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Marshall Islands



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Looking to the Future: Strengthening natural resources management in atoll communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands employing integrated approaches (RMI R2R) Project

MTR Final Report

UNDP-SUPPORTED GEF-FINANCED PROJECT

UNDP PIMS ID: 5685

GEF ID NUMBER: 5544

MTR TIMERRAME: AUGUST 2020 – FEBRUARY 2021

MTR SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 2021

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iii. Acronyms and abbreviations

AWPs	Annual Work Plans
CBD	Conventions on Biological Diversity
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CCD	Climate Change Directorate
CDR	Combined Delivery Report
CMAC	Coastal Management Advisory Council
CMI	College of the Marshall Islands
CO	Country Office
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CPD	Country Programme Document
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority (RMI)
EA	Executing Agency
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographical Information System
HPO	Historic Preservation Office
IR	Inception Report
IW	Inception Workshop
IA	Implementing Agency
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KBA	Key Biodiversity Area
LF	Logical Framework
LPAC	Local Project Appraisal Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MICS	Marshall Islands Conservation Society
MoCIA	Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs
MIMA	Marshall Islands Mayors Association
MIMRA	Marshall Islands Marine Resource Authority
MTR	Mid-term Review
MU	Moderately Unsatisfactory
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

NIM	National Implementation Modality
NPD	National Project Director
NPM	National Project Manager
PAN	Protected Area Network
PIF	Project Identification Form (GEF)
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PMU	Project Management Unit
PO	Programme Officer
ProDoc	Project Document
IP	Implementing Partner
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PTS	Project Technical Specialist
QPR	Quarterly Progress Reports
R2R	Ridge to Reef
RBMS	Results-Based Management System
RMI	The Republic of the Marshall Islands
TE	Terminal Evaluation
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the UNDP-supported GEF-Financed Government of The Marshall Islands Project “**Looking to the Future: Strengthening natural resources management in atoll communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands employing integrated approaches (RMI R2R)**”. Project Information are presented in **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** This MTR was performed by an Independent Evaluation Team composed of Dr Amal Aldababseh, International Evaluator and Team Leader, and Ms. Brooke Takala, National consultant.

This MTR report documents the achievements of the project, an assessment of management arrangement and adaptive management, and includes four chapters. Chapter 1 presents an overview of the project; chapter 2 briefly describes the objective, scope, methodology, stakeholders and limitations of the evaluation; chapter 3 presents the findings of the evaluation, and chapter 4 presents the main conclusions and recommendations, and relevant annexes are found at the back end of the report.

Table 1: Project Information Table

Project Title:	Looking to the Future: Strengthening natural resources management in atoll communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands Employing Integrated Approaches (RMI R2R)	
GEF Project ID:	5544	
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	5685	
ATLAS Business Unit, Award & Project ID:	FJI10, Award ID: 00101900 Output ID: 00104152	
Country(ies):	Republic of the Marshall Islands	
Region:	The Pacific	
Focal Area:	Water and Oceans	
GEF Focal Area Strategic Objective:	<i>Strategic Focal Area: Biodiversity (BD)</i> : The project focuses on Objectives 1 and 2 of the GEF 5 Biodiversity Results Framework. <i>Strategic Focal Area: International Waters (IW)</i> : The project strategy is most closely linked with Objective 3 of the GEF-5 IW strategy which aims to “Support foundational capacity building, portfolio learning, and targeted research needs for joint, ecosystem-based management of transboundary water systems”, specifically in general accordance with Outcome 3.2 of the IW strategy.	
Source of Fund	GEF	
Executing Agency/ Implementing Partner	Direct Implementation Modality (DIM): United Nations Development Programme	
Project Financing	at <u>CEO endorsement (US\$)</u>	at <u>MTR Dec 2020 (US\$)</u>
[1] GEF financing:	3,927,981	
[2] UNDP contribution:	126,371	
[3] Government (in-kind):	3,452,768	
[4] Other partners:	478,000	
[5] Total co-financing	4,057,139	
PROJECT TOTAL COST [1+5]	7,985,120	
Project Document Signature Date	January 2018 by UNDP December 2017 by the Government and the GEF Focal Point	
Closing date	Planned November 2022	Actual November 2022

Project Description

The project's **goal** is to maintain globally significant biodiversity and the ecosystem goods and services that it provides to the society of the Republic of Marshall Islands. The objective of the project is to sustain biodiversity and livelihoods by building community and ecosystem resilience to threats and degrading influences through integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources in priority atolls/islands¹.

To achieve the Project's **objective**, three outcomes (project components) are envisaged:

- **Outcome 1:** Conservation areas delineated, declared and efforts sustained in up to 5 priority atolls to meet Reimaanlok targets and contributing to the Micronesia Challenge and Aichi targets.
- **Outcome 2:** Supportive policies, institutions, and communities in place to ensure successful implementation of the Reimaanlok vision; and
- **Outcome 3:** Accessible data and information systems and improved linkages and collaboration with regional initiatives to support adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI.

These three main outcomes were supposed to be achieved by implementing twelve outputs that were supposed to help in lifting five barriers that were identified during the project development phase.² The Project was designed to support the Government of RMI to take steps to:

- Improve biophysical, socioeconomic, and cultural knowledge on terrestrial and nearshore marine resources in 5 outer islands.
- Benefit 2,000 residents, including 1,000 women from integrated approaches to natural resource management in the selected 5 outer islands.
- Designate 30,550 ha of nearshore marine and 502 ha of terrestrial ecosystems as protected areas and placed under enhanced community-driven management.
- Operationalize the PAN Office and develop a suite of secondary legislation recommendations to the PAN Act of 2015.
- Support four RMI environmental professionals to complete the regional post-graduate program.
- Deliver online training to representatives from the 24 inhabited atolls/islands on integrated approaches through the Pacific Regional R2R Program.
- Develop and pilot of an agroforestry certificate program at a higher education provider.
- Enable land-use arrangements developed to support an ecosystem-based approach to natural resource management.
- Strengthen the biodiversity management information system and enhance access to this system.
- Integrate traditional ecological knowledge into the planning and management of the RMI PAN.
- Increase public awareness of biodiversity conservation and the Reimaanlok process.
- Initiate replication in other atolls and islands to ensure sustainability towards the end of the project.

However, five barriers constrained the Government efforts to achieve the intended targets, those barriers were identified, analyzed, and addressed in the Project document.

Project Progress Summary

The Project contributes to RMI sustainable use of outer island ecosystem goods and services will lead to a reduction in pressures on natural resources and contribute to community

¹ Project Document. Page 20.

² Project Document. Section II. Development Challenge. Main Barriers. Page 8.

development priorities. The Project was designed to deliver socio-economic benefits, enhance human and physical capitals, increase natural and financial capitals.

The project is piloted on five (5) outer islands of Wotho, Mejit, Likiep, Aur and Ebon. The interventions are designed to strengthen local capacities, enabling local communities to implement the integrated natural resource management plans, and providing scale-able demonstrations of sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services. The lessons from this project will guide replication in other sites.

Overall, the Project has made **Unsatisfactory** and **Moderately Satisfactory** progress on outcome 1, **Satisfactory** and **Moderately Satisfactory** progress on outcome 2, and **Moderately Satisfactory and Moderately Satisfactory** progress on outcome 3 up until now. The overall progress is therefore rated **Moderately Satisfactory (3.84)**.

The evaluators consider that while the management arrangements used for the project, in theory, support effective and efficient implementation of the project, in practice there were delays caused mainly by some elements of the project management arrangement that required immediate attention. Consequently, the overall **Project implementation and adaptive management** rating is **Moderately Unsatisfactory (U)** as shown in **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference..**

Table 2: Mid-Term Review Ratings and Achievement Summary Table for the Project

Measure	Mid-Term Review Rating ³	Achievement Description
Progress Towards Results	Objective: Rating: (3) MU	Due to delays in implementation of all outputs, the Project is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
	Outcome 1 Rating: (3) – MU	All targets under this output are not on track and need more attention. The work under this output is at its early stage of commencement.
	Outcome 2: Rating: (4.5) MS to S	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
	Outcome 3: Rating: (4) MS (2)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
Project Implementation and Adaptive Management	Rating: Moderately Unsatisfactory	The Project requires more collaboration, partnerships, and intensive enhancement in its work planning and communication. More frequent and strategic Project Board (PB) meetings, strong and high-level government commitment to proceed with the project and enhance its implementation, enhanced communications, and coordination among all stakeholders at the main islands and the 5 outer islands.
Sustainability	Rating: 3⁴ (ML)	Risks are low to intermediate levels. However, the need for more focus on a strategy to reduce different kinds of risk.

³ Rating Scale: 6=Highly Satisfactory (HS), 5=Satisfactory (S), 4=Moderately Satisfactory (MS), 3=Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), 2=Unsatisfactory (U), or 1=Highly Unsatisfactory (HU).

⁴ The 4-point scale: 4=Likely (L), 3=Moderately Likely (ML), 2=Moderately Unlikely (MU), and 1=Unlikely (U).

A concise summary of conclusions

Progress is, to a large extent, in line with prospects as log-frame indicators are achieved in compliance with the Work Plan. Special attention was paid to setting up the team, conducting the studies, preparing the needed assessment and reports, on the expenses of soft interventions like capacity development. The project has managed, during 2019, to initiate many of the needed technical studies which is a noticeable achievement taking into consideration the substantial delay the project faced during its inception phase.

The Project is perceived as a major national initiative that is contributing tremendously to sustaining atoll biodiversity and livelihoods by building community and ecosystem resilience to threats and degrading influences through integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources. Without the project, the operationalization of the Reimaanlok will be an impossible target to achieve. With the support of the project, the principles, and processes outlines in Reimaanlok are in the process to be implemented in 5 outer islands. As a direct result of the project implementation and support, the Government and relevant stakeholders provided all needed co-financing that was committed during the project development with about USD 4.05 Million co-financing were already mobilized.

Although the project is not entirely on track regarding the implementation of project activities mainly the outcomes 1 and 3, the relevance of the Project is extremely high for the Government of The Marshall Islands. Project main beneficiaries are fully committed to proceeding with the remaining activities. Stronger coordination and collaboration between project management and other stakeholders is urgently required in the remaining period to get the necessary commitments and ensure the project's outcomes sustainability after the end of the project.

Although the implementation has been accelerated in 2019, after the slow start of the project. However, the breakout of COVID-19 in 2020 among other challenges, makes the achievement of the project's targets, by the end of the Project, November 2022, a great challenge.

Recommendations Summary

Based on the findings and outcomes of the Mid-Term Review, the MTR Consultant would propose the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: The planned completion date of the project is not realistic. To ensure full achievement of all planned end-of-project targets, the project implementation period must be extended (**UNDP**).

Recommendation 2: There has been a considerable delay in developing the necessary surveys and studies (marine survey, terrestrial surveys, socio-economic studies, LEAP surveys, hydrological survey, network scenario, management plans, delineation of the proposed sites, etc.) due to travel restrictions. As it is not clear when travel restrictions will be eased, an effective adaptive management plan must be put in place with clear measures to undertake the necessary work under a pro-longed travel restriction (**Project team with the support of UNDP**).

Recommendation 3: Due to the limited technical experts available at the national levels, it is recommended that peer experts, from other Micronesian Islands, provide technical support such as the development of a Conservation GIS database and online cleaning house for the different project sites (**UNDP Regional Office and team**).

Recommendation 4: As for linking cultural expressions to resource management, the MTR Consultant believes it should not be a problematic issue as the Project collaborates with different stakeholders, mainly the Mayors of the outer islands, to take the lead role to promote the sense they are involved in the project as an important partner. The involvement of youth-related organizations is key for sustaining and transferring local and traditional knowledge to young and new generations (**Project team**).

Recommendation 5: The MTR recommends making the project's technical deliverables, lessons learned, and knowledge management productions with a focus on cultural expressions open to the public by sharing the materials through different websites, social media and any other proper tools **(Project team)**.

Recommendation 6: An external consultant could be recruited to further assist in enrolling Marshallese students from the University of the South Pacific to get the needed capacity building and knowledge in integrated approaches **(Project team with the Support of UNDP)**.

Recommendation 7: Several awareness sessions need to be organized to ensure the technical capacities are in place after the project closure with a paramount focus on conservation, sustainable livelihoods, and community-based adaptation **(Project Team)**.

Recommendation 8: Development of the project's communication plan to be prioritized to boost the project's public awareness and stakeholders' engagement efforts. Most of the project's indicators need to be clearly and effectively communicated with outer islands. Poor communications and limited travel are defined as key obstacles to achieving the project's targets **(Project team)**.

Recommendation 9: The project's M&E system should be strengthened. UNDP to play a key role in transforming the M&E system from a management tool to an adaptive management approach through the continuous and effective involvement of stakeholders as part of the project's adaptive management framework. For example, the quarterly progress reports should be expanded to include an indicative work plan of activities for the next quarter as well as updated risks and mitigation measures. Furthermore, the project reporting function should include the documentation of lessons learned so that institutional memory is preserved, and a reference guide is created to support any future replication of similar project initiatives **(Project team with UNDP support)**.

Recommendation 10: UNDP-GEF Project Assurance to provide better guidelines and technical backstopping. Support for Implementation Phase of the project is critical to ensure that adaptation management measures are in place **(UNDP and UNDP/GEF teams)**.

Recommendation 11: The role of the Project Board needs to be strengthened, with more frequent meetings, adequate advance provision of documentation, follow-up mechanisms established, and the inclusion of representation at the local community level **(Project team)**.

Recommendation 12: The implementing /executing agency and stakeholders of the project can provide valuable technical (and political) support and the Project should draw on these relationships further in its management approach to this project. The MTR would recommend that a greater spirit of cooperation and inclusion of other stakeholders by the Project in all aspects of the project delivery needs to be emphasized **(Project team with UNDP and Government Support)**.

Recommendation 13: The MTR did not see any collaboration with other UNDP, GEF or relevant initiatives, except the Regional R2R. It is recommended that effective and continuous collaboration with all other relevant initiatives, partners, and stakeholders to enhance knowledge sharing and build on each other work **(Project team and UNDP)**.

1. Introduction

This report for the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the UNDP-supported GEF-financed project ***“Looking to the Future: Strengthening natural resources management in atoll communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands Employing Integrated Approaches (RMI R2R)”*** (hereafter called the “project”) summarizes the full review and main findings of the MTR following the UNDP/GEF mid-term review guide. This MTR is an integral component of the UNDP-supported GEF-financed project cycle.

1.1 Purpose of the Mid Term Review Objectives

In line with the UNDP and the GEF evaluation policy, the Midterm Review is supposed to take place at the mid-time of the project’s implementation, to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency), assess the project’s strategy and its risk to sustainability, assess progress towards the achievements of the project objectives and outcomes to identify the necessary changes to be made to set the project on track to achieve its intended results.

The MTR has two primary objectives: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to provide a clear way forward based on the current progress after viewing early signs of project success or failure to identify the necessary changes to be made to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results UNDP acts as the GEF Agency for this project. The project is implemented in cooperation with the Coastal Management Advisory Council (CMAC) following UNDP’s Direct Implementation Modality (DIM). UNDP is the implementing and executing partner. The project board is composed of the UNDP, the National Project Directory, the Chief Secretary, Secretary of Research and Development, Secretary of Ministry of Internal Affairs, Director of the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA) and the 5 Outer island Mayors (Aur, Ebon, Likiep, Mejit, and Wotho).

The MTR report provides a review of:

- the overall project strategy in terms of appropriateness of project design, its objectives, planned outputs, activities, and inputs compared to other cost-effective alternatives,
- the implementation of the Project in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs and efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out as well as overall management and stakeholder involvement
- the project outputs, outcomes, and impact and how the objectives of the project contribute to the realization.

1.2 Scope and Methodology

The MTR provides evidence-based credible and reliable information. The MTR sets-up a collaborative and participatory approach to ensure close cooperation with the project team, government counterparts, the UNDP Country Office, UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisers, and other key stakeholders.

The review methodology used for this project MTR is based on the UNDP-GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policies and includes multiple methods with an analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, where possible. It includes:

1. **Data collection.** To the extent possible, data collection and analysis will be disaggregated by sex. Many documents were already shared by the Project team, other documents were collected from the internet. The MTR will request other documents during the review.
2. **Desk Review** includes amongst others: PIF, GEF CEO Endorsement Request, UNDP Project Document, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy, Project Inception Report, Project Implementation Reports, Quarterly Progress Reports, annual work plans (AWPs), audit reports, mission reports, monitoring reports

prepared by the Project, financial and administrative guidelines used by Project team, minutes of the Project Board, Project combined delivery reports (CDRs), technical deliverables, Lessons learned reports, Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and the baseline GEF Core Indicators submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement and the midterm GEF core indicators that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

3. **Consultations with the project's stakeholders via virtual interviews and meetings.** A mission to the Marshall Islands was planned as part of the technical proposal submitted for this consultancy and as per the UNDP/GEF MTR guidelines. However, due to the current global health situation (outbreak of COVID19) and the travel restrictions applied by several countries, the mission might not take place. The MTR consultant proposes to take a final decision on the possibility of fielding a mission by mid-September as many countries have already opened its borders. Alternatively, if the mission is no longer possible, the MTR consultant would meet with all key stakeholders via virtual meetings/interviews. If meetings with local communities in piloting sites are not possible to take place virtually, the MTR consultant would propose hiring a national consultant to undertake this specific task.
4. **Interviews**, whether in-person or virtual, help in getting the perspective of both women and men beneficiaries and stakeholders. Sets of questions prepared in advance and used to facilitate data collection and knowledge sharing. The questions are arranged around the evaluation criteria. Sets of questions will be shared with key stakeholders by email if virtual meetings are not an option. Findings will be crosschecked during different interviews and with the available evidence.
5. **Observations based on interviews and meetings:** the information collected, including documentary evidence, interviews, and observations, will be compiled, summarized, and organized according to the questions asked in the evaluation⁵.

Achievements of project objectives have been rated in terms of the criteria above at a six-level scale⁶.

1.3 Limitations

The major limitation in this evaluation was the restricted travel by the consultants to meet with the stakeholders and beneficiaries in the Marshall Islands due to strict SOPs to be observed to stay protected from COVID-19. The International Evaluator could not visit The Marshall Islands, whereas the National Consultant could not visit the project sites due to operational issues. The International Evaluator led the team remotely from her home using communication tools such as email, Skype, and other convenient tools. The National Evaluator was responsible to conduct the interviews face-to-face and using communication tools such as emails to connect with the Team Leader. During the interviews, the evaluation team used the evaluation matrix prepared during the MTR inception phase. Key questions were used to collect evidence and get feedback from stakeholders.

1.4 Structure of the Mid Term Review Report

The preparation of the MTR Final Report follows the guidelines for conducting mid-term reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects. The MTR Final Report is structured along with the following chapters:

⁵ Data analysis entails the process of systematically applying logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense, and recap, and evaluate data.

⁶ *Highly satisfactory (HS) - the project has no shortcomings - Satisfactory (S) - minor shortcomings - Moderately satisfactory (MS) - moderate shortcomings - Moderately unsatisfactory (MU) - significant shortcomings - Unsatisfactory (U) - major shortcomings - Highly unsatisfactory (HU) - severe shortcomings*

- *Executive summary*, including i) Project Information Table, ii) Project Description, iii) Project Progress Summary, iv) Mid-Term Review Evaluation Rating and Achievement Summary Table, v) A Concise Summary of Conclusions, and vi) Recommendations Summary Table.
- *Introduction*, including i,) Purpose of the MTR and Objectives, ii) Scope and Methodology; Principles and Design and Execution of the MTR, Approach and Data Collection Methods, Limitations to the MTR, and iii) Structure of the MTR Report.
- *Project Description and Background Context*, including i) Development Context, ii) Problem that the Project Sought to Address, iii) Project Description and Strategy, iv) Project Implementation Arrangements, v) Project Timing and Milestones, and vi) Main Stakeholders.
- *Findings*, including i) Project strategy, ii) Relevance, iii) Effectiveness and Efficiency, iv) Progress Towards Results, v) Project Implementation and Adaptive Management, vi) Project Progress against GEF Criteria, vii) sustainability, viii) Country Ownership, ix), etc.
- *Conclusions and recommendations*, including i) conclusions, and ii) Recommendations.
- *Annexes*, covering TORs of MTR, evaluation matrix, example questionnaires/interview guides, rating scales, interviews agenda, list of persons interviewed, list of documents reviewed, signed UNEG code of conduct form, signed MTR report clearance form, and audit trail (annexed in a separate file).

2. Project Description and Background Context

2.1 Development context

The Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) has a strong dependence on natural resources and biodiversity not only for food and income. The Marshallese relationship with the islands forms the basis of its culture and way of life which has developed in harmony over thousands of years. In the face of global threats, RMI still has pristine waters and coral reefs that contribute to ecosystem services and livelihoods. In recognition of the importance of its natural assets, RMI together with other SIDS responded to global conservation targets through the Micronesia Challenge and specifically for its part, it prepared Reimaanlok to serve as a clear roadmap of the way forward.

The RMI consists of 870 reef systems reaching up from 2.1 million km² of the vast deep Central Pacific. Upon these reef systems are 29 coral atolls and 5 low-lying islands, respectively 22 and 4 of which are inhabited. These 1,225 sand cays and vegetated islets altogether comprise 182 km² of land which remain visible above water level during high tide, and although these small islands represent the only potentially habitable land with a mean elevation of fewer than 2 meters. It also has a vast maritime jurisdiction with more 6,500 km² of the lagoon and more than 2 million km² of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

According to the Project Document, RMI has some of the healthiest and robust coral reefs globally with high species diversity with more than 1,000 fishes, 360 corals, 2,500 invertebrates, 5 sea turtles and 27 marine mammals. On land in 4 atolls are home to globally important nesting seabird populations. Most atolls are dominated by agroforest, beach forest, and savanna. Rare natural semi-arid forests can be found in some of the northern atolls. Coral reef ecosystems are relatively intact in RMI and provide key ecosystem services for local communities. The outer and less populated islands support particularly healthy and diverse communities of marine life; however, in recent years coral reefs in RMI have become increasingly threatened by pressures of fisheries, climate change, and loss of cultural traditions and social structures. Coastal ecosystems near the more urbanized centres of Majuro and Ebeye are more impacted by fishing and pollution than in the outer island regions of RMI.

2.2 Problems that the project sought to address threats and barriers targeted

The harmony between nature and people in the RMI is being threatened in several fronts. Those are summarized in the ProDoc as follows:

- Traditional conservation and management practices are slowly being eroded.
- Increasing commercial fishing pressure on the reef and lagoon resources targeting reef fish, sharks, turtles, groupers, and sea cucumbers for local and export markets.
- Climate change-related events such as sea-level rise, rising ocean temperature and ocean acidification are further undermining the resilience of these atoll ecosystems.

To address these problems, RMI faced some obstacles including the remoteness of many of its communities, the necessary critical mass of skilled people and institutional cohesion needed to manage such a geographically scattered archipelago, scant financial resources, and limited information about biodiversity. Also, the low level of scientific study about the natural environment in RMI prevents more directed planning and prioritization in terms of biodiversity conservation. Thus, more information is needed to support science-based decision making. Furthermore, budgetary sources for implementing the Reimaanlok appeared limited at the time of the Project development. An alternative financing mechanism for natural resource management has been developed in 2010 with the Sustainable Finance Plan that called for doubling of government contributions and raising a USD 13 million endowment fund to achieve the Micronesia Challenge goals.

The Project supports operationalizing the Reimaanlok – the National Conservation Area Plan, adopted in 2008 to effectively conserve at least 30% of the nearshore marine resources and 20% of the terrestrial resources across Micronesia by 2020. This target was changed in 2019 to 50% marine and 50% terrestrial⁷. The Project is implemented in 5 islands/atolls within five years (2017- 2022) with a \$3.9m support through the Global Environment Facility.

2.3 Project Description and Strategy

The project's **goal** is to maintain globally significant biodiversity and the ecosystem goods and services that it provides to the society of the Republic of Marshall Islands. The objective of the project is to sustain biodiversity and livelihoods by building community and ecosystem resilience to threats and degrading influences through integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources in priority atolls/islands⁸.

To achieve the Project's **objective**, three outcomes (project components) are envisaged:

- **Outcome 1:** Conservation areas delineated, declared and efforts sustained in up to 5 priority atolls to meet Reimaanlok targets and contributing to the Micronesia Challenge and Aichi targets.
- **Outcome 2:** Supportive policies, institutions, and communities in place to ensure successful implementation of the Reimaanlok vision; and
- **Outcome 3:** Accessible data and information systems and improved linkages and collaboration with regional initiatives to support adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI.

These three main outcomes were supposed to be achieved by implementing twelve outputs that were supposed to help in lifting five barriers that were identified during the project development phase.⁹ The Project was designed to support the Government of RMI to take steps to:

- Improve biophysical, socioeconomic, and cultural knowledge on terrestrial and nearshore marine resources in 5 outer islands.
- Benefit 2,000 residents, including 1,000 women from integrated approaches to natural resource management in the selected 5 outer islands.
- Designate 30,550 ha of nearshore marine and 502 ha of terrestrial ecosystems as protected areas and placed under enhanced community-driven management.
- Operationalize the PAN Office and develop a suite of secondary legislation recommendations to the PAN Act of 2015.
- Support four RMI environmental professionals to complete the regional post-graduate program.
- Deliver online training to representatives from the 24 inhabited atolls/islands on integrated approaches through the Pacific Regional R2R Program.
- Develop and pilot of an agroforestry certificate program at a higher education provider.
- Enable land-use arrangements developed to support an ecosystem-based approach to natural resource management.
- Strengthen the biodiversity management information system and enhance access to this system.

⁷ Micronesia Islands Forum communique.

⁸ Project Document. Page 20.

⁹ Project Document. Section II. Development Challenge. Main Barriers. Page 8.

- Integrate traditional ecological knowledge into the planning and management of the RMI PAN.
- Increase public awareness of biodiversity conservation and the Reimaanlok process.
- Initiate replication in other atolls and islands to ensure sustainability towards the end of the project.

However, five barriers constrained the Government efforts to achieve the intended targets, those barriers were identified, analyzed, and addressed in the Project document.

The Project contributes to RMI sustainable use of outer island ecosystem goods and services will lead to a reduction in pressures on natural resources and contribute to community development priorities. The Project was designed to deliver socio-economic benefits, enhance human and physical capitals, increase natural and financial capitals.

The project is piloted on five (5) outer islands of Wotho, Mejit, Likiep, Aur and Ebon. The interventions are designed to strengthen local capacities, enabling local communities to implement the integrated natural resource management plans, and providing scale-able demonstrations of sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services. The lessons from this project will guide replication in other sites.

2.4 Project Implementation Arrangements.

The Project is being implemented following UNDP's direct implementation modality (DIM), according to the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement (SBAA) between UNDP and the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Sub-regional Programme for the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (2013-2017). UNDP is responsible and accountable for managing this project, including the monitoring and evaluation of project interventions, achieving project outcomes, and for the effective use of GEF resources.

A Project Board was established and had already convened 5 times. The first meeting took place in March 2018 in Majuro with the participation of 17 members representing 13 different organizations¹⁰.

A few responsible partners/executing bodies entered into agreements with the Project to ensure successful delivery of project outputs and are directly accountable to UNDP and the GoRMI. These include The Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS), MIMRA, the College of Marshall Islands (CMI) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The Project inception workshop (IW) was held on 9 March 2018. It was combined with the inception workshop for the Regional Ride to Reef inception workshop. The inception report (IR) indicated that some specific changes/amendments were made to the project log frame. Yet, it also indicated that as changes made to the log-frame are minor, it was advised that there is no need to raise this at the Project's board meeting. The amended log frame was attached to the IR report and was inclusive of updated indicators, baseline, midterm targets, end of project targets and assumptions.

The Project has faced some delay during its commencement phase due to difficulties in mobilizing the project team. This has led to the adjustment in the pre-determined timeframe/milestones in the project document. The project became effective almost 7 months after the official approval (signing of the ProDoc). The planned start date on the ProDoc was November 2017, the LPAC date was February 2017 while the ProDoc was signed by all parties by January 2018¹¹.

¹⁰ Minutes of First Board Meeting. March 2018.

¹¹ UNDP ProDoc. Cover Page.

2.5 Project timing and milestones

The project milestones captured through the review of various documents are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Project Timelines and Milestones

S. No.	Date	Event
1	21 October 2015	PIF Approval Date
2	27 September 2017	CEO Endorsement Date
3	Mar 9, 2018	Date of Inception Workshop
4	February 2017	LPAC meeting- project endorsement
5	November 2017	Project start date
6	December 2017 and January 2018	Signing of ProDoc by UNDP and the GOP
7	1 August 2020	Expected Date of MTR
9	February 2021	Actual Date of MTR
10	Jan 19, 2023	Expected Date of Terminal Evaluation
11	Feb 1, 2023	Original Planned Closing Date
12	(not set or not applicable)	Revised Planned Closing Date

2.6 Main stakeholders

Involving stakeholders is crucial to ensure a successful MTR. Stakeholders who have project responsibilities, include national government departments, NGO's/ Civil Society Organizations, resource owning communities, community leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Steering Committee, other project stakeholders, academia, etc. Below is a detailed list of the stakeholders involved with the project.

As described above, the main stakeholders involved in the project implementation were interviewed, either in-person or virtually. Those include national government, local government, UN organization, NGO/CSOs, and academic institutions as follows:

- **CMAC members:**

- Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA)
- RMI Environmental Protection Agency (RMIEPA)
- Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs (MoCIA)
- College of the Marshall Islands (CMI)
 - Land Grant
 - Sea Grant
- Marshall Islands Visitors Authority (MIVA)
- Historic Preservation Office (HPO)
- Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS)
- University of the South Pacific (USP)
- Office of Environmental Policy & Planning Coordination (OEPPC)
 - SPREP
- Women United Together in the Marshall Islands (WUTMI)
- Ministry of Natural Resources & Commerce (MoNRC)
- International Organization of Migration (IOM)
- The ProDoc clearly stated the need to involve key stakeholders in project implementation.

- ***Main Government Agencies including:***
 - Office of Environmental Policy and Planning Coordination, OEPPC.
 - Ministry of Internal Affairs
 - Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority, MIMRA
 - Environmental Protection Authority, EPA
 - Ministry of Resources and Development (R&D), Division of Agriculture
 - Ministry of Resources and Development (R&D)
 - Office of the Chief Secretary (OCS)
 - Office of the President
 - Ministry of Resources and Development, Division of Trade and Investment.
 - College of the Marshall Islands, CMI
 - Historic Preservation Office, HPO
 - The Council of Iroij
 - Marshall Islands Visitors Authority, MIVA
 - Ministry of Finance
 - Ministry of Education
 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 - National Training Council, NTC
 - Marshall Islands Mayors Association (MIMA)
 - GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) in RMI

A stakeholder engagement plan was also presented in the ProDoc. The participation of all stakeholders including the private sector is crucial to enhancing the likelihood that the results achieved during the project's lifespan will be sustained after GEF funding ceases. Table 4 of the Project document listed a long list of local, national, and regional stakeholders to be involved in the project implementation and their role in the project.

3. Findings

This section presents the findings of this MTR adhering to the basic structure proposed in the TOR and as reflected in the UNDP/GEF evaluation guidelines.

3.1 Project Strategy

The MTR team analyzed the design of the project as outlined in the ProDoc to identify whether the project strategy is proving to be effective in reaching the desired results. In doing so, the evaluators assessed the extent to which the project addresses country priorities and whether it is country driven. Furthermore, the MTR team evaluated the extent to which the project objectives are consistent with the priorities and objectives of the GEF.

3.1.1 Project Design

The project aims to support operationalizing the Reimaanlok – the National Conservation Area Plan, adopted in 2008 to effectively conserve at least 30% of the nearshore marine resources and 20% of the terrestrial resources across Micronesia by 2020 to sustain atoll biodiversity and livelihoods by building community and ecosystem resilience to threats and degrading influences through integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources. The Project document proposed to implement the principles and processes outlined in Reimaanlok in 5 islands/atolls, the lessons from which will guide replication in other sites.

The project benefited from the lessons learned and built upon the Micronesia Conservation Trust Sustainable Financing Plan¹². The Project realistically covers relevant gender issues in the project design. Specific involvement in project's activities recognized the differences between priorities, needs, labor, and knowledge of men and women, and included seven main actions to be tackled to ensure proper mainstreaming of gender during project implementation.

The project document is well structured and has been used correctly by the project management team for the implementation of project activities. When considering the implementation timeframe of 5 years and a GEF financing of about \$3.927 Million, the project is not progressing very well¹³. Several challenges have been already encountered, including the recruitment of the project team, the sites technical coordinators, the outbreak of COVID-19 and the Dengue fever. Currently, the project passed the mid-term point and, based on the assessment conducted for this MTR of the progress made so far, there are key challenges for the remaining period of implementation.

The Project contributes to Regional UNDAF/Outcome, mainly UNDAF **Outcome**¹⁴ 1: By 2017, the most vulnerable communities across the PICTs are more resilient and select government agencies, civil society organizations and communities have enhanced capacity to apply integrated approaches to environmental management, climate change adaptation/mitigation, and disaster risk management. More specifically, to RMI **Outcome 1.1**: A functional regulatory system with a high degree of compliance at all levels to achieve sustainable development of natural resources and protection of the environment through strengthened gender-inclusive climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction; RMI **Outcome 3.1** Enhanced self-reliance and resourceful livelihoods for poverty reduction, increased food and water security for inclusive socio-economic development, and RMI **Outcome 5.1**: A society based on good governance whose people and institutions uphold traditional, national and international laws and conventions.

The project is being executed under the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) and has been effective since November 2017. As written above under Project timeline and milestones,

¹² UNDP Pro Doc. Page 22.

¹³ Project has gained momentum since project team came on board, in terms of establishing partnership with implementing partners through contractual agreements.

¹⁴ The UNDAF is renamed and aligned to SDG. It came into effect 01/01/2016.

although the Project Document was signed on 1 February 2018 as a formal sign of the start of the implementation, the first AWP marking the actual start of the implementation was partially discussed by the stakeholders during the inception workshop which took place on 9 March 2018. However, it was not finalized and the need to develop a multi-year work plan was highlighted by the Government.

The Project also contributes to UNDP Strategic Plan **Output 2.5:** Legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions enabled to ensure the conservation, sustainable use, access, and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, in line with international conventions and national legislation.

The review of the project strategy and the national context for this project indicates that this strategy is a direct response to national needs and priorities. It aims to maintain globally significant biodiversity and the ecosystem goods and services that it provides to the society of the Republic of Marshall Islands. The project focuses on a) the problems being addressed by the project, b) its root causes, and c) the barriers to overcome to address the problem and its root causes, the project's intervention has been organized in three components, under which three 'outcomes' are expected. The project is well documented in the project document, which has provided a very useful "blueprint" for the project team to guide the implementation of the project.

According to the UNDP/GEF Mid Term Review Guide, the MTR consultant assesses and analyzes whether: the Project objective and components were clear, well-written, practical and feasible within the proposed timeframe and with the allocated budget; the ability and capacities of the Project's executing agency to implement the project's components in line with the proposed design; what lessons learned from other relevant projects were incorporated into the project design; needed partnerships to implement the project were properly incorporated in the project design; financial resources (including the cash and in-kind co-financing) were adequate or not; the Project's assumptions and risks identified during the project preparation with the proposed mitigation measures, and the Project's outcomes and the proposed indicators were SMART.

The involvement of men and women equally into project activities as well as mainstreaming gender in the project's activities are rated as Satisfactory (S).

Within this context, the project is fully relevant for the Marshall Islands, supporting the government to support operationalizing the Reimaanlok building community and ecosystem resilience to threats and degrading influences through integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources. The Project is well aligned with key national strategies and policies.

3.1.2 Results Framework/ Logical framework

The Project Results Framework/Logical Framework (LF) formulated during the design phase of this project presents a well-articulated set of expected results. No major changes were made during the inception phase to the project strategy (expected results) stated in the project document. The review of the Theory of Change indicates a good and logical theory – Barriers → Outputs → Outcomes → Impact Drivers and Assumptions → Intermediate States → Impacts. Project financial resources have been used to implement planned activities to overcome 5 barriers to reach a set of expected outputs (12), which would contribute in achieving a set of expected outcomes (3), which together should contribute to achieving the overall objective of the project. The LF includes - for each outcome - a set of indicators and targets to be achieved at the end of the project and that is used to monitor the performance of the project.

The review of the Project LG and ToC confirms that this project is well aligned with national priorities and its logic is appropriate to address clear national needs/priorities. The model of the project presented in Project LF is summarized in Table 4. It includes one objective, three outcomes and 12 outputs. For each expected outcome, indicators to measure the progress of the project were identified.

Table 4. Project LF Model

Expected Results	Indicators
Objective: To sustain atoll biodiversity and livelihoods by building community and ecosystem resilience to threats and degrading influences through integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal, policy and institutional frameworks in place for conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit-sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems. 2. The number of direct project beneficiaries.
<p>Outcome 1: Conservation areas delineated, declared, and efforts sustained in 5 priority outer islands to meet Reimaanlok targets and contributing to the Micronesia Challenge and Aichi targets</p> <p>Output 1.1: Marine and terrestrial biodiversity and socio-economic surveys conducted or updated in 5 outer islands to assess status and threats and serve as a guide in the delineation of conservation areas and spatial planning.</p> <p>Output 1.2: Conservation areas delineated and declared in 5 outer islands following Reimaanlok guidelines: Type I (subsistence non-commercial use) and Type II (high level of protection) areas; coarse-scale, fine-scale and species conservation targets; land-sea interactions.</p> <p>Output 1.3: Integrated management plans developed or updated and implemented in 5 outer islands following the Reimaanlok process and balancing livelihood considerations.</p> <p>Output 1.4: Sustainable financing mechanisms from internal and external sources put in place to further build up the RMI sub-account in the Micronesia Challenge Trust to meet the costs of implementing the National Conservation Area Plan</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Terrestrial and marine ecosystems under enhanced management. 4. Number of Resource Management Plans (NRMPs), inclusive of integrated terrestrial and coastal resource assessments and management strategies, approved by local resource committees and under implementation
<p>Outcome 2: Supportive policies, institutions and communities in place to ensure successful implementation of the Reimaanlok vision.</p> <p>Output 2.1: An action plan for developing secondary legislation to the Protected Area Network (PAN) Act 2015 formulated.</p> <p>Output 2.2: The PAN Office is operationalized through agreed organizational arrangements formally adopted through an appropriate policy instrument</p> <p>Output 2.3: Strengthened community-based management structures recognizing traditional ownership of resources (land, coastal, etc.) and local-national arrangements to enable communities to take</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Position of PAN Coordinator, overseeing the operation of the PAN office, is institutionalized. 6. Number of RMI professionals trained in integrated approaches through the Regional Pacific R2R Program

<p>ownership and leadership in the formulation and subsequent implementation of integrated resource management plans.</p> <p>Output 2.4: Capacity building on integrated approaches for conservation and livelihoods benefitting key national government agencies, community leaders and residents in all 24 outer islands in the entire country</p>	
<p>Outcome 3: Accessible data and information systems and improved linkages and collaboration with regional initiatives to support adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI.</p> <p>Output 3.1: GIS-based management information system (MIS) developed under the Reimaanlok project improved as an accessible repository for all spatial biodiversity and resource management information to aid in policy formulation, enforcement, monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management.</p> <p>Output 3.2: Local and traditional knowledge documented and compiled in the MIS for easy access and preserved for inputs in the development of integrated management plans.</p> <p>Output 3.3: Support for expansion/continuation of education and awareness programs at the local and national levels, e.g., the ‘Just Act Natural’ initiative; complementary awareness programs implemented using various forms of media to mobilize support for conservation and livelihoods.</p> <p>Output 3.4: Coordination established with the Pacific R2R program – regional program support project and other national R2R projects – in terms of monitoring and evaluation and south-south collaboration</p>	<p>7. National repository for spatial biodiversity and resource management information enhanced and sustained.</p> <p>8. Cultural expressions (stories, chants, dances, oration, material production, proverbs) linked to resource management documented and mapped in the 5 project sites management plans and celebrated annually via intergenerational knowledge transmission events.</p>

Source: UNDP Project document

The project strategy and the Theory of Change¹⁵ were confirmed during the inception phase of the project, including at the inception workshop held in Majuro on March 9, 2018. Only “minor amendments” were recommended for output 2.4, outcome 3 and output 3.3. However, it was noticed that output 2.4 remained the same as proposed in the project document and changes were made to outcome 3 and output 3.3 as presented in Table 5. The Evaluation Team confirms that a good review of the project strategy was conducted during the inception phase, including the context of the project.

Table 5. Changes to the Project’s Outcomes and Outputs

Original outputs/outcomes	Modified Outputs/outcomes
Output 2.4: Capacity building on integrated approaches for conservation and livelihoods benefitting key national government agencies, community leaders and residents in all 24 outer islands in the entire country	Output 2.4: Capacity building on integrated approaches for conservation and livelihoods benefitting key national government agencies, community leaders and residents in all 24 outer islands in the entire country conducted

¹⁵ UNDP Project Document. Section III. Strategy: Theory of Change, and Figure 1: Theory of Change Diagram.

Outcome 3: Accessible data and information systems and improved linkages and collaboration with regional initiatives to support adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI.	OUTCOME 3: Improved collaboration and decision through the readily accessible and functional database and information system including the Pacific R2R Program, to support adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI
Output 3.3: Support for expansion/continuation of education and awareness programs at the local and national levels, e.g., the 'Just Act Natural' initiative; complementary awareness programs implemented using various forms of media to mobilize support for conservation and livelihoods.	Output 3.3: Expansion/continuation of education and awareness programs at the local and national levels supported, e.g., the 'Just Act Natural' initiative; complementary awareness programs implemented using various forms of media to mobilize support for conservation and livelihoods.

The project's TOC and LF presented above provide good response to national needs/priorities to strengthening natural resource management in atoll communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI); particularly addressing the five impact drivers (ID) of degradation of atoll biodiversity and livelihoods. The detailed review of the project TOC and LF are logical. It includes about 44 distinct indicative activities under 12 expected outputs seeking to sustain atoll biodiversity and livelihoods by building community and ecosystem resilience to threats and degrading influences through integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources.

Regarding the set of indicators and their respective targets to measure the performance of the project, a total of 8 indicators were identified to measure the progress made in achieving its expected outcomes and objective: 2 indicators were identified to measure how well the project is progressing toward its objective; 2 indicators to monitor the progress under outcome 1; 2 indicators to monitor the progress under outcome 2, and 2 indicators to measure the progress made under outcome 3. The number of indicators is reasonable for a project of this size; making the monitoring function somewhat easy to follow. Table 6 provides an overview of the MTR assessment of the Project's LFA and how "SMART" the achievements are compared to the defined mid-point project targets. Indicators were SMART in general.

Table 6. Overview of the Mid-Term Review of the Project's Log-frame

Criteria	MTR Comments
Specific	Indicators are specific and target-oriented in general.
Measurable	The indicators are linked to measurable targets.
Achievable	All of the indicators are achievable.
Relevant	All indicators are relevant
Time-bound	The time limit was not identified clearly. Targets were identified at the mid-term and the end of the project. But it would have been more appropriate and practical to have more targets specified on yearly bases to facilitate project progress monitoring.

3.2 Progress Towards Results

3.2.1 Progress towards outcomes analysis

The information presented in this section has been sourced from the Annual Work Plans (AWP) 2018, 2019 and 2020 and Annual Progress Reports (APR) 2019 and 2020 supplemented with information collected during the MTR sites visits and stakeholders'

meetings. The progress towards the project outcomes is presented for each outcome as the GEF guidelines for MTR requires the evaluators to provide one overall rating for each outcome and the overall objective.

Based on observations, data collection and analyses, interviews, and review of the project's technical reports and progress reports, a detailed assessment at the outcome level is presented below (Table 7).

GEF Tracking Tool:

According to the Project Document, two GEF tracking tools (TTs) are to be used for this project the international Waters and Biodiversity. The MTR consultant reviewed the midterm GEF Tracking Tool for Biodiversity and the GEF 7 Core Indicator Worksheet. The baseline filled-in tracking tool is annexed in a separate file to this report; the midterm tracking tools were not prepared by the time of submitting the MTR report. The IWs TT was not submitted at all.

The GEF Tracking Tool is a very useful tool used to assess progress toward the outcome, the project team did not utilize this valuable tool to assess progress (although the absence of this practice did not hinder the project implementation). The TT is used to provide a standardized approach to document and monitor progress and to quantify and disaggregate progress. The progress towards outcomes analysis in the GEF Tracking Tool at the baseline can be compared and analyzed with the situation at the MTR. The TT is to be updated before the MOTR then should be updated and shared with the Terminal Evaluation team during the terminal evaluation.

The project objective is to sustain biodiversity and livelihoods by building community and ecosystem resilience to threats and degrading influences through integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources in priority atolls/islands. It follows from the detailed analysis of outcomes that by the end of 2022 the project objective is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets with significant shortcomings. Therefore, the overall rating for progress to the achievement of the project objective at MTR is **Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**.

Table 7: Matrix for rating the Achievement of Outcomes

The key is used for indicator assessment (Color Coding):

Green = Completed, the indicator shows achievement
Yellow = On target to be achieved by the end of the project
Red = Not on target to be achieved by project closure

Project Objective: To sustain atoll biodiversity and livelihoods by building community and ecosystem resilience to threats and degrading influences through integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources			
Indicator	Midterm target level	Status at MTR	Rating
Legal, policy and institutional frameworks in place for conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit-sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems (Indicator 2.5 from UNDP Strategic Plan)	The legal framework is in place, but institutional and regulatory frameworks are generally lacking	<p>Similar status as the baseline. As identified in the ProDoc</p> <p>The PAN Regulation and PAN SAP have now been finalized and waiting for MIMRA's Board approval.</p>	MS
Number of direct project beneficiaries	500 totals, including 250 women	<p>A total of 573 beneficiaries with 293 women have benefitted so far from the project as detailed below:</p> <p>1. The College of Marshall Islands designed and approved an Agroforestry Certificate curriculum, recruited 18</p>	S

		<p>participants (14 male and 4 female) to undertake Agroforestry/Terrestrial Certification Program.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The socio-economic survey and LEAP workshop completed in Likiep and Aur atolls. 289 (159 females, 130 males) outer island community members participated in both surveys and workshops. 3. IOM conducted a national consultation to review the guidelines for collection of cultural information. 23 people attended (11 female and 12 males). 4. In Ebon, IOM facilitated community consultation to establish a feasible livelihood activity and LEAP workshop. A total number of 207 (108 females, 99 males) people attended the consultation. 5. Six males GIS users in the RMI underwent training at the College of the Marshall Islands on how to manage the National Spatial Analytic Facility. 6. A pilot study on land use in the RMI to formulate a culturally appropriate enforcement arrangement for conservation was conducted on Laura. 30 people (19 males, 11 females) were engaged as primary informants of the survey 	
Outcome 1: Conservation areas delineated, declared and efforts sustained in up to 5 priority atolls to meet Reimaanlok targets and contributing to the Micronesia Challenge and Aichi targets			
Indicator	Midterm target level	Status at MTR¹⁶	Rating
Terrestrial and marine ecosystems under enhanced management	<p>New protected areas and coverage of unprotected ecosystems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of new terrestrial PAs: 2 - Coverage of new terrestrial PAs: 100 ha 	<p>Report for the marine survey for Wotho and Aur has been received by PIU while awaiting submission of Ebon from MIMRA. A terrestrial survey using drones has been completed for three sites (Aur, Mejit and Likiep). Cultural surveys are in progress. The Marine survey for Likiep and Mejit completed, with the analyzed results to be made available. Analyzed data from the terrestrial survey to be submitted by MICS. Cultural survey completed by HPO and IOM.</p>	US

¹⁶ The main text was compiled from the Project's PIRs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of new marine PAs: 2 - Coverage of new nearshore marine PAs: 10,000 ha 	<p>A hydrogeological survey in Likiep by SPC is on hold due to the travel restriction.</p> <p>MICS has developed several MPA network scenarios for Wotho. This will be finalized once the team can travel to the island.</p> <p>In principle, the MPA has been set of Wotho, awaiting the finalization of the Management Plan.</p> <p>The delineation work is in line to be completed according to the set timeline. No national consultant recruited yet, but Chief Technical Advisor is already on board to provide the support.</p>	
Number of Resource Management Plans (NRMPs), inclusive of integrated terrestrial and coastal resource assessments and management strategies, approved by local resource committees and under implementation	2 NRMPs completed	<p>Wotho management plan completed and waiting for signing by the Mayors and community leaders by February 2021.</p> <p>For the remaining 4 sites, Terrestrial surveys using drones, socio-economic and LEAP surveys for two sites completed.</p> <p>Geodetic surveys for flood risk assessment completed for the five sites.</p> <p>Note: Marine and socio-economic surveys for three demo sites (Wotho, Ebon and Aur) were conducted by MIMRA before this project, PIU is consolidating these data.</p> <p>All management plan should be in place by December 2021</p>	MS
Outcome 2: Supportive policies, institutions and communities in place to ensure successful implementation of the Reimaanlok vision			
Position of PAN Coordinator, overseeing the operation of the PAN office, is institutionalized	PIU functioning as interim PAN Office and PAN Coordinator financed with project funds	<p>The revised PAN Act was approved by Parliament in August 2019 giving MIMRA the mandate to establish the PAN Office.</p> <p>The PAN Office was established thereafter and is located within the MIMRA office premises.</p> <p>The responsibility of establishing the PAN office was removed from PIU.</p> <p>MIMRA appointed the PAN Coordinator to lead the PAN Office.</p> <p>PIU is supporting the PAN Coordinator's salary for three years (2020-2022). An agreement (UNDP/MIMRA) was made to formalize this engagement, effective from February 2020.</p>	S
Number of RMI professionals trained in integrated approaches	2	The postgraduate diploma course at the James Cook University, Australia organized through the Regional R2R program was specifically designed for the current cohorts of students. The project document was signed in January 2018 and three members (Project	MS

through the Regional Pacific R2R Program		<p>Manager, Deputy Project Manager, Project Associate) of the PIU was on board by August 2018. By then, the Postgraduate Diploma Course had progressed to the extent that the Regional R2R project was not able to take onboard new students</p> <p>The PIU, in consultation with UNDP both in Fiji and Regional Technical Adviser at Bangkok, will scout for similar training opportunities with College of the Marshall Islands and the University of the South Pacific. Discussions and consultations are progressing UNDP and the University of the South Pacific signed an agreement for the delivery of the Post Graduate Diploma in Environment Management training to four targeted Marshallese.</p> <p>The challenge encountered is the lack of interest from Marshallese to undertake the course. To date, no students enrolled in the course, but this will be a priority for 2021.</p>	
Outcome 3: Accessible data and information systems and improved linkages and collaboration with regional initiatives to support adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI			
National repository for spatial biodiversity and resource management information enhanced and sustained	Conservation GIS database and online clearinghouse updated with new data from 5 project sites	<p>The online facility has been established within the College of the Marshall Islands (CMI). The facility has a dedicated server with 16 laptop computers procured by the project for this purpose.</p> <p>A local GIS expert hired to manage the portal. He already conducted training to six GIS practitioners in the RMI on the application of the NSAF.</p>	MS
Cultural expressions (stories, chants, dances, oration, material production, proverbs) linked to resource management documented and mapped in the 5 project sites management plans and celebrated annually via inter-generational knowledge transmission events	TEK surveys completed in the 5 project sites, and their management plans incorporate materials and activities linking cultural expressions and resource management	<p>The concerned teams from IOM and HOP had initial discussions with potential stakeholders concerning their involvement in documenting cultural expressions. These include JoJiKum Youth Group, Youth to Youth Marshall Islands and Ministry of Internal Affairs, International Office for Migration (IOM), including island community of Aur. The same will be conducted in the other four project demonstration sites.</p> <p>The stakeholder interest and support has been identified. Based on their positive response, the R2R is planning a way forward and will progress this in the remaining year.</p> <p>JoJikUm Youth is currently working with the youth of Ebon to document traditional knowledge and practices. The anthropological survey is completed for Aur.</p>	MS

3.2.2 Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective

Despite the reported slow progress of the project implementation, the MTR team considers that a number of the five barriers that continue to hinder the achievement of effective and financially sustainable management of terrestrial and nearshore marine ecosystems namely those related to the Lack of information on the ecosystem health of the outer islands, as well as Erosion of traditional conservation and management practices, and insufficient awareness, knowledge, and access to available information are being partially addressed by the project activities under the project Components and will be removed by the achievement of the respective outputs in the 2nd half of 2022. The work under outcomes 1 and 3 helps to partially leave these two barriers, while they work under outcome 2 is still lagging, which has affected barriers 3 and 4.

While the Project needs to work intensively on the remaining three barriers: Insufficient human resources for PAN management and biodiversity conservation, and lack of community-level capacity, framework and institutional arrangements for PA network management, and Insufficient human resource capacity for sustaining effective PAN management, the work on the first two barriers that are partially addressed should also continue to ensure that all barriers are left.

3.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

This section of the MTR report provides an assessment of the components of project implementation and adaptive management, namely management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation, management of risks, stakeholder engagement, as well as reporting and communications.

3.3.1 Management Arrangements

The project is being executed under the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) and has been effective since November 2017. As written above under Project timeline and milestones, although the Project Document was signed on 1 February 2018 as a formal sign of the start of the implementation, the first AWP marking the actual start of the implementation was partially discussed by the stakeholders during the inception workshop which took place on 9 March 2018. However, it was not finalized and the need to develop a multi-year work plan was highlighted by the Government.

The project startup was delayed¹⁷. There was a gap of seven months between the signing of the project document to the recruitment of the Project Team (Project Implementation Unit-PIU)¹⁸. This required the project team to make changes to the project timeframe. The PIU is housed within the Climate Change Directorate (CCD) in Majuro. However, to expedite the implementation process and compensate for the wasted time, the project implementation unit (PIU) has adapted to this delay by progressing the signing of agreements with responsible partners, undertook missions to demonstration sites, regular reviews of work plans and budgets, in consultation with UNDP and Regional Technical Advisor.

Analysis of the Project Implementation Reports suggests that since the inception of the project, Project Implementation Unit (PIU) has been facing several issues that affected the effectiveness of the project implementation.

- Firstly, the 2019 PIR states that transportation to the outer islands was a major obstacle to visit the project site. Each of the project sites has an airstrip and major

¹⁷ 2019 PIR.

¹⁸ It took 7 months to recruit part of the project team. The team included a Project Manager, Deputy Project Manager, Project Associate and Admin and Finance Officer. However, the recruitment of the five site coordinators was delayed ensuring that the PIU is fully on board.

transportation means is through airplane. The risk arises when there is no flight to the project sites that can affect the mobilization of teams from Majuro to the islands and vice-versa. There are inter-island ships but can be inconsistent.

- **Secondly**, the 2019 PIR states that the land disputes amongst the land-owning units particularly in the delineation of terrestrial and marine conservation areas.
- **thirdly**, political, and traditional influences affected the implementation of the project implementation mainly when it comes to influencing community support, diverting project activities/funds into other activities outside of the project's mandate, etc.
- **Fourthly**: the 2020 PIR states that the PIR Covid-19 pandemic impact is equally experienced in the RMI. The RMI government-imposed travel ban from January 2020 and this has prevented in-country travel for International experts to support partners in implementing project activities, e.g. marine biologist hired by Marshall Island Conservation Society (MICS) to lead the marine survey wasn't able to travel thus delayed the conduct of this survey, noting that these surveys are highly scientific. Internal movement is restricted due to the pandemic.
- **Fifthly**: the 2020 PIR states that the Dengue fever Outbreak was another major issue the project faced. The outbreak in Ebeye and Majuro islands caused the government to declare an epidemic in July 2019 until January 2020. This was followed by the travel ban, and any travel outside of these two affected islands was strictly prohibited. Consequently, this affected the progress of the implementation because not one of our partners was able to travel to the demonstration sites.
- **Sixthly**: Limited pool of qualified individuals in the country. The recruitment of project staff took longer than expected because of the limited number of professional cadres in the country (initially caused a 7-month delay during the first year of the implementation). The project team and UNDP looked for alternative solutions to mobilize the needed staff. For example, UNDP conducted manual recruitment instead of the online process. In some instances, 'headhunting' was conducted to ensure the right people were recruited for the positions. This enabled the recruitment of the five site coordinators.

About the project management, the MTR team has made the following observations: the establishment of the PIU took place after 7 months of the start of the project, the recruitment of the site coordinators took around 2 years, and the organization of the first project steering committee/ Board meeting took around 15 months after the project document was signed, around 1 year after the inception workshop.

The evaluators consider that while the management arrangements used for the project, in theory, support effective and efficient implementation of the project, in practice there were delays caused by some elements of the project management arrangement that require immediate attention and corrective action. Consequently, the rating for the management arrangement component is **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**.

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Satisfactory (S)	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Unsatisfactory (U)	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)
			MU		

3.3.2 Work planning

PIU prepares Annual Work Plan (AWP) that specifies the project's planned activities for the next year and lists activities and targets for the year with quarterly implementation timeline as well as the total budget allocation for each activity in the year. AWP is then submitted for approval to the Project Board. After obtaining the approval from the Board, PIU submits AWP to UNDP for approval.

Based on the information collected, the MTR Team compared the budgeted annual work plans with the actual annual disbursements (from the CDRs), the results are presented in Table 8 below:

Table 8. Annual Work Plans versus Actual Expenditures¹⁹

Year	AWP Budget (\$)	Actual Expenditures	% Spent
2018	326,000	242,074.30	74.25
2019	1,163,247	779,755.90	67.03 ²⁰
2020	1,200,819	507,068.27	42.22 ²¹
Total	2,690,066	1,528,898.47	56.83

Numbers presented in the table above reveal that the total expenditure for the last 3 years is around 46% of the total planned budgets in the AWP. The implementation team has been guided by activities to be implemented to reach the expected results. Each AWP included a list of activities and a tentative budget. Through the implementation of activities, the use of adaptive management measures was limited and thus did not change the progress of the project toward its expected results. However, the planned 2020 expenditures, was affected by the outbreak of COVID19. Yet, a rigorous follow up is needed to make sure that the project's expenditure is in line with the work planning

Despite some good elements in the work planning overall, this component did not lead to an effective and efficient implementation of the project. Given the challenges the project will be facing in accelerating the implementation, the adaptability and flexibility of this component must be improved. Therefore, the rating for the work planning component is **Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**.

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Satisfactory (S)	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Unsatisfactory (U)	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)
		MS			

3.3.3 Finance and co-finance

The below tables provide a summary of resources allocation for the project and of the level of disbursement of the GEF grant funds as well as the amount of co-finance up to MTR.

At the time of this MTR, the review of financial records as recorded in the UNDP Atlas system indicates that the actual expenditures including commitments allocated against the GEF project grant for the years January 2018 to December 2020 (36 months) represent **56.73%** (US\$ **1,531,140**) of the approved budget of US\$ **2,698,958** versus an elapsed time of **60%** (36 months out of 60 if we consider the project start date as per the ProDoc, January 2018). **Table 9** below displays the financial summary of the project implementation.

The project was not subject to any financial audit during the last 3 years.

Co-financing / Parallel Financing

Co-financing commitments at the outset of the project totalled the amount of US\$ 4,057,139 as in-kind and grant co-financing (see Table 10), which represented about 51% of the total financial resources required in the project document of US\$ 7,985,120 (GEF grant + co-financing) for the implementation of the project. All pledged amounts listed in the table below were supported by co-financing letters and are part of the UNDP ProDoc.

¹⁹ Source: Project AWP and UNDP-Atlas CDR Reports.

²⁰ Low spending was largely the result of the Dengue Outbreak.

²¹ Low spending was mainly due to COVID-19 Outbreak.

The table indicates that all co-financings were pledged by UNDP, the Government and civil society organization. At the time of the MTR, there were no confirmed reported co-financing contributions²². Any contributions should be confirmed by letters are also confirmed by the review conducted for this MTR.

Table 9. UNDP GEF Project Funds Disbursement Status (January 2021 in USD)²³

	Budget Approved (USD)	Expenditure as of August 2020				% of budget spent	Difference between actual and planned budget
		2018	2019	2020	Total spent		
TOTAL GEF	2,698,958	226,441	601,505	703,194	1,531,140	56.73	1,167,818

Table 10. Co-financing Status²⁴

Co-finance Source	Co-financing Type	Co-financing Amount
Climate Change Directorate	In-kind	USD 500,000
	Grant	USD 500,000
Ministry of Internal Affairs (IA)	In-kind	USD 2,452,768
MI Conservation Society (MICS)	In-kind	USD 100,000
Women United Together MI (WUTMI)	In-kind	USD 378,000
UNDP	In-kind	USD 126,371

3.3.4 Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems

The monitoring framework proposed in the Project Document is composed of several elements, following the UNDP and GEF standard monitoring and reporting requirements as outlined in the UNDP POPP. However, since the inception of the project, the implementation of the monitoring framework has been limited to the preparation of quarterly progress reports, annual implementation reports, and annual work plans. The progress in implementation has thus been tracked through PIU and PSC.

PIU prepares QPRs and PIRs that contains information on planned activities and degree of actual achievement in the reporting period as well as financial information on planned budget and actual disbursements in a tabular format. Apart from that, PIRs also contain a narrative assessment of the achievements as well as of critical risk management, adjustments, gender aspect and social and environmental standards.

The evaluators noted that quarterly progress reports are complementing the annual implementation reports as both use different assessment methods of the project's targets' achievement. Having reviewed the available PIRs and QPRs, the MTR team noted that PIU had provided suggestions and recommendations for adaptive management of the project both in the 2019 and 2020 PIRs. However, there are no signs of follow-up on the recommendations, no evidence of consideration of the suggestions by PB as the other elements of the project monitoring system. The evaluators judge that the delays in implementation are caused by a combined lack of monitoring of output-level targets as well as the absence of follow-up on the recommendations provided in PIRs/QPRs by the other elements of the project monitoring system, namely PB. PB for the project meets regularly twice; one at the beginning of a calendar year and one towards the end of the year, although there is no provision on the

²² The Project team has shared a report indicated that all co-financing commitments have been materialized. However, the MTR team did not see any evidence to support this claim.

²³ Source: UNDP Atlas CDRs and Information Provided by the Project team.

²⁴ Source: UNDP ProDoc, Letter from the Government of GB, and Project documentation provided by the Project team.

frequency and time of meetings. The meetings are used to enable review of the AWP prepared by PMU and to present the project progress. So far, several board meetings, and Mayors meetings were organized: March 2018, November 2018, March 2019, October 2019, August 2020, and September 2020²⁵.

The evaluators, therefore, suggest that the role of the PB should be strengthened, more meetings to be convened to provide the needed political and technical support to the PIU. Two meetings per year for the PB should be enough, however, it is not evidenced that these two meetings were taken place during the last three years of implementation. It is necessary that one PB meeting is taking place before the submission of the PIR (due by mid-year) to review and approve the report before submitting it to UNDP and the GEF. Also, this arrangement will enable UIP to take proper corrective measures in mid-year and ensure that implementation of the project is accelerated.

The evaluation plan proposed in the Project Document includes the two mandatory elements required by the GEF M&E Policy, namely a Mid-Term Review and a Terminal Evaluation. MTR is being conducted; however, it is not at the mid-point in project implementation as originally planned. The evaluation plan also includes a set of M&E tools which are all missing at the mid-term point, including:

- the Mid-term GEF Tracking Tool updated by the project team and submitted to the evaluator,
- Supervision missions.
- Oversight missions.
- Knowledge management products
- Lessons learned and knowledge generation produced on annual bases.
- Financial audit as per UNDP audit policies.

Based on the above, the evaluators adjudge that the project level monitoring requires remedial actions particularly in the monitoring of annual targets for individual outputs of the project to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the project implementation. Accordingly, the rating given for the project level monitoring component is **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**.

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Satisfactory (S)	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Unsatisfactory (U)	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)
			MU		

The MTR team considers the risk and assumptions identification sufficiently detailed and addressing a variety of project risk areas such as nature/size of project activities, technical/policy/institutional complexities, as well as stakeholder ownership or resistance²⁶. The MTR team did not find any evidence of risk reassessment hence the risk identification at project design and inception appears to be one-time-only exercise. The Project's PIRs identified annual critical risks but did not provide any update on the risks identified during the project formulation. In theory, there should be periodic re-assessment of project-related risks. While it could be argued that there is not much value in the reassessment of risks related to technical/policy/institutional arrangement complexities and nature/size of the project activities, the MTR team consider lack of follow up assessment in the other project-related risk areas as a potential threat to the project success. Also, the MTR team did not see any evidence that the UNDP team are updating the risks and issues logs into the ATLAS system.

Based on the above, the MTR team rates risk identification and management as **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**.

²⁵ Minutes of the meetings were shared with the evaluators.

²⁶ UNDP ProDoc. Annex G: Monitoring Plan. Page 106 and section ii. Risk Management. Table 5. Page 39-41.

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Satisfactory (S)	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Unsatisfactory (U)	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)
			MU		

3.3.5 Stakeholder engagement

According to the Project Document, during the design phase of the project, several stakeholders were involved through baseline surveys and consultation workshops/meetings. This stands valid mainly for the key line ministries and associated agencies as well as local authorities (local communities, local government units, local resource committees, landowners, custodians of traditional knowledge, etc.

The ProDoc stated the importance of stakeholder consultation throughout project preparation and implementation to ensure that best practices and lessons learned were captured in decision-making, and to ensure synergies of similar efforts. In section iii. Stakeholder engagement and Table 4 in the Project document listed the project stakeholders and divided them into the direct beneficiaries, community-based stakeholders, project implementation stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, state-owned enterprises, private sector, and regional stakeholders. The list identified the role of stakeholders, with their proposed role in project implementation specified.

The ProDoc highlighted the importance of engaging three existed structures:

- the Coastal Management Advisory Council (CMAC) as one of the key stakeholder's engagement platforms. The CMAC, consisting of 12 members all of them are part of the technical advisory committee in the Protected Areas Network act 2015 and was proposed to be the technical working group for the Project.
- the local resource committees (LRCs), formed as part of the Reimaanlok process, should be considered as the main stakeholder engagement structures for facilitating development and implementation of the integrated management plans for the 5 outer islands.
- local government units and church organizations should have been utilized to help guide the activities on the islands.

Nevertheless, the MTR noticed that these three main structures were not fully in place and operational and thus a very valuable opportunity to strengthen the project's partnerships and guide its implementation is lost.

The project managed to engage key stakeholders. Stakeholders involvement is critical not only to provide strategic guidance to the Project but also supervised the actual implementation of the project in different piloting sites. The project has organized several meetings at the national and site levels to ensure proper stakeholder engagement.²⁷

To the MTR, and based on the discussion with key stakeholders, it seems that relationships with stakeholders were pleasant but not strong. The project managed to establish several partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations, including international organizations. The project established several contractual agreements with the key partners to provide the project with the needed technical support mainly when it comes to the project's piloting in outer islands.

At the local level (provincial, district and community-level) stakeholder engagements were mostly taken care of by partners such as IOM, and the activities the project supported in the

²⁷ Meetings included: MIMRA, Ministry of Natural Resource, President and Senior Management Team, College of Marshall Islands, Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs, Land Grant Division, Women United Together Marshall Islands, Division of Agriculture, Commissioner, Public School System, Historic Preservation Office, Mayors- for the five sites, Gender Officer, MoCIA, Small Grant: UNDP, Judiciary, University of the South Pacific: Majuro, RMI EPA, and EPPSO

pilot outer islands. Several studies (socio-economic assessment, and feasibility study) and implementation of field interventions including agroforestry, sustainable agriculture, mariculture, animal husbandry, small-scale fisheries, ecotourism, or handicrafts. For example, IOM was able to implement key activities related to Outcome 1 (outputs 1.1 and 1.3) in 5 outer islands. They managed to include around 500 community members by July 2020, over 50% of participants were female²⁸ (258 female). Also, there are various levels of engagement with community and stakeholders, i.e. the LEAP work is more engaging than others, for example, survey work done by MIMRA (marine and MICS), ground control points (MICS and Lands and Survey), cultural survey (Historical Preservation Office) and Youth engagement with Youth NGO.

In conclusion, the project was successful in involving a few stakeholders, in project implementation. Yet, the involvement and partnerships developed with the many key stakeholders and partners is very limited and does not respond to the Project Document proposed structure. The MTR recommends strengthening the existing partnerships and utilizing the three listed above mechanisms.

3.3.6 Reporting and Communication

As described under the sections on Monitoring & Evaluation, the PIU prepares Quarterly Progress Reports for operational purposes and at the end of each quarter. The evaluation team reviewed FOUR QPRs out of the proposed Twelve QPRs (Q3 and 4 for 2018 in one report, Q1 and 2 for 2019 in one report, Quarter 3 and 4 2019 in one report, and Q1 2020). One annual project report for 2019 was also reviewed. Reporting during project implementation helps the project implementing partners to identify potential issues that may endanger the project's capacity to achieve its development objectives. Reporting also helps to make informed decisions, provides valuable information for project evaluation, and provides lessons for future projects. Effective and timely communication between the project implementing partners is a key element in that respect.

It was observed by the evaluation team that the project management arrangement is a challenge by itself. Two members of the project team are based in the RMI, while two staff members are based in Fiji. Interviewed stakeholders highlighted the fact that this arrangement made communication with the project team more difficult than usual. Furthermore, the Government officials believe that all project team should be local and based in the RMI. If needed, international advisors could be hired for a short duration and specific assignments.

Communication difficulties were also evident in the minutes of the board meeting that was organized in October 2019. It was about 2 years after the start of the project implementation, yet critical issues were discussed for the first time like the name of the Project board. It was suggested, then later approved, to change the name of the project board to project Steering committee. The reason for this request, as stated in the minutes of the board meeting is that "Project Board requires Cabinet approval whereas this Board is just for the lifetime of the project to do steering committee work".

Interviews with the stakeholders revealed that communication is a challenge on multiple levels, UNDP to partners, partners to partners, and UNDP to consultants. Stakeholders believe that UNDP is not playing its role as it should play a catalytic role to ensure smooth project implementation²⁹.

The MTR team believes that more timely communication would have had an accelerating effect on the project implementation had the communication taken place much earlier in the year. Nevertheless, the evaluators believe the communication episode was extraordinary and have confidence that there are no systemic shortcomings in the communication between the

²⁸ IMO Presentation. December 2020.

²⁹ Minutes of meeting: Partners workshop. 9 December 2020.

implementing partners. Therefore, the rating for the reporting and communication component is **Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**.

The overall rating for the project implementation and adaptive management is based on an aggregation of the above ratings for individual components above. **Three** out of the six components are rated **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**, and **three** out of the six components are rated as **Moderately satisfactory (MS)**, and taking into consideration the challenges the project has faced, the overall rating for project implementation and adaptive management is **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**.

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Satisfactory (S)	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Unsatisfactory (U)	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)
			MU		

3.3.7 Country Ownership

The project design and objectives were relevant to the national development priorities and the priorities identified in The Marshall Islands national strategies and plans, and to support operationalizing the Reimaanlok – the National Conservation Area Plan, adopted in 2008 to effectively conserve at least 30% of the nearshore marine resources and 20% of the terrestrial resources across Micronesia by 2020. The principles and processes outlined in Reimaanlok are implemented in 5 islands/atolls.

The Government of the Marshall Islands is fully committed to meeting its obligation under the UNCBD and International Water.

Country ownership was evident during the project formulation stage as mentioned in the ProDoc; furthermore, it was reiterated during project implementation, which is evident in the strong interest and participation of senior government officials in interviews organized as part of the MTR.

The Project contributes to Regional UNDAF/Outcome, mainly UNDAF **Outcome**³⁰ 1: By 2017, the most vulnerable communities across the PICTs are more resilient and select government agencies, civil society organizations and communities have enhanced capacity to apply integrated approaches to environmental management, climate change adaptation/mitigation, and disaster risk management. More specifically, to RMI **Outcome 1.1**: A functional regulatory system with a high degree of compliance at all levels to achieve sustainable development of natural resources and protection of the environment through strengthened gender-inclusive climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction; RMI **Outcome 3.1** Enhanced self-reliance and resourceful livelihoods for poverty reduction, increased food and water security for inclusive socio-economic development, and RMI **Outcome 5.1**: A society based on good governance whose people and institutions uphold traditional, national and international laws and conventions.

The Project also contributes to UNDP Strategic Plan **Output 2.5**: Legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions enabled to ensure the conservation, sustainable use, access, and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, in line with international conventions and national legislation.

3.3.8 Efficiency and Effectiveness

The project was impacted by some operational issues. These issues affected the speed of implementation. Furthermore, the outbreak of Dengue Outbreak in 2019 and COVID19 in 2020 added more hardship to the existed hardship.

³⁰ The UNDAF is renamed and aligned to SDG. It came into effect 01/01/2016.

Effectiveness is the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups³¹.

The Project has not been effective in achieving its specific mid-term targets. The ineffectiveness of the project strategy is evidenced by:

- The level of dissatisfaction with the Project progress expressed by all stakeholders during the MTR is relatively high. Stakeholders interviewed (both who represented the national level ministries and organizations, and the Mayors of the outer islands) reported that the level of effectiveness of this Project is very low-up until the time of the MTR- in comparison to other projects they been involved with.
- The project was not effective during its first three years of implementation. According to 2020 PIR, the maximum activity achievements is 30.68% of the total approved amount as stated in the Prodoc.

Considering the above-mentioned facts, Effectiveness was rated as **Moderately Unsatisfactory**.

Efficiency is the extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way³².

The Project has been partially efficient due to:

- The proposed co-financing resources are being mobilized and tracked by the project team. According to UNDP ProDoc, UNDP, the Government, and the Civil Society Organization will contribute US\$ 4.057 Million as an in-kind and cash contribution. At the time of the MTR, the whole amount was considered as mobilized, as shared by the project team. However, the MTR consultant was able to review one co-financing letter with a total amount of 0.923 million USD³³.

The Project has been inefficient in the following manners:

- The slow progress at the beginning of the project due to several operational reasons. Stakeholders expressed concerns over the issue.
- Substantial delay of the project with recruitment and procurement processes mainly for critical positions including the site coordinators.

Overall, it emerges that the Project has been **Moderately Unsatisfactory** when it comes to efficiency.

the overall rating for project Efficiency and Effectiveness is **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**.

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Satisfactory (S)	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Unsatisfactory (U)	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)
			MU		

3.3.9 Cross- Cutting Issues

The socioeconomic benefits of the project were originally distributed over several aspects and thus the project design managed to provide adequate activities to achieve the needed socio-economic benefits. The project has completed terrestrial, socio-economic, geodetic surveys and feasibility studies on livelihoods. However, COVID-19 and travel restrictions have

³¹ Effectiveness definition: UNDP GEF Mid-Term Review manual.

³² Efficiency definition: UNDP GEF Mid-Term Review manual.

³³ Co-financing letter, signed by the Director of Office of Climate Change Directorate

disrupted most on-the-ground activities, including the hydrogeological survey in Likiep, local community meetings, marine surveys in Likiep and Mejit, and the MPA network in Wotho.

Up until the MTR, **human capital** is being enhanced through training and awareness-raising activities which will better enable community stakeholders to manage available natural resources. **Natural capital** is in the process to be increased through implementation of management measures such as sustainable agro-forestry. The improvements to terrestrial ecosystem conditions will lead to increased productivity, boosting food security capacities. **Financial capital** is also in the process to increase. The project has introduced alternative livelihoods which will gradually result in reduced fluctuations in household income flows, enabling communities, particularly youth, women, and the elderly to better cope with outmigration and other socioeconomic challenges facing the outer islands.

The Project was able to positively mainstream Government and several UNDP priorities. Specifically:

- The Project objective is in line with the UNDP Outcomes and strategic plan outputs.
- The Project contributed directly to the achievement of certain UNDAF's outcome (1) and RMI outcomes and outputs (1.1, 3.1 and 5.1).
- The ProDoc included a fair analysis of gender issues and specified certain activities to target women.
- The Project managed to mainstream gender in most of its activities. UNDP and Government Project-related team included both women and men.
- The Project targeted both women and men in their capacity building and public awareness components.

3.4 Sustainability

The sustainability is defined as the continuation of benefits from an intervention after the development assistance has been completed. The important aspect here is the sustainability of results, not necessarily the sustainability of activities that produced the results. Assessment of sustainability requires the evaluation of risks that may affect the continuation of the project outcomes. The commitment of the Government of the Marshall Islands to sustain results of the current project is judged by examining the existence of relevant legislative framework, enforcement of the legal provisions and prospect of financial resources' availability for future conservation sites. The following aspects were assessed in this mid-term review:

3.4.1 Financial risks to sustainability

The project is dependent on the financial support of the GEF, the Government and the contribution of the civil society organization. The Government, the UNDP and the CSO contribute co-financing with a total amount of US\$ 4.057 million. UNDP CO is implementing several GEF-supported projects in environment and climate change.

According to the documents shared by the project team, the co-financing is already materialized. However, as stated earlier, there was no evidence shared with the MTR team to confirm that the committed amount was utilized. Nevertheless, the project should ensure that the government will continue to support the project achievements with the necessary financial resources from the national budget and possibly from other funding sources. Also, the Government must allocate the needed funds to sustain the project's outcomes after the project lifetime.

Based on the above discussion, the financial risks are negligible, and sustainability is rated as:

Likely (L)	Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderately Unlikely (MUL)	Unlikely (U)
	ML		

3.4.2 Socio-economic risks to sustainability

The representatives of the population interviewed from different islands indicated that local communities have developed strong ownership of the project activities as they believe in the project's ability to enhance their lives and ensure the sustainable use of the ecosystems. The perspective of the strong local ownership is based on the fact that socio-economic consequences of the project will, in general, be positive as the outcomes will ensure improvements in quality of life of population at large due to enhance alternative livelihood. However, the outbreak of COVID-19 has greatly impacted the project implementation in 2020 and it is expected to affect the progress during the second half of the project implementation period.

The project has no major socio-economic risks that might affect the sustainability of the project outcomes.³⁴

Based on the above-mentioned Socio-economic Risk, risks are negligible and thus the sustainability is rated as:

Likely (L)	Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderately Unlikely (MUL)	Unlikely (U)
L			

3.4.3 Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

To ensure that the work will continue, more support from the Government is needed. The Government of the Marshall Islands with the support of interested donors are trying to sustain the work. The project did not yet put in place any frameworks, policies governance structures and processes that will create mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer after the project's closure.

A key issue to look at when reviewing institutional sustainability is the suitability of the project's achievements and impact after the project closure and the ability of the Government's staff to sustain the work. According to the project team and interviewed stakeholders, the follow-up work at the outer islands is very limited and needs to be enhanced. Many of the interviewed stakeholders questioned the sustainability of the work after the project's closure. The presence of a sustainability plan and a comprehensive exit strategy will lower any institutional or governance risks.

The issues of institutional sustainability were considered as only moderately likely as the risks are manageable and can be dealt with within the second half of the project implementation.

The Institutional framework and governance risks are medium, and sustainability is:

Likely (L)	Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Unlikely (U)
	ML		

3.4.4 Environmental risks to sustainability

No activities implemented by the project posed any environmental threats to the sustainability of the project's outcomes.

The Environmental risks are negligible, and the sustainability is:

Likely (L)	Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderately Unlikely (MS)	Unlikely (U)

³⁴ The project did not manage to document lessons learned on a continual basis. Thus, project's challenges, risks, issues and project's successful aspects are not being transferred to appropriate parties, or any potential future beneficiaries or stakeholders who could learn from the project and potentially replicate or scale up it in the future.

L			
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Based on the assessment of the categories above, and the presence of medium risks, the overall sustainability rating is:

Likely (L)	Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderately Unlikely (MS)	Unlikely (U)
	ML		

It follows from the above analysis of risks that most fear-provoking are the risks associated with the failure to sustain the institutional and governance improvements after the project. However, measures to mitigate the institutional and governance risks are low cost in nature as their sustain to the project results does not require the formation of new structures in addition to the existing ones. Based on the above, the MTR team considers that there are minor risks to sustainability as there is a high probability that key outcomes will be achieved by the project closure and will continue into a foreseeable future. Therefore, the MTR team rates project sustainability as **Moderately Likely (ML)**.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the previous section of facts collection, this section synthesizes and interprets the findings into conclusions that make judgments supported by one or more specific findings. Recommendations are then specific actions the evaluation team proposes to be taken by various project stakeholders that are based on the findings and conclusions.

As most of the recommendations are cutting across the entire project, they are not related to specific outcomes/outputs unless otherwise stated.

4.3 Conclusions

Overall, the Project has made **Unsatisfactory** and **Moderately Satisfactory** progress on outcome 1, **Satisfactory** and **Moderately Satisfactory** progress on outcome 2, and **Moderately Satisfactory and Moderately Satisfactory** progress on outcome 3 up until now. The overall progress is therefore rated **Moderately Satisfactory (3.84)**.

The evaluators consider that while the management arrangements used for the project, in theory, support effective and efficient implementation of the project, in practice there were delays caused mainly by some elements of the project management arrangement that required immediate attention. Consequently, the overall **Project implementation and adaptive management** rating is **Moderately Unsatisfactory (U)**. Progress is, to a large extent, in line with prospects as log-frame indicators are achieved in compliance with the Work Plan. Special attention was paid to setting up the team, conducting the studies, preparing the needed assessment and reports, on the expenses of soft interventions like capacity development. The project has managed, during 2019, to initiate many of the needed technical studies which is a noticeable achievement taking into consideration the substantial delay the project faced during its inception phase.

The Project is perceived as a major national initiative that is contributing tremendously to sustaining atoll biodiversity and livelihoods by building community and ecosystem resilience to threats and degrading influences through integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources. Without the project, the operationalization of the Reimaanlok will be an impossible target to achieve. With the support of the project, the principles, and processes outlines in Reimaanlok are in the process to be implemented in 5 outer islands. As a direct result of the project implementation and support, the Government and relevant stakeholders provided all needed co-financing that was committed during the project development with about USD 4.05 Million co-financing were already mobilized.

Although the project is not entirely on track regarding the implementation of project activities mainly the outcomes 1 and 3, the relevance of the Project is extremely high for the Government of The Marshall Islands. Project main beneficiaries are fully committed to proceeding with the remaining activities. Stronger coordination and collaboration between project management and other stakeholders is urgently required in the remaining period to get the necessary commitments and ensure the project's outcomes sustainability after the end of the project.

Although the implementation has been accelerated in 2019, after the slow start of the project. However, the breakout of COVID-19 in 2020 among other challenges, makes the achievement of the project's targets, by the end of the Project, November 2022, a great challenge.

4.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and outcomes of the Mid-Term Review, the MTR Consultant would propose the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: The planned completion date of the project is not realistic. To ensure full achievement of all planned end-of-project targets, the project implementation period must be extended (**UNDP**).

Recommendation 2: There has been a considerable delay in developing the necessary surveys and studies (marine survey, terrestrial surveys, socio-economic studies, LEAP surveys, hydrological survey, network scenario, management plans, delineation of the proposed sites, etc.) due to travel restrictions. As it is not clear when travel restrictions will be eased, an effective adaptive management plan must be put in place with clear measures to undertake the necessary work under a pro-longed travel restriction **(Project team with the support of UNDP)**.

Recommendation 3: Due to the limited technical experts available at the national levels, it is recommended that peer experts, from other Micronesian Islands, provide technical support such as the development of a Conservation GIS database and online cleaning house for the different project sites **(UNDP Regional Office and team)**.

Recommendation 4: As for linking cultural expressions to resource management, the MTR Consultant believes it should not be a problematic issue as the Project collaborates with different stakeholders, mainly the Mayors of the outer islands, to take the lead role to promote the sense they are involved in the project as an important partner. The involvement of youth-related organizations is key for sustaining and transferring local and traditional knowledge to young and new generations **(Project team)**.

Recommendation 5: The MTR recommends making the project's technical deliverables, lessons learned, and knowledge management productions with a focus on cultural expressions open to the public by sharing the materials through different websites, social media and any other proper tools **(Project team)**.

Recommendation 6: An external consultant could be recruited to further assist in enrolling Marshallese students from the University of the South Pacific to get the needed capacity building and knowledge in integrated approaches **(Project team with the Support of UNDP)**.

Recommendation 7: Several awareness sessions need to be organized to ensure the technical capacities are in place after the project closure with a paramount focus on conservation, sustainable livelihoods, and community-based adaptation **(Project Team)**.

Recommendation 8: Development of the project's communication plan to be prioritized to boost the project's public awareness and stakeholders' engagement efforts. Most of the project's indicators need to be clearly and effectively communicated with outer islands. Poor communications and limited travel are defined as key obstacles to achieving the project's targets **(Project team)**.

Recommendation 9: The project's M&E system should be strengthened. UNDP to play a key role in transforming the M&E system from a management tool to an adaptive management approach through the continuous and effective involvement of stakeholders as part of the project's adaptive management framework. For example, the quarterly progress reports should be expanded to include an indicative work plan of activities for the next quarter as well as updated risks and mitigation measures. Furthermore, the project reporting function should include the documentation of lessons learned so that institutional memory is preserved, and a reference guide is created to support any future replication of similar project initiatives **(Project team with UNDP support)**.

Recommendation 10: UNDP-GEF Project Assurance to provide better guidelines and technical backstopping. Support for Implementation Phase of the project is critical to ensure that adaptation management measures are in place **(UNDP and UNDP/GEF teams)**.

Recommendation 11: The role of the Project Board needs to be strengthened, with more frequent meetings, adequate advance provision of documentation, follow-up mechanisms established, and the inclusion of representation at the local community level **(Project team)**.

Recommendation 12: The implementing /executing agency and stakeholders of the project can provide valuable technical (and political) support and the Project should draw on these relationships further in its management approach to this project. The MTR would recommend

that a greater spirit of cooperation and inclusion of other stakeholders by the Project in all aspects of the project delivery needs to be emphasized **(Project team with UNDP and Government Support)**.

Recommendation 13: The MTR did not see any collaboration with other UNDP, GEF or relevant initiatives, except the Regional R2R. It is recommended that effective and continuous collaboration with all other relevant initiatives, partners, and stakeholders to enhance knowledge sharing and build on each other work **(Project team and UNDP)**.

5.1 MTR ToR



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Ref: PN/FJ/027/20

Consultancy Title: Mid Term Evaluation (MTR) Consultancy

Project Name: RMI National Ridge to Reef Project.

Duty Station: The consultant will be based in Majuro to partake in briefing and debriefings with government and non-government partners in the RMI.

Duration of Assignment:

Duration of Assignment: 30 days within 12 weeks period

Application closure date (for submission of application): 16 March 2020. Starting date: 26 March 2020

Completion date: 8 June 2020.

Number of Days in Country: 10 days between April 20-May 4

Consultancy Proposal (CV & Financial proposal Template) should be uploaded on UNDP Jobshop website(https://jobs.undp.org/cj_view_jobs.cfm?cur_rgn_id_c=RAS) no later than, 18th March 2020 (Fiji Time) clearly stating the title of consultancy applied for. Any proposals received after this date/time will not be accepted. Any request for clarification must be sent in writing, or by standard electronic communication to procurement.fj@undp.org. UNDP will respond in writing or by standard electronic mail and will send written copies of the response, including an explanation of the query without identifying the source of inquiry, to all consultants. Incomplete, late and joint proposals will not be considered and only offers for which there is further interest will be contacted. Failure to submit your application as stated as per the application submission guide (Procurement Notice) on the above link will be considered incomplete and therefore application will not be considered.

NOTE:

Proposals must be sent through UNDP job shop web page. Candidates need to upload their CV and financial proposal - using UNDP template

If the selected/successful Candidate is over 65 years of age and required to travel outside his home country; He/She will be required to provide a full medical report at their expense before issuance to contract. The contract will only be issued when the Proposed candidate is deemed medically fit to undertake the assignment.

Objectives

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, its risks to sustainability. This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the UNDP-GEF Midterm Review (MTR) of the project titled: Looking to the Future: Strengthening natural resources management in atoll communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands Employing Integrated Approaches (RMI R2R). This project is the first GEF national R2R project implemented by UNDP through the direct implementation (DIM) modality, working with the RMI Office of the Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination (OEPPC), who will now become the Department of Climate Change after the recent restructure in the Government of RMI. The Director is the GEF Operational Focal Point.

The project started on the November 2017 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 (http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/GEF/mid-term/Guidance_Midterm%20Review%20_EN_2014.pdf)

Background Information

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) has a strong dependence on natural resources and biodiversity not only for food and income. The Marshallese relationship with the islands forms the basis of its culture and way of life which has developed in harmony over thousands of years. In the face of global threats, RMI still has pristine waters and coral reefs that contribute to ecosystem services and livelihoods. In recognition of the importance of its natural assets, RMI together with other SIDS responded to global conservation targets through the Micronesia Challenge and specifically for its part, it prepared Reimaanlok to serve as a clear roadmap of the way forward.

This project support operationalizing the Reimaanlok – the National Conservation Area Plan, adopted in 2008 to effectively conserve at least 30% of the nearshore marine resources and 20% of the terrestrial resources across Micronesia by 2020.

The project objective is to sustain atoll biodiversity and livelihoods by building community and ecosystem resilience to threats and degrading influences through integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources adopting the principles and processes outlined in Reimaanlok. The project will be implemented in 5 islands/atolls within five years (2017- 2022) with a \$3.9m support through the Global Environment Facility.

Project Site Interventions:

The project is piloted on five (5) outer islands of Wotho, Mejit, Likiep, Aur and Ebon. The interventions are designed to strengthen local capacities, enabling local communities to implement the integrated natural resource management plans, and providing scale-able demonstrations of sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services. The lessons from this project will guide replication in other sites.

Approach and Methodology

The MTR must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The MTR consultant 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 consultant will review the baseline GEF Core Indicators submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement and the midterm GEF core indicators that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR consultant is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach¹ ensuring close engagement with the

Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisers, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR.² Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including national government departments, NGO's/ Civil Society Organizations, resource owning communities, community leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Steering Committee, other project stakeholders, academia, etc. Below is a detailed list of the stakeholders involved with the project. The MTR consultant will centre most of its work on Majuro, however, travel to the outer island will be discussed and agreed upon between the Consultant, UNDP, GEF OFP (OEPPC), RTA and the PIU Team at the beginning of the consultancy

Types	Name
National Government	Department of Climate Change (former OEPPC)
	Marshall Islands Marine Resource Authority (MIMRA)
	Historic Preservation Office (HPO)
	Department of Lands and Survey (L&S)
	Public School System (PSS)
	Ministry of Natural Resource and Commerce (MNRC)
Local Government	Mayors: Five Target Sites
UN Organization	International Organization for Migration (IOM)
NGO/CSO	Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS)
	JoJikum
Academic Institution	College of the Marshall Islands (CMI)
	University of the South Pacific

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.

The MTR consultant 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 of 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)?
- 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.

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.

² 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.

- 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 log-frame 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).

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

Project Strategy	Indicator ³	Baseline Level ⁴	Level in 1 st PI R (self-reported)	Midterm Target ⁵	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment ⁶	Achievement Rating ⁷	Justification for Rating
Objective :	Indicator (if applicable) :							
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							
Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
	Etc.							
Etc.								

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 Core Indicators at the baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
- Identify the 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.

iii. **Project Implementation and Adaptive Management**

Management Arrangements:

- Review the 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 on time? Recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.

3 Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards

4 Populate with data from the Project Document

5 If available

6 Colour code this column only

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

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.
- Examine the relevance of indicators and targets as per the results framework/ log frame and wherever necessary recommend appropriate changes

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 to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

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 the achievement of project objectives?

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.

- Besides, 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 the 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 to be documented by the Project Team continually and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

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.

Environmental risks to sustainability:

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

5.1.2 Conclusions & Recommendations

The MTR consultant will include a section of the report setting out the MTR's evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.⁸

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 in total.

5.1.3 Ratings

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

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for (RMI Ridge to Reef Project)

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

TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the MTR will be 30 days within 12 weeks period starting 26 March to 8 June 2020. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

TIMEFRAME

ACTIVITY

March 12-16	Advertising Consultant position.
March 17-25	Application closed and
Assessment of applications March 26-April 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contracting of consultant - Submission of workplan - Handing over the document for review - Submission of the inception report
April 20-May 4	<p>MTR mission in the country: conducting stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits to demo sites (to be confirmed)</p> <p>Mission wrap up meeting and Presentation of initial findings of the MTR</p>
May 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submission of the draft report
May 19-June 1	Government, UNDP and other stakeholders provide
feedback on the draft report June 8	Finalization of MTR incorporating
audit trail from feedback on the draft report.	

MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	MTR Inception Report	MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	No later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission – by 3 April.	MTR consultant submits to the UNDP, OEPPC (GEF OFP) and project management
2	Presentation	Initial Findings	End of MTR mission – by 4 May	MTR consultant presents to project management and the OEPPC

3	Draft Final Report	Full report (using guidelines on the content outlined in Annex B) with annexes	Within 2 weeks after the MTR mission –by 18 May	Sent to UNDP, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP
4	Final Report*	Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP	Sent to the UNDP

		comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	comments on draft - by 8 June	
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*The final MTR report must be in English. If applicable, the UNDP/GEF OFP may choose to arrange for a translation of the report into a language more widely shared by national stakeholders. Options for site visits should be provided in the Inception Report

MTR ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the UNDP Pacific Office, as a commissioning unit.

The commissioning unit will contract the consultant and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements for the MTR consultant. 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 as well as focal points in each state.

CONSULTANCY CRITERIA

An independent consultant will conduct the MTR with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally. The consultant cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation, and/or implementation (including the writing of the Project Document) and should not have a conflict of interest with project's related activities.

The selection of consultant will be aimed at maximizing the overall qualities in the following areas

- Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to GEF *Focal Areas of land degradation, international waters and biodiversity*);
- Previous experience facilitating evaluations of GEF/UNDP and other development agency supported projects/initiatives;
- Experience working in the Pacific region and/or small island state is advantageous;
- Work experience in relevant technical areas for at least 10 years;
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and biodiversity, land

degradation and international waters; experience in gender-sensitive evaluation and analysis.

- Excellent communication skills;
- Demonstrable analytical skills;
- A Master's degree in Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, Development studies and /or 10 years of relevant experience in a closely related field is necessary
- Familiarity and experience with Strategic Environmental Assessment approaches is preferred

Criteria	Max. Point
Qualification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum Master's degree in Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, Development studies and /or 10 years of relevant experience in a closely related field is necessary 	10%
Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous experience facilitating evaluations of GEF/UNDP and other development agency supported projects/initiatives; Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios; Competence in adaptive management, as applied to GEF <i>Focal Areas</i> of land degradation, international waters and biodiversity); Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and biodiversity, land degradation and international waters; experience in gender-sensitive evaluation and analysis. Excellent communication skills; Demonstrable analytical skills; Familiarity and experience with Strategic Environmental Assessment approaches is preferred 	20% 10% 10% 5% 5% 10%
Total	70%

Criteria for Evaluation of Proposal: Only those applications which are responsive and compliant will be evaluated. Offers will be evaluated according to the Combined Scoring method – where the educational background and experience on similar assignments will be weighted at 70% and the price proposal will weigh as 30% of the total scoring. The applicant receiving the Highest Combined Score that has also accepted UNDP's General Terms and Conditions will be awarded the contract.

5.1.4 PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS

- 20% of payment upon signing of contract and acceptance of work plan by March 26.
- 40% upon approval of the draft MTR report by May 18.
- 40% upon approval of final MTR report and submission of supporting documentation including GCF Core Indicators by June 8

Supervision/Reporting

The Consultant will report and supervised by the Deputy Team Leader Resilience and Sustainable Development Unit, UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji. While working in RMI, will be required to also report to the Project Manager, PIU and Director OEPPC (GEF OFF).

The consultant is expected to provide for his/her laptop. Works station and other support will

be provided for by the project.

He/ She is expected to coordinate closely with the Office of the Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination (OEPPC), Project Implementation Unit, and UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji.

5.1.5 APPLICATION PROCESS⁹

Recommended Presentation of Proposal:

- a) **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the [template](#)¹⁰ provided by UNDP;
- b) **CV Brief description of the approach to work/technical proposal** of why the individual considers him/herself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a proposed methodology on how they will approach and complete the assignment; (max 1 page)
- c) **Financial Proposal** that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price and all other travel-related costs (excluding in-country costs of travel), supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template attached to the Letter of Confirmation of Interest template. If an applicant is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the applicant must indicate at this point and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

The Consultant must send a financial proposal based on a **Lump Sum Amount**. The total amount quoted shall be all-inclusive and include all costs components required to perform the deliverables identified in the TOR, including professional fee, travel costs, living allowance (if any work is to be done outside the IC's duty station) and any other applicable cost to be incurred by the IC in completing the assignment. The contract price will be fixed output-based price regardless of extension of the herein specified duration. Payments will be done upon completion of the deliverables/outputs.

In general, UNDP shall not accept travel costs exceeding those of an economy class ticket. Should the IC wish to travel on a higher class he/she should do so using their resources. In the event of unforeseeable travel not anticipated in this TOR, payment of travel costs including tickets, lodging and terminal expenses should be agreed upon, between the respective business unit and the Individual Consultant, before travel and will be reimbursed.

The P11 form and Template for confirmation of interest and Submission of Financial Proposal is available under the procurement section of UNDP Fiji website (www.pacific.undp.org)

Women candidates are encouraged to apply.

⁹ Engagement of the consultants should be done in line with guidelines for hiring consultants in the POPP: <https://info.undp.org/global/popp/Pages/default.aspx>

¹⁰

<https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/psa/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirmation%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx>

5.2 List of documents reviewed

S. 1No.	Document Title
2	CMI Progress and assessment I report
3	Jo-JIKUM Youth Group- Progress and assessment
4	MI Conservation Society
5	Ride to Reef Progress and assessment
6	College of Marshall Islands LOA
7	LOA UNDP and SPC Hydrological Survey
8	IOM UNDP Signed Agreement
9	Signed RPA UNDP MIC
10	Signed UNDP nJojikum Agreement
11	Signed UNDP nMIMRA Agreement
12	UNDP MOCIA Agreement Signed
13	AWP 2018 RMI
14	AWP 2019
15	AWP 2020
16	Board Meeting Minutes March 2019
17	Board Meeting Minutes October 2019
18	Board meeting Minutes November 2018
19	CDR 2018, 2019, and 2020
20	ID5544 Project Review
21	ID 5544 CEO Endorsement
22	Inception Report for RMI R2R Project
23	Planning Meeting Report
24	ID5544 PIF clearance and PPG approval
25	PIMS 5685 RMI R2R PIF UNDP
26	GEF PIR 2019
27	GEF PIR 2020
28	GEF PIR 2018
29	Signed ProDoc
30	2018 Q 4 &3 Final
31	2019 Narrative Q3Q4
32	2019 RMI R2R Annual Report 2019
33	2019 Narrative Q1Q2
34	2020 Final RMI R2R Quarter 1

35	MTR IW R2R Final report
36	Aur Revisited 2020
37	Final report land rights study
38	Socio-economic Report for Likiep
39	Clearance Presentation 2R 5 th
40	CMI Progress and Assessment
41	CO Audits
42	Final R2R Project Board meeting
43	Getting Started
44	Jo JIKUM Progress
45	PaA I Report
46	Revised log frame
47	Revised log frame final
48	SKM
49	Socio-economic report Aur
50	Socio-economic report Likiep atoll
51	STAR R2R Overview

5.3 Example Questionnaire used for data collection

Many of the below questions were used in the virtual interviews. These questions were used to make sure that all aspects are covered, and the needed information is requested to complete the review exercise and a guide to preparing the semi-structured interviews.

I. Relevance - How does the Project relate to the main objectives of the UNDP/GEF/RMI and the environment and development priorities?

1. Is the Project relevant to the GEF objectives?
2. Is the Project relevant to UNDP objectives?
3. Is the Project relevant to the Country development objectives?
4. Does the Project address the needs of target beneficiaries?
5. Is the Project internally coherent in its design?
6. How is the Project relevant considering other donors?
7. What lessons have been learned and what changes could have been made to the Project to strengthen the alignment between the Project and the Partners' priorities and areas of focus?
8. How could the Project better target and address the priorities and development challenges of targeted beneficiaries?

II. Effectiveness – To what extent are the expected outcomes of the Project being achieved?

1. How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?
2. How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?

III. Efficiency - How efficiently is the Project implemented?

1. Was the adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use?
2. Did the Project logical framework and work plan and any changes made to them use as management tools during implementation?
3. Were the accounting and financial systems in place adequate for Project management and producing accurate and timely financial information?
4. Were progress reports produced accurately, timely and respond to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes?
5. Was Project implementation as cost-effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual)? Was the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happening as planned? Were financial resources utilized efficiently?
6. Could financial resources have been used more efficiently?
7. Were there institutionalized or informal feedback or dissemination mechanism to ensure that findings, lessons learned and recommendations about Project design and implementation effectiveness were shared among Project stakeholders, UNDP CO and UNDP Regional Hub Staff and other relevant organizations for ongoing Project adjustment and improvement? Did the Project mainstream gender considerations into its implementation?

8. To what extent were partnerships/ linkages between institutions/ organizations encouraged and supported?
9. Which partnerships/linkages were facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable?
10. What was the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, UNDP and relevant government entities).
11. Was an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity?
12. Did the Project consider local capacity in the design and implementation of the Project?

IV. IMPACTS - What are the potential and realized the impacts of activities carried out in the context of the Project?

1. Will the project achieve its objective that is to improve fiscal measures for collecting, managing, and allocating revenues for global environmental management?
2. How is the Project impacting the local environment such as impacts or likely impacts on the local environment; on poverty; and, on other socio-economic issues?

V. Sustainability - Are the initiatives and results of the Project allowing for continued benefits?

1. Are sustainability issues adequately integrated into Project design?
2. Did the Project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues?
3. Is there evidence that Project partners will continue their activities beyond Project support?
4. Were laws, policies, and frameworks being addressed through the Project, to address the sustainability of key initiatives and reforms?
5. Is the capacity in place at the national and local levels adequate to ensure the sustainability of the results achieved to date?
6. Did the Project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability?
7. Are Project activities and results being replicated elsewhere and/or scaled up?
8. What are the main challenges that may hinder the sustainability of efforts?

5.4 MTR Agenda and list of people interviewed

Date	Name / Titles / Organization
4 August 2020	Project Team
30 September 2020	Francis Wele
24 November 2020	Partners Consultation Meeting
25 November 2020	Amelia Raratabu
9 December 2020	Partners Workshop CMI, MICS, Jo Jikum, CCD, UNDP, Site Coordinators, Jenn Francis
10 December 2020	Marshall Islands Conservation Society MICS office, 11 am Delores deBrum, Director
10 December 2020	Ione deBrum, Ebon Coordinator
5 January 2021	IOM Wellness Center Laura and Baron
14 January 2021	College of the Marshall Islands Hatty Kabua, Grant Coordinator
20 January 2021	Jo Jikum Kathy Jetnil Jo Jikum office
22 January 2021	Aur Local Government Acting Mayor/Executive Council Member Milson Livai
22 January 2021	Likiep Local Government MIR Enra Restaurant Nicky deBrum (Mayor), Chris deBrum (executive council member), Lilly deBrum (secretary)

5.5 MTR Evaluation Rating Scales

Ratings for Progress Towards Results: (one rating for each outcome and 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 (MU)	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 a 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)	A 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

5.6 Mid Review matrix

Evaluation Questions	Criteria	Evaluation Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Overall project assessment, lessons learned and recommendations				
What do you perceive as the project's most significant achievements thus far?		Project achievements	Interviews Project documentation	Interviews Review of project documentation
Please comment on any lessons learned thus far through this project		Lessons learned	Project reports Interviews	Review of project documentation Interviews
What issues, if any, are impeding project progress and how might these be addressed?		Obstacles to progress	Interviews Project reports	Interviews Review of project documentation
Do you have any recommendations to strengthen project execution and delivery?		Recommendations	Interviews Project reports	Interviews Review of project documentation
Do you have any recommendations to maximize project impact and sustainability?		Recommendations	Interviews Project reports	Interviews Review of project documentation
Evaluation Questions	Criteria	Evaluation Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Project Design				
Are there any aspects of the project design that should be modified at this point to maximize project impact or to better reflect the project reality?		Design changes required	Interviews Project documentation	Interviews Review of project documentation
Were the project's objectives and components clear, practicable and feasible within its time frame?		Content of logframe	Logframe Interviews	Review of logframe Interviews
Were the main project assumptions and risks identified?		Project assumptions and risks	Logframe Interviews	Review of logframe Interviews
Were the capacities and resources of the executing		Capacity and resources of EA	Interviews ProDoc	Interviews

institution and counterparts properly considered when the project was designed?	and counterparts at project entry		Review of ProDoc
Were the management arrangements and roles and responsibilities properly identified before project approval?	Detail and clarity of management arrangements	ProDoc	Review of ProDoc
Were partnership arrangements negotiated before project approval?	Agreements with partners on project implementation at project entry	Interviews ProDoc	Interviews Review of ProDoc
To what extent did stakeholders participate in the project formulation process?	Level of stakeholder participation in project design	Interviews ProDoc	Interviews Review of ProDoc
Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated in the project design?	Project design reflecting previous lessons learned	Interviews	Interviews

Evaluation Questions	Criteria	Evaluation Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Gender equality and women's empowerment				
How is the project contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment?		Level of the progress of gender action plan and gender indicators in the results framework	Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders	Desk review, interviews, field visits
In what ways is the project's gender results advancing or contributing to the project's outcomes?		Existence of logical linkages between gender results and project outcomes and impacts	Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders	Desk review, interviews, field visits

Evaluation Criteria Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Project Finance			
Is there enough clarity in the reported co-financing and leveraged resources to substantiate in-kind and cash co-financing from all listed sources?	Table specifying co-financing and leveraged resources secured and sources thereof	Project reports Interviews	Review of project documentation Interviews
Have the reasons for differences in the level of expected and actual co-financing been made clear and are the reasons compelling?	Explanation of the difference between expected and actual co-financing	Project reports with co-financing figures	Review of project documentation Interviews
Are externally funded project components well integrated into the GEF supported components?	Components funded by co-financing	Project reports Interviews	Review of project documentation Interviews
Is the extent of materialization of co-financing influencing project outcomes and/or sustainability?	Total co-financing secured. Level of achievement of project outcomes Perceived project sustainability.	Project reports Interviews	Review of project documentation Interviews

Evaluation Criteria Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Sources	Methodology
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?			
Have the project and individual activities been implemented in line with the defined timeframe and budget, and accordance with the Annual Work Plans and Budgets?	Annual Work Plans and Budgets (AWBs) are based on the results framework and total budget and work plan; Activities are implemented within the timeframe and budgets indicated in the AWP	Project documentation; Project team, UNDP CO and key national partners, RTA	Documents review; consultation with relevant stakeholders

Were the project monitoring and evaluation and reporting plans implemented satisfactorily and did they support the project's implementation?	Quarterly and Annual Reports submitted timely and provide adequate information on progress, bottlenecks, and proposed mitigation measures; M&E Plan implemented and used to improve the project's implementation	Project documentation; Project team, UNDP CO and key national partners, RTA	Documents review; consultation with relevant stakeholders
Were risks, challenges and bottlenecks adequately and timely identified and mitigated?	Mitigation measures of identified bottlenecks and negative impact on implementation were implemented timely and effectively	Project documentation; Project team, UNDP CO and key national partners	Documents review; consultation with relevant stakeholders
Were any needs for adaptive management changes identified and implemented?	Adaptive management changes made and positively impacted project implementation	Project documentation; Project team, UNDP CO and key national partners	Documents review; consultation with relevant stakeholders
Was the project communication strategy designed and implemented satisfactorily and did it support achieving the project's objective and outcomes?	Project communication strategy elaborated, adopted and implemented; identified stakeholders and target groups were adequately informed	Project documentation; Communication materials; interviews with relevant stakeholders	Documents review; consultation with relevant stakeholders
Were the project's management arrangement and support of the partner organizations adequate for enabling efficient implementation?	Project implemented smoothly. Support provided by UNDP facilitated implementation	Project documentation; Project team, UNDP CO and key national partners	Documents review; consultation with relevant stakeholders

Was the project's financial management adequate?	Adequate, complete, and detailed financial reports; audit	Project documentation, specifically - financial reports; Project team, UNDP CO and key national partners	Documents review; consultation with relevant stakeholders
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Evaluation Criteria Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Project Implementation			
Has Implementing Agency & Executing Agency supervision and support been adequate so far?	EA and IA level of supervision and support	Interviews Project reports (PIRs, progress reports)	Interviews Review of project documentation
Has there been an appropriate focus on results by the IA and EA?	EA and IA monitoring results	Interviews Project reports (APRs, progress reports)	Interviews Review of project documentation
Are managing parties responsive to significant implementation problems (if any) and project risks?	Response to implementation problems and risks	Project reports Interviews	Review of project documentation Interviews
Does the M&E plan include all necessary elements to permit the monitoring of results and identify M&E roles and responsibilities?	M&E Plan	Pro.Doc.	Review of Pro.Doc.
Was the M&E Plan sufficiently budgeted and funded during project preparation and implementation?	Amount of funding designated and utilized for M&E	Pro.Doc. Interviews Project reports detailing expenses	Review of Pro.Doc. Interviews Review of project expenses
Is the project log-frame effectively being used as a management tool to measure progress and performance?	Use of log-frame	Project reports including PIRs Interviews	Review of project reports Interviews
Are progress and financial reporting requirements/ schedules complied with, including the timely delivery of well-developed monitoring reports (APRs)?	Content and submission dates of project reports	Interviews Project reports	Interviews Review of project documentation

Are follow-up actions, and/or adaptive management, taken in response to M&E activities (e.g., in response to APRs, and steering committee meetings)?	Responses to M&E activities	Project reports Interviews	Interviews Review of project documentation
If changes in planned project outputs, activities or implementation methodology were made, were these adequately justified and approved by the project steering committee?	Explanations provided for changes during project implementation	PB's minutes Project reports	Review of steering committee minutes and project documentation

Evaluation Questions	Criteria	Evaluation Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Progress Towards outcomes/outputs: To what extent have the expected outcomes/outputs and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?				
Project Outcome: 1: Conservation areas delineated, declared and efforts sustained in up to 5 priority atolls to meet Reimaanlok targets and contributing to the Micronesia Challenge and Aichi targets		Terrestrial and marine ecosystems under enhanced management Number of Resource Management Plans (NRMPs), inclusive of integrated terrestrial and coastal resource assessments and management strategies, approved by local resource committees and under implementation	Project reports; interviews with relevant national and local stakeholders. Management Plans.	Documents review; consultation with relevant stakeholders
2: Supportive policies, institutions and communities in place to ensure successful implementation of the Reimaanlok vision		Position of PAN Coordinator, overseeing the operation of the PAN office, is institutionalized. Number of RMI professionals trained in integrated approaches through the Regional Pacific R2R Program	Project reports; interviews with relevant stakeholders	Documents review; consultation with relevant stakeholders. Minutes of training events. Photos. Participants feedback.
3: Knowledge Management and Monitoring & Evaluation		National repository for spatial biodiversity and resource management	Project documentation ; interviews with Project	Documents review; consultation with relevant

	information enhanced and sustained. Cultural expressions (stories, chants, dances, oration, material production, proverbs) linked to resource management documented and mapped in the 5 project sites management plans and celebrated annually via intergenerational knowledge transmission events	team, UNDP CO and implementing partners. Produced materials.	stakeholders; Products review.
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Evaluation Questions	Criteria	Evaluation Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Project Strategy: To what extent is the project strategy relevant to country priorities, country ownership, and the best route towards expected results?				
Does the project strategy support achieve national needs and priorities?		Project objective and outcomes in line with priorities indicated in national policies, strategies and programmes	PRODOC; published relevant national policies, strategies and programmes	Documents review; consultation with UNDP CO and main government partners
Does the project strategy support achieving the needs and priorities of local stakeholders?		Project objective and outcomes in line with priorities indicated by local stakeholders	Project documentation ; interviews with local stakeholders	Documents review; consultation with District and local level stakeholders
To what extent is the project complementary to government's and partners' initiatives (regional, national and local projects and programmes) addressing the same priorities?		Project design complements existing and planned initiatives	PRODOC; documentation of complementing initiatives	Documents review; consultation with relevant stakeholders and partners
Are the Project outputs and activities relevant and feasible for achieving the Project		Project outputs and activities logically lead to achieving Project objective and outcomes	Project documentation ; interviews with local stakeholders	Documents review; consultation with relevant stakeholders

objective and outcomes?			
Were risks well-identified and mitigation measures well designed to adequately address the risks?	Verification relevance of risks and effectiveness of mitigation measures indicated in the PRODOC, through later Project reporting	Project documentation ; interviews with Project team and relevant stakeholders	Documents review; consultation with Project team and relevant stakeholders
Do the Project's outputs and management arrangements promote national ownership?	Project outputs support national and local capacity building; Project management arrangements are based on national ownership	Project documentation ; interviews with Project team and relevant stakeholders	Documents review; consultation with Project team and relevant stakeholders

Evaluation Questions	Criteria	Evaluation Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Efficiency: Was the project implemented efficiently, in line with international and national norms and standards?				
To what extent have the results been delivered with the least costly resources possible?		Total amount spent compared to budget Amount spent per output and outcome compared to budget The total amount of co-financing secured	PIRs (particularly summaries of project expenses) Interviews	Review of project documentation Interviews
How efficient are partnership arrangements for the project?		The number of partnerships established.	Progress reports.	Review of project documentation Interviews
Did the project efficiently utilize local capacity in implementation?		The number of local experts and staff engaged in the project's implementation.	Project HR documents	Review of project documentation Interview
What lessons can be drawn regarding efficiency for other similar projects in the future?			Project financial reports and progress reports	Review of project documentation Interviews

Evaluation Questions	Criteria	Evaluation Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Effectiveness: to what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved				
To what extent were each of the project outcomes and project objectives achieved thus far?		Each of the project outcomes and project objective achieved thus far? Log-frame indicators at the objective and outcome levels	APRs, progress reports, consultancy reports Interviews	Interviews Review of project documentation
How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?		Risks are identified and a clear set of mitigation measures were identified and taken	Risks log	Review of project documentation
What lessons can be drawn regarding effectiveness for other similar projects in the future?		Lessons learned generated and shared	Lessons learned the report. Progress Reports	Review of project documentation Interviews

5.7 Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form

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 the 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 it and how issues should be reported.
5. They 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 respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. They 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.

Terminal Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

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

Name of Consultant:

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANT

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

Signed at (Jordan)

Signature:



5.8 Signed MTR final report clearance form

(to be completed by CO and UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based in the region and included in the final document)

Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared by
UNDP Country Office

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

UNDP GEF RTA

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

5.9 Annexed in a separate file: Audit trail from received comments on draft IE report.