable support to the management and monitoring of the freshwater lens and commenced work with community members on working towards the sustainable utilisation of food species.

Achievements under Outcome 1 have been significant, with two indicators achieved and one partially achieved, and progress is assessed as Satisfactory. The three targets for the expansion of the protected area estate in terrestrial, marine and reef ecosystems were all exceeded. In particular, the Large-scale Marine Protected Area currently covers 40% of Niue's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (127,000 km<sup>2</sup>) and in April 2022 the declaration of the Niue Nukutuluea Multiple-Use Marine Park regulations completed the Niue Marine Spatial Management Planning framework, providing varying levels of protection over 100% of Niue's EEZ (317,500 km<sup>2</sup>), a step towards sustainable development that is of global significance. Management plans are in place or being finalised for each of these conservation areas. The project also commenced efforts for the recovery of species at risk.

Under Outcome 2, two indicators were achieved and one partially achieved and progress is assessed as Moderately Satisfactory. Local and central government now adopt a comprehensive, holistic approach to natural resources management, and biodiversity and natural resources are explicit in local and central government planning and engagement with the community. Finally, engagement and awareness raising have been a strength of this project, including working with the education sector to publish their Education Sustainability Guidelines curriculum and to build capacity, although the quantitative target for awareness levels was not reported against.

The project made some contributions to gender issues and gender mainstreaming, although these were limited because the project design did not include gender-disaggregated targets or gender-specific actions. However, gender equality was reported on in narrative form throughout the project, which shows that it was considered throughout, and activities were informed by a 'Gender Analysis and Recommendations' document after the midterm review. The project was designed and implemented in accordance with the Niue National Policy for Gender Equality and Plan of Action 2014–2018.

The project has made an important contribution to the Niue population by enhancing understanding of cultural and science-based approaches to the sustainable use of natural resources and by undertaking top-down and bottom-up planning to capture the communities' cultural etiquette and protocols, Niue knowledge, and Niue intellectual sovereignty, aspirations and priorities.

This TE experienced significant limitations, especially because the IC was not in Niue for the mission. Also, there were delays in receiving many documents and information for the TE, with some key documents only being provided in the final days of this report being finalised. Finally, during the remote mission there were recurring challenges scheduling meetings, and some stakeholders who were scheduled for interview were not interviewed.

### 5.2 Conclusions

The project provides a good example of engaging communities in combining cultural etiquette, knowledge, protocols and practices with science-based approaches to conservation and natural resources



management. The engagement approach has been respectful and patient and has contributed to increased appreciation among the people of Niue of the importance and relevance of their cultural knowledge.

The project has also achieved some impressive achievements, especially with exceeding the targets for the establishment of new terrestrial, marine and reef conservation areas, developed via a participatory approach with the people of Niue.

Specific conclusions are provided in the Recommendations section, with associated recommendations.

### 5.3 Recommendations

This section presents recommendations for the project, with an explanation of each that outlines the relevant conclusions and rationale for the recommendation (Table 15).

**Table 15:** Recommendations table

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
	<b>Category 1: Current project</b>		
1	<p><b>Finalise the terrestrial community conservation area management plans for each village, ensuring that they include village-specific information on habitats, species, natural resources and priority activities and that they are clear about their relationship with the coastal and marine resources plan and Resource Management Advisory Committee for each village</b></p> <p>The draft management plans for the terrestrial village community conservation areas do not yet contain detailed village-specific information on biodiversity, natural resources and priorities, which is vital content for these plans to be a practical and useful mechanism for villages to continue to deliver the results promoted by this project. Also, the draft plans are not clear about their relationship to the coastal and marine plans and the Resource Management Advisory Committee that have also been established for each village.</p>	PIU, MNR	Immediate
2	<p><b>Provide ongoing support to villages to implement their conservation area management plans and coastal and marine plans and to update them when circumstances change (such as new information, new village priorities, or new governance arrangements)</b></p> <p>The project and partners have built a strong model for the sustainability of results, including the sustainable financing mechanism, which will depend on continued support to villages from government. The management plans will also be more effective at continuing to deliver results if they are dynamic and updated in response to changing knowledge, priorities and other circumstances.</p>	MNR, other agencies, NOW Project	Immediate
3	<p><b>Ensure that all project products (including management plans, EIMS and Sustainability Strategy) meet the expectations of relevant stakeholders, include all key information and are endorsed by appropriate parties</b></p> <p>There has been a rush at the conclusion of the project as some key deliverables are finalised (especially the conservation area</p>	MNR	Immediate

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
	management plans). It is important to note that many of these delays were caused by factors largely beyond the project's control, especially COVID-19. The rushed finish creates a risk that the products do not meet the expectations of relevant stakeholders and/or do not include all key information. It is very important for the sustainability of results that all products and outputs are finalised to an appropriate standard and meet the expectations of relevant stakeholders.		
4	<p><b>Continue to work with the NOW project to strengthen delivery of management plans by embedding the sustainable financing mechanism</b></p> <p>The strong sustainability model for the project includes a sustainable financing mechanism, being delivered through the NOW project, and a Resource Management Advisory Committee in each village. Sustainability of results therefore depends on the sustainable financing model becoming fully functional and the trust fund reaching a critical mass of funds. The collaboration between government agencies, the project and NOW has been excellent and the launch of the trust fund is expected in late 2022.</p>	MNR, other agencies, PIU, NOW	Immediate, medium and ongoing
5	<p><b>Work with Tāoga Niue to agree on the best way to codify the cultural knowledge and make it available to the community and decision-makers in a culturally sensitive way</b></p> <p>A key result from the project was the gathering of important information on Niue cultural knowledge and practices in natural resource utilisation. There was enthusiasm from stakeholders about the need for the cultural knowledge collected to be sensitively documented in a hard copy format available to the community and decision-makers, but there was lack of clarity about whether this was being done. There was also an expectation that there should be some tangible results from the extensive engagement that occurred. Two former R2R staff members have moved to Tāoga Niue at the conclusion of the project to progress this, which is very positive.</p>	Tāoga Niue, MNR, PIU	Medium
6	<p><b>Repeat the awareness questionnaire from 2018 and analyse to provide some insight into the results of the awareness raising</b></p> <p>Engagement and awareness raising was a strength of the project but there was no measurement of this (despite this being a quantitative target for Indicator 2.3); an awareness questionnaire was undertaken in 2018 but not repeated.</p>	MNR	Immediate

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
	<b>Category 2: Future project implementation and oversight</b>		
7	<p><b>At the commencement of a project, clearly identify how achievement of each indicator and target will be measured, including agreeing on repeatable quantitative measurement techniques if required, and identify indicators and/or targets that are ambiguous and/or difficult to measure and that should be changed</b></p> <p>Reporting against the results framework was not clearly focused for some indicators and targets, and no measurements or reporting were made against three quantitative targets, which makes it difficult to evaluate some achievements. It is important at commencement to carefully consider each indicator and agree on how it will be measured and reported against. Also, some indicators and targets in the results framework were ambiguous and/or difficult to report against and the project would have benefited by identifying these and making changes early.</p>	All	Ongoing
8	<p><b>Ensure that changes to indicators and/or targets are adopted (if required and appropriate) when project deliverables are changed and that these revised indicators and/or targets are clear in subsequent PIR reporting</b></p> <p>After the MTR, the number of project activities was rationalised and a revised work plan was approved by the Working Group and Cabinet; this significantly changed project deliverables, especially for Indicators 2.1 and 2.2, but the end-of-project targets were not changed to reflect this and PIR reporting continued against the original targets. This made assessment of some progress difficult.</p>	All	Ongoing
9	<p><b>Provide enhanced project oversight to countries with less experience in delivering GEF projects to ensure that project progress is being appropriately measured and reported</b></p> <p>There was a shortcoming in oversight because quantitative reporting was not done for three indicators with quantitative targets, baselines were not set for two indicators, and targets were not updated after significant changes to deliverables were endorsed by the Working Group and Cabinet. If these deficiencies had been identified and remedied early, this would have been of significant benefit to the project's M&amp;E.</p>	UNDP	Ongoing
10	<p><b>Finalise public project reports and other outputs and make them available on an easily accessible public knowledge products portal</b></p> <p>The project produced various reports and other outputs that would be of interest to the public and other practitioners. However, there were shortcomings with version control – the documents received for the TE were often labelled 'draft' or were undated. Also, there was not a point of public access for these project outputs – the project's Facebook page does not have a knowledge portal and there was no dedicated Niue R2R website for the concluding phase of the project</p>	UNDP	Ongoing

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
	(due to difficulties with the supplier for the original website). For future projects, it is recommended that clear version control protocols are followed, that final reports are dated and clearly marked as final, and that a public knowledge products portal be established.		
11	<p><b>Prepare in advance for independent evaluations to ensure that all reporting and deliverables are available and to ensure that all stakeholders have equal opportunity to contribute</b></p> <p>There were delays in receiving many documents and information for the TE, with some key reporting not becoming available until the last week of finalising this report; this created difficulties in assessing some results and holistically evaluating the project's outcomes. In addition, during the mission there were recurring challenges scheduling meetings and some stakeholders who were scheduled for interview were not interviewed.</p>	All	Ongoing
	<b>Category 3: Future programming</b>		
12	<p><b>Include consideration of climate change impacts in future updates of land use planning, species management planning and conservation area planning</b></p> <p>Consideration of climate change and its impacts was not included in the land use plans that were prepared (although it was discussed during early consultations). During interviews, it was apparent that local people are aware of climatic changes that are already underway (such as changes in cyclone and rainfall patterns). There are many likely impacts on biodiversity and natural resources from these changes in climate.</p>	MNR, other agencies	Ongoing
13	<p><b>Maintain the momentum of the R2R project by developing a follow-up project that builds other vital issues into the village planning and financing mechanism: sustainable utilisation of food species, sustainable alternative livelihoods, other species and ecosystem management approaches, and climate change</b></p> <p>The project has successfully conveyed the importance of a holistic approach to sustainable resource management and has seen significant results with cultural knowledge and practices, protected area establishment, management planning, Resource Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) establishment, and sustainable financing. The project was not strong on sustainable utilisation of food species and sustainable alternative livelihoods, which are vital considerations for Niue villages. The project also did not fully consider threatened species or climate change in its land use planning. The opportunity exists to build on the successes, structures and processes from this project (such as village plans, RMACs and sustainable financing) to focus on these factors. Such a project may be suitable for GEF 8 funding and should work closely with the proposed GEF 7 UNEP project 'Robust sustainable tourism and agriculture sectors in Niue</p>	Niue government, UNDP	Medium

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time frame
	supported by biodiversity mainstreaming and sustainable land management’.		

## 5.4 Lessons Learned

The following lessons learned were identified:

### ***Community engagement activities need time to build trust, understanding and participation***

Community engagement was a major component of this project, starting from a low level of awareness of R2R and related concepts. In addition to having low awareness, community members had early concerns about the project, especially relating to their traditional rights and practices and whether the project was seeking fundamental changes to these in pursuit of its conservation goals. The project did not rush the engagement, respected and discussed the views and concerns, and took the time to build trust and understanding, which ultimately led to high levels of participation in land use planning and conservation area planning.

### ***Niue culture and intergenerational knowledge are harmonious with the concepts of holistic planning and sustainable natural resources management***

The Niue people have been living sustainably on their land and waters for generations. Traditionally, the knowledge involved is passed between generations, ensuring that the culture continues, the resources continue to be available and significant areas in the landscape and seascape are protected and respected. It is clear that this knowledge system is harmonious with the scientific concepts of holistic planning and sustainable natural resources management.

### ***Participatory land use planning can be a crucial input to holistic landscape planning***

The project used a top-down and bottom-up land use planning process that involved all 14 villages, which included identifying important cultural and biological sites and areas, issues and opportunities, community conservation areas, and permitted uses and best practices in different land use categories. Together, these 14 land use plans comprise an integrated landscape plan for the entire country of Niue.

### ***Niue successfully delivered a \$4.2 million GEF project within the country***

This \$4.2 million R2R project was successfully delivered, with the Overall Project Outcome assessed as Moderately Satisfactory and 94% of the budget expended as of 30 April 2022. Given that this project was implemented under the National Implementation Modality, this shows that Niue has the capability to deliver large complex donor projects within the country. Key to this was the inclusion of multiple key agency stakeholders on the Working Group and the proactive participation and guidance of these Working Group members. The support of UNDP as the GEF Executing Agency was also key.

## Annexes

- Annex 1. Terminal Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR)
- Annex 2. Mission itinerary and list of persons interviewed
- Annex 3. List of documents reviewed
- Annex 4. Evaluation criteria matrix
- Annex 5. Delivery of outputs at project completion
- Annex 6. Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form
- Annex 7. Signed Terminal Evaluation Final Report Clearance Form

Annexed in a separate file: Audit trail from received comments on draft TE report

Annexed in a separate file: Terminal GEF tracking tools

## Annex 1: Terminal Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR) – excluding ToR annexes

United Nations Development Programme



<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b> <b>TERMINAL EVALUATION OF THE APPLICATION OF RIDGE TO REEF (R2R) CONCEPT FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN NIUE</b> <b>(INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANT/TEAM LEADER)</b>
<p><b>A. INTRODUCTION:</b></p> <p>In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&amp;E policies and procedures, all full- and medium-sized UNDP-supported GEF-financed projects are required to undergo a Terminal Evaluation (TE) at the end of the project. This Terms of Reference (ToR) sets out the expectations for the TE of the full-sized project titled: <b>Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation and of the Enhancement of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage in Niue (PIMS 5258)</b> implemented through Niue Ministry of Natural Resources. The project started on the 21 April 2016 and is in its fifth year of implementation. The TE process must follow the guidance outlined in the document '<a href="#">Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects</a>'.</p>
<p><b>B. Project Description or Context and Background:</b></p> <p>The project was designed to enhance Niue's capacity to effectively create and manage protected areas for biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, and safeguarding of ecosystem services. It focuses on the expansion of its protected estate on land and on its marine areas through a combination of community conservation areas and government-led protected areas. In Community Conservation Areas, both strict protection and sustainable use zones will be identified and planned carefully, using innovative protection tools recognizing that tenure over most land areas is vested in local communities.</p> <p>This project has been designed to engineer a paradigm shift in the management of terrestrial, coastal and marine protected sites from a site-centric approach to a holistic "ridge to reef" comprehensive approach. Through this approach, activities in the immediate production landscapes adjacent to marine and terrestrial protected areas will be managed to reduce threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services stemming from key production activities (e.g. tourism and agriculture).</p> <p>Additionally, the project also introduces the concept of connectivity between landscape and seascape in Niue. Terrestrial protected areas will include a landscape that links strictly protected community areas (tapu) to each other to enhance their integrity and to form a functional ecological corridor between them. Similarly, the creation of a Marine Protected Area at Beveridge Reef also satisfies the integrated and holistic approach promoted by the project by recognizing the link that is thought to exist between the Reef and mainland Niue through which the former serves as a source of recruitment for clams and other marine species that make up Niue's coral reefs.</p> <p>The primary objective of the project is to strengthen conservation and sustainable use of land, water and marine areas and their biodiversity by building on their cultural heritage values through integrated national and community actions and this will be achieved through the following outcomes;</p>



**Outcome 1:** New community conservation and national protected areas established at different levels, thus reducing threats and improving biodiversity status of conservation areas through effective community management

Outcome 1 identifies communities as the agents of management and monitoring. It comprises the major project interventions on the ground leading to protective measures at different levels and through different instruments thus reducing threats and improving biodiversity status. A large part of the work will be carried out primarily by empowering Village Councils and Communities as owners.

**Outcome 2:** Strengthened community and cross-sectoral involvement of relevant national government departments to promote effective Ridge to Reef management by mainstreaming biodiversity and environmental concerns into plans and actions

Outcome 2 is focused primarily upstream at the central and local government levels and it targets institutional strengthening, capacity building and other foundational elements. At the local, Village Council level this Outcome seeks a stronger institutional foundation and enhanced capacities; likewise among central government functionaries. Institutional strengthening will be achieved through policy and regulatory reforms at central level but also through by-laws at Local Level. Capacities will be enhanced through the provision of expertise and know-how for land use planning and management, protected area management (including for eco-tourism), species protection and management, sustainability. Under this Outcome, the project will also make provision for information sharing, awareness raising, learning and outreach.

The total GEF trust funds for this project is US\$4,194,862 with in-kind co-financing of US\$11,068,600. The project document was signed in April 2016. The executing agency for this project is the Ministry of Natural Resources and responsible parties are the Department of Education, Taoga Niue, Department of Public Works (Water), Office of the Premier, Treasury Department and the United Nations Development Programme .

Due to the travel restrictions, the lead evaluator will be home-based and will work closely with the national consultant in engaging stakeholders via virtual consultations via telephone or online (Zoom, Skype, etc.). Field missions will be conducted by the national consultant and findings shared with the lead evaluator. Furthermore, all stakeholder engagement will be strongly supported by the PMU and the UNDP MCO in Samoa. Consideration should be taken for stakeholder availability, ability, and willingness to be interviewed remotely and the constraints this may place on the TE. These limitations must be reflected in the final TE report. No stakeholders, consultants or UNDP staff should be put in harm's way and safety is the key priority.

#### **C. TE PURPOSE:**

The TE report will assess the achievement of project results against what was expected to be achieved and draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming. The TE report promotes accountability and transparency and assesses the extent of project accomplishments.





The TE will cover the full project and will be conducted according to the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the [‘Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects’](#).

#### **D. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE TE:**

The TE will assess project performance against expectations set out in the project’s Logical Framework/Results Framework (see ToR Annex A). The TE will assess results according to the criteria outlined in the [‘Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects’](#).

The Findings section of the TE report will cover the topics listed below. A full outline of the TE report’s content is provided in ToR Annex C.

The asterisk “(\*)” indicates criteria for which a rating is required.

#### **Findings**

##### **i. Project Design/Formulation**

- National priorities and country driven-ness
- Theory of Change
- Gender equality and women’s empowerment
- Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)
- Analysis of Results Framework: project logic and strategy, indicators
- Assumptions and Risks
- Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g. same focal area) incorporated into project design
- Planned stakeholder participation
- Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector
- Management arrangements

##### **ii. Project Implementation**

- Adaptive management (changes to the project design and project outputs during implementation)
- Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements
- Project Finance and Co-finance
- Monitoring & Evaluation: design at entry (\*), implementation (\*), and overall assessment of M&E (\*)
- Implementing Agency (UNDP) (\*) and Executing Agency (\*), overall project oversight/implementation and execution (\*)
- Risk Management, including Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

##### **iii. Project Results**

- Assess the achievement of outcomes against indicators by reporting on the level of progress for each objective and outcome indicator at the time of the TE and noting final achievements





- Relevance (\*), Effectiveness (\*), Efficiency (\*) and overall project outcome (\*)
- Sustainability: financial (\*), socio-political (\*), institutional framework and governance (\*), environmental (\*), overall likelihood of sustainability (\*). Note that the TE team is expected to provide comments/recommendations to the project exit strategy and sustainability plan draft.
- Country ownership
- Gender equality, women's and other vulnerable group empowerment
- Cross-cutting issues (poverty alleviation, improved governance, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster prevention and recovery, human rights, capacity development, South-South cooperation, knowledge management, volunteerism, etc., as relevant)
- GEF Additionality
- Catalytic Role / Replication Effect
- Progress to impact

#### **Main Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned**

- The TE team will include a summary of the main findings of the TE report. Findings should be presented as statements of fact that are based on analysis of the data.
- The section on conclusions will be written in light of the findings. Conclusions should be comprehensive and balanced statements that are well substantiated by evidence and logically connected to the TE findings. They should highlight the strengths, weaknesses and results of the project, respond to key evaluation questions and provide insights into the identification of and/or solutions to important problems or issues pertinent to project beneficiaries, UNDP and the GEF, including issues in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Recommendations should provide concrete, practical, feasible, properly timed and targeted guidance directed to the intended users of the evaluation about what actions to take and decisions to make. The recommendations should be specifically supported by the evidence and linked to the findings and conclusions around key questions addressed by the evaluation. Ideally these recommendations should be linked to the project exit strategy and sustainability plan.
- The TE report should also include lessons that can be taken from the evaluation, including best practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success that can provide knowledge gained from the particular circumstance (programmatic and evaluation methods used, partnerships, financial leveraging, etc.) that are applicable to other GEF and UNDP interventions. When possible, the TE team should include examples of good/appropriate practices in project design and implementation.
- It is important for the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned of the TE report to incorporate gender equality and empowerment of women.

The TE report will include an Evaluation Ratings Table, as shown below:

**ToR Table 2: Evaluation Ratings Table for Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation and of the Enhancement of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage in Niue (PIMS 5258)**



Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)	Rating <sup>1</sup>
M&E design at entry	
M&E Plan Implementation	
Overall Quality of M&E	
Implementation & Execution	Rating
Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight	
Quality of Implementing Partner Execution	
Overall quality of Implementation/Execution	
Assessment of Outcomes	Rating
Relevance	
Effectiveness	
Efficiency	
Overall Project Outcome Rating	
Sustainability	Rating
Financial resources	
Socio-political/economic	
Institutional framework and governance	
Environmental	
Overall Likelihood of Sustainability	

<sup>1</sup> Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, Implementation/Oversight & Execution, Relevance are rated on a 6-point scale: 6=Highly Satisfactory (HS), 5=Satisfactory (S), 4=Moderately Satisfactory (MS), 3=Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), 2=Unsatisfactory (U), 1=Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability is rated on a 4-point scale: 4=Likely (L), 3=Moderately Likely (ML), 2=Moderately Unlikely (MU), 1=Unlikely (U)



**E. TIMEFRAME:**

The total duration of the TE will be approximately 26 working days over a time period of 8 weeks. The tentative TE timeframe is as follows:

Timeframe	Activity
25 March 2022	Selection of TE team
28 March 2022	Preparation period for TE team (handover of documentation)
01 April 2022	Document review and preparation of TE Inception Report
06 April 2022	Finalization and Validation of TE Inception Report; latest start of TE field work
07-20 April 2022 (10 days)	TE field work: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits, etc.
19 April 2022	TE field work wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings; earliest end of TE field work
21-25 April 2022	Preparation of draft TE report
27 April 2022	Circulation of draft TE report for comments
11 May 2022	Incorporation of comments on draft TE report into Audit Trail & finalization of TE report
13 May 2022	Preparation and Issuance of Management Response
18 May 2022	Expected date of full TE completion

Options for site visits should be provided in the TE Inception Report.

**F. TE DELIVERABLES:**

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	Terminal Evaluation Inception Report	TE team clarifies objectives, methodology and timing of the TE; Options for site visits by the national consultant should be provided in the Inception Report.	Target date for signing contract & commencement of work is 28 March 2022. Inception report is due no later than one week after contract signing 06 April 2022	Evaluation team submits to the Commissioning Unit and Project Management Unit
2	Presentation	Initial Findings (this includes a PPT that summarizes Initial findings and preliminary recommendations)	19 April 2022	Evaluation team presents to the Commissioning Unit and the Project Management Unit. Sent for information only to Commissioning Unit, RTA, Project Management Unit, GEF OFP



3	Draft Final Evaluation Report	Full report (using guidelines on report content in ToR Annex C) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the TE field work. 27 April 2022	Sent for review to the Commissioning Unit, RTA, Project Management Unit, GEF OFP
4	Final Evaluation Report	Revised final report and TE Audit trail in which the TE details how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final TE report (See template in ToR Annex H)	Within 2 weeks of receiving UNDP comments on draft: 18 May 2022	Sent to the Commissioning Unit (not RTA, Project Management Unit, GEF OFP?)

\*All final TE reports will be quality assessed by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO). Details of the IEO's quality assessment of decentralized evaluations can be found in Section 6 of the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines.<sup>2</sup>

#### **G. TE ARRANGEMENT:**

The principal responsibility for managing this Terminal Evaluation resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for the International Consultant of this Terminal Evaluation is the UNDP Multi-country office for Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau based in Samoa (UNDP Samoa MCO).

The UNDP Multi-country office for Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau based in Samoa and the Niue Islands R2R Project Management Unit (PMU) will be responsible for liaising with the Evaluation team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits for the National Consultant, etc.

The Commissioning Unit will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the TE team. The Project Management Unit will be responsible for liaising with the TE team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

#### **H. TE TEAM COMPOSITION:**

A team of two independent evaluators will conduct the TE – **One Team Leader** (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions) and One National Team Expert, usually from the country of the project.

The team leader will be responsible for;

- Completion of the inception report in coordination with the National Team Expert

<sup>2</sup> Access at: <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/section-6.shtml>



- Conduct TE interviews with coordination with the National Team expert and PMU
- The overall design, writing and completion of the TE report inclusive of audit trail and including all comments from project partners and stakeholders
- Overall TE report quality assurance and adherence to the ['Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects'](#).

The national team expert will;

- Work closely with the Team Leader and the PMU;
- Contribute to the inception report including a detailed plan for interview and project site visits
- Develop and confirm TE interview schedule in coordination with the PMU and the Team Leader
- Translate questionnaires if needed and share list of questions with interviewees in preparation for the TE interviews
- Facilitate virtual (and translate if needed) interviews for the TE and conduct interviews where virtual means are unavailable
- Conduct data collection for the TE
- Conduct field visits to verify impact of project interventions at project sites in coordination with the Team Leader and PMU
- Work with PMU to confirm co-financing for the project
- Contribute to the TE report
- Conduct and confirm any follow up data/information requirements to complete the Terminal evaluation report including audit trail.

The evaluator(s) cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation and/or implementation (including the writing of the project document), must not have conducted this project's TE Review and should not have a conflict of interest with the project's related activities.

The selection of **Team Leader** will be aimed at maximizing the overall "team" qualities in the following areas:

**Education:**

- A Master's degree in Environmental Management, Biodiversity and ecosystems management or other closely related field (20 points);

**Experience:**

- Minimum of 10 years of relevant professional experience in providing management or consultancy services to the multi focal area projects; in developing national and regional capacities and enabling conditions for global environmental protection and sustainable development (20 points);





- Five years' experience in project evaluations, results-based management, and/or evaluation methodologies (20 points);
- Technical knowledge in the targeted GEF focal areas: Biodiversity and International Waters (20 points);
- Project evaluation experience within the United Nations system will be considered an asset (5 points);
- Experience working in biodiversity conservation and protected areas elsewhere in the Pacific region (ideally Niue) or SIDS (5 points)
- Fluency in English (oral and written) is a requirement, with excellent written and presentation skills (10 points)

#### **I. EVALUATOR ETHICS:**

The TE team will be held to the highest ethical standards and is required to sign a code of conduct upon acceptance of the assignment. This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. The evaluator must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The evaluator must also ensure security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the evaluation process must also be solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses without the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

#### **J. DUTY STATION:**

Home-based. It is expected that the consultant/team leader will conduct remote stakeholder interviews and site visit via virtual means (Zoom, skype etc.) in lieu of a mission in Niue due to COVID19 travel restrictions

#### **K. SCOPE OF BID PRICE & SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS:**

DELIVERABLES	DUE DATE (%)	AMOUNT IN USD TO BE PAID AFTER CERTIFICATION BY UNDP OF SATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE OF DELIVERABLES
Upon approval and certification by the Commissioning Unit of the TE Inception Report	06 April 2022 (20%) (6 days after contract signing)	\$ 2,548.00
Upon approval and certification by the Commissioning Unit of the draft Terminal Evaluation report	27 April 2022 (40%)	\$ 5,096.00
Upon approval and certification by the Commissioning Unit and UNDP-GEF RTA of the final Terminal	18 May 2022 (40%)	\$ 5,096.00



Evaluation report and completed Audit Trail			
TOTAL	26 working days	\$ 12,740	
Criteria for issuing the final payment of 40% <sup>3</sup> :			

<sup>3</sup> The Commissioning Unit is obligated to issue payments to the TE team as soon as the terms under the ToR are fulfilled. If there is an ongoing discussion regarding the quality and completeness of the final deliverables that cannot be resolved between the Commissioning Unit and the TE team, the Regional M&E Advisor and Vertical Fund Directorate will be consulted. If needed, the Commissioning Unit's senior management, Procurement Services Unit and Legal Support Office will be notified as well so that a decision can be made about whether or not to withhold payment of any amounts that may be due to the evaluator(s), suspend or terminate the contract and/or remove the individual contractor from any applicable rosters. See the UNDP Individual Contract Policy for further details:  
[https://popp.undp.org/\\_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/UNDP\\_POPP\\_DOCUMENT\\_LIBRARY/Public/PSU\\_Individual%20Contract\\_Individual%20Contract%20Policy.docx&action=default](https://popp.undp.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/UNDP_POPP_DOCUMENT_LIBRARY/Public/PSU_Individual%20Contract_Individual%20Contract%20Policy.docx&action=default)

## Annex 2: Mission itinerary and list of persons interviewed

All interviews were conducted via videoconferencing. The interviews were spread over several weeks for a variety of reasons: Niue operates on a four-day week; several public holidays occurred during the period; and there were recurring challenges scheduling meetings, with the IC frequently arranging meetings but these requiring re-scheduling for a range of reasons.

Date/ Time (Niue time)	Participants	Organisation/role
<b>6 April 2022</b>		
3pm	Dave Loubser	R2R Chief Technical Advisor
<b>7 April 2022</b>		
9am	Georgina Tukiuha	R2R Community Liaison Officer
10am	Thomas Talagi	R2R Communication Officer
2pm	Birtha Togahai Charles Ioane Carol Edwards Itzy Tukuitoga	Director of Education (MoSS) Niue High School Principal Niue Primary School Principal Principal of the Early Childhood Education
<b>11 April 2022</b>		
11am	Charlene Tukiuha	Head of Community Services, Department of Justice (MoSS)
1pm	Moira Enetama	Head of Tāoga Niue, MoSS
<b>12 April 2022</b>		
11am	Andre Siohane	Director General, Mol
1pm	Clinton Chapman	Head of Utilities, Mol
<b>20 April 2022</b>		
3pm	Poi Okesene	Head of DAFF, MNR
<b>22 April 2022</b>		
1pm	Launoa Gataua	Head of Fisheries, DAF, MNR
2pm	Emani Flui	Village Council Chair, Alofi North
3pm	Emi Hipa	Alofi North Catholic Church, Niue Can Man Project
<b>24 April 2022</b>		
4pm	Anne Trevor Aussie Simanu	Programme Officer, UNDP MCO Assistant Resident Representative/ Programme Manager, UNDP MCO
7pm	Jose Padilla Nittaya Saengow	Regional Technical Advisor, UNDP Regional Programme Associate, UNDP
<b>26 April 2022</b>		

11am	Dr Josie Tamate	Director General, MNR
2pm	Richard Siataga	Deputy Head, Justice (MoSS)
2.30pm	Doreen Siataga	Head of Treasury
3pm	Shane Tohovaka	R2R Project Manager
<b>3 May 2022</b>		
2pm	Presentation of initial TE findings to UNDP, PIU, MNR and other agencies	

### **Annex 3: List of documents reviewed**

1. Project Identification Form (PIF)
2. UNDP Initiation Plan
3. Final UNDP-GEF Project Document with all annexes
4. CEO Endorsement Request
5. UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) (annex of project document)
6. Inception Workshop Report
7. Midterm Review report and management response to MTR recommendations
8. Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) – 2017 to 2021
9. Quarterly progress reports
10. Back-to-office reports (BTOR) for oversight mission (4)
11. Minutes of Working Group meetings
12. GEF Tracking Tools (from CEO endorsement, midterm and terminal stages)
13. Financial data, including actual expenditures by project outcome, including management costs
14. Co-financing data
15. Audit reports, including 3 Spot Checks, 2 Micro Assessments, 1 Macro Assessment, and 1 Internal Audit Report
16. List of contracts and procurement items over US\$5,000
17. Gender Analysis and Recommendations: Niue R2R FSP (undated, with June 2021 updates)
18. Village Land Use Plans 2020 (for Alofi Toga, Alofi Tokelau, Avatele, Hakupu, Hikutavake, Lakepa, Liku, Makefu, Mutalau, Namukulu, Tamakautoga, Toi, Tuapa and Vaiea villages)
19. Huvalu Conservation Area Management Plan 2019–2029
20. Village Plans for Sustainable Management of Coastal and Marine Resources 2021-2026 (for Alofi North, Alofi South, Avatele, Hakupu, Hikutavake, Lakepa, Liku, Makefu, Mutalau, Tamakautoga, Toi, Tuapa and Vaiea villages)
21. Draft Village Community Conservation Area Management Plans (for Alofi Toga, Alofi Tokelau, Avatele, Hikutavake, Lakepa, Makefu, Mutalau, Namukulu, Tamakautoga, Toi, Tuapa and Vaiea villages)
22. Topographic Lidar Survey Report Island of Niue (2020)
23. Niue Land Use Planning - Key Outcomes and Recommendations (2019)
24. Niue Land Use Planning - Stakeholder Consultations - July 8th to 27th, 2019
25. Niue Ridge to Reef Sustainability Strategy 2022
26. UNDP Sub-regional Programme Document (SRPD) for the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) 2013–2017 and 2018–2022
27. Niue National Strategic Plan (2016-2026)
28. Niue National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2015)

29. Niue's Sixth National Report Convention on Biological Diversity (2020)
30. Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries – Corporate Plan 2020-2025
31. Department of Education – Corporate Plan 2020-2025
32. Niue Meteorological Service – Corporate Plan 2020-2025
33. Report - Development of Options for Centralised Treatment of Household Wastewaters In Niue (ecoEng) (27 November 2019)
34. Report - Niue Marine Ecological Surveys, 2016 and 2017
35. Niue Cave Fauna: Report on a survey for subterranean species October-November 2017
36. Report on the Land Reptiles and Sea Snakes of Niue (undated)
37. Survey of Peka (Pacific Flying Foxes) on Niue – September-October 2017 and 2019
38. Draft Reptile Survey Report for Ridge to Reef, Niue – July 2017 survey
39. Capacity Development Needs for Protected Area Management (draft report) 2019
40. Niue Ridge to Reef Communication Strategy 2018–2021 (draft) 2018
41. CTA quarterly reports
42. Niue Ridge to Reef Cultural Heritage Survey Project Report - Historical Sites - April to November 2018
43. The Niue Pelagic Fishery Management and Development Plan (undated)
44. Sustainable Financing Strategy for Niue Ocean Wide Project – 2020 (commissioned by the Project Advisory Team, Niue Ocean Wide Project (NOW Project))
45. Tourism Carrying Capacity Report - August 2018

#### Annex 4: Evaluation criteria matrix

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
<b>Relevance: Is the project relevant with respect to the environmental and development priorities at the local, regional and national levels?</b>			
Is the project relevant to CBD and other international conventions?	Consistency with CBD and other relevant conventions (if any)	CBD and other relevant conventions, project document, PIRs, project progress reports	Desk review
Does the project's objective fit within the national environment and development priorities?	Consistency with relevant national strategies / policies  Level of participation of relevant agencies	Relevant national strategies / policies, project document, PIRs, project progress reports	Desk review, national level interviews
Does the project objective fit GEF strategic priorities?	Relationship between project objectives and the GEF focal area	Project document, GEF strategy documents, PIRs	Desk review
Did the project concept originate from local or national stakeholders, and/or were relevant stakeholders sufficiently involved in project development?	Level of involvement of local and national stakeholders in project origination and development (number of meetings held, project development processes incorporating stakeholder input, etc.)	Project staff / local and national stakeholders / project documents	Desk review, interviews
Was the project linked with and in-line with UNDP priorities and strategies for the country?	Level of coherence between project objective and design with UNDP strategic priority documents including CPD	UNDP strategic priority documents	Desk review
<b>Effectiveness: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?</b>			
Are the project objectives likely to be met? To what extent are they likely to be met?	Indicators in results framework	PIR, quarterly reports, results framework, project document, stakeholder interviews, tracking tools	Desk review, interviews
What are the key factors contributing to project success or underachievement?	Level of documentation of and preparation for project risks, assumptions and impact drivers	PIR, quarterly reports, results framework, project document, stakeholder interviews, tracking tools	Desk review, interviews
What are the key risks and barriers that remain to achieve the project objective and generate	Presence, assessment of, and preparation for expected risks,	PIR, quarterly reports, results framework, project document, stakeholder interviews, tracking tools	Desk review, interviews

Global Environmental Benefits?	assumptions and impact drivers		
How are risk and risk mitigation being managed?	Completeness and quality of risk identification and mitigation during project planning, design and implementation	PIR, quarterly reports, project document, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
What lessons can be drawn regarding effectiveness for other similar projects in the future?	Findings regarding effectiveness	PIRs, quarterly reports, project document, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
<b>Efficiency: Was the project implemented efficiently, in-line with international and national norms and standards?</b>			
Was project support provided in an efficient way?	Evaluation findings regarding support, implementation, adaptive management, results-based management, financing and co-financing	Quarterly reports, PIRs, Board minutes, back-to-office reports, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
Is the project cost-effective?	Quality and adequacy of financial management procedures (in line with UNDP, UNOPS, and national policies, legislation, and procedures)  Financial delivery rate vs. expected rate  Management costs as a percentage of total costs	Quarterly reports, PIRs, PB minutes, back-to-office reports, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
Is the project implementation approach efficient for delivering the planned project results?	Achievement of outcomes assessed against cost	PIR, quarterly reports, financing and co-financing, PB minutes, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
What lessons can be drawn regarding efficiency for other similar projects in the future?	Findings regarding efficiency	PIRs, quarterly reports, project document, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews



What is the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to project implementation?	Level of cash and in-kind co-financing relative to expected level	PIRs, quarterly reports, project document, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
<b>Results: To what extent did the project deliver the expected results?</b>			
Have the planned outputs been produced? Have they contributed to the project outcomes and objectives?	Level of project implementation progress relative to expected level at current stage of implementation  Existence of logical linkages between project outputs and outcomes/impacts	PIRs, quarterly reports, project document, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
Are the anticipated outcomes likely to be achieved? Are the outcomes likely to contribute to the achievement of the project objective?	Existence of logical linkages between project outcomes and impacts	PIRs, quarterly reports, project document, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
Are impact level results likely to be achieved? Are the likely to be at the scale sufficient to be considered Global Environmental Benefits?	Environmental indicators  Level of progress through the project's Theory of Change	PIRs, quarterly reports, project document, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
<b>Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?</b>			
To what extent are project results likely to be dependent on continued financial support? What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project results once the GEF assistance ends?	Financial requirements for maintenance of project benefits  Level of expected financial resources available to support maintenance of project benefits  Potential for additional financial resources to support maintenance of project benefits	Budget allocations, progress reports, PIRs, other relevant planning and budgeting processes, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
Do relevant stakeholders have or are likely to achieve an adequate level of 'ownership' of results, to have the interest in	Level of initiative and engagement of relevant stakeholders	Budget allocations, progress reports, PIRs, other relevant planning and budgeting	Desk review, interviews

ensuring that project benefits are maintained?	in project activities and results	processes, stakeholder interviews	
Do relevant stakeholders have the necessary technical capacity to ensure that project benefits are maintained?	Level of technical capacity of relevant stakeholders relative to level required to sustain project benefits	Budget allocations, progress reports, PIRs, other relevant planning and budgeting processes, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
To what extent are the project results dependent on socio-political factors?	Socio-economic risks	PIRs, quarterly reports, other relevant planning and budgeting processes, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
To what extent are the project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance?	Existence of institutional and governance risks to project benefits	PIRs, quarterly reports, other relevant planning and budgeting processes, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project impacts and Global Environmental Benefits?	Environmental risks	PIRs, quarterly reports, other relevant planning and budgeting processes, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
What lessons can be drawn regarding sustainability for other similar projects in the future?	Findings regarding sustainability	PIRs, quarterly reports, other relevant planning and budgeting processes, project document, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
<b>Impact: Are there indications that the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward long lasting desired changes?</b>			
Are there verifiable environmental improvements?	Verifiable environmental improvements	Tracking tools, progress reports, PIRs, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
Are there verifiable reductions in stress on environmental systems?	Verifiable reductions in stress on environmental systems	Tracking tools, progress reports, PIRs, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
<b>Gender equality and women's empowerment</b>			
How did the project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment?	Level of progress of gender action plan and gender indicators in results framework	PIRs, quarterly reports, other relevant planning and budgeting processes, project document, stakeholder interviews	Desk review, interviews
In what ways did the project's gender results advance or contribute to	Existence of logical linkages between gender results and	PIRs, quarterly reports, other relevant planning and budgeting processes, project	Desk review, interviews

the project's biodiversity outcomes?	project outcomes and impacts	document, stakeholder interviews	
<b>Cross-cutting and UNDP mainstreaming issues</b>			
How were effects on local populations considered in project design and implementation?	Positive or negative effects of the project on local populations	Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports	Desk review, interviews

## Annex 5: Delivery of outputs at project completion

The following table provides a summary of the implementation and delivery status of project outputs at project completion, prepared by the IC using a variety of information sources.

Delivery status at TE:

Green - Full achievement at the end of the project

Yellow - Partial achievement at the end of the project


Red - Little or no achievement at the end of project

Output	Implementation at project completion	Delivery status
<b>Outcome 1:</b> New community conservation and national protected areas established at different levels, thus reducing threats and improving biodiversity status of conservation areas through effective community management		
1.1: National conservation and protected area system expanded through – (i) a continuous terrestrial conservation area covering 2,550 ha that links traditionally strict protected sites (tapu) and their surrounding landscapes; (ii) a national marine protected area covering 4,500 ha (Beveridge Reef); and (iii) community-conserved reefs covering at least 112 ha. Conservation and protected areas formalized through appropriate instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 14 villages have confirmed commitment of over 17,000 ha as terrestrial CCAs</li> <li>- Declaration and gazetting to formalise CCAs still in progress</li> <li>- Large-scale Marine Protected Area (LSMPA) comprising 40% of Niue's EEZ inclusive of Beveridge reef approved by Niue Govt and announced at Malta Oceans summit 2017 (April 2022 declaration of MPA to cover 100% of EEZ)</li> <li>- Compliance strategy, marine spatial planning and legal frameworks have been established to underpin the management and planning of the LSMPA</li> <li>- All 14 villages have confirmed commitment of over 1,600 ha as Special Managed Reef Areas (SMRAs)</li> <li>- Extension of SMRA boundaries to the 350 m contour depth, within the 3-nautical mile zone</li> <li>- Final Land Use Plans presented to each village in Q1 2022</li> <li>- Cultural Heritage Survey (historical sites) completed</li> </ul>	Green
1.2: Management plans developed through participatory approaches for: a) expanded terrestrial conservation areas; b) the national marine protected area; and c) community-conserved reefs; management plan adopted through appropriate instruments; management plans mainstreamed in development, sectoral and CC adaptation plans/policies; adequate financing identified from budgetary and other sources for implementation of the plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Huvalu Conservation Area Management Plan (HCA MP) finalised</li> <li>- Large-scale Marine Spatial plan (LSMSP) being finalised (led by NOW project)</li> <li>- C&amp;M Plans finalised</li> <li>- New confluence conservation area not specifically established but areas covered by village terrestrial CCAs</li> </ul>	Green
1.3: Management plans implemented for all conservation areas through conservation and management activities (concrete measures) at the village, cross-village and national levels, including improvements in water quality in reef areas, protection of the freshwater lens and necessary support activities (soft measures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HCA MP being implemented by the two villages (Liku and Hakupu)</li> <li>- Implementation of CCA MPs and C&amp;M Plans for other villages commencing (finalisation was delayed to the end of the project period)</li> <li>- Permanent moorings for Beveridge Reef in progress</li> </ul>	Yellow

Output	Implementation at project completion	Delivery status
1.4: Systematic local and national level ecosystems and species level biodiversity monitoring systems established, with data sharing and joint training and survey activities for terrestrial and marine areas and integrated approaches; monitoring and evaluation results are fed to the R2R program through the regional program support project to facilitate lessons sharing and cross-country fertilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EIMS on track for completion as per Agreement with IIC Technologies, and roll out commencing followed by capacity strengthening and technical support for a further 2 years built into the contract</li> <li>- Environmental monitoring system elements combined into the EIMS development; this component was downscaled after the MTR</li> <li>- Numerous consultations and interactions with the Regional R2R Programme, including data and information sharing; COVID-19 constraints limited interactions with other countries in 2020 and 2021</li> </ul>	
<b>Outcome 2:</b> Strengthened community and cross-sectoral involvement of relevant national government departments to promote effective Ridge to Reef management by mainstreaming biodiversity and environmental concerns into plans and actions		
2.1: Community level actions on biodiversity and R2R implemented through: (i) establishment of village committees towards participatory management of terrestrial conservation areas and community-conserved reefs; (ii) training on integrated approaches to planning and management focusing on developing clearly-specified roles; and (iii) formulation of innovative instruments to secure support of landowners affected by the terrestrial conservation area and other interventions prescribed by the land use plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Liaison Officer engaged to specifically work with Village Councils</li> <li>- All 14 villages fully engaged by R2R over course of implementation, with strategy of 'no villages left behind, big or small' with equal commitment of resources from project shared among all villages; this ensured trust developed, and commitment from all villages resulting in terrestrial CAs and marine SMRAs, and RMACs established in all 14 villages</li> <li>- Villages involved in engagement on cultural knowledge, land use planning, conservation area planning, establishment of RMACs</li> </ul>	
2.2: Sector-related legal framework, policies and plans support effective R2R conservation and sustainable use within and outside of conservation areas, embedded in (i) community development plans; (ii) cross-sectoral plans such as climate change and mitigation and adaptation, tourism and the plan for achieving water security; (iii) sector plans such as education, culture, Public Works (particularly on water division and their work on water pollution control affecting the coastal areas and the freshwater lens); and, (iv) increase in sectoral operational budgets by 20% by end of project from baseline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This component was downscaled after the MTR</li> <li>- Sector-related legal framework, policies and plans not developed and not embedded in the plans listed in the output</li> <li>- No reporting on sectoral operational budgets</li> <li>- Central government agencies were closely involved in the project</li> <li>- The project had a significant impact on the education sector, influencing the primary and secondary curriculums</li> </ul>	
2.3: Institutional strengthening of the capacity of the Department of Environment, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and other government agencies for planning and monitoring of PAs and R2R management for linked landscapes for effective environmental management, enforcement and compliance monitoring, including (i) strategic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed report 'Capacity Development Needs for Protected Area Management'</li> <li>- Some capacity building and training reported on</li> <li>- Professional competency standards for staff not reported on</li> </ul>	

Output	Implementation at project completion	Delivery status
training activities and application of the professional competency standards for staff (to be developed); and (ii) participation in regional R2R trainings through the regional program support project		
2.4: Economic, social/cultural and biodiversity lessons documented and communicated regionally, nationally and locally through: (i) targeted campaigns, publications in local language and English, and also available through dedicated website and the media (also targeting involvement of non-resident Niueans); (ii) mainstreaming environment curriculum and activities in schools; (iii) establishment of in-situ learning sites for biodiversity conservation; (iv) information, know-how, and experience made accessible to other Pacific neighbours to be emulated and replicated as applicable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Used a Facebook site rather than website</li> <li>- Various targeted campaigns in Niuean and English, including for non-residents</li> <li>- Community outreach activities included national TV and radio, show days and community events</li> <li>- Significant contribution to the secondary and primary curriculums and provided other valued support to the education sector</li> <li>- All 14 villages extensively consulted during project</li> <li>- Tuapa in-situ marine biodiversity learning centre launched 2021</li> <li>- R2R network of professionals and practitioners established and various information sharing implemented (see also under Output 1.4)</li> </ul>	

## Annex 6: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form

<p>Evaluators/Consultants:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.</li><li>2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.</li><li>3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.</li><li>4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.</li><li>5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.</li><li>6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.</li><li>7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.</li><li>8. Must ensure that independence of judgement is maintained, and that evaluation findings and recommendations are independently presented.</li><li>9. Must confirm that they have not been involved in designing, executing or advising on the project being evaluated and did not carry out the project's Mid-Term Review.</li></ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TE Consultant Agreement Form</b></p> <p>Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:</p> <p>Name of Evaluator: Adrian Stokes</p> <p>Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant):</p> <p>I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.</p> <p>Signed at: Adelaide, Australia (place) on: 6 April 2022 (date)</p> <p>Signature: </p>
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## Annex 7: Signed Terminal Evaluation Final Report Clearance Form

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### Annex 7: TE Report Clearance Form

**Terminal Evaluation Report for the 'Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation and of the Enhancement of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage in Niue PIMS#5258' Reviewed and Cleared By:**

#### Commissioning Unit (M&E Focal Point)

Name: Pilisi Leota

Signature:  Date: 26-Jul-2022

#### Regional Technical Advisor (Nature, Climate and Energy)

Name: Jose Padilla

Signature:  Date: 26-Jul-2022



