



REPORT

FOR THE MID-TERM REVIEW (MTR) OF THE PROJECT

APPLICATION OF RIDGE TO REEF CONCEPT FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

IN NIUE

PIMS 5258

GEF PROJECT ID5552

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DATE: OCTOBER 8 2018

I. OPENING PAGE:

TITLE OF UNDP SUPPORTED GEF FINANCED PROJECT:

APPLICATION OF RIDGE TO REEF CONCEPT FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND FOR THE
ENHANCEMENT OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN NIUE¹

PROJECT ID#S:

AWARD ID: 00078842

PROJECT ID: 00088927

GEF Project ID 5552

MID TERM REVIEW TIME FRAME AND DATE OF REPORT

Time frame: July – December 2018

Date of Report: October 8 2018

REGION AND COUNTRIES INCLUDED IN THE PROJECT:

Pacific Sub-region, Niue

GEF OPERATIONAL PROGRAM/STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

- Component 1: GEF's Biodiversity Focal Area Objective 1 - Improve Sustainability of PA Systems, and Outcome 1.1 - Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas.
- Component 2: GEF 5 BD2 Objective - Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors

EXECUTING AGENCY / IMPLEMENTING PARTNER

Ministry of Natural Resources

RESPONSIBLE PARTNERS:

Department of Education, Taoga Niue, Department of Public Works (Water), Office of the Premier, Treasury Department and United Nations Development Programme

¹ Also known as the Ridge to Reef Project or R2R Project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The mid-term review consultant would like to acknowledge and thank all who kindly shared their time, information, and inputs for the interviews and consultations that took place as part of this process.

DISCLAIMER

Be stated that the analysis and recommendations contained in this document only represent the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the analysis, views and opinions of the United Nations Development Programme, GEF, any other UN Agency, nor any of the donors or parties involved in the *Project Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation and For the Enhancement of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage in Niue*.

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III. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFO	Administration and Finance Officer
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CC	Climate Change
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries
DoE	Department of Environment
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
FAO	Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
ha	Hectare
IW	International Waters
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
LogFrame	Logical Framework Matrix
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MNR	Ministry of Natural Resources
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NPD	National Project Director
NZD	New Zealand Dollar
PA	Protected Area
PAS	Pacific Alliance for Sustainability (GEF Programme)
PEB	Project Executive Board
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PIU	R2R Project Implementation Unit
R2RAC	Project Advisory Committee
R2R PM	Project Manager
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USD	United States Dollar
VC	Village Council

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT INFORMATION TABLE

Project Title:	APPLICATION OF RIDGE TO REEF CONCEPT FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN NIUE			
Award ID:	00078842		At endorsement (US\$)	At mid – term (US\$)
Project ID:	00088927			
PIMS	5258	GEF financing:	4,194,862	949,177
Country: Niue		UNDP: (In kind)	200,000	N/A
Region: Pacific Sub-region		Government (In kind)	10,868,600	4,292,864
GEF OP/SP ²	In footnote 1	Total co-financing:	11,068,600	5,242,041
Implementing Agency:	UNDP	Total Project Cost:	15,263,462	5,242,041
Implementing Partner:	Ministry of Natural Resources	ProDoc Signature (date project began):	April 2016	
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed: April 2021	

² Component 1: GEF's Biodiversity Focal Area Objective 1 - Improve Sustainability of PA Systems, and Outcome 1.1 - Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas.

Component 2: GEF 5 BD2 Objective - Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Ridge to Reef Project has been 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 protected areas on land and on its coastal as well as marine areas through a combination of community conservation zones and government-led protected areas. These goals are to be achieved through the implementation of two interlinked components/outcomes that address barriers and threats to effective biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in Niue. These are:

- 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 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 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). Additionally, the project also introduces the concept of connectivity between landscape and seascape in Niue.

The Project formally started in April 2016 (upon signature) and has an expected finalization in April 2021. Its total projected budget is USD 11,061,341, with support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), support to be of USD 4,194,862. The Government of Niue has committed co-financing to the Project for an amount of USD 10,868,600. The Implementing Partner for the Project is Niue's Ministry of Natural Resources.

PROJECT PROGRESS SUMMARY

The R2R Project has carried out a number of processes and products. For instance at the village – level a series of consultations have taken place in order to advance work related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in a protected area mode; a set of consultancies/studies are being carried out; reviewing, updating and incorporating of R2R holistic approach into existing community – level and sectoral development and management plans, and education plans has begun; collation and surveying of information on land issues (tenure, surveys, land – based / geological / water – related characteristics); outreach and visibility products and events are being organized in different villages, with mass media, as well as with social networks; debates began in order to set up and formalize matters related to future learning centres to be established as part of the Project (coastal in-situ and national learning centres). Lastly, there has been work with several organizations (at the national as well as the international level) in relation to the commitment of the Government of Niue to establish 40 percent of its EEZ (127,000km²) for the establishment of a Large Scale Marine Protected Area that includes Beveridge Reef. Although this progress can be established at mid-point (with most of the progress achieved in the last few months) the Project has had a slow set up and start up. Although activities and processes (and delivery) have increased in the last year to a great degree, the set-up process and the beginning of delivery of products was slow for several of the aspects the project intends to implement.

MTR RATINGS AND ACHIEVEMENT SUMMARY TABLE

TABLE 1: MTR RATINGS AND ACHIEVEMENT SUMMARY TABLE FOR THE PROJECT³

Measure		MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: Moderately Satisfactory: MS		As a composite, there are a few moderate shortcomings in the achievement of 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. The integrated approach has proved to be more challenging for land use than for other areas. Although some outputs have been achieved, several other outputs, expected processes and outcomes that make up and articulate the objective have not been met at the expected mid-point levels. Delays in the initial stages of delivery have had an impact on the achievement of the objective thus far. No shortcomings in terms of relevance.
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: Moderately Satisfactory: MS		Some shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness at the results levels and due to delays in implementation and delivery as well as delays in terms of challenges, in particular due to problematic issues such as land ownership. The major achievements in terms of products thus far have been the generation of studies and baseline information. The major process achievements in terms of process have been the village consultations and participatory approach at this level. Significant shortcomings in terms of seeking effects and results-based planning thus far. No shortcomings in terms of relevance.
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: Moderately Satisfactory: MS		Some shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness at the results levels and due to delays in implementation and delivery as well as delays in terms of challenges. The major achievements in terms of products thus far have been the generation of studies and baseline information. The major process achievements in terms of process have been the village consultations and participatory approach at this level. Achievements greater when dealing with reef and marine areas. Significant shortcomings in terms of seeking effects and results-based planning thus far. No shortcomings in terms of relevance.
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management		Rating: Satisfactory: MS	Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to moderately satisfactory implementation. No adaptive management processes formally underway thus far. Delays in delivery associated to challenges with project implementation in Niue.
Sustainability		Rating: Moderately Likely: ML	At the midpoint, and as a composite assessment, there are moderate risks regarding the sustainability of some components, but there are expectations that at least some of the outputs and outcomes will be sustained and carry on after project closure. Although some outputs and activities should carry on after closure, a series of them are at risk of not being fully sustained if no further work is carried out in seeking sustainability from the mid-term review onward (such as generating exit strategy, fully incorporating financing and livelihood enhancement components to the products and processes adopted).

³ Reference: The ratings for performance follow a six – point scale (Highly satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)). The rating for sustainability follows a four – point scale (Likely (L); Moderately Likely (ML); Moderately Unlikely (MU); Unlikely (U); Highly Unlikely (HU)). The ratings explanations are found in annexes (see Annex 2: Rating Scales).

CONCISE SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The R2R Project in Niue has an overarching 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.” This would be achieved through two highly interlinked expected outcomes that promote the establishment of protected areas and strengthening national and community level institutions to promote the Ridge to Reef holistic management approach. The design of the Project properly acknowledges the needs for intervention at community as well as to national levels. It is also very appropriate in its holistic Ridge to Reef approach, expanding from a site-centric approach to a holistic comprehensive approach by acknowledging the concept of connectivity between landscape and seascape in Niue. Yet the design is highly expansive at specific intervention levels, as well as by intending implementation of numerous (and perhaps unmanageable) activities.

Although a few products have been obtained at the time of the Project’s mid-term review, there have been a number of difficulties with the implementation processes. First of all, there have been delays in staffing, rotation, and implementation standstills. The work at the community level has been highly positive, yet communities are weary of the multiple consultation processes that have taken place without concrete results thus far in many cases. In all fairness to the Project and to the Niue institutions involved, it must be emphasized that this is the first intervention of this magnitude and scope in the country as a nationally implemented intervention. Therefore, the learning curve for implementing a project of this extent has been arduous. A number of expected outputs are in the process of being achieved or planned for the near future. While this is expectable of a project which is in its relative midpoint, this also calls for a sort of reorganising and rationalising implementation in the Project’s remaining tranche, and speeding up implementation of some aspects. Nevertheless, although adjustments are necessary these are not sufficient for the adoption and implementation of whatever cross-sectoral, land, or planning mechanisms arise out of R2R Project and ultimately produce developmental changes. The understanding that implementation and sustainability of the sought products, plans and instruments are crucial factors that should arise out of the Project is still missing. The remaining operational period for the R2R Project can be decisive to adopt and implement policy, planning instruments and key strategies to generate a holistic integrated approach to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in Niue and sustain the achievements that the Project is having and conceivably will have in the future

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY TABLE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REMAINING IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD	
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EXTENSION REQUEST	
1.	Streamline and accelerate procurement and administrative processes in order to avoid further delays that are impacting upon the implementation process.
2.	Update and rationalise the numerous activities that were originally planned in order to streamline implementation.
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.
4.	Strive to generate national capacity at all levels and in all areas (technical, project management, etc.).
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
6.	Impel work, analysis, concept notes, and other processes and mechanisms to deal with sustainable financing of the products and process that the project is and will achieve.
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.
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
9.	Orientation mechanisms (presentations, inception-type meetings, written materials) should be developed at this mid-point stage.
10.	Improve communication as well as dissemination of the information the project is and will be generating.
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
12.	Assure that gender issues are more than just participation of women. Interweave gender equality outlooks in all tools, studies, publications, etc.
13.	Generate exit and sustainability strategies for all the implementing aspects of the Project.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EXTENSION REQUEST	
14.	An extension for the Project should be requested.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNDP FOR THE REMAINING PERIOD OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NIUE R2R PROJECT	
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.
16.	Support staff and associated stakeholders in generating and obtaining capacity (both at a technical and at an organisational level) when this is not present within the Project or in-country.
RECOMMENDATIONS AT THE DESIGN LEVEL FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING OF GEF FUNDED – UNDP IMPLEMENTED PROJECTS	
17.	Having learned that whatever is or not included in design of projects permeates into implementation and often in results, design should be very specific in certain features and expected results.

2. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE MTR AND OBJECTIVES

As indicated in the monitoring and evaluation framework contained in the Project Document (PRODOC), the Project is to undergo an independent Mid-Term Review at the mid-point of project implementation. The MTR has as its purpose to determine progress being made toward the achievement of outcomes and to identify course correction if needed. It focuses on the effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of project implementation; highlights issues requiring decisions and actions; and presents initial lessons learned about project design, implementation and management. Findings of this review also lead to recommendations for enhanced implementation during the final half of the Project's term. The review follows methods and approach as stated in UNDP manuals, relevant tools, and other relevant UNDP guidance materials, including *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* and *UNDP's Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results*.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY: PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN AND EXECUTION OF THE MTR, MTR APPROACH AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS, LIMITATIONS TO THE MTR

This mid-term review has focused primarily on assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and relevance of the Project in light of the accomplished outcomes, objectives and effects. It includes the following scope and, as indicated in the above-mentioned *Guidance*, mid-term reviews should be mainly focused on:

- Assessment of progress towards results
- Monitoring of implementation and adaptive management to improve outcomes
- Early identification of risks to sustainability, and
- Emphasis on supportive recommendations.

The approach for the review of the Project is determined mainly by the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this assignment and it follows methods and approach as stated in UNDP and GEF guidance materials. The analysis entails reviewing different stages and aspects of the Project, including design and formulation; implementation; results; and the involvement of stakeholders in the Project's processes and activities. It has been carried out following a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts, UNDP, project team, and other key civil society stakeholders.

In order to carry out this review exercise, several data collection tools for analysing information from the principles of results-based reviews were used. Following UNDP/GEF guidelines, the relevant areas of the Project are evaluated according to performance criteria and prospects of sustainability with ratings as summarized in the tables found in annexes.

The tools chosen for the mid-term review, with a mixture of primary and secondary data sources as well as a combination of quantitative and qualitative material, were selected in order to provide a spectrum of information and to validate findings. These methods allow for in-depth exploration and yield information that facilitated understanding of observed changes in outcomes and outputs (both intended and unintended) and the factors that contributed to the achievements or lack of accomplishments.

Regarding specific methodologies to gather assessment information, the following tools and methods were used:

- *Document analysis.* In depth scrutiny of documentation was used as an instrument of analysis. The analysis examined documents formulated during the preparation and implementation phases of the Project (i.e. the Project Document, project reports including Annual Project Review/PIRs, etc) as well as technical documents produced within the Project and by other stakeholders/projects. A list of consulted documents is found in annexes.
- *Key informant interviews:* Interviews were implemented through a series of open and semi-open questions raised to stakeholders directly and indirectly involved with the Project. Key actors (stakeholders) were defined as governments actors, project staff, local actors, and civil society representatives. The interviews were carried out in person during the review mission. Stakeholders to interview were chosen to be the key actors from every group directly and tangentially involved in the Project. The array of stakeholders, therefore, was a representative sample of actors involved such as the implementing and partner agencies, national government representatives, other levels (village) representatives, Project Implementation Unit, and representatives from civil society stakeholders directly and tangentially involved with the Project. Annexes contain lists of stakeholders contacted.
- *Site visit/direct observation.* During the mission a series of site visits took place, allowing for interviewing national and local stakeholders as well as to carry out direct observation at the Project's field sites. Specific details on this visit and overall mission schedule is found in annexes.

A first tool developed for the review process was an evaluation matrix (which can be found in annexes). This matrix guided the data collection process and, as the review proceeded, the matrix was used to collect and display data obtained from different sources that relate to relevant criteria and questions. The matrix contains Evaluative Criteria Questions (that is questions, and where relevant sub questions, related to each of the criteria contained in the review); Indicators; Sources; and Methodology.

A mission took place (with 10 days in-country), mainly for the international review consultant to maintain meetings and interviews with relevant stakeholders at the national level and sub – national level, meetings with the Project Implementation Unit, meetings with UNDP personnel at the national level and with UNDP staff from the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau Office , review of materials with key stakeholders, and interviews with local stakeholders and with civil society representatives. As part of this mission site visits took place as planned (in annexes a mission schedule is included).

STRUCTURE OF THE MTR REPORT

The mid-term review report is structured beginning with an executive summary, where project summary, ratings tables, progress, conclusions and recommendations of this report are summarized. A second section introduces methodologies, scope and information of the execution of the mid-term review. A third section contains an overall project description within a developmental context, including an account of the problems the Project sought to address, as well as its initial objectives. A fourth core section of this report deals principally with review findings relating to the actual implementation of the Project. The fifth section of the present report entails overall conclusions as well as forward looking issues such as recommendations for future actions and future programming. Lastly, an annex section includes project and mid-term review support documentation.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT: ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC, INSTITUTIONAL, AND POLICY FACTORS RELEVANT TO THE PROJECT OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

As the Project Document states, Niue is highly dependent on its natural environment and ecosystem services for its food security, quality of life as well socio-economic development. Natural resources are not only closely associated to household food security, they are also one of the key factors for tourism, which is one of the country's main economic sectors. Biodiversity is directly linked to about one fifth of Niue's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), mainly from agriculture, fishery, forestry and hunting sectors. It is also the basis for subsistence lifestyles and has cultural significance. About 70 percent of the country retains a cover of forest and 23 percent of it is in formal conservation areas, primarily the Huvalu Conservation Area. Furthermore, the natural environment is highly associated to other factors such as groundwater protection.

Taking the above into consideration, the Project has aimed to consolidate the conservation as well as the sustainable use of land, water and marine areas and their biodiversity by building on Niuean cultural heritage values through integrated national and community actions. In particular, the Ridge to Reef Project aims at consolidating and expanding marine and terrestrial protected areas (PAs); promoting sustainable biodiversity management practices; and building a legal and institutional framework to support the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources at different policy levels. Considering that Niue's land areas are mainly vested in local communities yet these are also national government's domain, the Project has affirmed an intervention combining community – led conservation and sustainable use areas with national government protected areas.

A significant factor, in scope and outlook, is that the Project aims to apply the “ridge to reef” approach in the management and protection of natural resources. This holistic approach is to be applied instead of a more traditional protected area of disconnected ecosystems consideration. This holistic approach considers a range of connected ecosystems and natural resources (terrestrial and reefs as well as fresh water sources) present in the island of Niue in an integrated manner. This is to be done in recognition that there is an ecological as well as cultural connection between terrestrial landscape and seascape in Niue. Furthermore, the Project from its inception onward also acknowledges the importance of marine ecosystems in this ridge to reef configuration since it also comprised the creation of a marine protected area at Beveridge Reef (part of the country's Exclusive Economic Zone –EEZ–) which is crucial for reef-associated resources.

PROBLEMS THAT THE PROJECT SOUGHT TO ADDRESS: THREATS AND BARRIERS TARGETED

The Project tries to address a series of issues related to threats and barriers for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Several threats to biodiversity and to the environment in general are specifically identified, such as: unsustainable harvesting of wild resources; land degradation; pollution; groundwater quality; invasive alien species; and climate change. Two specific barriers that the Project identified and addresses are: (a) limited capacities and limited mechanisms for management on an integrated landscape and seascape scale; and (b) limited integration of terrestrial and marine biodiversity conservation into national government and community plans and actions.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGY: OBJECTIVE, OUTCOMES AND EXPECTED RESULTS, DESCRIPTION OF FIELD SITES

The above is a contextual introduction to the Project. As the design well indicated, the vulnerability of Niue's ecosystems, terrestrial and coastal, is quite high. Therefore, there are crucial needs for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. It is with this framework that the Project was designed and is being implemented. The Project's objective 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."* The intervention has been organised into two expected 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.
- 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 1 is expected to be achieved through the implementation of the following outputs:

Output 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.

Output 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.

Output 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).

Output 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.

In turn, Outcome 2 is expected to be achieved through the implementation of the following outputs:

Output 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.

Output 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.

Output 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 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.

Output 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.

These, in turn, are articulated through multiple and assorted expected sub-outputs, products, sub products and a myriad of activities anticipated to take place to some degree throughout the implementation process.

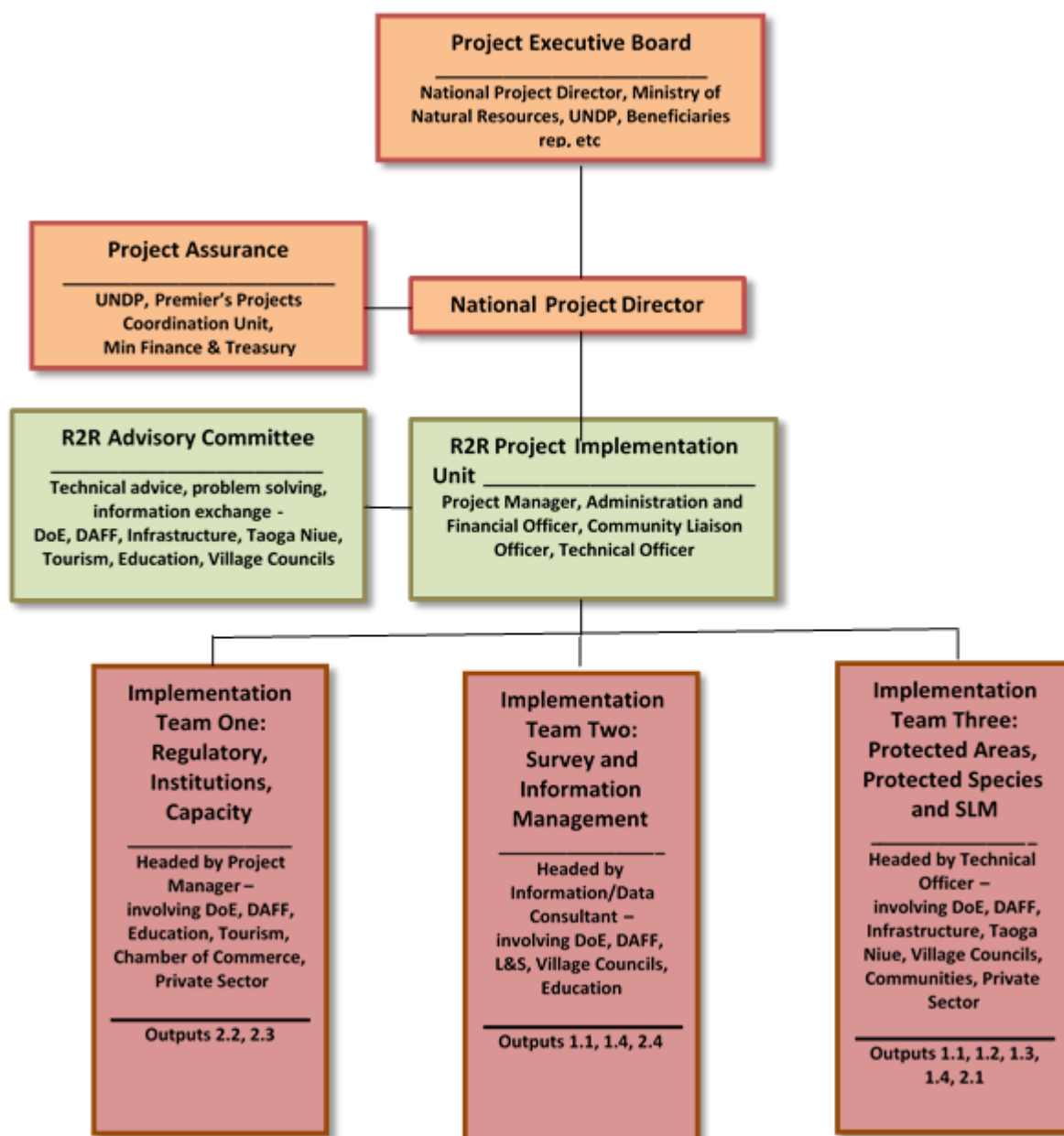
In the case of the R2R Project being carried out in Niue it is not correct to define field sites in a restricted manner or as pilots. The entire country, that is all of its villages, are contained in several different activities, outcomes, etc., of the project as a whole. Given the very strong local/sub national characteristics of this project, these are more than pilot sites, they are an integral part of the Project's overall approach.

In summary, the Project is expected to bring about stronger conservation and sustainable use practices (of land, water, coastal and marine areas as well as of their biodiversity) in Niue by building upon cultural values, and through integrated national and community actions.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS: KEY IMPLEMENTING PARTNER ARRANGEMENTS, SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT BOARD AND OF COMMITTEES

Project implementation arrangements are standard for a National Implementation Modality (NIM) project. Formally, the Ministry of Natural Resources of Niue is the Implementing Partner while other key stakeholder institutions fulfil different roles within the implementation framework. Due to the multilevel and multisector nature of the Project, a series of other stakeholders are engaged as well, at the national government level as well as at the village level.

Following is the agreed upon project management and organisational structure in a graphic form as presented at design.

FIGURE 1: PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AT DESIGN⁴

The Project Document indicated that the R2R Project would have a Project Executive Board to provide governance. This Board was to be convened jointly by UNDP and the Government of Niue and would serve as the project's decision-making body. Design guidance also specified the establishment of a R2R Advisory Committee (R2RAC) with a combination of functions (consultative forum and technical

⁴ As presented at design, source is the Project Document.

advice capacities).⁵ At design it was also indicated that Government would appoint a National Project Director (NPD) to serve as the Government's focal point.

The Project Document also provided guidance regarding the planned project implementation unit. It was indicated that the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) would be set up within the Ministry of Natural Resources and led by a Project Manager who would deliver day-to-day coordination and administration of the project. The PIU would also require an Administration and Finance Officer, a Community Liaison Officer and a Technical Officer (TO). All staff would be full time and dedicated positions.

PROJECT TIMING AND MILESTONES

The Project formally started in April 2016 and has an expected finalization in April 2021. The Project's inception workshop (signalling effective beginning of implementation) was held on July 2016.

MAIN STAKEHOLDERS: SUMMARY LIST

At the design stage a stakeholder analysis took place. The purpose of this analysis was to identify main potential stakeholders and to consider their potential roles and responsibilities in the implementation and/or guidance of the Project. Nine primary stakeholders were identified, while four other stakeholders (defined as secondary) were acknowledged. Following are the potential stakeholders as identified by their recognised type in the Project planning documents.

Primary Stakeholders

- 1) Environment Department (DoE)
- 2) Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF)
- 3) Department of Community Affairs
- 4) Village Councils
- 5) Tāoga Niue - Culture and Heritage
- 6) Education Department/schools
- 7) Ministry of Infrastructure
- 8) Justice, Lands & Survey (L&S)
- 9) Niue Tourism Authority

Secondary Stakeholders

- 10) Chamber of Commerce and the private sector
- 11) Niue Island United Association of Non-Government Organizations (NIUANGO)
- 12) Niue Island Organic Farming Association
- 13) University of the South Pacific (USP).

The main stakeholder analysis not only identified institutions to be involved in the Project. It also carried out an analysis of their anticipated roles and responsibilities throughout project implementation. Their role(s) in the Project have been identified at several levels. For instance, from the level of Implementing lead agencies for execution to more specific roles within the operational process of the Project.

⁵ The actual composition and functioning of these governance bodies is expanded upon in the section on implementation given that their functionality is quite different than what was planned at design.

4. FINDINGS

PROJECT STRATEGY

PROJECT DESIGN

The design of the Project follows standard structure for these sorts of interventions with intended outcomes and outputs within a framework of expected objective. Moreover, the formal logic of the Project identifies threats as well as barriers and plans to endeavour to act upon them in order to obtain products, processes and results. The overall approach, nevertheless, is satisfactory, in the sense that barriers and threats are identified and ways to overcome these are recognised. That is, the design identifies the barriers and delineates processes/activities that to some extent could conceivably breach the gaps needed to strengthen conservation and sustainable use of land, water and marine areas and their biodiversity through the creation of new protected areas and strengthened community and cross-sectoral involvement of relevant national government departments to promote effective Ridge to Reef management.

It is also highly positive that the intended approach is all-inclusive and integrated. That is, the *ridge to reef* integrated approach is presented as a holistic strategy to confront the barriers, threats and overall issues that affect biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in Niue. As such, it is a proper strategy given that it acknowledges and distinguishes that ecosystem and social issues in Niue are a continuum of terrestrial and reef as well as marine matters.

The two expected outcomes are clearly established as intended short and medium-term effects of the intervention. That is, expected 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*) and expected 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*) are fairly well expressed in the sense that they are established as anticipated results that would stem from the Project.

However, it is in the rank below the objective and expected outcomes that Project Design becomes overly ambitious, convoluted, intricate and unduly elaborate. The design even determines a series of activities that are not necessarily products, going into very minute detail of what these should be at the different levels of implementation. That is, the design establishes that the Project should implement 110 activities of varying scopes in order to achieve outcomes. Furthermore, although the activities are rather specific it is not clear how these are to be results – based.

In addition, the blueprint for the implementation (as indicated in the Project Document) went outside what this sort of design is supposed to plan given that it summoned and received a number of very specific activities within Output 1.3⁶ from communities. The Project Document, therefore, contains an uncalled – for portfolio with proposals that arose from the consultations with communities and villages. This, in turn, as will be seen in the section on implementation has caused a series of issues with villages and communities regarding their expectations vis-à-vis this project.

⁶ Output 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).

An inherent complexity that the design contends with properly is the multilevel and multi department nature of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in Niue. The design properly deals with this matter by being inclusive through the involvement of villages and communities as well as national government. Regarding the latter (i.e. national government) the project design is wide-ranging since it comprises several different departments. This is significant given that the subject matter is manifold due to its holistic approach intent to protected areas and sustainable use of natural resources.

The design process was participatory. The Project Document attests (and a matter which stakeholder have validated within this review) that a series of consultations have taken place in the different villages and communities as well as with national government stakeholders at the design stage. Nonetheless the above, some stakeholders indicate that the resulting Project Document and some of the project's architecture did not reflect the full nature of the consultations.

The design documents identify other international cooperation projects with which the R2R Project has similarities and possible linkages, coordination or from which the Project would build upon and from which the Project could learn lessons. Some of these are: Pacific Ridge-to-Reef Programme; Biodiversity Enabling Activity; GEF-FAO PAS Forestry and Protected Area Management Project; UNEP-GEF PAS Prevention, Control and Management of Invasive Alien Species in the Pacific Islands; Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Project in Niue; the SSCF-UNDP Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change (PACC) Project and the related IWRM Project in Niue.

The Project appropriately addresses country priorities at different levels and it is in line with the national sectorial and overall development priorities and development plans of Niue. These issues are acknowledged in the design by stating that the Government of Niue policies and plans are aligned with the Project's objectives. Niue's National Strategic Plan 2009-2013 is indicated as an overall policy with which the R2R Project aligns, specifically in the issues of land management, sustainable use of natural resources, ecosystem approach to fisheries management and such. Other policies with which the Project is aligned are also identified such as Niue's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, Water Act. Also, the project identifies that its goals and objectives are aligned with those of Tāoga Niue (national government department dealing with the protection of traditional knowledge).

Gender issues were somewhat raised in project design. For instance, project design acknowledges the alignment of the R2R Project with Niue National Policy for Gender Equality and Plan of Action for 2014 to 2018. Furthermore, a section that links gender and youth issues is a specific part of the project design. However, this section only deals specifically with youth and gender participation. The design however is not specific as to what gender equality would or should entail within this project.

It is key and highly positive that from all aspects of design, and therefore implementation, that the Project assumed a commitment to interweave cultural factors. That is, the Project intends to build upon cultural heritage values (through integrated national and community actions) in order to strengthen conservation and sustainable use of land, water and marine areas and their biodiversity and not impose exogenous models of conservation/sustainable use of natural resources.

Although as indicated in the paragraphs above, project strategy is relevant at several levels, the R2R Project has several imprecisions at design. In particular on how the outputs, processes and products will culminate in results and effects. This matter as well as the over ambitiousness of the project is having, as will be seen in the section on design, some impacts on implementation.

It should be noted also that this Project has been planned as the largest intervention of its type for Niue. Most other similar projects implemented in the island have been either multi country, with Niue just one of multiple countries involved, or of direct implementation modality by a UN Agency. A previous national implementation modality project, GEF-funded with UNDP as its implementing agency, in Niue

alone (i.e. not a multi country intervention) ended six years ago.⁷ Yet the GEF/UNDP funding for this previous project was of USD 474,545 while the Ridge to Reef Project has support of USD of 4,194,862 from GEF (that is, nearly nine-fold funding). Considering the size of Niue, its public expenditure, and the population in-country, it is clear that this is a sizeable intervention and a demanding and challenging one in terms of resources and capacity needed to implement nationally.

RESULTS FRAMEWORK/LOG FRAME

Indicators (baseline and end – of – project target) are analysed as to whether they are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound). Below is a chart extracted from the log frame with baseline and end of project target indicators. Immediately below the chart is the indicators' analysis.

⁷ This was the “CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT IN NIUE” project, which was implemented from 2007 to 2012.

FIGURE 2: LOG FRAME INDICATORS: BASELINE AND TARGETS AT END OF PROJECT

[Source: Prodoc]

	Indicator	Baseline	Targets at End of Project
Project Objective <i>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</i>	Impact 0.1 Incorporation of cultural and traditional values and approaches in natural resources protection and management	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
	Impact 0.2 The freshwater lens safeguarded in the long term	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
	Impact 0.3 Terrestrial and reef species are being utilized on a sustainable basis to an increasing number of community members	Some reef species such as <i>Tridacna</i> sp., and <i>Holothuria</i> 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
Outcome 1 <i>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</i>	Impact 1.1 Extent of the protected estate in various forms and through different protective mechanisms	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
	Impact 1.2 Efforts in place for the recovery of species at risk	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.
	Impact 1.3 Status of completion and adoption of management plans for various conservation areas	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
Outcome 2 <i>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</i>	Impact 2.1 Promotion of R2R approach by Village Councils and Government departments	There is currently no comprehensive, holistic approach applied by Village Councils or Government Departments to natural resources management	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.
	Impact 2.2 The extent to which biodiversity and natural resources are taken into account in central and local planning, management and daily life	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
	Impact 2.3 Level of awareness, sensitivity and understanding of the value and vulnerability of natural resources	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.

¹ Tamakautoga main sea track, 2013 survey, mid-tidal area results: *Tridacna* sp = 0 per 0.25m², *Holothuria* sp = 0.08 per 0.25m²

¹ Experienced hunters of Peka and lupe suggest a huge decline in numbers. 2014 Uga survey shows breeding population is at risk - only 1.9% and 24.5% of females and males respectively were found to be over the legal harvest limit of 36mm thoracic length. The average size of females and males determined from the 2014 survey were 26mm and 31mm thoracic length respectively. This was a decrease from 27mm and 33mm from the 2008 survey for females and males respectively.

The Project design did not, for the most part, establish SMART baseline indicators in the Project Document (Logical Framework). For the objective, for instance, two of the three phrases utilized as indicators are not specific nor measurable (i.e. *Cultural values and constraints are reported as being eroded away; Freshwater lens at risk from agricultural chemicals, and septic tank effluent*). The third objective indicator expresses some basic figures as baseline (i.e. *“Some reef species such as Tridacna sp., and Holothuria sp., have been reported as diminished”*) yet it specifies that rates should be established at inception which was not done, and it is not specific since it suggests that the information is not measured (i.e. *“reported as diminished”* is not an indicator per se).

A similar analysis can be made of several of the Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 baseline indicators. Although the first indicator for Outcome 1 (i.e.: *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*) and the second indicator for Outcome 2 (i.e.: *Neither sector plans nor Village Development Plans can be said to have mainstreamed biodiversity considerations*) can be considered SMART, others are not. For instance, where it is stated regarding management plans that *“Reefs covered somewhat by Coastal Management Plan”*, there is no specificity nor potential to measure since ‘somewhat’ is not expressed in a concise manner.

Similarly, only a few targets at end of project indicators can be considered SMART. For example, for Outcome 1 the first indicator (i.e. *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*) can be considered SMART. When some of the comprised indicators are expressed as numbers or gages in those cases they are specific and measurable. Others are not. For instance, when it is stated for Outcome 2 that *“An improvement of 20-50% in awareness and understanding as measured by a repeat survey”* this is not measurable since the baseline is not available.

The log frame does not have any mid-term indicators. When presented as SMART, the indicators are time bound given that they are expected to be achieved by the end of the intervention. The log frame also does not include sex-disaggregated indicators nor indicators that capture development benefits.

The issue of indicators goes beyond mere planning or design issues. Without adequate specific and measurable baseline indicators it is impossible to determine the effect or impact of a project. That is without these types of indicators it cannot be feasible determined whether the achievements have been attained as a result of the project. Furthermore, if outcome indicators are not truly result gages, then the project is hindered in being a results-based intervention.

PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS

PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES ANALYSIS

In annexes is the Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis in chart form. This graph reviews the indicator-level progress reported in the most recent PIR (2018) as well as information from other sources. Following indications for Mid Term Reviews, the chart includes an analysis regarding achievements and categorises them with colour coding⁸: (a) has already been achieved (colouring table cell green); (b) is partially achieved or on target to be achieved by the end of the Project (colouring table cell yellow); or (c) is at high risk of not being achieved by the end of the Project and needs attention (colouring table red).

⁸ For further details on this sort of indications and analysis, see *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews Of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*.

Furthermore, classifications following a Six - point Progress Towards Results Ratings is also added (Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), or Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)).⁹ The Progress Towards Outcomes Chart also includes the specific outputs and sub outputs that were achieved as of the last reporting cycle (as expressed in the Project Implementation Review –PIR—2018). The following paragraphs contain a narrative of the progress towards outcomes analysis and is linked to the mentioned chart. In the continuing sections other specific analysis are made regarding the Project’s progress.

The R2R Project has carried out a number of processes and products, summarised as follows:¹⁰

- At the village – level a series of consultations have taken place in order to advance work related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in a protected area mode. Management plans have also been discussed in relation to the establishment of these potential terrestrial areas. Furthermore, a series of small-scale interventions have been proposed by villages and several accepted by the R2R Project, with an expectable varying degree of implementation. Consultations have also taken place with absentee landowners. However, although these discussions have taken place, particularly for the terrestrial PAs, the delineation of terrestrial protected areas is still very much in the making. Therefore, the community-level terrestrial aspects of the Project are gradually being developed.
- A set of consultancies/studies have been taking place, particularly in the last few months of the Project. These are in varied states of development (that is, some have been completed while others were being developed at the time of this mid-term review). These are studies and reports dealing with marine ecological surveys (of different types, general and of target species), legal review for terrestrial protected areas (both customary and formally legalized areas), terrestrial ecological surveys (e.g. reptiles, cave fauna and peka), legal review for coastal marine protected area, baseline analysis for tourism carrying – capacity studies.
- Reviewing, updating and incorporating of R2R holistic approach into existing community – level and sectoral development and management plans, and education plans. Designing and developing management plans for the conservation areas with community -wide participation.
- Collation and surveying of information on land issues, such as property and land tenure, land surveys, land – based / geological / water – related characteristics. This information gathering is also centring upon the potentiality of protected areas within terrestrial and reef ecosystems.
- A succession of outreach and visibility products and events are being organized in different villages, with mass media, as well as with social networks.
- Debates began in order to set up and formalize matters related to future learning centres to be established as part of the Project (coastal in-situ learning centre and national learning centre).
- Work with several organizations (at the national as well as the international level) in relation to the commitment of the Government of Niue to establish 40 percent of its EEZ (127,000km²) for the establishment of a Large Scale Marine Protected Area that includes Beveridge Reef. This has included debates on marine spatial planning, compliance strategies including sustainable and multiple use of the PA, and reef conservation issues. The integration of the Ridge to Reef approach with the Government of Niue’s aims in establishing this protected area (aims such as

⁹ Explanation of rating scale is attached in annexes (in the section Progress Towards Results Rating Scale).

¹⁰ Further information on these activities is found in Annexes in the Progress Towards Outcomes chart.

the reduction of overfishing, of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, as well as other harmful practices, the implementation of a Marine Management Plan and of the EEZ Compliance Strategy) have been significantly examined matters.

The Project has had a slow set up and start up. Although activities and processes (and delivery) have increased in the last year to a great degree, the set-up process and the beginning of delivery of products (and evidently of outcomes) was slow for several of the aspects the project intends to implement.

Although at the midpoint of a project is too early in most cases to determine effects or potential effects, some can be established at this point:

- The declaration of one of the largest marine reserves to date (which encompasses the island, seamounts and offshore reefs, as well as Beveridge Reef) in the year 2017, with the aim to protect 49,000 square miles of ocean, is a key issue in the country. The Project, from its inception has had these areas as objectives for conservation and sustainable use. Linking with relevant institutions, non-governmental organizations, as well as international donors on this matter is beginning to produce direct and indirect changes (effect) in the generation of protection mechanisms.
- Regarding areas that have been committed, such as the marine protected area, the studies that are being supported can provide backstopping and backing for several aspects related to this committed protected area (and potentially also for other areas).
- A robust set of information and data is being generated (ecosystem, legal, cultural, land tenure, etc.). If this information and data is appropriated by decision makers at the national level and at the village level, a strong set of instruments for the management and sustainable use of biodiversity within a holistic protected area paradigm can be developed and implemented. Examples, among others, are the legislative analysis as inputs for the debate that needs to ensue at the highest national level to declare and set up protected areas or contributions with baseline data that some of the reports can have on specific studies being carried out by other stakeholders in Niue.¹¹
- Also, the R2R Project is not only providing the inputs for the legislative analysis as inputs for the debate that needs to ensue at the highest national level to fully declare these areas but also inputs for the definitions (use of resources, planning, compliance, etc.) that need to take place not only for declaration but for planning, management and for financing these areas.
- The inclusion of villages and communities in a “bottom-up approach” for the development of studies, surveys, and debates can consolidate the establishment of protected areas with sustainable use as a key factor.
- The active presence of stakeholders from the communities in the debates and engaging them in all aspects pertaining to their villages creates conditions for better development of plans, planification that considers the needs and conditions of the communities, as well as generate the circumstances for improved appropriation of the products and therefore improved probability of implementation of whatever plans are designed within the Project.

¹¹ Regarding the latter. for example, studies on tourism that the Tourism Department is beginning to engage in.

The GEF Tracking Tool was completed right before the Midterm Review (August 2018). This reflects, also, the above considerations. The Tracking Tool indicates advances in marine areas, yet less advances regarding terrestrial protection. The potential protected areas at the village – level have been recognised through consultations yet this was done after the METT analysis was carried out. The Tracking Tool also identifies several conceptual gaps in the Project per se as such as financing issues.

REMAINING BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING THE PROJECT OBJECTIVE

As seen above, some anticipated outputs have been achieved or are close to completion at the expected level for the R2R Project at mid-point. The remaining barriers to achieving project objective are varied. There are a set of remaining barriers that hinder progress, while some are design and conceptual issues others are more of an implementation/organisational nature.

They are listed and explained below:

- *Land tenure issues.* The challenge of land tenure issues in Niue has been identified from the very inception and design of the Project as a difficult issue to contend with in general but also in the specific matter of land conservation and sustainable use. Nearly all of the land in the country is owned under customary law, and ownership is based on traditional rights, this matter is compounded by the fact that much of the land is held by absentee owners. Non – resident ownership makes decision making regarding land allocation for formalized conservation practices a time consuming and at times an unsuccessful or futile exercise given that absentee owners do not have incentives for this change in land use patterns. Furthermore, the project had to engage in tenure clarification and obtaining baseline data on land ownership, a process that has taken an effort toll in the Project itself. This issue was posed as a moderate risk within the project design, yet it is considered that risk mitigation as proposed in the Project Document (i.e. consultation) is rather frail given the scope of the issue, given that Land Court is the most important and contentious aspect of judiciary issues in Niue reflecting a high level of land-tenure conflicts, and that major political struggles revolve in many cases on how to resolve ownership issues, including the predicaments caused by absentee landowners. This is an issue that needs to be contented fully in order to be able to move on and proceed with products and processes, such as land use products, management plans, delineation of a contiguous terrestrial PA, and community-based approaches to protected areas.
- *Lack of a fully staffed Project Implementation Unit.* As will be seen in the section on Management Structure and as briefly indicated in other sections, the PIU has functioned for most of the implementation thus far without full staffing. The two – person staff at the very beginning of project implementation was not sufficient to take on the tasks that a project of this type entailed; the project has had two project managers; technical staff was only hired for one year; and other staff were incorporated later on. This matter is further hindered by the lengthy contracting and hiring processes existing in Niue. Therefore, fully staffing in a permanent basis is a matter that needs to be addressed in order to advance in implementation and not fall behind in this process as it has occurred.
- *Lack of capacity in – country.* Although acknowledged at design, the little expertise in-country in implementing a project of this scope and with the technical complexities that the R2R Project entails is still an issue. In part seen above in the questions related to staffing issues, it also permeates in other areas of implementation (consultants, potential implementors of the Project's products, etc.). Efforts should be made, therefore, to make sure that capacity is generated and upgraded for in-country personnel when they are incorporated in one way or another to the Project and that there are very specific opportunities when international expertise hired for the

different aspects of the Project to generate and upgrade local in – country capacity at different levels.

- *Changes in government structure and functioning.* Since Project was designed, many changes have taken place in government structure and functioning in Niue. Structural rearrangements of departments / ministries have taken place and a four – day working week (instead of five – days) for government staff has been implemented. This has caused restructuring, realignment of government dependencies and also a decrease in whatever time resources government had committed for the development of the Project, including integrating Ridge to Reef cohesive approaches into cross – sectoral plans of different government sectors, and to some degree the isolation of R2R from some relevant departments. Although evidently there is nothing that the Project can do about these government changes, these new circumstances can also be a way-in to readjust instrumentation of different processes and products as necessary (as is also seen in the section design issues immediately below).
- *Design issues.* Related to the design of the Project, there are several barriers to achieving a streamlined yet robust objective. The strategy presented in the design, with a myriad of small-scale activities, widely dispersed focus, and multiple level interventions is a barrier to successful implementation and can have a strong negative impact also on the sustainability of the Project's achievements. The Midterm Review process is an opportunity to take a critical look at design and streamline, update, and rationalise the numerous activities that were originally planned in order to rationalise implementation, reforming work plan as needed and seeking effectiveness and high impact processes and products. A critical look at whatever processes are deemed unsustainable, or not feasible should be taken and use this opportunity to remove those processes and products which do not adapt to current circumstances in the country, are unnecessary given what is known at this point in the implementation process which was not known at design, or are clearly unsustainable once the Project ends.
- *Communities and villages weary.* Communities, villages, and other related stakeholders have been consulted repeatedly regarding the R2R Project (at design, at inception and several times during the implementation process). Although positive in the sense that consultations imply a participatory approach, these stakeholders are experiencing fatigue in participation since there are no concrete results as of yet in most cases from these processes. Furthermore, the myriad of activities proposed to be implemented in communities as expressed in the Project Design has caused misperception and misunderstandings with the communities given that they generally understood that these were set to be implemented completely and were not perceived as suggested processes. Lastly, communities perceive that they are being regularly and repetitively surveyed, consulted and ecological and environmental information is gathered, yet they see little devolution of this information, in particular little devolution in a non – technical language-appropriate format that can be easily grasped.
- *Weak buy-in from some communities and villages.* In part related to the above and in part due to land tenure issues, some communities and villages have a weak buy-in into the Project. However, there is also a conceptual barrier given that conservation issues asserted are perceived as processes that curtail their rights. That is, conservation issues (and with this the creation of protected areas) are perceived as matters that would limit the use of natural resources (fish stock, fauna, and even land) by the villages, communities, and individuals. The sustainable use of natural resources that is inherent in the Ridge to Reef approach is either not being transmitted correctly or not being grasped properly creating a barrier for buy-in from communities.

- *Lack of understanding of the project at-large and internal conflicts.* Although the R2R Project is highly visible in-country, there is a general lack of understanding of the Project, even among some working group members and other key stakeholders. The focus and objective of the Project is not well known, information and products generated by the Project are not fully visible nor available at-large. There is also a lack of understanding of what the project should achieve in terms of results, focus on protected areas, etc. There is a persistent view that the Project is a fund that will (or should) finance a series of activities for national government, villages, and nongovernmental organization, many of which are discretionary and not even related to the Project's objective and expected results nor to the Ridge to Reef approach. Also, there is a lack of definition of boundaries between the R2R Project and other similar initiatives in place in Niue. The roles of several stakeholders are not fully understood and even questioned at some levels. There is also a lack of clarity of where the R2R Project fits together with other similar initiatives in country, given that the Project has been financing other initiatives' activities and given the lack of clarity as to boundaries of each initiative.
- *Lack of design in key issues (financial, gender, livelihoods).* Although at several levels the project is expected to deliver products and effects related to financial sustainability of the achievements, livelihoods' support as part of the protected areas' established incentives, gender equality, and other socio-economic issues, there is very little in the design dealing with these matters. Therefore, due to this design gap, very little attention has been paid thus far to these issues, neither as stand-alone matters nor as interweaved issues in other products and sought effects.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The management arrangements were openly established at design. The management arrangements agreed upon project signature indicate that:

- UNDP would be the GEF Implementing Agency (IA).
- Ministry of Natural Resources was to be the Executing Agency / Implementation Partner (with other government as well as non-government organizations playing key roles in implementation).
- Project would be implemented in the National Implementation Modality (NIM).
- There would-be high-level coordination with other initiatives to be carried out through two mechanisms: through Secretary of Government and Directors General and through aid coordination unit in the Premier's Office.

At design it was determined that the Project would have a Project Executive Board convened jointly by UNDP and the Government. This Board would have the project's decision-making responsibilities in overseeing project implementation, approving all project work plans and budgets, approving major changes should they occur, providing technical advice, approving major project deliverables, ensuring commitments of resources as well as other crucial functions related to implementation, decisions, in general overseeing as well as providing transparency. It was also indicated that the Government of Niue would appoint a National Project Director (NPD) to operate as the Government's focal point for the project and would have a series of duties and responsibilities while acting as liaison of the Project ¹². An R2R Advisory Committee (R2RAC) was to be established as a consultative and technical advice forum.

Lastly, regarding management arrangements, a Project Implementation Unit (PIU) was planned, to be housed within the Ministry of Natural Resources and to be made up of a Project Manager, an Administration and Finance Officer (AFO), a Community Liaison Officer (CLO) and a Technical Officer (TO), all of these being full time positions. The design indicates that the PIU should assume responsibility for

¹² There are doubts from several stakeholders at national level of what the duties and responsibilities of a National Project Director entail in such a project as this one, with substantial external donor funding yet with an important role (and responsibilities) from the Government on Niue. The Project Document states that the duties and responsibilities are strictly as follows:

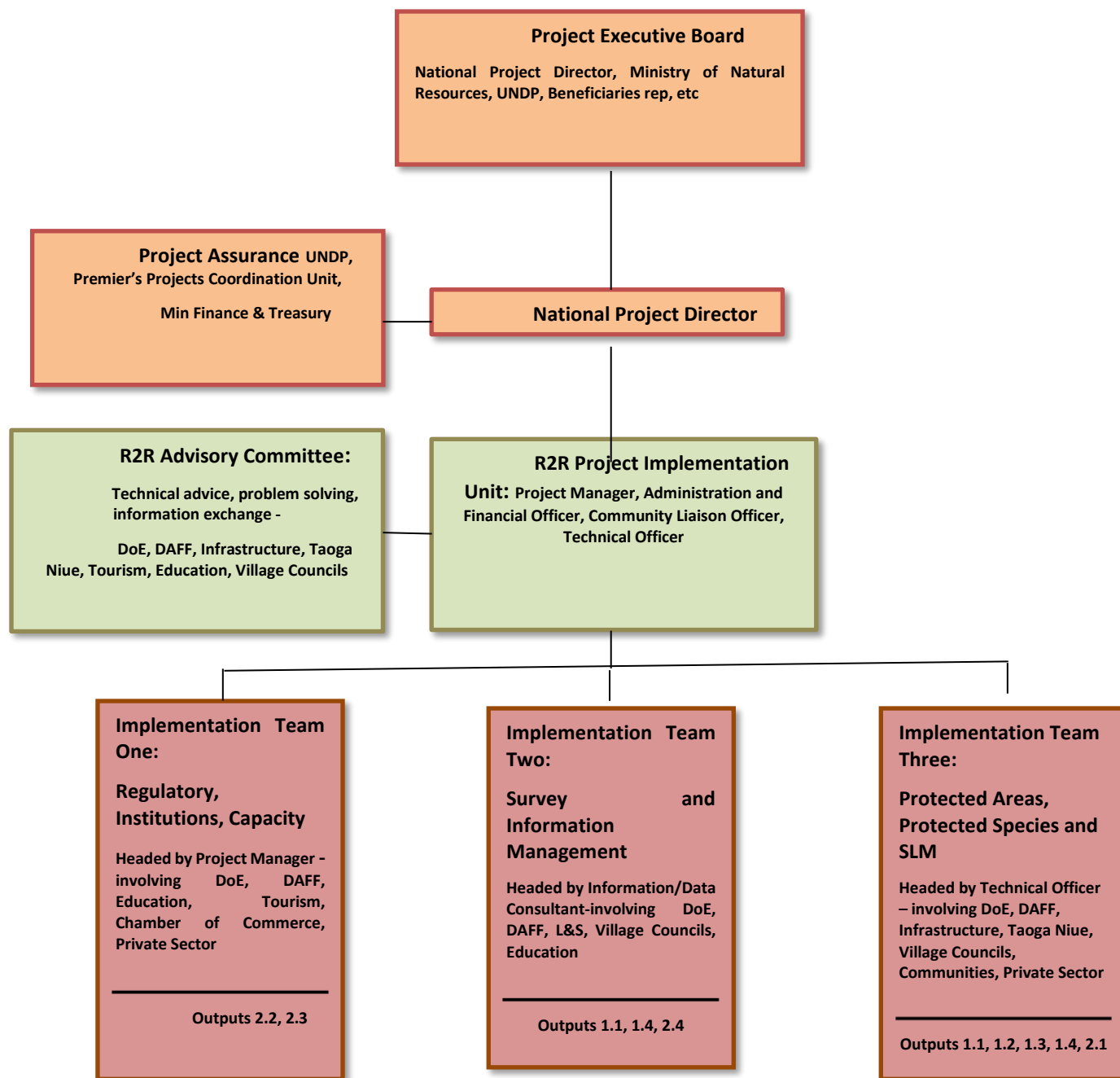
1. Serves as a focal point for coordination of the project with implementing agencies, UNDP, Government and other partners
2. Ensures that Government inputs for the project are available and that the project activities are in line with national priorities.
3. Leads and coordinates partners in the selection of the R2R Project Manager.
4. Coordinates with the R2R Project Manager and facilitates his/her work and all staff.
5. Ensures that the required project work plan is prepared and updated and distributed to the relevant Government entities.
6. Will represent the Executing Agency at project meetings and annual reviews.
7. Will lead efforts to build partnerships for the support of outcomes indicated in the project document.
8. Will support resource mobilization efforts to increase resources in cases where additional outputs and outcomes are required.

upstream activities, and deliver advice, support and coordination for all project activities as well as liaise and work closely with all partner institutions. It is indicated that the PIU (through its Project Manager) is accountable to the Project Executive Board “for the overall quality, timeliness and effectiveness of the activities carried out, as well as for the use of funds”¹³. The PIU has functioned for most of the implementation thus far without full staffing. The two – person staff in the first year of implementation was not sufficient to take on the tasks that a project of this type entails; the project has had two project managers; technical staff was only hired for one year; and other staff were incorporated later on. At the time of this review a highly committed PIU consisting of a Project Manager, an Administration and Finance Officer, and Community Liaison Officer is in place, as well as a Communications Advisor. Yet, at this time, the Project is still lacking a Technical Officer.

The figure below is a graphic representation of the project management and organisational structure as set at design. Below it there is an account of what has been the actual project management and organisational structure functioning thus far.

¹³ Source: Project Document.

FIGURE 3: PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AT DESIGN



The actual project management and organizational structure as the Project that is being implemented at the time of this review is quite different than what was planned. First of all, a board was not set up until recently. Cabinet did not approve the generation of this mechanism until very recently (February 2018). Ostensibly, furthermore, a Project Executive Board only made its first work plan approval in March 2018 (only five months before the midterm review process began). It should be noted that this planned structure is supposed to provide direction, oversee implementation, provide transparency to work planning, and in general be the definite decision – making process for a project of this type.

Lacking Cabinet approval for an Executive Board, the Project has been functioning with the guidance of a working group¹⁴. This working group has had high level representation from several departments. This implies that there has been adequate judgement – making authority within the working group. It is understood that this working group functioned instead of the Advisory Committee that was to be established as a consultative and technical advice forum (indicated in the ProDoc). Yet in the absence of an Executive Board, the Working Group assumes the roles of decision – making, funds allocations and overall overseeing duties of the Project that the Board should have had.

The WG is seen therefore as a de facto Board, yet without the mandate commensurate to the activities it carries out and the decisions it makes. Also, the project's decision making of what or who to fund, financial management and budget controls associated with the project delivery are not fully visible to a series of stakeholders from government and the roles of different government representatives vis-à-vis the project are confusing to many stakeholders.

Given that a Board is now in place and given the above, there should be a restructuring and adaptation of each mechanism. Each body should assume the roles and mandates established at design and standard for this sort of project in order to provide transparency, make the decisions at the top level of government, provide technical and other advice, and guide implementation along the lines of seeking results within the established objective and expected outcomes. This can be an opportunity also to clarify what each partner's role is in the overall implementation of the Project (including reporting lines and sharing of information and collaboration functions), make clear what functions each member of these bodies has, and also elucidate objectives, expected results, and other such matters to those members of the advisory groups which are not clear on these matters.

Concerning management arrangements with regard to UNDP's support of the Project, throughout the implementation period (as well as what can be reconstructed from the design period) there has been ample technical UNDP support to the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and Project Team, in terms of quality and timelines of technical backing. Albeit at a mid-point it is difficult to see results, and as will be seen in other sections of this report, there is at this point still an emphasis on products and less of focus on results/change (as is illustrated also in the section Other Issues below as well as pertinent). Although understandably at midpoint it is difficult to expect results per se, what is possibly missing is a vision that a project such as this must seek effects, results, etc. This is again highlighted in the pertinent questions of the present report.

Regarding reporting, there is candour and realism in annual reporting, from the Project itself as well as from the reporting carried out by UNDP. A specific section on reporting is included further along. With respect to risks and risk management, from the first stages of project design a series of risks have been identified. These are, as they appear in the ProDoc: (a) low population and low capacities for project implementation; (b) complex land tenure will make declaration of community conservation area difficult;

¹⁴ Recently a subsidiary sub working group of a more technical nature has also been functioning within the R2R Project.

(d) significant distance between the island and Beveridge Reef will make it very difficult to ensure it is protected from passing ships / yachts; (e) climate variability and change – especially natural disasters; and (f) coral bleaching and seawater acidification as a result of climate change. The Project as well as UNDP have a series of mitigation strategies, evidently for the risks and possible risk management that falls within the realm of a project given that a series of the risks identified (distance, climate change, etc.) are not issues that can be mitigated. Furthermore, the UNDP ATLAS for this project has a risk analysis and assessment system which is reflected in the relevant section of the annual PIRs for the project (section E. Critical Risk Management -- Current Types of Critical Risks -- Critical risk management measures undertaken this reporting period) where mitigating measures taken are indicated implying an awareness of risks and a good quality of risk management.

WORK PLANNING

As indicated before, the Project has had some delays in project start up and implementation which is related to some degree to work planning, and to some degree to other externalities and barriers. Project inception (workshop, etc.) began without having a PIU, first manager left the Project less than a year after project start, PIU only functioned with two of the four planned personnel for the first year, the technical officer was only in place for a year at the PIU and that post had not been filled at the time of this review, and a chief technical advisor was not recruited until a few months before the midterm review process began. These issues, together with procurement and hiring delays as well as the barriers to implementation identified above, have caused postponements in implementation related to work planning.

Formally, work planning follows prescribed steps. That is, project management gathers input from key implementation stakeholders and produces Annual Work and Budget Plans. Although approval of the work plan and budget is to be done by the Board, since there has not been one in place until recently, the only annual work plan approved by the PEB was done in April 2018. In previous years the Working Group took on this obligation. Nevertheless, although the plans are supposed to provide the basis for allocating resources to planned activities and ultimately guide the implementation of activities, products, etc, that will lead to expected results, the decision – making process is at times hindered by the perception of several stakeholders that new funding decisions or discussion of funding processes are taken without the proper alignment with expected results and without the appropriate levels of endorsement from Government.

Furthermore, as indicated previously, the Project is also affected by an overambitious and overarching design which hinders achievement of products and eventually of results given that design prescribes not only a wide-spread policy implementation but also because it prescribes the execution of a high number myriad of activities and processes. This in part adds to the perception at-large that the R2R Project is a funding mechanism and not a specific result – based process. A major concern, therefore, is that the Project's actual execution and implementation processes are not fully results – based. That is, the expectations are in many ways oriented to obtaining products (some of them discretionary) but not tangible measurable results or changes.

Adaptive management is defined as a project's ability to adapt to changes to the Project design (project objective, outcomes, or outputs) during implementation resulting from: (a) original objectives that were not sufficiently articulated; (b) exogenous conditions that changed, due to which a change in objectives was needed; (c) the Project's restructuring because the original objectives were overambitious; or (d) the Project's restructuring because of a lack of progress.¹⁵ In a strict sense, in the case of the R2R

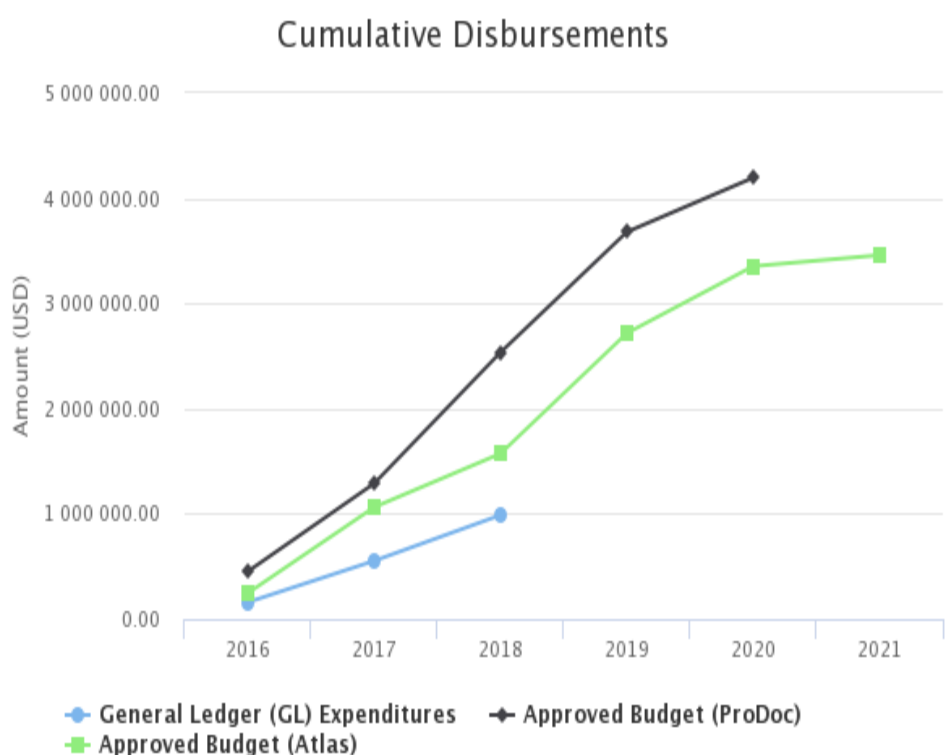
¹⁵ UNDP-GEF. *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*, 2014.

Project there have no formal overarching changes to the Project's objective, outcome, and outputs to date. Therefore, no adaptive management in a full and strict sense has taken place since formally there have been no changes in objectives, outputs or outcomes thus far, and the proposed definition of outputs that is indicated in the Project Document has not been altered. Nevertheless, the Project has adapted to changing circumstances (such as changes in government and in elected officials at the village levels) to the best of their capacities and considering the constraints.

FINANCE AND CO-FINANCE

A few months before this review process has taken place, the Project reports delivery against the total general ledger against total approved amount of GEF financing of 23.55 percent. The figure at project mid-point is low, and is an indicator of the slow delivery to date. The graph below charts cumulative disbursement throughout project implementation.

FIGURE 3: CUMULATIVE DISBURSEMENTS¹⁶



¹⁶ Source: PIR 2018.

The figure below are the funds and project co-funding committed and confirmed at CEO endorsement (i.e. planned funding).

Figure 4: Project financing and co – financing table (In US Dollars)

Co-financing (type/source)	UNDP		Government of Niue		GEF		Total	
	Planned	Actual at Midterm	Planned	Actual at Midterm	Planned	Actual at Midterm	Planned	Actual at Midterm
Grants	0	0	0	0	4,194,300	949,177	4,194,300	949,177
In kind	200,000	N/A	10,868,600	4,292,864	0	0	11,068,600	4,292,864

GEF funding at mid-term is 22.6 % of planned financing. This is a low ratio and indicative of slow delivery to date, as indicated above. Government of Niue co – financing (in kind) is 39.5 % of planned backing, which is more attuned to what could be expected as co-financing at implementation midpoint. However, this variance between the proportion of GEF financing and of GoN co – financing at implementation midpoint is a cautionary sign that should be taken into account as financial planning for the conclusion stage of the Project takes place.

There are strong financial controls in place to allow for the timely flow of funds. Furthermore, there is due diligence in the management of funds, including audits. There are audits and reviews from UNDP. There are, as well, reviews and identification of potential issues (regarding financial and the management of funds matters) from the Government of Niue’s relevant institutions.¹⁷

PROJECT-LEVEL MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS

Monitoring at design included standard instruments and tools which are habitual for monitoring and evaluation of UNDP-implemented / GEF – funded projects. In the monitoring and evaluation strategy drawn in the Project Document the following are the types of monitoring activities that should take place within the implementation time frame of the Project:

- Inception Workshop and Report
- Measurement of Means of Verification of project results.
- Measurement of Means of Verification for Project Progress on output and implementation
- ARR/PIR
- Periodic status/ progress reports
- Mid-term Evaluation
- Final Evaluation
- Project Terminal Report

¹⁷ For instance, from Office of the Premier, Crown Law, Treasury as relevant.

- Audit
- Visits to field sites.

Therefore, design at entry for monitoring and evaluation is the standard for the Project's specific context. Inception workshop and report were generated early on, even before the PIU was fully in place. Regarding evaluation, the Project has planned the current mid-term review at appropriate times. These and other reporting mechanisms (PIRs, etc.) vis-à-vis UNDP/GEF are taking place as planned using inclusive, innovative and participatory monitoring systems as planned.

However, since the R2R Project is implemented in the NIM modality, there are a series of reporting steps that have to be taken vis-à-vis the Government of Niue. This includes reporting to Cabinet, to the Finance Department, as well as the donor and the donor – related working groups/board/etc. set up within the Project architecture. Although some of these monitoring duties were included in design, since the Project operated without a Board to report to until recently, this sort of reporting has not been substantially processed.¹⁸

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

As seen in the section on design, at the Project formulation level there was a strong stakeholder involvement in the design, implementing a bottom-up approach to a great degree. That is, districts and communities were thoroughly consulted regarding the Project's design as well as to their needs and their perceptions of the issues. Also, a process of consultation took place with national level stakeholders as well as stakeholders from a diversity of institutions and organizations.

Regrettably, the consultations at the community level were not adequately qualified in the sense that a myriad of suggested activities with communities are presented (and perceived) in the Project Design as an accomplished fact. From the implementation stage onward, it has become apparent that implementing a number of these suggested activities is not feasible nor directly related to expected results of the Project, and in many cases not directly related to the Project objective. This has generated mistrust with the communities and villages involved given that they were expecting implementation of these activities by now.

Nonetheless, stakeholder engagement continues to be strong at the implementation stage and the Project Implementation Unit has continued to make remarkable amounts of effort to engage the villages and the communities. Community-level engagement is very strong with community – level organizations and individuals not only being beneficiaries of small-scale interventions, but also impelled to take an active role in consultations. However, here too there is a certain degree of participation fatigue, in particular with those stakeholders who do not perceive direct incentives as a result of participation.

The Project has developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with non-governmental as well as governmental stakeholders. Engagement with critical governmental stakeholders at the national and district levels is for the most part strong and active, although the Project is isolated from some key government stakeholders.

¹⁸ According to the Project Document . . . *"The R2R PM is accountable to the PEB for the overall quality, timeliness and effectiveness of the activities carried out, as well as for the use of funds. These plans will provide the basis for allocating resources to planned activities. The R2R PM will further produce collated quarterly operational reports and Annual Progress Reports (APR/PIR) for submission to the PEB. These reports will summarize the progress made by the project against the expected results, explain any significant variances, detail the necessary adjustments and serve as the main reporting mechanism for monitoring project activities. The R2R PM will be provided with delegated financial responsibility to a level to be determined by the Government in consultation with UNDP."*

REPORTING

Reporting for the Project (as stated in other relevant sections of this report) is done following and fulfilling UNDP and GEF reporting requirements. This includes reporting as indicated in the monitoring plan and other reporting requirements (including PIRs, Tracking Tool, etc.). The PIRs, for example, to a great degree convey what activities and process have taken place as part of the implementation process. However, reporting to Cabinet and other relevant stakeholders at the national level, a process that is essential for a NIM project in Niue, has not been at the level of national expectations.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Project is a highly visible intervention in Niue. It is noticeable at events, Government documents carry its logo, it is present in several activities in-island such as community events, it has a twice monthly radio programme, it has had some social media insertion, and it has produced some newsletters.

However, the project is not understood and its activities, results and expectations are not very well discerned, neither by many key stakeholders nor at large. The Project is not applying a concrete communication strategy. That is, R2R does not have as of yet a project communication pattern (internally and externally) to express what the Project's progress is and has been as well what it is achieving. Furthermore, the Project has not produced any thematic documents to be shared at large and within the Project. Therefore, R2R Niue has weak regular internal project communication with its stakeholders. Expertise, processes and other knowledge that is being generated, managed, and produced is not being adequately exchanged at the local level, between and among stakeholders. Internal and external communication can contribute to the visibility and awareness of the Project activities and expected outcomes, to generate a dialogue with other actors in the field, provide transparency, and to generate a more agile communication between partners as a way to provide transparency and exposure in the media as a way of spreading widely information about the project.

SUSTAINABILITY

Mid-term reviews, when dealing with sustainability, assess the likelihood of sustainability of outcomes at project termination. Sustainability is normally considered to be the prospect of continued benefits after the Project ends. Consequently, the assessment of sustainability considers the risks that are likely to affect the continuation of project outcomes. Guidelines for GEF – funded / UNDP- implemented project evaluations and reviews establish four areas for considering risks to sustainability: financial, socio – economic, institutional framework, and environmental. That is, at mid-point, evaluations attempt to recognise early identification of risks to sustainability.

Although to date it is difficult to ascertain which of the expected outputs and outcomes will be fully achieved within the framework of the R2R Project, in general terms several of the risks can be outlined in order to begin exploring how sustainability can be assured. Besides the risks indicated below, an overall consideration is that the Project lacks, as of now, a general concrete exit strategy/sustainability plan. This should be developed and include issues related to financial, socio-economic, institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability. Given the above, the sustainability rating for the R2R Project is *Moderately Likely (ML)* given that at midpoint, and as a composite assessment, there are moderate risks regarding the sustainability of some components, but there are expectations that at least some of the outputs and outcomes will be sustained and carry on after project closure. Although some outputs and activities should carry on after closure, a series of them are at risk of not being fully sustained if no further work is carried out in seeking sustainability from the mid-term review onward. Below are assessments of risks to sustainability divided by each of the risk components.

FINANCIAL RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Regarding financial issues, an evaluation ascertains if there are financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outcomes as well as the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once granted assistance ends. In the case of the R2R Project there are serious risks as to the likelihood of financially supporting the majority of outcomes and outputs after external funding ends for several motives. At the national level first due to the low budget assignments and operational funds that these sorts of issues have within the context of Niue as a developing country. Second, because, although the Project is supposed to have some aspects related to financing issues, these are not sufficient nor are they captured to date to provide a solid base for generating financial sustainability to the potential results achieved by the Project. Lastly interventions taking place within the communities' sphere also lack financial components and do not integrate fully the financial components needed to sustain implementation after the funding ends.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY

The socio - economic risks to sustainability are mixed. If achievements are made within the Project, there are medium social risks in Niue that may jeopardize sustainability of the Project outcomes. There are some ownership issues, not only for the village – level activities but also from several of the departments that are or should be involved in the project and are very involved in implementing whatever the Project achieves in way of products. Therefore, several stakeholders express doubts as to their prospective full implementation. Some positive indications are being generated in order to sustain at least at the product level some of the achievements, for instance with the repositories of products (i.e. learning centres) being developed. Therefore, socio – economic risks from this perspective are medium.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND GOVERNANCE RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Although the creation and/or upgrading of an institutional framework that can effectively deal with strengthening conservation and sustainable use of land, water and marine areas and their biodiversity in Niue is the very purpose of this project, it is here that several risks to the sustainability of this framework manifest themselves. The governance context of Niue is frail and (related to financial and buy – in issues) there are several doubts as to the possibility of having and implementing an institutional framework that deals with several of these issues. This is also the case with the villages, since their funding and governance for applying whatever instruments are produced is also frail. Therefore, those would need special attention if sustainability is sought. As the next stage of implementation unfolds, the Project should carefully consider what institutional and governance framework is needed so that the specific cross sectoral plans, village-wide management plans, and methodologies are to be implemented and sustained in the long run.

ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Regarding environmental risks to sustainability these are quite present, specially and evidently threats upon biodiversity and also climate change risks. Although the environmental risks to sustainability are menaces, the management of several of these are also the very purpose of the Project and the very issues to contend with.

Other Issues: Higher Level Development Changes; Impacts Upon the Poor, Marginalized and Disadvantaged; Gender Equality and Women Empowerment; South-South Cooperation and Innovation.

- *Developmental changes.* Ostensibly, the R2R Project, by promoting practices that can lead to better sustainable use of natural resources and improved environmental conditions can create

conditions (i.e. impact or change) for developmental changes (for instance, better living conditions or improved livelihoods). However, none of these can be captured at this midterm point given the status of implementation of the Project.

- *Gender equality and women's empowerment.* While women's participation issues have been included in design, a full gender equality component is not part of the design (and conceivably therefore not part of implementation/result if corrective actions are not taken). For instance, project design acknowledges the alignment of the R2R Project with Niue's National Policy for Gender Equality and Plan of Action for 2014 to 2018 yet there are no specific gender equality directives within the design. Furthermore, a section that links gender and youth issues is a specific part of the project design. However, this section only deals specifically with youth and gender – balanced participation, inputs, and other such matters. Although it mentions some issues which could conceivably be interpreted as promoting gender equality, it is not specific as to what this would entail beyond the participation of women and of gathering their views. A comprehensive gender analysis, although planned, it has not yet been conducted. Although the arranged participation of women as beneficiaries is certainly positive, and participation of women is quite high in consultations for instance, the Project does not have a clear strategy or knowledge on gender and biodiversity issues. Given that men and women use natural resources (biodiversity, water, etc.) differently, within all societies not only in Niue, there is ample opportunity for the inclusion of gender equality issues as they relate to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Furthermore, the issue of land ownership has a clear gender differential aspect in Niue given that there is a preference for patrilineal inheritance of real property such as land. Therefore, as it regards to land, women have some rights, but these are not as strong as those of male claimants. Work on this matter as it relates to the Project's objective can be supportive of women's empowerment and gender equality.
- *South-south cooperation.* Although the Project is supposed to cooperate --without overlapping-- with the regional Pacific Ridge-to-Reef Programme (another GEF – funded UNDP implemented multi country programme with similar objectives and having Niue as one of its countries of implementation) coordination of activities between the two initiatives implemented in Niue is still absent. Also, while the Ridge to Reef approach is also instrumentalized in a number of island countries in the South Pacific, more or less with the same modalities and methods as the R2R Project being implemented in Niue, there have little substantial exchanges and south – south cooperation initiatives. Even if some exchanges have taken place amongst the countries involved, these have not been significant. The Project has as one of its intended outputs these sorts of exchanges and cooperation¹⁹, however these have not been instrumentalized as of yet.
- *Innovation.* The R2R Project is implementing a number of innovations, in particular innovations for Niue which, with the proper mechanisms, can be captured, promoted and disseminated widely (regionally and globally). For instance, the approach that the Project drives regarding cultural values as they relate to preservation, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is very much appealed in these sorts of projects but rarely is it applied in the manner that the Niue R2R Project is doing, integrating cultural values, customary practices and natural resource

¹⁹ Output 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.

management. Also, community managed resources (in a formal manner with management plans) and extraction (such as fishing) considering customary rules yet incorporating scientific knowledge is also an innovative area of work. Given that the 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 (as it is stated from the Project Document onward) the intervention is intrinsically innovative. The information gathering that is taking place, although it has occurred in other countries and regions, is innovative in Niue. Niue has had little generation of complete scientific natural resource baseline information (attesting to this the finding of several species that it was not known that existed in the island in the baseline studies being carried out), for example.

Extension Request

Although not all parties and stakeholders agree on whether or not an extension request would or should be requested, several stakeholders are considering an extension request while others indicate that the project would be able to close on time as planned if delivery is sped up and ‘catches-up’ with implementation timing plans. Given the delays, issues with execution, and overall implementation process of this project, it is recommended by this midterm review that an extension should be sought and eventually granted.

This evaluation ascertains that the Project has had a series of setbacks in implementation processes, making an extension request a possibility. Hiring of staff took more time than expected; the Project sustained changes brought about by government reorganization, organizational and implementing standstills; and the lack of national capacities and small pool of individuals to take on tasks (mainly due to the size of the country), while dealing with highly complex matters such as land ownership baseline information gathering and issues, have also caused hindrances in implementation. Furthermore, the learning curve of implementing for the first time such a sizeable project in a NIM modality has been more demanding than expected for all of the stakeholders involved (from inside and from outside the Project). All of this, in turn, generated setbacks in implementation and programming, in obtaining products and, of course, in obtaining results and achievements. Therefore, if asked for, it is considered that an extension request ought to be granted based on the issues explained here.

The request (as is the present midterm review) can also be an opportunity for the Project (including all relevant stakeholders) to bring up to date and clear-out several implementation, planning and programming issues that hinder to some degree a successful implementation process. For example, regarding the products expected to be achieved and the myriad of small-scale processes proposed (in the Project Document and in initial work planning) can certainly be streamlined and consolidated into larger scale interventions that are easier to implement. Further, the Project can also do away with proposed products and deliverables that already deemed as unsustainable and which are considered not to have potential effects or results. Although it is the prerogative of the Project and its stakeholders to streamline and change products implementing adaptive management methods, it should be specified that the products that would be dropped or realigned should be done so in a programmatic manner and not by happenstance, and certainly with transparent decision - making.

At the time of the request, if such takes place, a financial analysis should be carried out with inputs as to the funds pending to be used in relation to a specific work plan (ideally streamlined) and projections regarding expenditures and funds available. Furthermore, although these extensions are generally catalogued as ‘no – cost’ (given that no increased international donor funding is offered for these extensions) all parties should be aware that there are still costs to UNDP and to the Government of Niue if the implementation is extended in time.

The extension request process, if an extension is indeed requested, is a good point for taking care of these matters and other arrangements as necessary. Specific suggestions regarding these matters are part of the recommendations section of this report.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The *Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation and for the Enhancement of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage Project in Niue* has an overarching 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.” This would be achieved through two highly interlinked expected outcomes that promote the establishment of protected areas and strengthening national and community level institutions to promote the Ridge to Reef holistic management approach.

The design of the Project properly acknowledges the needs for intervention at community as well as to national levels. Furthermore, it very positively includes issues related to culture and heritage and considers customary rights and practices as cornerstones of whatever products, plans and practices are to be introduced via the R2R Project. It is also very appropriate in its holistic *Ridge to Reef* approach, expanding from a site-centric approach to a holistic comprehensive approach by acknowledging the concept of connectivity between landscape and seascape in Niue.

The formal logic of the Project identifies threats and plans to endeavour to act upon them in order to obtain products, processes, and results. Yet the design is highly expansive at specific intervention levels, as well as by intending implementation of numerous (and perhaps unmanageable) activities.

Although a few products have been obtained at the time of the Project’s mid-term review, there have been a number of difficulties with the implementation processes. First of all, there have been delays in staffing, rotation, and implementation standstills. These delays have had effects not only upon timely delivery but also in the implementation’s efficiency and effectiveness. The work at the community level has been highly positive, yet communities are weary of the multiple consultation processes that have taken place without concrete results thus far in many cases. Also, many of the stakeholders are not fully clear or cognizant of what their roles are within the Project. These two last issues hinder to some degree the generation of buy-in and appropriation necessary not only to obtain the products, but perhaps more importantly, to implement them and whatever plans are being generated by the Project. These matters also deter the likelihood of sustainability once the intervention ends.

In all fairness to the Project and to the Niue institutions involved, it must be emphasized that this is the first intervention of this magnitude and scope in the country as a nationally implemented intervention. Therefore, the learning curve for implementing a project of this extent has been arduous. This is clearly related, also, to the fact that (due to the size of the country and the expertise pool) the in – country capacities for many of the roles and tasks that need to be realized are not present.

A number of expected outputs are in the process of being achieved or planned for the near future. While this is expectable of a project which is in its relative midpoint, this also calls for a sort of reorganising and rationalising implementation in the Project’s remaining tranche, and speeding up implementation of some aspects (such as the definition of communities as to where the protected areas would be at, the generation of tools that can be used to manage these and other national protected areas, etc.).

Nevertheless, although adjustments are necessary these are not sufficient for the adoption and implementation of whatever cross-sectoral, land, or planning mechanisms arise out of R2R Project and ultimately produce developmental changes. The understanding that implementation and sustainability of the sought products, plans and instruments are crucial factors that should arise out of the Project is still missing. It is key that these aspects be assumed and adopted in the second tranche of implementation.

The remaining operational period for the *R2R Project* can be decisive to adopt and implement policy, planning instruments and key strategies to generate a holistic integrated approach to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in Niue and sustain the achievements that the Project is having and conceivably will have in the future. Following is a set of recommendations that could enhance and enrich the implementation process, as well as recommendations for UNDP/GEF for future programming based on the lessons learned through this Project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations presented here reflect suggested corrective actions for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Project, proposals for future directions underlining main objectives as well as actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the Project. The recommendations are for the remaining implementation period of the Project and there are also a set of recommendations for future programming.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REMAINING IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

- 1) Streamline and accelerate procurement and administrative processes in order to avoid further delays that are impacting upon the implementation process.
- 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.
- 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. The same principle should be applied for the technical assistance consultants, incorporating planned advisors as soon as feasible.
- 4) Strive to generate national capacity at all levels and in all areas (technical, project management, etc.). Ascertain that international consultants are hired in tandem with national/consultants. Implement specific capacity building practices as part of international consultants' technical advice (for instance, having a training workshop in the specific area each consultant works on). Whenever capacity gaps are identified for project staff, training and capacity should be specifically provided.
- 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. Ascertain that there is a devolution of information to communities as soon as possible after events take place. Streamline process that deal with communities (applications, participation processes, etc.) in order for these to be as effective as possible and as attuned to the communities' capacities as conceivable. Review and revise, where necessary, the community-level interventions assuring that:
 - a. They truly deal with conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (terrestrial / ridge) and coastal (reef) in a direct way, and ascertaining that the interventions are truly developmental and applicable within the Niue social and cultural context.
 - b. Technical backstopping is provided for all issues that have arisen out of the first tranche of implementation, as well as for the new activities to be implemented.

- c. Communities, villages and other direct beneficiaries have all the tools (technical, managerial, etc.) to sustain and maintain the processes that are being supported by the R2R Project
- 6) Impel work, analysis, concept notes, and other processes and mechanisms to deal with sustainable financing of the products and process that the project is and will achieve. Imbed the issue in all products and process as feasible (for instance in protected and multiple use area management plans, land use planning, etc.) in order for the appropriation of processes by different sectors of 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. These linkages should create synergies and avoid duplication of efforts.
- 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. it should specifically indicate by what means products, outcomes, and effects will be sustained, for instance: through the approval of policies, through the implementation of policies; through budget allocations, via sustainable livelihoods and income generation aspect, through village and community planning, etc., and other means as appropriate. therefore, the sustainability/exit strategy should acknowledge the main pillars of sustainable projects: institutional framework and governance; socio-economic sustainability; financial sustainability; and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, the exit plan/sustainability strategy should indicate overtly which stakeholder(s) would and should carry out to each of the means to assure sustainability.
- 9) Orientation mechanisms (presentations, inception-type meetings, written materials) should be developed at this mid-point stage to:
 - a. Generate understanding of the project's design principles, goals and objectives.
 - b. Generate understanding of the roles, functions, partnership arrangements, expectations, and responsibilities that each partner needs to assume.
 - c. Engender understanding that the project is a pioneering effort in Niue and that upscaling, replication and sustainability factors are to be sought in order for these processes to occur after project completion.
- 10) Improve communication as well as dissemination of the information the project is and will be generating. Generate user friendly tools and publications where practitioners, communities and beneficiaries can easily assimilate and use (such as specific tool kits). Formally publish the reports, studies, surveys, that are being carried out as a result of the Project. Generate long lasting sustainable dissemination methodologies. Create and sustain a webpage with all the information being generated by the project, seeking ways that this webpage be maintained after project conclusion. See repositories of the information generated by the project that is widely available, decentralized, with open access, seeking ways that these repositories are maintained after project conclusion.
- 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. Use knowledge management-oriented products internally to exchange information among and between the Project practitioners as well as externally with other actors (donors, media, etc.).

- 12) Assure that gender issues are more than just participation of women. Interweave gender equality outlooks in all tools, studies, publications, etc, where it is relevant. Assure that whatever policy, planning instruments and methodologies are impelled and adopted include a gender mainstreaming dimension.
- 13) Generate exit and sustainability strategies 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. It should specifically indicate by what means products, outcomes, and effects will be sustained, for instance: through the approval of policies, through the implementation of policies; through budget allocations, via market-oriented mechanisms, and other means as appropriate. Furthermore, the exit plan/sustainability strategy should indicate overtly which stakeholder(s) would and should carry out each of the means to assure sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EXTENSION REQUEST

- 14) An extension for the Project should be requested. Should an extension request be presented, it is the consideration of this review that it should be granted given the implementation delays that the Project experienced. In order to assure that this extension is used properly, this request should be seen as an opportunity for the Project (including all relevant stakeholders) to bring up to date and clear-out several implementation, planning and programming issues that hinder to some degree a successful implementation process. For this, it is recommended that this potential request should be accompanied by:
 - a. Streamline and consolidate into larger scale interventions that are easier to implement than the myriad of small-scale activities proposed to be carried out.
 - b. Do away with proposed products and deliverables that already deemed as unsustainable and which are considered not to have potential effects or results.
 - c. Specify which of the products that would be dropped or realigned in a programmatic manner and not by happenstance with transparent decision - making.
 - d. At the time of the request, if such takes place, a financial breakdown should be carried out by the Project with inputs as to the funds pending to be used in relation to a specific work plan (ideally streamlined) and projections regarding expenditures and funds available.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNDP FOR THE REMAINING PERIOD OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NIUE R2R PROJECT

- 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.
- 16) Support staff and associated stakeholders in generating and obtaining capacity (both at a technical and at an organisational level) when this is not present within the Project or in-country.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT THE DESIGN LEVEL FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING OF GEF FUNDED – UNDP IMPLEMENTED PROJECTS

- 17) Having learned that whatever is or not included in design of projects permeates into implementation and often in results, design should be very specific in certain features and expected results. For instance, design should:
- a. Be streamlined and not be overly extended at intervention levels.
 - b. Be focalized and not be protracted in the number and types of products and processes that a project is supposed to achieve so as to not jeopardizes effectiveness, in particular of pilot or innovative interventions, should
 - c. Clearly include gender equality aspects.
 - d. Include broader developmental aims, in order to promote sustainable development-oriented change in the countries where projects are executed.

6. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: MTR TERMS OF REFERENCE

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE APPLICATION OF RIDGE TO REEF CONCEPT FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN NIUE (NIUE R2R) PROJECT

A. Introduction:

a.

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the UNDP-GEF Midterm Review (MTR) of the full-sized project titled *Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation and for the Enhancement of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage in Niue* (PIMS 5258) implemented through the Ministry of Natural Resources, which is to be undertaken in 2018. The project started on 21st April 2016 and is in its third year of implementation. In line with the UNDP-GEF Guidance on MTRs, this MTR process was initiated before the submission of the second Project Implementation Report (PIR). This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document [Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed](#) Projects.

B. Project Description or Context and Background:

b.

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.

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).

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.

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;

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 focussed 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 .

C. Scope of Work:

- c.
- d. The objective of this consultancy is to undertake the mid-term review of the Niue R2R project.
- e.

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE MTR

- f. The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy, and its risks to sustainability.

g.

2. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The MTR must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The MTR team will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Environmental & Social Safeguard Policy, the Project Document, project reports

including Annual Project Review/PIRs, project budget revisions, lesson learned reports, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review). The MTR team will review the baseline GEF focal area Tracking Tool submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Tracking Tool that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach²⁰ ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Adviser, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR.²¹ Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to the *Ministry of Natural Resources – Department of Environment, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Infrastructure – Department of Utilities, Ministry of Social Services – Department of Education, Department of Justice, Taoga Niue, Niue Ocean Wide Project, Treasury Department, Crown Law, Office of the Premier – Project Management Coordination Unit, Niue Tourism Office, Village Council Representatives, relevant community members* executing agencies, senior officials and task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project stakeholders, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field missions to Niue including a selection of the project sites on Niue.

The final MTR report should describe the full MTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review.

3. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR

The MTR team will assess the following four categories of project progress. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for extended descriptions.

i. Project Strategy

Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?

²⁰ For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see [UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results](#), 05 Nov 2013.

²¹ For more stakeholder engagement in the M&E process, see the [UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](#), Chapter 3, pg. 93.

- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.
h.

Results Framework/Logframe:

- Undertake a critical analysis of the project's logframe indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.
- Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?
- Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyse beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.
- Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART 'development' indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

ii. Progress Towards Results

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

- Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix and following the *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*; colour code progress in a "traffic light system" based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as "Not on target to be achieved" (red).

Table. Progress Towards Results Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against End-of-project Targets)

Project Strategy	Indicator ²²	Baseline Level ²³	Level in 1 st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target ²⁴	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment ²⁵	Achievement Rating ²⁶	Justification for Rating
Objective:	Indicator (if applicable):							
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							
Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
	Etc.							
Etc.								

i. Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved
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In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

- Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

j.

iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive ManagementManagement Arrangements:

- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.

Work Planning:

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.

- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
- Examine the use of the project's results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

Finance and co-finance:

- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

k.

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

- Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?

²² Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards

²³ Populate with data from the Project Document

²⁴ If available

²⁵ Colour code this column only

²⁶ Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

Reporting:

- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.
- Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly-rated PIRs, if applicable?)
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Communications:

- Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?
- Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?)
- For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project's progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits.

iv. Sustainability

- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Management Module are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.
- In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:

Financial risks to sustainability:

- What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes)?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long term objectives of the project? Are

lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

l.

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

- Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems/ mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer are in place.

m.

Environmental risks to sustainability:

- Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?

n.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The MTR team will include a section of the report setting out the MTR's evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.²⁷

Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report's executive summary. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table.

The MTR team should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

Ratings

The MTR team will include its ratings of the project's results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements in a *MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table* in the Executive Summary of the MTR report. See Annex E for ratings scales. No rating on Project Strategy and no overall project rating is required.

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for Niue R2R

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	

²⁷ Alternatively, MTR conclusions may be integrated into the body of the report.

	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)		
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)		
Sustainability	(rate 4 pt. scale)		

4. Expected Outcomes and Deliverables:

o. #	p. Deliverable	q. Description	r. Timing	s. Responsibilities
t. 1	u. MTR Inception Report	v. MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	w. No later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission: 20 th July 2018	x. MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management
y. 2	z. Presentation	aa. Initial Findings	bb. End of MTR mission: 5 th or 6 th September 2018	cc. MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit
dd. 3	ee. Draft Final Report	ff. Full report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes	gg. Within 3 weeks of the MTR mission (19 th August 2018)	hh. Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP
ii. 4	jj. Final Report*	kk. Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	ll. Within 2 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft: 24 th September 2018	mm. Sent to the Commissioning Unit
nn.				

5. Institutional Arrangement:

oo.

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is the UNDP Samoa Multi-country office for Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau based in Samoa.

The commissioning unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the MTR team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

6. Duration of the Work:

pp.

The total duration of the MTR will be *25 working days* over a time period of *18 weeks* starting *31st May 2018* and shall not exceed five months from when the consultant(s) are hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

COMPLETION DATE	NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS	ACTIVITY
8 th June 2018		Application closes
29 th June 2018		Select MTR Team
13 th July 2018		Prep the MTR Team (handover of Project Documents)
20 th July 2018	4 working days	Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report
26 th July 2018		Finalization and Validation of MTR Inception Report- latest start of MTR mission
27 th August – 7 th September 2018	10 working days	MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits
5 th or 6 th September 2018		Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings- earliest end of MTR mission
19 th September 2018	8 working days	Preparing draft report
24 th September 2018	3 working days	Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report/Finalization of MTR report (note: accommodate time delay in dates for circulation and review of the draft report)
8 th October 2018		Preparation & Issue of Management Response
12 th October 2018		Expected date of full MTR completion

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

7. Duty Station:

qq.

rr. Home-based with travel to Niue. It is expected that the consultant will spend 10 (working) days on mission in Niue.

8. Competencies:

ss.

- Demonstrates commitment to the Government of Niue mission, vision and values.
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability
- Focuses on result for the client and responds positively to feedback
- Consistently approaches work with energy and a positive, constructive attitude
- Demonstrates openness to change and ability to manage complexities
- Good inter-personal and teamwork skills, networking aptitude, ability to work in multicultural environment

Qualifications of the Successful Contractor:

tt.

- Post-graduate degree in environmental science or natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, or other closely related field
- Minimum of 10 years of relevant professional experience in natural resource management/biodiversity conservation, including land and/or seascape scales involving multiple sectors
- Minimum of 5 years' experience in project evaluations, results-based monitoring, and/or evaluation methodologies
- Experience of working with the GEF/GEF-LDCF programs and in the targeted focal areas: biodiversity and international waters preferred
- Experience working in the Pacific region preferred
- Fluency in English (oral and written) is a requirement, with excellent written and presentation skills

uu.

Evaluation criteria: 70% Technical, 30% financial combined weight:

Technical Evaluation Criteria (based on the information provided in the CV and the relevant documents must be submitted as evidence to support possession of below required criteria):

- Post-graduate degree in environmental science or natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, or other closely related field (25%)
- Minimum of 10 years of relevant professional experience in natural resource management/biodiversity conservation, including land and/or seascape scales involving multiple sectors (30%)
- Minimum of 5 years' experience in project evaluations, results-based monitoring, and/or evaluation methodologies (20%)
- Experience of working with the GEF/GEF-LDCF programs and in the targeted focal areas: biodiversity and international waters preferred (5%)
- Experience working in the Pacific region (5%)
- Fluency in English (oral and written) is a requirement, with excellent written and presentation skills (15%)

vv.

9. Scope of Bid Price & Schedule of Payments:

ww.

DELIVERABLES	DUE DATE (%)	AMOUNT IN USD TO BE PAID AFTER CERTIFICATION BY UNDP OF SATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE OF DELIVERABLES
Upon approval and certification by MNR and UNDP of the final MTR Inception Report	20 th July 2018 (20%)	\$xxx
Upon approval and certification by MNR and UNDP of the draft MTR report	19 th September 2018 (40%)	\$xxx
Upon approval and certification by MNR and UNDP of the final MTR report	1 st October 2018 (40%)	\$xxx
TOTAL		\$xxx

10. Recommended Presentation of Proposal:

xx.

Given below is the recommended format for submitting your proposal. The following headings with the required details are important. Please use the template available (Letter of Offer to complete financial proposal)

yy.

CVs with a proposed methodology addressing the elements mentioned under deliverables must be submitted by **XX XXX 2018** electronically via email: procurement.ws@undp.org. Incomplete applications will not be considered and only candidates for whom there is further interest will be contacted. Proposals must include:

- **CV** or P11 form addressing the evaluation criteria and why you consider yourself the most suitable for this assignment. The selected candidate must submit a signed P11 prior to contract award.
- **3 professional references (including one from most recent job/assignment)**
- **A brief methodology** on how you will approach and conduct the work (2 pages maximum),
- **Financial Proposal** specifying the daily rate and other expenses, if any
- **Letter of interest and availability specifying the available date to start and other details**

Queries about the consultancy can be directed to the UNDP Procurement Unit procurement.ws@undp.org

ANNEX 2: RATING SCALES

Ratings for Progress Towards Results: (one rating for each outcome and for the objective)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as “good practice”.
5	Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.
Ratings for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management: (one overall rating)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The Project can be presented as “good practice”.
5	Satisfactory (S)	Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
Ratings for Sustainability: (one overall rating)		
4	Likely (L)	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by the Project’s closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future
3	Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm Review
2	Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
1	Unlikely (U)	Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained

ANNEX 3: MEETINGS AND MISSION SCHEDULE

August 1st, 2018

TIME	AGENDA	PARTICIPANTS
Wednesday,		
6-7am	Conference Call with UNDP	Jose Padilla UNDP Anne Trevor UNDP

August 24th, 2018

TIME	AGENDA	PARTICIPANTS
6-7am	Conference Call with UNDP	Yvette Kerslake UNDP Anne Trevor UNDP Frances Brown UNDP Taufao Taufao UNDP
	Conference Call with UNDP, Project Staff and Project Consultant	Anne Trevor UNDP Frances Brown UNDP Taufao Taufao UNDP Shane Tohovaka Project Coordinator Dave Butler Project Consultant

10th – 18th SEPTEMBER 2018

TIME	AGENDA	PARTICIPANTS
FRI 7th September - ARRIVE NIUE		
3pm – 4pm	Project Staff Greet and introduce Discuss schedule	Shane Tohovaka Peter Fetaui
SAT/SUN, 8th- 9th September		
	Round the Island Tour Sat Tuapa Village Day	
MON 10th September		
9am – 10am	Confirm Schedule	Shane Tohovaka
10am – 2 pm	Meetings with R2R Niue Project Staff	Georgina Tukiuha
		Thomas Talagi
		Peter Fetaui
2pm – 3pm	Meetings with former R2R Staff/ UNDP Niue	Jay Gatuau
3pm – 4pm	Telephone interview - Project Consultant	Dave Butler
TUES 11th September		
9am – 10am	Regional R2R Project	Crispina Konelio
10am – 11am	Dept of. Environment	Haden Talagi Charlotte Pihigia Huggard Tangatule
11am – 12pm	Dept. Agriculture Forestry, Fisheries	Poi Okesene Natasha Tohovaka
3pm – 4pm	Treasury	Poi Kapaga Doreen Siataga

WED 12 th September			
9am – 10am	Dept. Education	Birtha Togahai	
10am – 11am	Dept. Justice, LS	Darren Tohovaka Richard Siataga	
11am – 12pm	TAOGA NIUE	Moira Enetama	
2pm – 3pm	NOW	Brendon Pasisi Carmen Fuhiniu	
3pm – 4pm	Crown Law	Justin Kamupala	
THURS 13 th September			
8am – 9 am	Felicia Talagi	PMCU	
9am – 10am	Andre Enetama	Ministry of Infrastructure	
10am – 11am	Niue Tourism	Felicity Bollen Micah Fuhiniu	
11– 11:30am	Project consultant	Fapoi Akesi	
11:30am – 2pm	Meetings with Village Representatives	Maureen Melekitama Sionetasi Pulehitoa Sione Sionetama Robin Hekau Speedo Hetutu	Mutalau Village Liku Village Tuapa Village Alofi South Village Avatele Village
3-4pm	Project consultant	Vanessa Marsh	
FRI 14 th September			
9am – 12pm	Site Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•TAOGA NIUE new Museum site (Terrestrial Learning Center site)•HAKUPU - Huvalu Conservation Area•VAIEA – Fatiau Tuai/Old village settlement site•ALOFI NORTH – Catholic Mission can crushing site•MAKEFU – Namoui/Anono MPA•TUAPA – Marine Learning Center site•NAMUKULU – Coconut plantations	
14-14:30 pm	Meeting with UNDP Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau Office Staff	Anne Trevor Frances Brown Taufao Taufao	
7-9 pm	Dinner – Meeting	UNDP and Project Staff	
SUN 16 th September			
Presentation Climate Change Adaptation Booklet – Liku Village			
MON 17 th September			
9: -10 am	Ministry of Natural Resources	Josie Tamate	
10am – 1pm	MTR DEBRIEF PRESENTATION	Working Group Project Staff UNDP Mission	
2pm – 4pm	Initial feedback to findings, discussion on results and implementation ratings, Management Response	Project Staff UNDP Mission	
TUES 18 th September – DEPARTURE NIUE			

ANNEX 4: STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED AND STAKEHOLDERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN MTR ACTIVITIES

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Institution</i>
1.	Shane Tohovaka	R2R Project Niue
2.	Jay Gatuau	UNDP Niue
3.	Georgina Tukiuha	R2R Project Niue
4.	Thomas Talagi	R2R Project Niue
5.	Peter Fetaui	R2R Project Niue
6.	Dave Butler	Chief Technical Advisor
7.	Crispina Konelio	Regional R2R Project
8.	Haden Talagi	Dept of. Environment
9.	Charlotte Pihigia	Dept of. Environment
10.	Huggard Tangatule	Dept of. Environment
11.	Poi Okesene	Dept. Agriculture Forestry, Fisheries
12.	Natasha Tohovaka	Dept. Agriculture Forestry, Fisheries
13.	Poi Kapaga	Treasury
14.	Doreen Siataga	Treasury
15.	Birtha Togahai	Dept. Education
16.	Darren Tohovaka	Dept. Justice, LS
17.	Richard Siataga	Dept. Justice, LS
18.	Moira Enetama	Taoga Niue
19.	Brendon Pasisi	NOW
20.	Carmen Fuhiniu	NOW
21.	Justin Kamupala	Crown Law
22.	Andre Enetama	Ministry of Infrastructure
23.	Felicia Talagi	PMCU
24.	Felicity Bollen	Niue Tourism
25.	Micah Fuhiniu	Niue Tourism
26.	Fapoi Akesi	Project Consultant
27.	Maureen Melekitama	Mutalau Village
28.	Sionetasi Pulehitoa	Liku Village
29.	Sione Sionetama	Tuapa Village
30.	Robin Hekau	Alofi South Village
31.	Speedo Hetutu	Avatele Village

32.	Vanessa Marsh	Project Consultant
33.	Josie Tamate	Ministry of Natural Resources
34.	Anne Trevor	UNDP MCO Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue & Tokelau
35.	Frances Brown	UNDP MCO Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue & Tokelau
36.	Taufao	UNDP MCO Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue & Tokelau
37.	Yvette Kerslake	UNDP MCO Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue & Tokelau
38.	Jose Padilla	UNDP Regional Hub in Asia and the Pacific

ANNEX 5: SAMPLE INTERVIEW GUIDE USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

This review questionnaire operationalizes the review's guiding questions regarding achievements and criteria. It is mainly a guide for interviews with relevant stakeholders at different institutions and at site visits. That is, the questionnaire is an overarching tool with questions that would be used suitably for each stakeholder (project staff, government, local actors). The survey as presented therefore asks general guiding questions that would be tailored to each relevant stakeholder interviewed and become more specific in the application of the guidance questions themselves and as part of counter questions.

1. How relevant is the project?
2. What have been the project's achievements (at the output, outcome, results levels)?
3. Are achievements clearer or more advanced for one or the other of the two Outcomes?
4. Within Outcome 1, particularly for the terrestrial PAs., how advanced are the discussions with landowners and the villages regarding the delineation of a contiguous terrestrial Pas?
5. What are the challenges for the Project and the potential solutions to these challenges?
6. How were these results achieved? What issues have arisen that hinder the achievement of results?
7. What planning instruments were designed, adopted and / or implemented effective R2R approach in general and in the site-specific areas and in Niue as a whole?
8. What effects or impacts (change) have occurred due to the project (policy, investments, etc.)?
9. Were the relevant country representatives, from government and civil society, as well as the private sector, NGOs, CBOs, Associations, etc., involved in the project preparation and execution? What has been the effective role of guidance of the project's committees, etc.?
10. How did the partnership and management arrangements between different institutions work and when it did not)? Was it effective? Efficient?
11. What have been the issues or problems encountered in the implementation of the project?
12. What have been the projects weaknesses, if any?
13. How is the work with the communities carried out? With stakeholders (NGOs, private sector, etc.)?
14. What are the probabilities that results would be sustained over the medium/long term?
15. If something could have been done different, in hindsight what could this have been (lesson learned)?
16. Has the contribution toward higher level development changes taken place?
17. Has the project contributed to or triggered developmental changes thus far?
18. Has the project result has triggered some significant changes at the higher level?
19. Have there been impacts to the poor, marginalized and disadvantaged?
20. Has the project promoted gender equality and women's empowerment?
21. Has there been South-south cooperation? Innovation?

ANNEX 7: MTR EVALUATIVE MATRIX

(CRITERIA WITH KEY QUESTIONS, INDICATORS, SOURCES OF DATA, AND
METHODOLOGY)

Evaluative Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Relevance: Project Strategy: To what extent is the project strategy relevant to country priorities, country ownership, and the best route towards expected results?			
Do the project activities address the gaps in the policy, regulatory and capacity framework at the national level? To what extent is the project suited to local and national development priorities and policies?	Degree to which the project supports national environmental objectives. Addressing gaps and/or inconsistency with the national and local policies and priorities Addressing gaps in capacity framework.	National policies Project Document	Document analysis
How relevant the project's intended outcomes?	Degree to which the project supports national environmental Objectives	Project documents and country planning documents	Document analysis
Were the project's objectives and components relevant, according to the social and political context?	Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities, policies and strategies	Government of Niue UNDP, Project Management	Interviews
Are counterpart resources (funding, staff, and facilities), enabling legislation, and adequate project management arrangements in place at project entry? Are the stated assumptions and risks logical and robust? And did they help to determine activities and planned outputs? Is the project coherent with UNDP programming strategy for Niue? To what extent is the project in line with GEF operational programs?	Appreciation from national stakeholders with respect to adequacy of project design and implementation to national realities and existing capacities Coherence UNDP and GEF operational programming	Project partners and relevant stakeholders UNDAF, UNDP/GEF Programming statements	Interviews Document analysis
Effectiveness: Progress Towards Results: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?			
What expected outputs have been achieved thus far? To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?	Degree of achievement vis a vis expected outcome indicators	PIR 2018 Interviews	Document analyses Site Visits Interviews

Was the project effective in acquiring a policy guidance for R2R?	Indication of policy guidance in project outputs, documents, products.	Project outcomes Norms, policies debated, adopted	Document analysis Stakeholders interviews
How well has the project involved and empowered communities to implement R2R?	Involvement of beneficiaries in project development and implementation Analysis of participation by stakeholders (communities, civil society, etc.). Effect of project aspects implemented at sites	Project outputs and outcomes	Interviews Site visits
Are some outcomes more advanced than others in their implementation? What is causing delays in implementation in particular outputs for the project? Where are the implementation 'bottlenecks'? Are the products being developed according to schedule? How can these issues be solved? What changes need to be implemented?	Discrepancies between expected outputs/outcome by the time of mid-term and actual achievements	Findings in project documents, achievement indicators	Document analysis (minutes of meetings specially) Site visits observation Stakeholder interviews
Partnerships for implementation	Working relationship between PMU, UNDP, and other strategic partners Board functions	Findings in project documents (PIRs, minutes of meetings) Indications in interviews	Document analysis Stakeholder interviews
In what ways are long-term emerging effects to the project foreseen?	Level of coherence between project expected results and project design internal logic	Government of Niue, Project team, UNDP	Interviews
Were the relevant representatives from government and civil society involved in project implementation, including as part of the project?	Level of coherence between project design and project implementation approach Role of committees in guidance Harness effectiveness by analysing how project's results were met vis-à-vis intended outcomes or objectives Draw lessons learned/good practices from the implementation and achievement of results	Project partners and relevant stakeholders	Document analysis

Efficiency: Project Implementation and Adaptive Management: Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and been able to adapt to any changing conditions thus far? To what extent are project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, reporting, and project communications supporting the project's implementation?

Was the project implemented efficiently, in-line with international and national norms and standards?	<p>Policies adopted / enacted</p> <p>Policies implemented</p> <p>Budgetary / financial means to implement policies drawn</p>	<p>Policy documents contain sustainability factors (policy adopted, implemented)</p> <p>Budget arrangements (allocations, etc.) made to sustain project outputs and outcomes</p>	<p>Documentation analysis</p> <p>Stakeholder interviews</p>
	<p>Was adaptive management used thus far and if so, how did these modifications to the project contribute to obtaining the objectives?</p> <p>Has the project been able to adapt to any changing conditions thus far?</p> <p>To what extent are project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, reporting, and project communications supporting the project's implementation?</p>	<p>Quality of existing information systems in place to identify emerging risks and other issues</p>	<p>Project documents</p>
	<p>How did institutional arrangements influence the project's achievement of results?</p>	<p>Quality of risk mitigations strategies developed and followed</p>	<p>Government of Niue, Project team, UNDP</p>

Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?

Sustainability possibilities	<p>In what way may the benefits from the project are likely to be maintained or increased in the future?</p>	<p>See indicators in project document results framework and log frame</p>	<p>Project documents and reports</p>
Social sustainability factors	<p>Is there sufficient public/stakeholder awareness in support of the project's long-term objectives?</p>	<p>Evidence that particular partnerships/linkages will be sustained</p>	<p>Government of Niue, Project team, UNDP</p>
Political/financial sustainability	<p>Do the legal frameworks, policies, and governance structures and processes within which the project operates pose risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project benefits?</p>	<p>Evidence that particular practices will be sustained</p>	<p>Government of Niue, Project team, UNDP; other actors.</p>

Replicability	Which of the project's aspects deserve to be replicated in future initiatives?	Evidence that particular practices will be sustained	Government of Niue, Project team, UNDP
Other issues: Project's contribution toward higher level development changes; impacts upon the poor, marginalized and disadvantaged; gender equality and women empowerment; South-south cooperation and innovation			
Project's contribution toward higher level development changes	In what way may the benefits from the project are likely to be maintained or increased in the future?	Indicators in project document results framework and log frame	Project documents and reports Interviews with GoN Interviews with UNDP Staff
Impacts upon the poor, marginalized and disadvantaged	Has the project generated impacts upon the poor, marginalized and disadvantaged?	Indicators in project document results framework and log frame	Project documents and reports Interviews with GoN Interviews with UNDP Staff Interviews with local beneficiaries
Gender equality and women empowerment	Has the project design considered gender equality and women empowerment issues? Has there been any changes in gender equality and women's empowerment attributable to the Project?	Design in ProDoc Indicators	Project documents and reports Interviews with GoN Interviews with UNDP Staff Interviews with local beneficiaries
South-south cooperation	Has there been exchanges (of issues, best practices, etc.) with other similar countries in the region and sub-region?	Evidence of exchanges	Interviews with GoN Interviews with UNDP Staff
Innovation	Is the project innovative for Niue? Is the project introducing innovation (technical, processes)?	Indicators of design.	Project documents and reports Interviews with GoN Interviews with UNDP Staff Interviews with local beneficiaries

ANNEX 8: Progress Towards Results Matrix

Objective/Outcome Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target Level at end of project	Report Level at 30 June 2018 (2018IR)	Mid term Level & Assessment ²⁸	Achievement Rating ²⁹	Justification for Rating
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						
Incorporation of cultural and traditional values and approaches in natural resources protection and management	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	<p>Ecological/cultural surveys assist building baseline data. These cover caves and fauna, reptiles, bird, uga (coconut crab), marine, land use, tourism carrying capacity assessment, Legal review and cultural heritage all of which continue to inform and provide guidance for implementation with particular focus on cultural values.</p> <p>Island wide 2-day village consultations in Qtrs 1 and 2 2018 contribute significant documentation of traditional knowledge and data regarding cultural heritage sites, and cultural values from individuals, families, and communities per individual village district, (Including land owners) positively progressing discussions regarding identification, recording of cultural heritage, traditional values and methods of conservation practiced in the past.</p>		MS	<p>The justification for rating and assessment of the objective is due to the fact that at midpoint the objective has been partially achieved.</p> <p>At the village – level a series of consultations have taken place in order to advance work related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in a protected area mode.</p> <p>Management plans have also been discussed in relation to the establishment of these potential terrestrial areas. Furthermore, a series of small-scale interventions have been proposed by villages and several accepted by the R2R Project, with an expectable varying degree of implementation. Consultations</p>

²⁸ Following indications for Mid Term Reviews, the analysis also concludes whether the end-of-project target: a) has already been achieved (colouring table cell green); b) is partially achieved or on target to be achieved by the end of the project (colouring table cell yellow); or c) is at high risk of not being achieved by the end of the project and needs attention (colouring table red). For further details on this sort of analysis, see *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews Of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*.

Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved
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²⁹ Six - point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU. Explanation of rating scale is attached in annexes (Annex 10: Progress Towards Results Rating Scale).

The freshwater lens safeguarded in the long term	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>Substantial remedial efforts to improve water quality and water security in Qtrs1 and 2 2018 contribute significantly to safeguarding Niue's water from pollution from surface contaminants.</p> <p>Health and safety inspections of individual household premises throughout Qtr 2 provide important data on number of modern versus old septic tanks in use islandwide for further targeted actions via R2R, Govt and other agencies ongoing.</p> <p>Village consultations raise importance of water security and safeguarding the water lens highlighting risks posed by agricultural chemicals. Invasive species program identified least damaging chemicals to the environment for use in eradication of Invasive plant species island wide.</p>		<p>have also taken place with absentee landowners. However, although these discussions have taken place, particularly for the terrestrial PAs., the delineation of terrestrial protected areas is still very much in the making. Therefore, the community-level terrestrial aspects of the Project are gradually being developed.</p> <p>A set of consultancies/studies have been taking place, particularly in the last few months of the Project, some of them dealing with cultural heritage issues.</p> <p>Reviewing, updating and incorporating of R2R holistic approach into existing community – level and sectoral development and management plans, and education plans. Designing and developing management plans for the conservation areas with community -wide participation.</p> <p>Collation and surveying of information on land issues, such as property and land tenure, land surveys, land – based / geological / water – related characteristics. This information gathering is also centring upon the potentiality of protected areas within terrestrial and reef ecosystem.</p>
Terrestrial and reef species are being utilized on a sustainable basis to an increasing number of community members	Some reef species such as Tridacna sp., and Holothuria sp., have been reported as diminished[1]. Peka, Lupe and Uga populations have declined[2]; 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	<p>Beveridge reef survey results indicate Niue and Beveridge reef species genetically sampled share some similar characteristics yet otherwise have distinct genetic identities reinforcing importance of MPAs and community conservation reefs and implementing sustainable harvesting practices island wide.</p> <p>Community consultations Qtr1 and 2 2018 highlight risks of overfishing and possibility of introducing quota systems for at risk reef species.</p> <p>Bat survey in 2017 indicate numbers have increased slightly but restricted hunting should continue or increase to ensure further growth in numbers.</p> <p>Uga survey in Qtr 2 show uga numbers are steady however sizes remain generally small. Ban on exports of Uga is recommended to continue and is supported by the villages during village consultations.</p> <p>High risk practices of shooting Lupe out of season discouraged via village consultations and for measures to protect bats, lupe, uga and other at risk species to be included in management plans for conservation areas in villages.</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					
Extent of the protected estate in various forms and through different protective mechanisms	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>40% of Niue's EEZ (127,000km²) has been committed by Government and announced at Malta Oceans conference 2017 for the establishment of a Large Scale Marine Protected Area, that includes Beveridge Reef.</p> <p>12 of the 14 villages consulted in Qtrs1 and 2 2018 indicate desire to establish community conservation reefs, including Alofi North and Makefu villages which already have the Namoui Marine Reserve. Alofi North indicate extension of the current Marine reserve south reaching Houme. Makefu indicate a new area slightly further north from Fafa to Oneone. The two villages Lakepa and Avatele have yet to decide will conduct further consultation within their communities to reach agreement.</p> <p>Draft report of island-wide Niue Marine Ecological survey by SPC, DAFF and R2R suggested 3 locations for Marine Protected areas at Tamakautoga, Tuapa and Toi.</p> <p>Legal review will recommend actions to strengthen legal and Tapu mechanisms when completed in Qtr 3 2018. Review also explores village by-laws and extent of crown law jurisdiction in terrestrial and reef settings to establish where village and central government responsibilities complement, hinder or overlap.</p> <p>Consultations with Liku and Hakupu reinvigorate existing commitments for the Huvalu Conservation Area and confirm the Liku extension of the HCA to include the northern boundary of the village. Hakupu's desire for similar action however requires further village consultation to cement consensual agreement from all parties.</p> <p>Full results of terrestrial and marine areas indicated by villages during villages consultations will be available in quarter 3 once Justice Lands and Survey collation of village consultations data is complete. This will provide early indication of total land and reef committed by villages though open to some variance during further consultations prior to being finalised in Qtr 3 and Qtr 4 2018, or in early 2019.</p>	MS	<p>The justification for rating and assessment of Outcome 1 is due to the fact that at midpoint the outcome has been partially achieved.</p> <p>Work with several organizations (at the national as well as the international level) in relation to the commitment of the Government of Niue to establish 40 percent of its EEZ (127,000km²) for the establishment of a Large Scale Marine Protected Area that includes Beveridge Reef. This has included debates on marine spatial planning, compliance strategies including sustainable and multiple use of the PA, and reef conservation issues. The integration of the Ridge to Reef approach with the Government of Niue's aims in establishing this protected area (such as the reduction of overfishing, of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, as well as other harmful practices, the implementation of a Marine Management Plan and of the EEZ Compliance Strategy) has been a significant matter.</p> <p>A set of consultancies/studies have been taking place, particularly in the last few months of the Project. These are in varied states of development (that is, some have been completed while others were being developed at the time of this mid-term review). These are studies and reports dealing with marine ecological surveys (of different types, general and of target species), legal review for terrestrial protected areas (both customary and formally legalized areas), legal review for coastal marine protected area, baseline analysis for tourism carrying – capacity studies.</p>
Efforts in place for the recovery of species at risk	Hega (blue-crowned lory) and the olive small-scaled skink	Species Recovery Plans for Hega and the olive small-scaled skink formulated,	Results of Reptiles Survey 2017 successfully confirm existence of the olive small scaled skink in both the east and western sides of the island with reports along western coast of further sightings. Reptile survey included		

are considered endangered	adopted and being implemented.	survey of the Katuali (Seasnake) of which one species was also found to be endemic.		At the village – level a series of consultations have taken place in order to advance work related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in a protected area mode.
Uga and Peka are currently considered as threatened. Both are being harvested unsustainably.	Species Management Plans for Uga and Peka formulated, adopted and being implemented.	<p>Findings of the Eco-survey results were presented during the 2 day consultations with all villages in Qtr 1 and 2 2018, raising greater awareness of the importance of the findings, in particular as several villages questioned the focus on the small scaled skink as it had little cultural significance compared to the uga, lupe or peka. Reassurance was provided of the significance of the find and importance of recovery measures for any endangered species.</p> <p>Further actions to be included in design of management plans to include cliffs and both sides of the road as a buffer for the community conservation reefs on the western side of the island. Alofi North already indicated desire to ban the use of paraquat on Alofi Terrace within the Alofi North district as a measure to protect the reef and coastal zones.</p> <p>Similar action placing formal Tapu restrictions on Tauga Peka (Peka Roosts) and banning of shooting of bats in the areas adjacent was a preference for several villages as an effort to manage and increase bat numbers. Measures included capacity building for possible internal survey and monitoring of peka numbers over time by select individuals and students in the villages committed to establishing peka sanctuaries.</p> <p>Qtr 2 2018 Uga survey indicates numbers remain strong however uga size in general is smaller, with fewer large uga caught. One possible reason given by local hunters is the period survey was undertaken was when many uga were hibernating underground. Consensus islandwide however praise the current Uga ban, and advocate for continuance.</p> <p>The Hega remains an enigma yet to be resolved. Confirmed report of birds in a bush patch inland of Tuapa. Unconfirmed sightings in Huihui Alofi have yet to be followed up. Village consultations 2017, 2018 failed to reveal any current sightings though several elders recall the proliferation of the Hega in their youth, some describing efforts to trap them eating coconut flowers or nesting in hollow trunks of dead standing coconut trees. Their demise has been attributed by some elders to the onset of Cyclone Ofa in 1989/90, and the increased farming of honey bees which compete with the Hega for flower nectar. Sound recorders have been purchased and will</p>		<p>Management plans have also been discussed in relation to the establishment of these potential terrestrial areas. Furthermore, a series of small-scale interventions have been proposed by villages and several accepted by the R2R Project, with an expectable varying degree of implementation. Consultations have also taken place with absentee landowners. However, although these discussions have taken place, particularly for the terrestrial PAs., the delineation of terrestrial protected areas is still very much in the making. Therefore, the community-level terrestrial aspects of the Project are gradually being developed.</p> <p>Reviewing, updating and incorporating of R2R holistic approach into existing community – level and sectoral development and management plans, and education plans. Designing and developing management plans for the conservation areas with community -wide participation.</p> <p>Collation and surveying of information on land issues, such as property and land tenure, land surveys, land – based / geological / water – related characteristics. This information gathering is also centring upon the potentiality of protected areas within terrestrial and reef ecosystem.</p>

			be placed at sites to capture birdsong as a means to identify the Hega presence.		
Status of completion and adoption of management plans for various conservation areas	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	<p>40% of Niue's EEZ (127,000km²) has been committed by Government and announced at Malta Oceans conference 2017 for the establishment of a Large Scale Marine Protected Area, that includes Beveridge Reef. Marine spatial planning, compliance strategies including legal review of relevant coastal and marine legislation are progressing.</p> <p>Consultations Qtr 2 with Liku and Hakupu villages raised the need to complete the Huvalu Conservation Area Management plan (Skeleton drafted during previous FPAM - Forestry Protected Areas Management Project).</p> <p>Consultations reinvigorated interest in particular from elders in Liku and Hakupu to continue completion of the Huvalu CA management plan, and incorporating conservation and sustainable management measures into existing plans such as village development plan and other plans previously drafted.</p> <p>Village consultations are expected Qtrs 3,4 to confirm extension of Hakupu HCA to include southern village boundary, including follow up meetings in both Liku and Hakupu to map and document traditional knowledge and cultural heritage sites of significance, that will inform further on design of Landuse Map, and management plans for HCA inclusive of the reef.</p> <p>All Western villages barring Avatele, (Whom need further internal village meetings to discuss and agree), committed reef areas for Conservation measures as part of the community conserved reefs. Specific areas per village and actual management measures were discussed in village consultations but require further internal village meetings before the second round of R2R consultations Qtr 3 and Qtr 4 2018 to finalize commitments and formalization 2019.</p> <p>Hikutavake, Toi, Namukulu, Tuapa, Makefu, Alofi North, Alofi South, Tamakautoga were keen to establish conservation reefs recognizing the need to protect their reefs and ensure sustainable management and harvesting practices.</p> <p>All 5 villages in the new Confluence Conservation Area were consulted with all villages barring Lakepa (Whom need further</p>		

internal village meetings to discuss and agree) expressing commitment for establishing terrestrial conservation areas. Alofi North preference was for land areas under the ownership of the consultation participant's, closer to the seaward side rather than the interior, as they anticipated possible difficulties further inland based on knowledge of personalities of the land owners there. According to the village representatives inclusive of the VC, the land closer to the seaward side provides more traction to progress forward as they are the land owners compared to other lands further inland, who did not turn up to several village meetings prior to the R2R consultation to discuss CAs. Dialogue and further consultations with R2R and within the village are scheduled for Qtr 3 and 4 will be reinforced by PA expert to reinforce conservation of the primary forests in the confluence zone. Makefu, Tuapa, Mutalau are keen to include Primary forests in the islands center in their village CAs.

Protected Area expert to be recruited Qtr 3 Qtr 4 2018 will play a key role in leading management planning.

A pilot community based resource management partnership with the University of Wollongong, Australia, to assist Tuapa village with a focus on the coastal in-situ learning center to be located there, is mapped for Qtr 3 2018 onwards, and with potential to role out for other coastal villages in western reef.

The Western Reef 'Marine Park' as opposed to Marine protected area, similar to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, was discussed during marine spatial planning for the new Large Scale Marine Protected Area. This takes into account general use areas in many of the village districts will continue and that only site specific areas will become community conserved reefs with varying degrees of protection according to community preference. This takes into account customary rights and practices, and that heavy restrictions will increase fishing pressure elsewhere in the village or spill into neighboring village boundaries which elevates risk of inter-village conflict. The tendency would be for tit for tat scenario as has sometimes happened between neighboring fishing communities in the past.

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					
Promotion of R2R approach by Village Councils and Government departments	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 collaboration across departmental boundaries.</p>	<p>Extensive discussions with Village councils and communities took place during Qtr 1 and Qtr 2 2-day island consultations 2018 regarding mainstreaming of R2R holistic approach into existing development and management plans. This includes during R2R presentations and from other key stakeholders DAFF (Dept Agriculture forestry and Fisheries), Environment Dept, NOW(Niue Ocean Wide project),TAOGA that reinforces the same message of sustainable management and use of resources on land and sea.</p> <p>A further extension of the 2 day consultation to the Niuean expatriate communities in NZ Qtr 1 2018 ensured communities were informed, main project objectives and activities were discussed, and feedback gained from overseas communities in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland. This ensured communities in NZ were well informed, as a means to keep them involved, and mitigate against potential conflicts over lack of information regarding implementing Terrestrial CAs and Reefs in Niue. This successful engagement was undertaken March April 2018. of this consultation process</p> <p>Review and update of existing plans will be part of the upcoming activities for villages as part of their designing and developing management plans for the conservation areas. Where existing plans are amended to reflect greater inclusion or focus on holistic R2R approach to avoid reinventing or duplicating efforts.</p> <p>Further involvement through closer scrutiny by cabinet of R2R activities and governance in 2018 provided greater opportunity to promote awareness of Holistic R2R approach within the most senior Government high levels. Specific partnerships with key stakeholders Infrastructure, Education, Invasive species further promoted awareness in Senior Govt levels of R2R activities and the R2R holistic approach, including the Acting Secretary of Govt who has been tasked with greater scrutinizing of R2R implementation efforts from Government perspective.</p> <p>A fortnightly community radio program, newsletters and factsheets, facebook and social media continue as mediums for promotion of the R2R holistic approach. Promotions and displays at all village showdays</p>	MS	<p>The justification for rating and assessment of Outcome 2 is due to the fact that at midpoint the outcome has been partially achieved.</p> <p>The justification for rating and assessment of Outcome 1 is due to the fact that at midpoint the outcome has been partially achieved.</p> <p>A set of consultancies/studies have been taking place, particularly in the last few months of the Project. These are in varied states of development (that is, some have been completed while others were being developed at the time of this mid-term review). These are studies and reports dealing with marine ecological surveys (of different types, general and of target species), legal review for terrestrial protected areas (both customary and formally legalized areas), legal review for coastal marine protected area, baseline analysis for tourism carrying – capacity studies.</p> <p>At the village – level a series of consultations have taken place in order to advance work related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in a protected area mode.</p> <p>Management plans have also been discussed in relation to the establishment of these potential terrestrial areas. Furthermore, a series of small-scale interventions have been proposed by villages and several accepted by the R2R Project, with an expectable varying degree of implementation. Consultations have also taken place with absentee landowners. However, although these discussions have taken place, particularly for the terrestrial PAs., the delineation of terrestrial protected areas is still very much in the making.</p>

			ensure high visibility and promotion of R2R approach through quiz's and engagement directly with communities.		Therefore, the community-level terrestrial aspects of the Project are gradually being developed.
The extent to which biodiversity and natural resources are taken into account in central and local planning,	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>Threats to biodiversity, impacts of tourism on communities and biodiversity, high risk harvesting of fish and reef species, and birds and other terrestrial species was extensively discussed with communities as part of the 2 day consultations in Qtrs 1 and 2 2018.</p> <p>These concerns were expressed by communities and the recognition of the need to conserve and protect our biodiversity and natural resources. Development of villages proposals throughout Qtr 3,4 2017 also raised awareness among village councils of the requirements of R2R from criteria set for acceptance proposals.</p> <p>Participation of village MP's in most of the village consultations also ensures the message reaches into the house of parliament through the voices of the MP's who throughout the consultations expressed support and agreement of the integrated holistic R2R approach. This increased awareness should be reflected in increased debate and questions in the house regarding any new developments Govt or otherwise and the impacts of biodiversity and ecosystems.</p> <p>A project activity raised by R2R during consultations was that of an EIA case study to test the robustness of current EIA legislation and practices and strengthening of these sectors of which discussions supported strengthening measures, not only for EIA but also border security to prevent the introduction of new Invasive species. A suitable project is being sought.</p>		<p>Reviewing, updating and incorporating of R2R holistic approach into existing community – level and sectoral development and management plans, and education plans. Designing and developing management plans for the conservation areas with community -wide participation.</p> <p>Collation and surveying of information on land issues, such as property and land tenure, land surveys, land – based / geological / water – related characteristics. This information gathering is also centring upon the potentiality of protected areas within terrestrial and reef ecosystem.</p>
Level of awareness, sensitivity and understanding of the value and vulnerability of natural resources	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.	The implementation of radio programs, newsletters, social media, village showday displays and commitments have all helped boost the profile of the R2R project and goals through these cumulative awareness measures. The most successful engagement to date however has been the face to face discussions with the communities through the village consultations in Qtrs 1and 2 2018. This most valuable face time has been a significant factor changing people's perceptions and promoting a greater understanding of the projects activities and goals. The most significant part being the strategic inclusion of key partners and stakeholders from Govt and NGO sector as part of the consultation team. This large consultation team of 3 R2R staff,		

Director general of MNR, Directors of DAFF, MetService and Taoga (on occasion) and staff, Environment, Justice lands and Survey and the NOW project, combined with the resources provided to the communities for showdays and to provide catering for the village consultations, all played a significant part in getting communities attention and people sitting up and taking the issues seriously.

With communities is the past being heavily consulted with little tangible benefits, the above commitment alone has helped ensure a good reception in communities, and healthy and robust discussions to take place.

The village proposals approved for the 11 proposals submitted in Qtr 4 2017 has also demonstrated a clear commitment from the project for implementing tangible results in the communities. Similarly the key stakeholder agreements with Govt and NGO sectors has also established tangible benefits via Govt sectors that also ensures Govt commitment ongoing.

Overall this has boosted community understanding and provided empowerment for communities as they recognize the project is here to help the communities consolidate their existing traditional conservation values and formalize them into a modern and current format that can withstand the passage of time, unlike most traditional measures that were preserved mostly via word of mouth from generation to generation.

Participant surveys during village consultations have indicated satisfaction with consultation process with overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Full report from Qtr1 and 2 consultations will be available Qtr3 given timeframes of consultations are ongoing in week beginning 25 June hence collation will not be complete in Q2.

ANNEX 10: PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS RATING SCALE

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as “good practice”.
Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.

ANNEX 11: CONSULTED DOCUMENTS

- <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2017/niue-to-create-large-scale-marine-protected-area.html>
- <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/10/niue-chile-marine-parks-ocean-conservation-environment/>
- Annual workplan. 2016
- Annual workplan. 2017
- Annual workplan. 2018
- Inception report. 2016
- Minutes of R2R PEB and TWG meeting
- PIMS 5258 Niue. Tracking Tool for Biodiversity Projects in GEF-3, GEF-4, and GEF-5. August 2018.
- Project Document 2016
- Project Implementation Report 2017
- Project Implementation Report 2018
- R2R Consultancy reports:
 - Legal Review for Ridge to Reef
 - Land use survey
 - Survey of Peka (Pacific Flying Foxes) on Niue
 - Niue Cave Fauna: Report on a survey for subterranean species
 - Tourism Carrying Capacity Report
 - Reptile Survey Report for Ridge to Reef, Niue
 - Cultural Heritage Survey Report. Tangible and Intangible
- UNDP GEF. *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*. 2014.
- UNDP HACT Macro Assessment Report September 2015.
- UNDP. *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results*.

ANNEX 12: SIGNED REPORT CLEARANCE FORM

Midterm Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By:

Commissioning Unit

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ANNEX 13: SIGNED UNEG CODE OF CONDUCT FORM FOR INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANT**Evaluators/Consultants:**

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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

MTR Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Consultant: Maria ONESTINI

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed at Buenos Aires, Argentina on July 23 2018

Signature: 