

REPORT
FOR THE MID-TERM REVIEW (MTR) OF THE
INTEGRATING BIODIVERSITY SAFEGUARDS AND CONSERVATION INTO DEVELOPMENT IN PALAU
PROJECT

ATLAS PROJECT ID/AWARD ID NUMBER: 00105164
ATLAS OUTPUT ID/PROJECT ID NUMBER: 00106389
UNDP-GEF PIMS ID NUMBER: 5645
GEF ID NUMBER: 9208

TEAM LEADER: MARIA ONESTINI
NATIONAL CONSULTANT: CHERYL-ANN R. UDUI

REPORT DATE: JULY 31, 2021

I. OPENING PAGE:

TITLE OF UNDP SUPPORTED GEF FINANCED PROJECT:

INTEGRATING BIODIVERSITY SAFEGUARDS AND CONSERVATION INTO DEVELOPMENT IN PALAU PROJECT

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MID TERM REVIEW (MTR) TIME FRAME AND DATE OF REPORT

Time frame: June – July 2021 / Date of Report: July 31, 2021

REGION AND COUNTRY INCLUDED IN THE PROJECT: PACIFIC SUBREGION/PALAU

GEF OPERATIONAL PROGRAM/STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

GEF 6: Objective 2, Program 4: Prevention, Control and Management of Invasive Alien Species

GEF 6: Objective 4, Program 9: Managing the Human-Biodiversity Interface

LD2 – Ecosystem services in forest landscapes - PROGRAM 3

LD3 – SLM in wider landscapes (integrated management) - PROGRAM 4

SFM-1: Maintained Forest Resources

SFM-3: Restored Forest Ecosystems

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER: MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES, AND ENVIRONMENT (MAFE)¹

IMPLEMENTING AGENCY: UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)

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DISCLAIMER

The analysis and recommendations contained in this document only represent the analysis and views of the author (team leader) and do not necessarily reflect the analysis, views and opinions of the United Nations Development Programme, GEF, Government of Palau, staff and consultants to the Project, nor any of the parties involved in the Project.

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III. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BD	Division of Biosecurity
BMR	Bureau of Marine Resources
BNM	Belau National Museum
BOA	Bureau of Agriculture
BOE	Bureau of Environment
BOT	Bureau of Tourism
CB2	Capacity Building Project
CBO	Community based Organization
CNMI	Commonwealth of Northern Marina Islands and Hawaii
CRB	Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle
CRRF	Coral Reef Research Foundation
DFWP	Department of Forest and Wildlife Protection
EA	Environmental Assessment
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EDRR	Early Detection and Rapid Response
EIA	Environment Impact Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EQPB	Environmental Quality Protection Board
EPU	Environmental Protection Unit
FD	Forest Division
FIB	Foreign Investment Board
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
FSP	Full Sized Project
GDP	Gross Domestic Production
GEB	Global Environmental Benefits
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEFSEC	Global Environment Facility Secretariat
GIS	Geographical Information System
HCVF	High Conservation Value Forest
HCVMA	High Conservation Value Marine Area
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
ILSMF	Integrated Land and Seascape Management Framework
ILSMP	Integrated Land and Seascape Management Plan
ILSMS	Integrated Land and Seascape Management Strategy
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
JCB	Joint Coordinating Body
KBA	Key Biodiversity Area
LMO	Living Modified Organism
MCE	Micronesia Chief Executives (Summit)
MNRET	Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism
MOE	Ministry of Education
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSP	Medium Sized Project
MSY	Maximum Sustainable Yield
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

NCSA	National Capacity Self-Assessment
NEPC	National Environment Protection Council
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NISC	National Invasive Species Committee
NISCO	National Invasive Species Committee Office
NISS	National Invasive Species Strategy
NISSAP	National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plan
PA	Protected Area
PACC	Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change
PALARIS	Palau Automated Land and Resources Information System
PAN	Protected Area Network
PCS	Palau Conservation Society
PES	Payment for Environmental Services
PICRC	Palau International Coral Reef Center
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	GEF Project Implementation Report
PM	Project Manager
PMU	Project Management Unit
POPP	Program and Operations Policies and Procedures
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
PPLA	Palau Public Lands Authority
PVA	Palau Visitors Authority
RBP	Regional Biosecurity Plan for Micronesia and Hawaii
RIMA	Rock Island Management Area
RISC	Regional Invasive Species Council
RISCO	Regional Invasive Species Coordination Office
RMI	Republic of Marshall Islands
RTA	UNDP Regional Technical Advisor
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SESP	Social and Environmental Screening Template
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SGP	GEF Small Grants Program
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program
STAP	Scientific Technical Advisory Panel
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP-CO	UNDP Country Office
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP WCMC)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project aims to address the negative impacts of unsustainable sector-led development practices on biodiversity-rich landscapes of Palau, including its productive coastal and marine ecosystems, while taking into account climate change adaptation needs and inclusive and equitable social and economic development for dependent communities, thereby contributing towards poverty alleviation, food security and sustainable agriculture and gender equality. Furthermore, the Project aims to safeguard against threats to biodiversity and the introduction and spread of Invasive Alien Species through tourism and related sectors. The objective of the project is to mainstream biodiversity conservation into integrated land and seascape governance, planning and management in Palau. The developmental context in Palau is very much aligned with Project aims.

The above mentioned objective is to be achieved through the implementation of four inter-related and mutually complementary Components (also known as Project Outcomes) that are focussed on addressing the identified existing barriers. The four project expected Outcomes are: (a) Outcome 1: Enhanced national institutional framework for integrated planning and management of land and seascapes; (b) Outcome 2: Integrated multi-sector land and seascape planning and management operational in Babeldaob states to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies; (c) Outcome 3: Integrated multi-sector planning and management operational in 264,686 ha of seascapes and coastal areas in the Southern Lagoon to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies, and; (d) Outcome 4: Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation support, equitable gender benefits and biodiversity conservation in Palau.

PROJECT PROGRESS SUMMARY

The GEF-6 Project has carried out a number of processes and implemented products, even engendered effects. Following are some of the rationale of why these processes are taking place within the context of the Project: (a) engendered collaborative processes; (b) understanding that working with states and communities in Palau is complex, the Project has gone ahead with these processes no matter what the difficulties. Imbedding community oriented and community participation in these sorts of projects; (c) institutional framework analysis, review of policy framework, potentially upgrading policy tools, as well as generating plans for biodiversity management, land use planning, and other such plans, to impel sustainable development processes in Palau, have been carried out; (d) contributed thus far to upgrading and mainstreaming policies, plans, etc. Merged, mainstreamed policies in partnership between states and national government are also perceived to be helpful for future enforcement; (e) technical groundwork for several planning tools laid and contextual tools developed and evidence/data for informed decision making for planning gathered (GIS, etc.) identifying needs and priorities; (f) concrete pilots and expectantly demonstrative for upscaling and replication carried out: river restoration, reforestation, erosion control pilots—all with community participation—taking place; (g) capacity building taking place with investment at the national and states' levels for capacity building at the individual as well as the institutional levels, and due to this it is expected to engender strong national and state level institutions to continue environmentally sound sustainable development policies; (h) although in many cases the Project captures that there is strong level of awareness regarding biodiversity and biosecurity issues in Palau the work carried out thus far has contributed to awareness raising, albeit highlighting the complexities inherent to these issues in the country; (i) some effects are already beginning to be discerned by the stakeholders, for instance certification processes accomplished; (j) a highly proactive board and technical advisory groups, as well as volunteering partners, are some of the reasons why the results and products are being achieved.

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MTR RATINGS AND ACHIEVEMENT SUMMARY TABLE²

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement N/A	As a composite, there are several achievements within the <i>Integrating biodiversity safeguards and conservation into development in Palau Project</i> . Some outputs have been achieved, several other outputs, expected processes and outcomes that make up and articulate the objective have not been met at the expected mid-point levels, although most of them are on track. Delays in delivery have had an impact on the achievement of the objective thus far. Delays are associated to a late start for project set up, the impact the pandemic is having, as well as implementation issues (reporting, management, etc.). Furthermore, design issues (over ambitiousness, complexity) are also hindering full achievements.
	Outcome 1: Enhanced national institutional framework for integrated planning and management of land and seascapes Achievement Rating: Moderately Satisfactory: MS	Some shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness at the results levels and due to postponements in terms of implementation and delivery. Several processes have achieved. Groundwork to support institutional framework analysis, review of policy framework, potentially upgrading policy tools, as well as generating plans for biodiversity management, land use planning, and other such plans, to impel sustainable development processes in Palau is being carried out. Capacity enhanced at different levels.
	Outcome 2: Integrated multi-sector land and seascape planning and management operational in Babeldaob states to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies Achievement Rating: Moderately Satisfactory: MS	Identification of information for the development of planning tools underway, including mapping. Contributed thus far to upgrading and mainstreaming policies, plans, etc. Merged, mainstreamed policies in partnership with states and national government are also perceived to be helpful for enforcement. Some expected outputs not on tracks either due to changing conditions or over ambitiousness upon design. Technical groundwork for several planning tools laid. Contextual tools developed and evidence/data for informed decision making for planning gathered (GIS, etc.) and identifying needs and priorities. Concrete demonstration pilots being implemented.
	Outcome 3: Integrated multi-sector planning and management operational in 264,686 ha of seascapes and coastal areas in the Southern Lagoon to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies Achievement Rating: Moderately Satisfactory: MS	Issues with baseline however hinder the possibility of properly accounting for achievement of products and/or results. Technical groundwork for several planning tools laid. Contextual tools developed and evidence/data for informed decision making for planning gathered (GIS, etc.) and identifying needs and priorities.
	Outcome 4: Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation support, equitable gender benefits and biodiversity conservation in Palau Achievement Rating: Moderately Satisfactory: MS	This Outcome deals with a series of products and processes that have been achieved to a good degree for some of them and not for others. Communication processes are constant and active, particularly for the last year and a half. Knowledge products have not been produced to the expected levels thus far, and stakeholders are indicating that they can be advanced together with other technical support in order to generate achievements. Through this outcome Project is promoting equitable gender benefits, yet it is hindered to some degree due to resistance to gender mainstreaming.
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	Rating: Satisfactory: MS	Several implementation components (stakeholder engagement and communications for instance) are leading to moderately satisfactory implementation. Others are problematic within the context of the Project (such as reporting, financial flow, management arrangements). The adaptive management components have not been used fully as of yet, since the Project is supposedly at midpoint but has had delays in start-up and delivery.

² Reference: The ratings for performance follow a six – point scale (Highly satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)). The rating for sustainability follows a four – point scale (Likely (L); Moderately Likely (ML); Moderately Unlikely (MU); Unlikely (U); Highly Unlikely (HU)). The ratings explanations are found in annexes (Rating Scales). In the text of this report full narratives with background for these ratings are found in the sections that refer to each of these components.

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		Nevertheless, there are dialogues on creating adaptive management conditions. Some adaptive management has taken place regarding adaptation to COVID-19 situations.
Sustainability	Rating: Moderately Likely: ML	At the midpoint, and as a composite assessment, there are moderate risks regarding the sustainability of some components, but there are expectations that at least some of the outputs will be sustained and carried-on after project closure. The consolidation and upgrading of institutional frameworks have been strengthened to some degree and/or there are plans to do so. Although some outputs and activities should carry on after closure, a series of them are at risk of not being fully sustained if no further work is carried out in seeking sustainability from the mid-term review onward, in particular regarding institutional strengthening and financial sustainability plans in Palau that can maintain the planning tools being advanced that incorporate biodiversity as a development factor.

CONCISE SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The Project has reached its mid-point with achievements but also with a number of challenges. Although the design is relevant vis-à-vis national issues as well as global environmental benefits, it is by all analysis too ambitious and has a large number of ambitious expected results and of expected products anticipated to be arrived at. The Project has had a slow start and several delays, including delays regarding staffing and regarding meeting with the management and reporting guidelines. Staffing issues (lack of sufficient staff to manage the Project, unclear role definition between the different staff duties and overlap of work, and –lately mainly due to COVID – 19 issues— deficiencies in bringing in technical expertise) has hindered and slowed the implementation processes. Even with low financial delivery at midpoint, the Project has had several achievements. These are achievements within what is expected in the results framework arrangements as reflected in the specific achievement indicators (such as seascapes and landscapes effectively managed through participatory approaches, etc.) in other broader achievements such as the individual and institutional capacity being built. Although the Project has a gender strategy and it has carried-out several gender mainstreaming activities, it encounters several roadblocks in this aspect. While the GEF-6 Project is at times perceived as the environmental arm of the Palau government(s) and as the financial mechanism for a myriad of governmental activities at the national and state level, which some are part of the Project as planned and which are part of the planned architecture and others are not. Therefore, there is a need for the Project to focus on defining what is part of the Project and what activities/processes/etc. are outside of its specific mandate and streamline accordingly, as well generate strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY TABLE

The recommendation table includes recommendations for Project partners for the remaining period of implementation and for future programming. This is a summary table; full recommendations can be found in the appropriate section.

Rec #	Recommendation	Responsible entity
1	The project needs to be reviewed in order to –among other aims-- correct its course, in particular concerning some design features.	Project/UNDP
2	A broad scoped analysis on the indicators has to take place to further refine and aid the reformulation.	Project/UNDP
3	Strengthen the project implementation architecture by hiring additional personnel that can provide backstopping for operational processes and for technical support.	Project
4	The project implementation unit and management structure should not only be strengthened but it should also have clearly defined roles and should follow these roles definitions.	Project
5	In tandem with the above, Project should intensify and increase the technical work needed to implement pilots, and to generate / implement tools for integrated planning, as well as to generate knowledge management products.	Project
6	The Project should continue training, information dissemination, and other such activities based on its gender analysis and strategy as well as based on the Gender and Natural Resources 2020 National Report that the Project commissioned. Gender mainstreaming should not be a pillar or only associated to a particular outcome. This is a cross-cutting issue to be imbedded in all pilots, demonstrations, plans and activities.	Project
7	The Project should begin the elaboration of a sustainability plan / exit strategy, in particular in order to cement capacity within Palau and to secure institutional and financial sustainability, bearing in mind that this is the general expectation for the very first outcome anticipated to be obtained by this project.	Project
8	Regarding governance, the Project needs to begin engendering analysis and internal discussions as to what the structure for this institutionalisation should be.	Project
9	Regarding financing, there should be a clear link between continuation and sustainability of plans and activities with their financing once external support ends.	Project
10	UNDP needs to work with and assist the Project in order to aid them in applying processes that support projects' technical and implementation capabilities (specially support project implementation and efficient decision – making capacities) and in applying procurement systems to increase capacity to efficiently implement projects aiding in the fulfilment of a project's objective.	UNDP
11	The Project and all the partners and stakeholders should recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic will have effects upon implementation and cope with the understanding that COVID-19's impact and the pandemic will be persistent in the near future, and that there is an urgent need to move along using digital means.	Project
12	Although the implementation of the communication strategy as well as the outreach through this has been positive, there is ample room to improve, to make it more suitable, and to upscale its focus.	Project
13	Design processes should be extended enough to gather all data, information, and enhance in -country stakeholder participation, even when the design is not done in country.	UNDP/GEF
14	Design of projects in situations with limited in – country capacity should very much be taken into account at planning, inception and preparation of an intervention avoiding, designs that are overreached and not fully applicable.	UNDP/GEF
15	UNDP needs to work with and assist the countries where interventions take place in order to aid them in applying processes that support projects' technical and implementation capabilities.	UNDP/GEF

2. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE MTR AND OBJECTIVES

The Mid-Term Review of the *Integrating biodiversity safeguards and conservation into development in Palau*³ Project has, as its purpose, to determine progress made toward the achievement of outcomes and to identify course correction if needed. It focuses on the effectiveness, efficiency, and timeliness of project implementation; highlights issues requiring decisions and actions; and presents initial lessons learned about project design, implementation, and management. Findings of this review also lead to recommendations for enhanced implementation during the final operation term. The review follows methods and approach as stated in UNDP manuals, relevant tools, and other relevant UNDP guidance materials, including *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* and *UNDP's Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results*.

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

This mid-term review has focused primarily on assessing the Project considering the accomplished outcomes, objectives, and effects. It includes the following scope and, as indicated in the above-mentioned *Guidance* for mid-term reviews and is mainly focused on:

- (1) Assess progress towards achieving project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document.
- (2) Assess signs of project success or failure.
- (3) Review the project's strategy in light of its sustainability risks.
- (4) Monitoring of implementation and adaptive management.
- (5) Strategy assessment (project design and results log-frame).

The Terms of Reference for this review determine the main approach for this assessment. This MTR is based on evidence and information that is credible, reliable and useful grounded on a collaborative and participatory approach. For this, the review team reviewed relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure/SESP), the Project Document, project reports including the 2020 PIR, as well as other materials that the team considered useful for this evidence-based review, including the Project website, weekly newsletters, Social Media channels, and tracking tools. Furthermore, for this to be collaborative and participatory approach, close engagement took place with the Project Team, government counterparts, direct beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders. Stakeholder involvement included interviews with interested parties who have defined project responsibilities. The choice of those persons to interview was based on the type of stakeholders and their involvement in the project and the capacity of these persons to provide inputs to the MTR. Therefore, the criteria for stakeholder selection for interviews was: involvement in the project, relevance vis-à-vis implementation, and geographical representation. The analysis entailed reviewing different stages and aspects of the Project, including design and formulation; implementation; results and the involvement of stakeholders in the Project's processes and activities.

³ Also known as the GEF-6 Project in Palau or as the Palau Biodiversity Project.

The review process took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. This pandemic, undeniably, not only has and will influence the Project itself, it also had an impact upon the review process. It has had an early impact by delaying the review while issues were settled pertaining to the methodology considering an understandable lack of in-country mission for the international team leader. For carrying out the review, therefore, UNDP guidance on evaluation planning and operation during Covid-19 was followed for the design and implementation of the assessment process. In part due to travel restrictions, a national consultant was engaged as part of the review team in order to be able to carry out face-to-face interviews in Palau as well as to provide general local backstopping to the assessment. The data and information were gathered through a desktop review (as originally planned) while the personal interviews were done using remote mechanisms (video conferences, telephone calls, etc.) when they involved the team leader and face – to – face when they were implemented by the national consultant. Notwithstanding this context, the review followed a collaborative and participatory approach while using remote engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts, the UNDP Pacific Office and UNDP personnel, civil society organisations and other key stakeholders.

In order to carry out this review exercise, several data collection tools for analysing information using the principles of results-based reviews were used. Following UNDP/GEF guidance, the relevant areas of the Project were assessed according to performance criteria and prospects of sustainability with ratings as summarized in the annexed tables (ratings are found in annexes: Annex 4 Ratings Scales).

The tools chosen for the mid-term review, with a mixture of primary and secondary data sources as well as a combination of quantitative and qualitative material, were selected in order to provide a spectrum of information and to validate findings. These methods allow for in-depth exploration and yielded information that facilitated understanding of observed changes in outcomes and outputs (both intended and unintended) and the factors that contributed to the achievements or to the lack of accomplishments. An initial tool developed for the review process was an evaluation matrix (which can also be found in the annexes - Annex 2 MTR evaluative matrix (evaluation criteria with key questions, indicators, sources of data, and methodology). This matrix guided the data collection process and, as the review proceeded, the matrix was used to collect, and display data obtained from different sources that relate to relevant criteria and questions.

The specific methods used to gather assessment information were the following:

- *Document analysis.* In depth scrutiny of documentation was used as an instrument of analysis. The analysis examined documents formulated during the preparation and implementation phases of the Project (i.e. the Project Document, project reports including PIR, etc.), board minutes and presentations to the board, as well as technical documents produced within the Project and by other stakeholders/projects. A list of consulted documents is found in annexes (Annex 7 List of documents reviewed).
- *Key informant interviews:* Interviews were implemented through a series of open and semi-open questions raised to stakeholders directly and indirectly involved with the Project. Given the COVID-19 pandemic mission travel could not take place for the team leader. Therefore, all of the dialogues with the team leader were held online, mainly through video conferences. In-person interviews were held in Palau by the national consultant. Key actors (stakeholders) were defined as government actors, project staff, local actors, and civil society representatives. Stakeholders to interview were chosen to be the key actors from every group directly or tangentially involved in the Project. The array of stakeholders, therefore, was a representative sample of actors involved such as the implementing and partnering agencies, national government representatives, other levels (e.g. local) representatives, UNDP staff, and representatives from civil society stakeholders directly and tangentially involved with the Project. The national consultant also had an opportunity to engage in direct observation during project events. Annexes contains a list of stakeholders contacted and with whom dialogues (interviews, exchanges, etc.) took place (Annex 5 List of persons interviewed). A total of 29 persons were consulted for the overall MTR process.

The MTR team used gender-responsive methodologies and tools and ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues (including disaster risks including climate change and SDGs), were incorporated as relevant into the MTR report. The gender-responsive evaluation assessed how gender issues are included in the project (from design/planning to implementation processes) and provided information on the way in which the Project is affecting women and men differently and how women are included in the project within a rights framework. As relevant for an MTR, the review also assessed cross cutting issues (such as climate change, poverty alleviation) and other pertinent issues as included in design documents and implementation modalities.

LIMITATIONS AND EVALUABILITY IN PARTICULAR IN LIGHT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As it occurs in most of these sorts of assessments, there can be a series of limitations. Besides the characteristic evaluability issues such as access to inputs and constraints in terms of time and resources, with the Covid-19 pandemic there have been other limitations identified. For instance, in light of the pandemic, mission travel was cancelled for the team leader, and stakeholder access (including response time) was an issue. Therefore, in order to mitigate whatever issues might arise in this sense, a national consultant was engaged and different access instruments were used (such as different tools for key interviews) to broaden stakeholder access, participation, and inputs at different levels. The 2021 PIR and tracking tools were being developed at the same time as the MTR process. Therefore these were not made available for the review. Furthermore, delays in MTR implementation, including procurement issues, made this a hurried assessment process which -in some ways- hindered to some degree the interchanges that make up this type of assessment. The above issues notwithstanding, the review team made every effort, and succeeded, in engaging a robust number and type of stakeholders in Palau in order to implement the MTR with a participatory and collaborative approach.

STRUCTURE OF THE MTR REPORT

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

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT

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

As the Project Document states, the project aims to address the negative impacts of unsustainable sector-led development practices on biodiversity-rich landscapes of Palau, including its productive coastal and marine ecosystems, while taking into account climate change adaptation needs and inclusive and equitable social and economic development for dependent communities, thereby contributing towards poverty alleviation, food security and sustainable agriculture and gender equality. Furthermore, the Project aims to safeguard against threats to biodiversity and the introduction and spread of Invasive Alien Species through tourism and related sectors. The objective of the project is to mainstream biodiversity conservation into integrated land and seascape governance, planning and management in Palau.

The developmental context in Palau is very much aligned with Project aims. For instance, tourism is an increasing driver in Palau's economy with an expectation that this area will rise 30 per cent per year. Agriculture and fisheries are the main livelihoods for a large portion of Palau's population.

The growth of these sectors point to increasing pressure on natural resources. Furthermore, Palau is very much affected by climate change which exacerbates natural resource pressures and indicating a need for increased adaptation measures. Several policies acknowledge risks as well opportunities of these sectors, including the growing tourism sector.

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

The Project tries to address a series of critical issues related to targeted threats and barriers. The threats are identified as follows:

- (1) Forest clearing and other land conversion leading to degradation of natural terrestrial and marine habitats.
- (2) Invasive Alien Species (IAS).
- (3) Uncontrolled fires.
- (4) Damaging practices in tourism, coupled with rising demand.
- (5) Over-fishing.

Most of these threats are also linked to gaps in current legal and policy frameworks to deal with these issues in an integrated manner. For instance, there are good regulations for fishing gear, but inadequate rules on seasons and none to regulate overharvesting in the sector. Export of marine reef fish continues despite concerns about declining stocks; and turtle shells and other marine products are on sale in many shops. Many families rely on subsistence fishing as an important food source (37% of households), especially in rural areas (58% of households). The vast majority (91%) of fish folk households rely exclusively on the declining and more vulnerable reef fisheries. Only 9% are involved in Palau's abundant offshore tuna fishery. The number of smaller boats has decreased by about 20% in the past decade; but wealthier urban residents owning bigger and more powerful boats while rural fishermen tend to have smaller, less powerful boats. Koror State waters, which adjoin Palau's major population centre and are therefore easily accessible, continue to be extremely important and heavily reliant on fishery, although Koror-based fishermen fish throughout Palau. There are also threats from illegal foreign fishing in the offshore waters.

The identified barriers to be targeted by the Project are as follows:

Barrier 1: Inadequate national enabling and institutional framework, including its consistent application across Palau's states, to safeguard biodiversity and underpin integrated natural resource management.

Barrier 2: Limited capacity and experience in managing terrestrial and marine resources at land and seascape levels within an integrated multi-sector approach designed to maintain ecological connectivity from 'ridge to reef'.

Barrier 3: Limited capacity and demonstration of responsible management of tourism, fisheries, aquaculture and IAS in coastal and marine areas in the Southern Lagoon.

Barrier 4: Lack of awareness among the public, industrial and commercial sectors at national and state levels about the importance of integrated landscape and seascape planning, within a framework of safeguards to address risks posed by IAS and unsustainable practices within key sectors, such as agriculture, fisheries and tourism.

The direct threats impacting on the project target, that is on safeguarding Palau's biodiversity at land and seascape scales, and their relationships with a range of indirect factors (root causes) were analysed upon project preparation. Furthermore, the link between the barriers identified and the project intervention logic and strategy were inputs for a Theory of Change diagram included in project planning documentation.

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

As the planning documents indicated, this project was designed with a primary objective: *to mainstream biodiversity conservation into integrated land and seascape governance, planning and management in Palau*. Its aims are to address the negative impacts of unsustainable sector-led development practices on biodiversity-rich landscapes of Palau. This is including its productive coastal and marine ecosystems, while taking into account climate change adaptation needs and inclusive and equitable social and economic development for dependent communities, as well as safeguarding against threats to biodiversity and the introduction and spread of Invasive Alien Species through tourism and related sectors. It is recognized that land and sea support the lives and livelihoods of a large number of local communities and that implementation of a coherent strategy to promote sustainable, biodiversity-friendly livelihood options is an integral part of the solution.

The above mentioned objective is to be achieved through the implementation of four inter-related and mutually complementary Components (also known as Project Outcomes) that are focussed on addressing the identified existing barriers. The four project expected Outcomes are:

Outcome 1: Enhanced national institutional framework for integrated planning and management of land and seascapes;

Outcome 2: Integrated multi-sector land and seascape planning and management operational in Babeldaob states to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies;

Outcome 3: Integrated multi-sector planning and management operational in 264,686 ha of seascapes and coastal areas in the Southern Lagoon to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies, and;

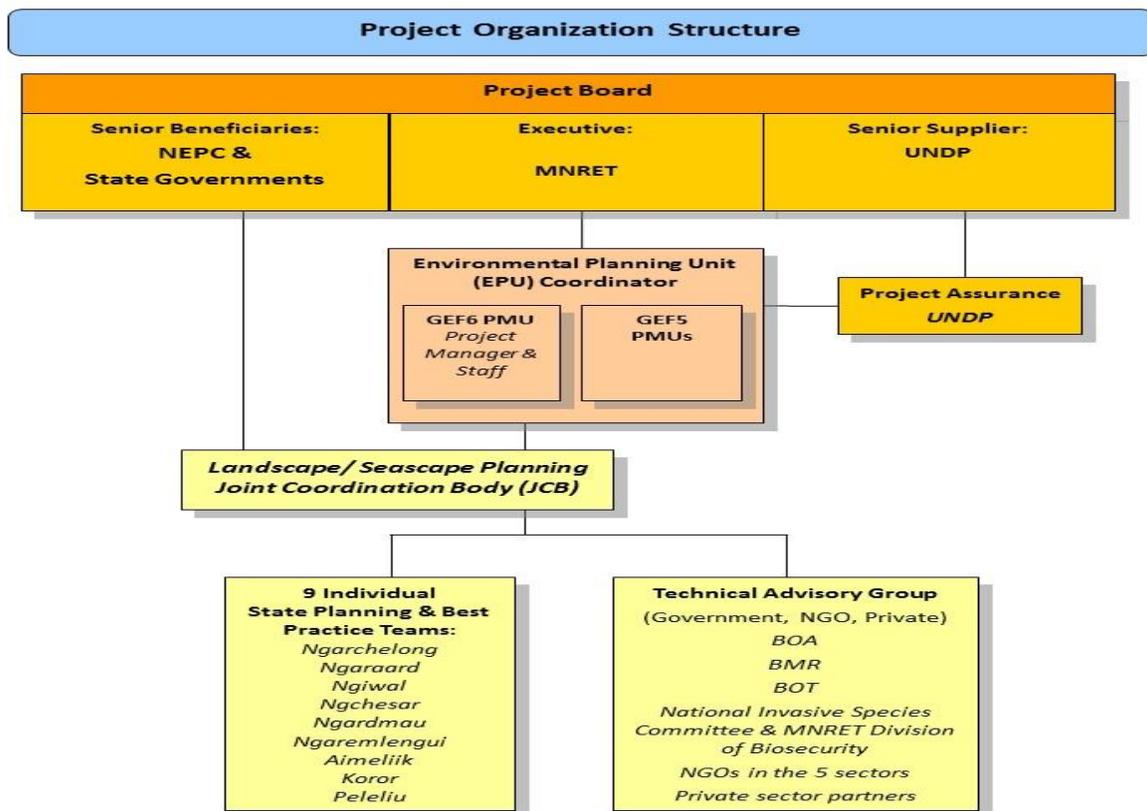
Outcome 4: Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation support, equitable gender benefits and biodiversity conservation in Palau.

Each of the outcomes has a series of expected outputs through which the outcome would be achieved. These, in turn, are articulated through multiple and assorted products and activities anticipated to take place throughout the implementation process.

Total resources required for the project are USD 26,904,868, of which USD 4,233,562 are GEF funds, with expected co – financing of USD 22,671,306. The expected co – financing is to originate from two sources: from Government USD 15,616,306; and 1,150,000 from Civil Society Organizations

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

The Project is implemented via a National Implementation Modality (NIM). The management arrangements have been set at design and have a number of roles, responsibilities and governance mechanisms arranged at planning stages. The planned general organisational structure is as follows:



The *Implementing Partner* for this project is the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Environment (MAFE)⁴. The *Project Board* is responsible for making by consensus management decisions when guidance is required by the Project Manager, including recommendations for UNDP/Implementing Partner approval of project plans and revisions. The composition of the Board was described in planning document as comprised of the following stakeholders: *NEPC (Chair or Secretary as decided by the NPEC); a representative of State Governments (as elected by Governor's Association); MNRET's Minister until the EPU Coordinator was hired; and eventually by the Director of the Bureau of Environment; UNDP Country Program Officer.* It is described in the Project Document that the *Environmental Planning Unit Coordinator* will be supported by the GEF 6 funds in part (other GEF project will also

⁴ Formerly Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment & Tourism, MNRET.

fund this position). The EPU Coordinator is to be supervised directly by the Minister and would sit on the Project Board as a full member. As indicated in the project planning documents, the EPU Coordinator shall function more as a strategic thinker and partnership-builder than an on-the-ground project implementer.

Planning documents did also describe the roles, purposes, and composition of the *Project Management Unit (PMU)*. It is indicated that the PMU would be placed in the EPU and shall consist of those individuals involved in project coordination, supervision and day-to-day management of the project, including the Project Manager and the Administrative and Financial Support Personnel. The indications for the PMU were slight, with only two staff members.⁵ According to the planning documents, *Project Assurance* roles are to be assumed by the UNDP Country Office and the UNDP Regional Technical Advisor.

Other governance, programmatic guidance and technical advisory bodies that would accompany implementation were also described in the Project Document. These included the Land/Seascape Planning Joint Coordination Body (JCB) (which would have civil society, private sector, as well as national and state governments representation); Individual State Planning and Best Practice Teams; and a Technical Advisory Group, and a National Invasive Species Committee. Some of their prescribed roles include mainstreaming plans into development activities, oversee actions in the ground, lead planning activities, provide technical guidance, and partner with the Project in different activities.

PROJECT TIMING AND MILESTONES

The Project has an expected six year duration. The planned start date of the Projects was July 1, 2018 while the planned end date is June 30, 2024

MAIN STAKEHOLDERS: SUMMARY LIST

At the design stage stakeholders were identified. The purpose of this analysis was to identify main potential stakeholders and to consider their potential roles and responsibilities in the implementation and/or guidance of the Project. As seen in the section on implementation there has been continuous engagement of and with these identified stakeholders in project execution. Their roles and responsibilities remain unchanged.

The extensive list of stakeholders identified at the design stage was as follows:

National Government Agencies

- Ministry of Natural Resources Environment and Tourism (MNRET)⁶: Office of the Minister; Environmental Planning Unit
- Ministry of Natural Resources Environment and Tourism (MNRET): Office of the Minister; Environmental Planning Unit
- Bureau of Tourism (BOT), MNRET
- Bureau of Agriculture (BOA) and Biosecurity Office
- Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection (DFWP), Ministry of Justice

⁵ This section deals with project implementation arrangements as set at planning and design. Actual implementation functioning is found further along this report where this is specifically assessed.

⁶ This was the name of the institution at the time of design, it is currently the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Environment (MAFE).

- Office of the Palau Automated Land and Resources Information Systems (PALARIS), Public Infrastructure, Industries and Commerce (MPIIC)
- Secretariat of the National Environmental Protection Council (NEPC), PALARIS, MPIIC
- Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs, Bureau of Aging and Gender, Gender Division

Autonomous Government-supported organizations

- Environmental Quality Protection Board (EQPB)
- Palau Public Land Authority (PPLA)
- State Public Lands Authorities
- Palau International Coral Reef Center
- Belau National Museum (BNM)

Government-Mandated Joint Committees

- National Invasive Species Committee (NISC) and
- NISC Chairperson
- Economic Advisory Group (EAG)
- Foreign Investment Board (FIB)

State Government

- State Governments (with emphasis on Peleliu, Koror, and 9 Babeldaob States) and Governor's Association
- Koror State Department of Conservation and Law Enforcement (KSDCLE)

Foreign Governments

- USDA NRCS
- Taiwan Technical Mission

Business / Private Sector

- National Development Bank of Palau (NDBP)
- Developers and Large Construction Companies (including Government's Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Office)
- Commercial Farms
- Shippers (Air and Sea) and Importers and Port Authority
- Tour Companies and Diving Shops

Non-profit Organizations

- Palau Conservation Society (PCS)
- Ebiil Society

- Belau Tourism Association
- Palau Chamber of Commerce
- Island Conservation
- Alliance of Palau Conservation Officers (APCO)

Fisheries Organizations

- Coral Reef Research Foundation (CRRF)
- Northern Reef Fisheries Cooperative

Land, Agriculture, and Aquaculture Organizations

- Palau Community Action Agency (PCAA)
- Palau Organic Growers Association
- Palau Taiwan Farmers Association
- Belau Watershed Alliance (BWA)
- Palau Aquaculture Cooperative Association

For most of these stakeholders their roles in the country were also listed in the design vis-à-vis the Project's issues. For the main stakeholders, their role vis-à-vis Project implementation was also defined.

4. FINDINGS

PROJECT STRATEGY

PROJECT DESIGN

The design of the Project follows standard structure for these sorts of interventions with intended outcomes and outputs within a framework of an expected objective. Moreover, the formal logic of the Project identifies threats as well as barriers and plans to endeavour to act upon them in order to obtain products, processes, and results. The overall approach is satisfactory, in the sense that barriers and threats are identified and ways to overcome these are recognised.

The four expected outcomes are clearly established as intended short and medium-term effects of the intervention.⁷ That is, the projected outcomes are expressed adequately given that they establish anticipated results that would stem from the Project.

Lessons and processes from other relevant projects were incorporated explicitly into project design. For instance, the intention of this Project is to build upon the knowledge base derived from the GEF-5⁸ project in Palau. Lessons and knowledge from the GEF-5 entailed issues such as Agriculture, Climate Change Adaptation, Land Use and Erosion Control, Fire Prevention, Forest Restoration and Rehabilitation, and Tourism. As it is explicitly stated in GEF-6's log frame: "best practice and lessons from GEF-5 are available, yet –due to the fact that resources do not exist for their implementation—they would be used as tools for GEF-6's implementation".

As indicated above the link with GEF-5 is not only at the products/outputs level but also in the implementing processes and architecture of GEF-6. Governance structures have also been linked and implementation/management arrangements linkages were similarly indicated at design. It is indicated in planning documents that Project Managers for UNEP's GEF5 (ID 5208), UNDP's GEF 2R2 IW program (ID 5404)⁹ and the UNDP GEF6 projects will serve under the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) and will be supervised by an EPU Coordinator (the coordination at the Ministry is funded jointly by these GEF projects). The aim for this is to foment interaction between projects, discussions about each project, information sharing and close collaboration between activities of the three projects to ensure synergies and avoid duplication. Furthermore, the potential linkage with other (national and regional projects in the Pacific region) is specified at project design.

The Project to a great extent addresses the country's priorities specifically identified at design. These are, inter alia, the following: local food security; effective and comprehensive national awareness strategy on integrated

⁷ Outcome 1: Enhanced national institutional framework for integrated planning and management of land and seascapes;

Outcome 2: Integrated multi-sector land and seascape planning and management operational in Babeldaob states to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies;

Outcome 3: Integrated multi-sector planning and management operational in 264,686 ha of seascapes and coastal areas in the Southern Lagoon to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies; and

Outcome 4: Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation support, equitable gender benefits and biodiversity conservation in Palau.

⁸ GEF-5 is the short name in Palau for the R2R: Advancing Sustainable Resources Management to Improve Livelihoods and Protect Biodiversity in Palau Project, a project also funded by GEF and having UNEP as its implementing agency.

⁹ This is the R2R: Testing the Integration of Water, Land, Forest & Coastal Management to Preserve Ecosystem Services, Store Carbon, Improve Climate Resilience and Sustain Livelihoods in Pacific Island Countries Project, a multi – country project in the region also funded by GEF and implemented by UNDP.

land and seascape planning with respect to invasive alien species and biosecurity; as well as fomenting sustainable planning and policy implementation regarding productive sectors (tourism, fisheries, agriculture). Explicitly, the Project is aligned with several national policies such as its alignment with Palau's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) of 2015-2025, and its National Invasive Species Strategy (NISS) of 2014, as well as the Responsible Tourism Policy Framework of 2017-2021.

It is aligned with UNDP/GEF programmatic guidelines, such as UNDAF/Country Program Outcome: Environmental Sustainability; UNDP Strategic Plan Output: Output 1.3 Solutions developed at national and sub-national levels for sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem services, chemicals and waste; UNDAF/Country Program Document: Outcome 1.1 Improved resilience, with particular focus on communities, through integrated implementation of sustainable environmental management, climate change adaptation/mitigation and disaster risk management. It was also anticipated at design that the Project would be aligned and contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (s): Strategic Goal C (To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity), and Target 12 (By 2020, the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained).

The Project undertook UNDP's Environmental and Social Screening Process upon project preparation. The screening results showed that the project falls under moderate overall project risk categorization. The majority of SESP identified risks were ranked low, and small number were ranked moderate with respect to their significance in terms of 'impact' and/or 'probability'. The two risks considered as moderate, using SESP rankings, during design were the following:

- *Risk 1:* Could the Project potentially restrict availability, quality of and access to resources or basic services, in particular to marginalized individuals or groups?
- *Risk 5:* Would the proposed Project possibly affect land tenure arrangements and/or community based property rights/customary rights to land, territories and/or resources?

Mitigation measures for managing these moderately significant risks were also proposed at designed, yet no major social and environmental risks were identified since it was considered that the intervention would not potentially cause adverse impacts to habitats and/or ecosystems and ecosystem services. This means that SESP did not identify any risks ranked as High.

Relevant gender matters were raised at project design. A Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming Action Plan was carried out acknowledging Palau's national approach to gender issues which includes overall inclusivity and multiple vulnerable populations factors. The analysis raised a number of questions such as rapidly changing gender roles in Palau, information on gender baseline data, and links between gender roles and inclusivity vis-à-vis the planning and productive sectors targeted through the Project (such as fisheries/aquaculture, tourism, agriculture and forestry). It is of interest to note that one of the expected outcomes (that is, *Outcome 4: Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation support, equitable gender benefits and biodiversity conservation in Palau*) entails dealing with gender issues specifically, notwithstanding the cross-sectoral gender-sensitive approach of other expected outcomes. A gender mainstreaming plan was also part of the design documents, with objectives/proposed activities/targets. The Project's UNDP Gender Marker is 2: *Activities that have gender equality as a significant objective*. The expected outputs and results of the Project at design are correspondent to the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale defined as Gender Responsive (*result addressed differential needs of men or women and addressed equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status, rights but did not address root causes of inequalities in their lives*).

In addition to gender equality and women's empowerment, other cross cutting issues were factored into project design. Matters such as income generation, improved governance, livelihood benefits, food security were included in design and planning documents.

In addition to the mentioned gender strategic outlook, the Project's design included several other formal strategies or frameworks for implementation. These were, inter alia., Framework for Participatory Land/Seascape Planning and Management; Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy; and planned roles and responsibilities of main stakeholders of the project.

Overall, project planning documents show that the project strategy is adequate as a broad approach to address the main threats and barriers identified in order to integrate biodiversity safeguards, conservation and sustainable uses of key natural resources into development planning in Palau. Nevertheless (and as it will be further explored in the section dealing with an analysis of the log frame and with indicators but it can be seen in a broader more encompassing way) the Project as planned is very ambitious in what it asserts it would attain, there are some results which are not attainable within the scope and time frame of a project such as this, and, as seen in the section about stakeholder involvement previous to this section in the report, with a very high number of partners intended to be involved. Furthermore, the degrees of difficulties which a project that links national and state – levels policy coordination in Palau were not fully captured, and eventually give rise to this over ambitiousness. In addition to over ambitiousness at the design and planning phases there were a great deal of focus on technical aspects (meeting GEF/UNDP requirements and aligning to national priorities) yet a number of operationalisation questions of a project were overlooked. As will be seen further along in the appropriate sections of this report, matters such as adequate staffing for project implementation unit, realities of working with so many state and national governments, and other such matters, were not properly regarded in the planning stages.

The design process has also been referred to by relevant stakeholders. The design was carried out mainly by consultants external to the country, yet with one consultant who worked in Palau and who is now a member of the implementation staff at the Ministry. While these consultants accessed national key stakeholders in order to harness their inputs, it was indicated by national and local stakeholders that the development of design was rushed and that key operational and design issues (log frame, etc.) were not properly debated nor was there a proper uptake by those who designed the project of national / local inputs. At the end of this process and seemingly due to the haste to submit to GEF for approval, national inputs and national debate on design were curtailed and inputs not properly incorporated. The perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes and log frame, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, were therefore abridged to some degree due to the rush to submit design documents and the whole planning process. It should be also noted that this is the first stand-alone (i.e. not a multi country project) large UNDP implemented GEF supported project in Palau. Taking into consideration this matter the design for a sizeable intervention of this type has been demanding and challenging in terms of resources and capacity needed to implement nationally.

RESULTS FRAMEWORK/LOG FRAME

The results framework is a display of some of the strengths but also some of the issues in the *Integrating biodiversity safeguards and conservation into development in Palau* Project. Both of these aspects are demonstrated by the indicators.

The over ambitiousness of the Project as designed is shown by the fact that the log frame has 17 indicators¹⁰. This implies that the Project (again as designed) envisages to have 17 different results / impacts / effects, which is undoubtedly too large of a scale for a project as this.

The Results Framework has three indicators levels: Baseline, Midterm target, and End of project target. Indicator analysis for these sorts of reviews are based on whether these are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound). For the GEF-6 Project in Palau a SMART assessment leads to the following breakdown.

¹⁰ All indicators part of the log frame can be found in annexes in the PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS MATRIX.

S • Specific: Indicators must use clear language, describing a specific future condition.¹¹

- Although many of the Log Frame indicators are specific, some of them are not. For instance indicator 1.3.2 [Number of households benefiting from strengthened livelihoods through solutions for improved management of natural resources and provision of ecosystem services], does not define a specific future condition (that is, change) by just specifying that at midpoint “at least 45% of HHs in Babeldaob states and Peleliu (at least 340HHs) directly benefit through sustainable resource management approaches and incomes”. This is not specific enough to signify change. That is, it is not sufficiently precise to conclude how households benefit from improved management of natural resources as would other indicators. Even so, stakeholders indicate that is proving difficult to validate baseline data for this indicator.¹²
- Some of the indicators are result-oriented. Yet others are product – oriented, output or process oriented and therefore do not tally effects (or future condition) per se. For instance, Indicator 16 (*Percentage of fifth-grade students received updated “ridge to reef” curriculum, including IAS*) is to be measured by *At least 90% of fifth-grade students received updated “ridge to reef” curriculum, including IAS of which 50% are females* as an end target indicator. Nevertheless, this does not truly describe change (outcome) since it describes an output (product).

M • Measurable: Indicators, must have measurable aspects making it possible to assess whether they were achieved or not:

- All 17 indicators have measurable aspects.

A • Achievable: Indicators must be within the capacity of the partners to achieve:

- Several of the expected results are beyond the viability of being achievable. Similarly, the indicators that should measure these expected outcomes are outside the Project’s scope. For instance, stakeholders have specified that some are not achievable due to the labour intensity needed to attain them which is –again– beyond the scope of the project. This is the case with Indicator 9 (*Number of hectares of degraded forests and grasslands and coastal and marine areas outside PAN network rehabilitated*). The Project’s preliminary analysis on whether this indicator is achievable or not it is also carried out taking into consideration that the ecological conditions of the targeted areas. For instance, the Project reports that soils are poor in the targeted areas and that expected results are not feasible also due to this. Furthermore, also as an example, Indicator 12 [*Change in status of fish stocks in designated reef and sea grass areas based on biomass indices*] and Indicator 13 [*Change in status of coral cover at designated sites*] are unattainable within the scope of the Project given that the types of change indicated here take a longer time to attain beyond the timeline for an intervention such as this. And, perhaps as importantly, causality between the Project’s outputs and this outcome cannot be fully determined.¹³

R • Relevant: Indicators must make a contribution to selected priorities of the national development framework:

- All of the project indicators are R (relevant) since they are aligned with national development priorities.

¹¹ Source: *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*.

¹² Regarding indicator 1.3.2, stakeholders have indicated other issues, such as the pertinence of measuring by individuals and not by households.

¹³ Stakeholders have indicated in the latest project implementation reviews that these indicators are to be revised but not for the reasons explained here. Stakeholders point out that a revision for these indicators should be based on not having robust baseline as well as not having begun work on this area, or due to externalities.

- The internal analysis being carried out by the Project on indicators specify that –in their view—some indicators are no longer relevant, yet this analysis does not agree with how the Project defines relevance. For instance, it is established in some documents by the Project at this point that Indicator 15 [*Increase in percentage of sampled community members, tour operators and sector agency staff aware of potential conservation threats and adverse impacts of IAS Partners: Tour guides and communities know about adverse threats of IAS*] that current target is not relevant. This indicator expectation is –in the view of the Project— seen as not relevant. The Project alleges that there are new baselines established, but this is contradictory since measurements at point of departure cannot be new at midpoint. The existing high levels of awareness cannot be deemed as irrelevant nor the baseline moved at will since it is expected that the baseline indicators were existing at design and not at midpoint. Relevance is defined as a contribution to selected priorities of the national development framework. It is likely that the internal analysis is interpreting *validity* as relevance. It is plausible that the analysis is specifying that an indicator, therefore, is no longer valid, which implies that the classification as not relevant is not accurate.

T• Time-bound: Indicators are never open-ended; there should be an expected date of accomplishment:

- All of the project indicators are T (time-bound) given that they have horizon of when it is expected that they would be achieved (midterm and/or end of project).

Germane partners (project implementation staff, government representatives, board members, UNDP) are well aware of the indicators’ issues and how they affect not only monitoring and follow through but also a results - oriented framework for implementation. For this reason, at some level, an internal analysis on the indicators has begun to take place within the Project, which –as seen in the recommendations section of this report—needs to be further refined to engender a reformulation as needed. Nevertheless, there is a stipulation from this assessment that this review at this stage should not merely be about metrics or retrofitting as to whether or not an indicator can be met, but it should be within an agenda of a results-oriented outlook for this Project. Furthermore, it should be envisaged that indicators should to a large degree gauge whether impacts and effects arise out of the Project and that they should capture this properly.

PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS

PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES ANALYSIS

In annexes, the Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis in chart form is found (Annex 11: Progress Towards Results Matrix). This graph reviews the indicator-level progress reported by the Project (July 2021) as well as information from other sources. Following indications for Mid Term Reviews, the chart includes an analysis regarding achievements and categorises them with colour coding¹⁴ at the outcome level: (a) has already been achieved (colouring table cell green); (b) is partially achieved or on target to be achieved by the end of the Project (colouring table cell yellow); or (c) is at high risk of not being achieved by the end of the Project and needs attention (colouring table red). Furthermore, classifications following a six point Progress Towards Results Ratings is also added (Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), or Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)).¹⁵ The Progress Towards Outcomes Chart also includes the specific outputs and sub outputs that were achieved which will be part of the next reporting cycle. The following

¹⁴ For further details on this sort of indications and analysis, see *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews Of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*.

¹⁵ Explanation of rating scale is attached in annexes (in the section Progress Towards Results Rating Scale).

paragraphs contain a narrative of the progress towards outcomes analysis and are linked to the mentioned chart. In the continuing sections, other specific analysis is made regarding the Project's progress.

The GEF-6 Project has carried out a number of processes and implemented products, even engendered effects, which are summarised below and in the progress toward results chart in annexes.¹⁶ Below is also some of the rationale of why these processes are taking place within the context of the Project:

- Engendered collaborative processes, that have aided in linking and discussions between and among different areas (government and states for instance such as within JCB). This not only has helped in coordination but also presents opportunities for sustainability, given that policies which are debated and analysed jointly are perceived to have a greater likelihood of implementation and sustainability. This acknowledges also the complexities of national and states realms for policy making and policy implementation, and creates or strengthens institutional synergies. Collaborative processes very importantly have also included communities and non-governmental entities, which also entails filling gaps regarding community interactions with national and state levels. Opened channels of communication between different types of stakeholders and between different institutions.
- Understanding that working with states and communities in Palau is complex, the Project has gone ahead with these processes no matter what the difficulties. Imbedding community oriented and community participation in these sorts of projects.
- Institutional framework analysis, review of policy framework, potentially upgrading policy tools, as well as generating plans for biodiversity management, land use planning, and other such plans, to impel sustainable development processes in Palau, have been carried out. Groundwork for aligning national plans and states plans in order for them to be mutually supportive also took place.
- Contributed thus far to upgrading and mainstreaming policies, plans, etc. Merged, mainstreamed policies in partnership between states and national government are also perceived to be helpful for future enforcement. Although it is understood that it is likely that this upgrading and mainstreaming might have occurred without GEF-6, stakeholders indicated that the Project has contributed to speeding up the process.
- Technical groundwork for several planning tools laid. Contextual tools developed and evidence/data for informed decision making for planning gathered (GIS, etc.) identifying needs and priorities.
- Concrete pilots and expectantly demonstrative for upscaling and replication carried out. River restoration, reforestation, erosion control pilots—all with community participation—taking place.
- Capacity building taking place with investment at the national and states' levels for capacity building (at the individual as well as the institutional levels which in turn is expected to engender strong national and state level institutions to continue environmentally sound sustainable development policies).
- Although in many cases the Project captures that there is strong level of awareness regarding biodiversity and biosecurity issues in Palau (even more than what was thought to be at baseline analysis at some levels), the work carried out thus far has contributed to awareness raising, albeit highlighting the complexities inherent to these issues in the country.
- Some effects are already beginning to be discerned by the stakeholders, for instance certification processes accomplished.

¹⁶ Further information on these activities is found in annexes in the Progress Towards Outcomes chart.

- A highly proactive board and technical advisory groups, as well as volunteering partners, are some of the reasons why the results and products are being achieved.

REMAINING BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING THE PROJECT OBJECTIVE

As seen above, and in the chart on progress towards results chart in annexes, expected outputs have been achieved approximately at the expected levels for implementation at mid-point. Some of the remaining barriers can be associated to the slow set up and slowed start up, particularly in the first year and a half of implementation. The set-up process and the beginning of delivery of products (and evidently of outcomes) was -therefore- slow. The remaining barriers to achieving the Project's objective are varied. There are a set of remaining barriers that hinder progress, while some are design issues others are more of an implementation/organisational nature, while others (such as the COVID – 19 pandemic and its ensuing impact beyond the health emergency) are unexpected externalities. They are listed and explained below:

- *Difficulties associated with design.* Some of the barriers can be associated to planning issues. As indicated in the design analysis of this report, the over ambitiousness imbedded at design (beginning from the pipelining stages such as when the Project Implementation Form –PIF—was developed) , design lacking robust operational mechanisms, as well as the involvement of numerous partners have resulted in lagging implementation, in part due to accommodate this complexity. The design is weak on focus and this is dispersing into the implementation process. It attempts to carry out a great number of overambitious activities/products/processes, even many outside of the log frame, which suggest a deficiency in focus.
- *Delayed start up.* Although at this point staff has been incorporated as planned, start up and set up of the Project as such was delayed, hindering the implementation process.
- *Delayed funding flows.* In part due to having to set up in Palau complex financial reporting processes to fulfil UNDP requirements, and in the 80/20 spending rule that UNDP requires (i.e. spending at the level of 80 percent in order to have a release funds) there have been serious delays in funding flows that hinder flowing implementation and have even halted implementation totally for some of the Project's processes.
- *Rotation:* There is a high level of rotation of individual partners that participate and/or contribute to the Project at different levels. This, in turn, hinders continuity. Changes in administrations have hindered continuity as well as potentially hinder sustainability.
- *Frail staffing of PIU.* The Project implementation staff is not sufficient to flowingly implement such a complex project as well as to properly fulfil requisites from UNDP and of GEF (such as reporting).
- *Weak communication.* The Project and UNDP have had at times weaknesses in their communication, delaying or creating hurdles to implement some processes. These are more evident in issues such as reporting (financial reporting, as well as other types of implementation reporting such as the generation of yearly implementation reports in addition to reporting every three months, as well as other monitoring tools).
- *COVID – 19 Pandemic.* While the COVID – 19 pandemic and its ensuing impact beyond the health emergency are unexpected externalities, their effect has already been felt by the Project. The emergency has had a series of impacts at the project implementation level in Palau in general, and there are as well a number of expected impacts in the short and medium term after this MTR. Because of the pandemic, some planned activities and processes were not implemented and there was a halt to hiring consultants from abroad as well as diminishing specific technical advice from UNDP. Although there has been an increased used of in – island expertise, still the gap is very much evident, in particular at the technical level. In a broader sense, COVID-19 has had, and will continue to have in the immediate future, an indelible impact on tourism. This

will not only impact on the generation of benefits for Palau but also jeopardise sustaining some of the Project's achieved results.

- *Language issues.* Language issues run both ways; some stakeholders feel more comfortable in Palauan than in English. Others understand that carrying out debates in Palauan does not help in the conceptualization of highly technical nor policy oriented issues.
- *Weak technical support.* Debate is understood to be a part of the processes, but many partners indicate that they need more robust technical support as well, not only create the venues for debate on policy but to provide further foundations and key technical information. Team members with technical capacity overextended.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The management arrangements were openly established at design. The arrangements agreed within the design documents have been as follows, with information on how they have been implemented added in this section:

- UNDP is the GEF Implementing Agency (IA).
- Project is implemented via National Implementation Modality (NIM) with UNDP support services.
- Project Management Unit (PMU): The PMU is placed in the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU). At design it was established that the PMU would consist of those individuals involved in project coordination, supervision and day-to-day management of the project. The directives in planning documents indicated that the PMU would consist only of two persons, a Project Manager and one Administrative and Financial Support Personnel. The hiring of the Project Manager was delayed until early 2019 and this arrangement of only two persons basically overseeing the whole project has proven to be deficient in the sense that managerial tasks required for proper administration far exceed the capacity of the PMU. This notwithstanding, project management staff at the PMU makes keen efforts for the implementation of such a complex project. It is found therefore that the team is surpassed by the different aspects of project implementation given the staff structure being weak in comparison to the tasks that need to be implemented. At times there are no clearly defined roles since the staff carry out a myriad of roles which are not commensurate with the formal account of an employee's responsibilities or overlap in their duties (having different persons carrying out at the same time management work or implementation activities, technical work, financial reporting, as well as communication, etc.) without a clear demarcation of who needs to take on what aspect and at times having staff fulfilling different roles due to lack of personnel. There is even a confusion amongst stakeholders on whom within the PMU and whom among the consultants have responsibilities for what areas of project management and/or implementation. Some very key stakeholders indicate that "everyone is doing everything at the same time". Besides the delay in hiring a project manager, it took even longer to bring on subject matter experts and technical experts on board and there is still technical support lacking (the latter issue has also been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic). It is indicated by the project that both of these issues contributed to delays in overall project implementation. Staff at the PMU has drawn also on technical expertise from advisory consultants, as have some of the partners (for instance, for gender analysis, land use planning, etc.). Yet, the technical support has not been sufficient to enhance delivery, and –as many other aspects– has been negatively affected by COVID-19 by not being able to draw-in support and technical input from outside Palau. Due to the complexity of implementing a project such as this, the relative novelty of a large project with these characteristics in Palau, and at times the lack of clarity regarding

standard operating procedures from the donor/implementing agencies, the Project has had a heavy burden with several managerial issues including financing management and reporting.

- The Environmental Planning Unit Coordinator fulfilled the roles of project management until a full time manager was hired. However, the EPU Coordinator also oversees several projects and, consequently, the roles that this coordinator is supposed to fulfil vis-à-vis the GEF-6 Project are also overextended.
- Guidance and/or governance is provided at several levels, among them by the Project Board, by the Land/Seascape Planning Joint Coordination Body (JCB), by a Technical Advisory Group, as well as by the National Invasive Species Committee. Guidance by the Project Board (as well as leadership by the other guidance and governance entities) has worked properly by providing stakeholder input and by linking the work in the guidance bodies to their individual institutions' work. Therefore mainstreaming of results, guidance for implementation as well strategic directives are being emitted. In the more managerial oversight roles, these guidance mechanisms review the Project's progress and plan as well as approve working plans. These governance and guidance structures meet regularly and are proactive in their outlook regarding different project aspects. The Project Board has had some issues with overseeing reporting (vis-à-vis the log frame, alignment of the log frame with reporting, financial reporting, as well as reporting within the ATLAS system framework) and with linking with overall UNDP reporting. Overall, however, the board has been hands-on regarding decisions making, and has been forward looking in the decisions and directives for project implementation as a whole. The Board has met eight times since project start-up.
- Project Assurance role is to be provided by UNDP (through its Pacific Office, and Regional Technical Advisor). Evidence indicates that the GEF Implementing Agency (UNDP Pacific Office) has an active involvement in the programmatic aspects of the Project (participation in Board, follow up of project activities, monitoring and evaluation etc). Nevertheless the relation between UNDP and the project implementation has at times been stressed. With the understanding that this is the first such large scale project UNDP-implemented project as a stand-alone intervention (i.e. not regional project) in Palau and it has had a steep learning curve to understand and implement managerial aspects, there is the consideration that backstopping by UNDP to the implementation partners could be strengthened. Stakeholders indicate that this should be done with clear standard operating procedures put forth and better communication patterns between UNDP and the Project in Palau. Furthermore, for the UNDP Regional Office there is also an increasing demand to manage and implement an increasing number of projects in the region and, consequently, do not have the capacity to do so with the necessary continuance. Although recently there have been increased capacity by hiring staff to deal with this, at the regional office – level, there are still some issues on the workload amongst programming analysts in order to properly provide support and backstop to the projects being implemented. The Regional Technical Advisor has changed recently, and the incorporation of this person has been during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has curtailed site and country visits and has –therefore—abridged to some degree the capacity to develop an advisory role. Some Ministry staff in Palau indicate that they are not aware of what support the RTA can provide, and therefore do not know what significant implementation problems can be addressed by this support.
- Partners and other stakeholders, although perhaps not formally recognized as part of the management arrangements of this project, play a key role in all aspects of implementation. There has been overall very positive stakeholder engagement (with national government, states, CSOs/NGOs and with technical – level personnel from different institutions, private sector, etc) as well as full engagement with decision-makers. This is indicative also of national government and states' ownership in the Project, and in the implementation. This ownership is also an indication furthermore of potential sustainability.

The SESP identifies that several measures were instituted or are proposed to manage the risks. For the two risks identified as moderate¹⁷ (no risks were identified as high) the mitigating or managing measures include a framework for participatory land/seascape planning and management; a screening checklist during early project implementation based on eligibility criteria for project investments; ensuring that decisions regarding restrictions on resource use will not be imposed, but will involve through an informed/transparent and consultative community consensus building process; a project grievance redressal system to address any specific community concerns; and a gender and social inclusivity “lens” to be applied to every project activity and output to further analyse impacts on the rights of women and vulnerable peoples.

Although the Project does not report formal implementation of most of these tools, several of these processes are *de facto* applied, in particular those that pertain to participation and consultative processes. As is seen in the gender-specific section of the report, the cross-cutting implementation of gender mainstreaming is not fully applied, and—as will be seen in the recommendations section of this report—this is one of the recommendations for future action.

WORK PLANNING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

The Project has had delays in start-up and has experienced further delays as implementation progressed. Some of these can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic while others are inherent to the barriers identified above. However, as far as possible, work planning has followed several procedures specified for a project such as this, with Annual Work Plans.

In Palau there is no expectation of an extension request at this point in time that would feed into work planning. Although some expected outputs are delayed as of mid-point, they are mostly nearly on target to be delivered vis-à-vis mid-term indicators metrics as stated in the log frame. Although financial delivery is considered low (nearly 23 percent by June 2021), this is not commensurate with technical delivery since the Project has produced a number of outputs and engendered implementation processes, proportionately corresponding to more than actual financial delivery. Considering the delays in start-up and the delays witnessed in the first stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, and considering that this is planned as a six-year project, at this point an extension is not contemplated as necessary.

Work planning is further complex by the fact that the Project is a conduit for financing of specific interventions that can be construed as demonstration pilots. That is, the Project is a conduit for funds for (a) partners already in the Project Document that get their assigned funds based on what was determined in this document; or (b) other state-level partners which obtain the same amount of funds (i.e. about 20000 US Dollars per year for a two year period), determined year by year at annual work planning stage. For the first set [(a)] allocations are imbedded within the project document and log frame. Overall these are funding allocations to the state governments in a broad lump sum amount (i.e. 280,000.00 to do on the ground implementation of best practices). At the management level, the Project did propose to the board that rather than just provide the full amount (i.e. \$40,000.00 to each of the seven states) in a year that there would be a maximum budget of \$20,000 for the current year and another \$20,000 for next year. When the Project Board approved this amount as part of the Annual Work Plan, state governments therefore developed their own annual work plan on how they intend to spend those funds with a quarterly disbursement. Based on the multi-year workplan and the readiness of partners to implement, calls were put out to partners. The Project helped them develop their workplans for the next project year and all of those work plans make up the Annual Work Plan for the project. Additionally, the Project indicates

¹⁷ Risk 1: Could the Project potentially restrict availability, quality of and access to resources or basic services, in particular to marginalized individuals or groups? And Risk 5: Would the proposed Project possibly affect land tenure arrangements and/or community based property rights/customary rights to land, territories and/or resources?

that they are trying to save funds for next year, which further adds to the complexity, lowers delivery, is not results-based planning and it does not follow standard procedures.

Overall, therefore, this is a highly convoluted process and more so when the issues of financial planning as well as work planning based on spending and not on a results-based manner are joined. All of the above, plus the fact that the Project pays for salaries for government staff, leads several partners to understand the Project more as a funding mechanism than a result – based intervention.

Adaptive management is defined as a project’s ability to adapt to changes to the Project design (project objective, outcomes, or outputs) during implementation resulting from: (a) original objectives that were not sufficiently articulated; (b) exogenous conditions that changed, due to which a change in objectives was needed; (c) the Project’s restructuring because the original objectives were overambitious; or (d) the Project’s restructuring because of a lack of progress.¹⁸

In a strict sense, in the case of the GEF-6 Project, there have been as of yet no formal instances where adaptive management has taken place as defined and indicated. Yet, there has been internal discussions as well as external inputs on the needs to change some aspects of the project that would need adaptive management processes. The main discussion thus far, which has been carried out by the Project with partners and board, has been regarding the need to reassess indicators. Although the discussion has zeroed in on the indicators in and of themselves, this mid-term review analyses that the indicators are merely the gauges for something broader, such as the over ambitiousness of the project. Therefore, it is analysed from this MTR that the adaptive management that might ensue should look at project restructuring as a whole, and not just indicators.

There have some adaptations that, although not adaptive management in the strict sense, have proved to be adjustments that have had some positive impacts on implementation. As a good practice, there has been simplification of the templates/forms to be used for financial reporting and this can trigger in the future improved and more agile disbursement processes that can also aid in making the procurement processes swifter. In relation to COVID-19 some adaptations have taken place, including using in – country consulting when from abroad persons with expertise could not travel to Palau. However, at a distance modality for technically advancing the Project has been resisted by some partners.

FINANCE AND CO-FINANCE

The following chart contains the finance and parallel co – financing plans set up at project development stages.

FINANCING PLAN	
GEF Trust Fund	USD 4,233,562
UNDP TRAC resources	USD 0
Cash co-financing to be administered by UNDP	USD 0
Total Budget administered by UNDP	USD 4,233,562
PARALLEL CO-FINANCING (all other co-financing that is not cash co-financing administered by UNDP)	
UNDP	USD 0
Government	USD 15,616,306
Civil Society Organizations	USD 7,055,000
Total co-financing	USD 22,671,306
Grand-Total Project Financing (1)+(2)	USD 26,904,868

As of July 2021, the GEF-6 Project reports that it obtained 39 percent of expected co – financing (8,901,617 US Dollars)¹⁹. Considering the slow start of the Project and considering that it still has three – years of planned

¹⁸ UNDP-GEF. *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*, 2014.

¹⁹ In annexes there is a chart of reported co – financing

implementation, it is deemed by this review that the co – financing is fairly much on target and targeted expectations at this midpoint. UNDP (not the Project) reports that additional co-financing was secured from the Government of Romania (approximately 20,000 euros) through the Agency. UNDP co-financing figures for Palau BD Project are reported as US\$57,444.

The Project has had low financial delivery to date. As of June 2021, the Palau G-6 project has delivered of a total of USD 968,288 out of a budget of USD 4,233,562 or 22.87 percent. Therefore, there is a variance of planned and actual expenditure indicated by this low delivery rate.

There have been delays in disbursements due to diverse procedural and reporting issues. In part due to initial arrangements, financing advances were to be sent directly to the various partners the Project has in Palau, aside from the advances that would be received by the PMU being channelled through the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, And Environment (i.e. the implementing partner). However, due to this dispersion of partners and overall report submission delays by partners, all the advances and the reporting was consolidated by the Ministry. Another difficulty that has arisen is that, understandably, the national systems of reporting (including to the Palauan Treasury Department) differs from the required financial reporting to UNDP, and there was a need for procedural reconciliation. Furthermore, there was a need to re align UNDP reporting due to internal changes within the agency, which entailed issues with budget lines, correcting entries, etc. There was work between UNDP and the IP to deal with these issues, yet they further delayed disbursements as well as hindered procurement.

Furthermore, with regards to financial reporting, there has also been some misunderstandings about how to report (expenses as linked to Project Document, log frame, codes, etc.). Since some activities and therefore budget lines are in the Project Document but not in the log frame *per se*, this has resulted in difficulties and revisions. These revisions not only have affected financial accounting but also work planning for the current year (2021).

For monitoring and reporting overall, including monitoring, and reporting regarding financial management, the Project followed specific guidance from UNDP as well as indications in Project Document, internal guidance within the country, and conciliation of the different reporting process. The tools for financial reporting, however, have proved to be too burdensome for the PMU, and this has also been a reason for delivery delays.

The project demonstrates due diligence in the management of funds as they spend the funds according to what is stipulated in their workplans. In terms of the processes, the project follows their national procurement and financial guidelines. UNDP verifies and monitors their spending against the project and Treasury listings, submitted by the Ministry of Finance, ensuring that funds are spent according to their AWP with valid budget allocations. The project is subject to audit once spending reaches and exceeds the value of US\$450,000 in a year as per UNDP CO's audit threshold and will follow UNDP's audit requirement. Therefore there have no audits for UNDP since the level of spending criteria has not been met.

Although financial reporting from some of the partners (some states, for instance) to the Project is found to flow easily enough and its deemed straightforward from the partners point of view, there are some issues identified. Some partners indicate that they cannot do this on their own however and indicate that the main issues are that these processes are cumbersome and time consuming. However, partners also indicate that time allocated for spending once reporting is approved is not workable since bidding and procurement processes are also time consuming, and it is difficult to generate expected products and processes within the short window of time allocated for spending.

Annual Work Plan revisions and associated changes are reported. Allocation changes and associated budget revisions are informed to the board for decisions as indicated in Board Minutes.

PROJECT-LEVEL MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS

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

- Inception Workshop
- Inception Report
- Standard UNDP monitoring and reporting requirements as outlined in the UNDP POPP
- Monitoring of indicators in project results framework
- GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR)
- NIM Audit as per UNDP audit policies
- Lessons learned and knowledge generation
- Monitoring of environmental and social risks, and corresponding management plans
- Addressing environmental and social grievances
- Project Board meetings
- Supervision missions
- Oversight missions
- GEF Secretariat learning missions/site visits
- Mid-term GEF Tracking Tool updated
- Independent Mid-term Review (MTR)
- Terminal GEF Tracking Tool updated
- Independent Terminal Evaluation (TE)

The monitoring tools currently being used are those indicated in the Project Document's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan and in other targeted guidance for the Project. The Project has had an inception workshop which has led to an inception report, and regularly generates AWP, APRs, quarterly reports, etc. The Inception Workshop took place in the first quarter of project start (November 2018). The Project developed a Project Implementation Report for 2020 and is currently in the process of developing a PIR for 2021.

Monitoring is also linked to the communication strategy. Monitoring of indicators is fed into the webpage the Project manages²⁰.

All of these instruments provide necessary information for the Project to be managed and to inform adaptive management processes. They involve key partners when appropriate since several of them are implemented in a participatory inclusive manner when it is pertinent to do so (such as the case of the inception workshop and the participatory process which has led to this mid-term review, for example). However, as indicated in the reporting section further along this report, the monitoring developments (and the reporting that results from these procedures) has been a burden for the Project, given that all the monitoring processes that it needs to fulfil in relation to the staff capacity and the magnitude of the Project are many.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic some of the mentioned and programmed project-level monitoring could not be carried out due to global travel bans in the last year and a half. These would be: Supervision missions, Oversight missions, and GEF Secretariat learning missions/site visits. No discussion for virtual monitoring or third party monitoring took place thus far.

²⁰ <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Tc0HcZiyRZ1xofHDrmIHkEsAiyppRPIYLWpL8zx9Vfw/edit#gid=0>

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Planned stakeholder engagement was specified at design. As indicated in the design analysis, stakeholders were identified. The purpose of this first analysis was to identify main potential stakeholders and to consider their potential roles and responsibilities in the implementation and/or guidance of the Project. Yet, the list of identified stakeholders to be involved was quite extensive at the planning stage and many actors in the Project have identified this as impracticable in terms of implementation. The Project formulation stage was weak in stakeholder engagement given the rushed process (particular at the end of this process) and the fact that most of the formulation was done from outside Palau.

Nevertheless, stakeholder engagement in implementation is one of the best practices of this project. In general, stakeholder engagement has been quite positive in the implementation period of the Project thus far. This is not only at the national government and states levels but also for non – governmental actors and communities. The Project has developed partnerships with relevant stakeholders which have contributed towards achievements. Several stakeholders indicate that information sharing has also been a constructive process that contributed to engagement. This is so particularly after the first year of implementation. When the Project had no managerial staff (that is, the first year and a half of implementation) stakeholders indicate that the flow of information was not adequate. Nevertheless, now stakeholders indicate that there has been continuous flow of information from the Project to them and that this (together with communication and outreach) has greatly improved their participation and the cultivation of partnerships within the last period of the Project implementation.

REPORTING

Reporting for the Project (as stated in other relevant sections of this report) is done following and fulfilling UNDP and GEF reporting requirements. This includes reporting as indicated in the monitoring plan and other reporting requirements (including PIRs, etc.). The Project has only completed one PIR (2020) yet although this implementation report was carried out when the GEF-6 Project was only beginning to be implemented in Palau, to a great degree convey what activities and process have taken place as part of the implementation process up to that date. The second PIR (2021) is delayed since it is being drafted at the same time as this mid-term review.

Management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board through regular communications and included in quarterly reports as well as shared at other relevant meetings. Management lessons have also been reported in the same manner.

Nevertheless, overall reporting (both narrative implementation reporting and financial reporting) has been an issue for the Project, given all the reporting processes that it needs to fulfil with the periodicity required in relation to staff capacity, and –therefore– reporting has inordinate weight of effort vis – a – vis project scope and staffing.

COMMUNICATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The Project does have a Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy imbedded within project design (i.e. the Project Document). As it is stated there, the aim of this strategy is to deliver a guide to effectively communicate about the GEF6 project and to capture, transfer, and institutionalize knowledge that arises from the project. This planned strategy details not only what communication and KM products should be developed, but –perhaps even more importantly– what are or should be these products’ objectives and purposes.

Although through expected Outcome 4 (*Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation support, equitable gender benefits and biodiversity conservation in Palau*) communications and knowledge management is the main pillar of this expected results, communications and KM are not standalone activities of the Project. Most communication and KM processes are weaved in the expected outcomes as well as in several of the outputs, and they give transparency to project implementation processes (such as technical advisory groups, board meetings

information, etc.). The means and tools used and necessary communication frequency are employed with the aim to facilitate interactions with all stakeholders in relation to information flows.

As a result of the implementation of the communication strategy as well as in meeting with specific information communication aims and (through this) increase stakeholder engagement, the Project developed a strong set of information/dissemination/communication products, processes and activities. The application of the strategy set as design and the generation of products has been very dynamic with some aspects highlighted as follows:

- Dedicated internet presence through the Project webpage [<https://sites.google.com/view/gef6palau/home?authuser=0>].
- Housing products, materials, information in the above web site.
- There is a constant flow of information from the Project to national stakeholders, such as weekly email messages with updates on activities, newsletters, etc.
- Social media is used actively, not only through a web page presence, but also through other channels.
- Keeps track of the myriad of meetings the Project engages with, and due to COVID-19 limitations, also facilitates the use of online technologies for different events due to this situation.

Therefore, the outreach and communication process is very active. The generation of knowledge management technical products have not been as proactive as of yet. The dissemination of KM products basically entails disseminating materials from other projects in Palau.

Communication also involves incorporating information from partners. Regarding the latter, it is also understood by some partners that this is positive because it provides incentives for stakeholders to engage in policy dialog and other matters, but also –on the other hand—might reflect the over ambitiousness and at times lack of focus of the Project trying to encompass more than its finite purposes. This creates some levels of confusion amongst partners as to where the project ends and where other land planning and biodiversity conservation activities begin in Palau.

The plan and implementation of the communications strategy applies to internal Project stakeholders' engagement (mainly in-island). Although this is positive in and of itself, it is deemed by partners that transmission of information and KM production and dissemination can be communicated in a manner that can capture interest of a more global audience, in particular in comparable work or similar situations.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

As stated in the section on design, the Project --from its planning stage onward-- has considered relevant gender issues through a gender mainstreaming action plan based on a gender analysis as well as through interweaving gender in some other broader project process. From design through implementation the approach to gender mainstreaming has put an emphasis on gender issues within broader rights, development goals and vulnerability factors. Although one of the expected outcomes (that is, Outcome 4: Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation support, equitable gender benefits and biodiversity conservation in Palau) entails dealing with gender issues specifically, there are other -albeit incipient- cross-sectoral gender-sensitive approach of other expected outcomes.

As the Project Document indicates, this is the first large-scale multi-stakeholder project in Palau in the environment sector that has considered issues of gender and social inclusion. In this document it is stated that gender issues will be taken into account in a broader sense than just a mechanical inclusion of women in activities. This is also to be done to embrace national government's Gender Division's approach that focuses on inclusivity and multiple vulnerable populations with gender mainstreaming.

One of the Project's partners is the Bureau of Aging and Gender within the Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs. This Bureau commissioned a civil society organization to draw a base line study: *Palau Gender and Natural Resources 2020 National Report*. This work provides a framework to gender mainstreaming issues not only within the GEF-6 Project but also anticipating including gender issues into overall governmental planning processes. The study provides a through baseline data and information on gender disaggregated issues as they pertain to the Project. The study not only looks at gender disaggregated data, but –even more importantly–it also provides analysis on what is the differential use of natural resources of men and women in Palau, which should be the basis for equitable development including in planning. Women are identified as predominant users of forest and agriculture resources and prevalent in some fisheries-related activities yet this analysis and, other monitoring by the Project, identifies that women do not participate on an equal basis on decision making processes which, in turn, hinders equitable gender decision – making nor does it contribute to closing gender gaps in access to and control over resources. The study further identified women's vulnerability to several other developmental factors such as loss of income from the impact of unsustainable coastal development and fisheries degradation as well as food insecurity associated to these factors.

Therefore, the baseline data and analysis for issues on use access to and control over resources is cogent. This implies that all processes, products, outcomes derived from the Project should incorporate gender issues by mainstreaming equity factors.

A barrier is that, although the baseline work identifies gender gaps as does the gender analysis commissioned by the Project, there is very little social acknowledgement from partners about this. Many stakeholders perceived gender mainstreaming as simply hiring females or having a level number of women and men in offices, in events, etc. Resistance to gender mainstreaming, cultural issues, misunderstanding on what it is meant by gender mainstreaming, as well as resistance to what is perceived to be a conditionality by UNDP for a matter which is perceived to be not relevant to Palau, further hinder mainstreaming. It also hinders gender related advice and guidance and to a great degree deters the application of gender mainstreaming guidelines throughout implementation.

Regarding management per se, the Project as well as its associated partners indicate that staff (being all female) face several barriers which are gender – related. For instance, due to cultural predispositions, it is found that implementing the project is difficult for staff due to the resistance of elders and community figures to acknowledge female leadership.

SUSTAINABILITY

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

Although to date it is difficult to ascertain which of the expected outputs and outcomes will be fully achieved within the framework the Project (although many are on track), in general terms, several of the risks can be outlined in order to begin exploring how sustainability can be assured. Assuming the above, the sustainability rating for the Project is *Moderately Likely (ML)* given that at midpoint, and as a composite assessment, there are moderate risks regarding the sustainability of some components, but there are expectations that at least some of the outputs and outcomes will be sustained and would carry on after project closure. Below are assessments of risks to sustainability divided by each of the components that make up this composite assessment.

FINANCIAL RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Regarding financial issues, a review ascertains if there are financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outcomes as well as the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once granted assistance ends. In the case of the GEF-6 Project in Palau, there are moderate risks as to the likelihood of financially supporting outcomes and outputs after external funding ends for several motives. First of all, there have been experiences with other GEF-funded projects in Palau that cannot guarantee financial sustainability of its obtained products. In fact, the GEF-6 Project is sustaining the application of products from the GEF-5 Project given that “resources do not exist for their implementation”, as stated in the Project Document. Also, the Project is perceived as a financial window by many partners, not as a project itself. Due to this there are inordinate expectations from some of the partners that the funding will flow after this project ends with other projects of a similar nature, not with Palau’s resources. Therefore, a through financial sustainability plan with in -island resources needs to be developed in order to have the resources at different levels for the implementation of the products and processes obtained during implementation. There are some plans beginning to be assumed about financing for sustainability (and how this links to institutional and governance aspects of sustainability). There begins to be an understanding at the national level that sustainability of planning tools not only is it linked to financing their development (such what the Project is supporting now) but to finance their implementation after this project ends. Therefore, the need for improved national and state level sustainable financing tools and resource mobilization is beginning to become clearer for some stakeholders. Financial sustainability is also related to institutional and governance sustainability, and the Project’s plans indicated this by stating that “the institutionalization of the JCB as the potential Bureau of Environment will trigger budgetary allocations from government”. Therefore, the financial sustainability of the Project’s achievements is somewhat possible at this point, yet there are some risks in the short term.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY

The socioeconomic risks to sustainability are also moderate to low. There is a general acceptance of the Project’s aim as well as of its objectives. Yet, the risk of continuing with the processes implemented by the Project are somewhat present. There is evidence of high ownership by the partners, proactive participation from different sectors in the activities of GEF-6 as well as active engagement by members of different committees. At this point, therefore, there are indications that after closure, institution(s) will have enough acceptance and appropriation of the achieved products and results to continue with them (at least a set of them) over the long run. There are no lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND GOVERNANCE RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY

The consolidation and upgrading of institutional frameworks as well as the generation of individual/institutional/systemic capacity is the principal factor analysed when dealing with institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability. Institutional and governance upgrading is one of the more secure manners in which governance risks to sustainability can be reduced.

The GEF-6 Project in Palau from its very first planning steps has --to a great degree-- imbedded measures that, if properly achieved, can reduce risks to institutional/governance related sustainability. Keeping in mind that the aims of the project are to establish institutional and regulatory measures for integrating biodiversity into land/seascape planning and practice via designing, adopting and applying national land/seascape development planning processes, and by improving regulatory, monitoring and enforcement framework for conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use at land/seascape levels developed, applied and operational, it is clear that –at least at the goals level—this type of sustainability is expected.

Another component of institutionalisation and governance related to the Project is also deeply embedded in planning documents. The design establishes that “the long-term goal of MNRET to establish a Bureau of Environment given the national priority afforded to biodiversity conservation . . .”. It is intended that this Bureau

links to the Environmental Planning Unit (EPU) that implements this and other related projects in Palau and that capacity development through the EPU would be institutionalized after project closure. There are several internal discussions as how this aim would emerge since the project planning documents indicate that “By the end of the Project, the EPU will be institutionalized formally in the National Government Structure as the Bureau of Environment”. Debates have begun indicating that it is critical that work needs to be properly absorbed into the Ministry or integrated and secured structurally. Also on whether this future structure would be institutionalized in a different format, with cross-cutting bureaus as well as linking to other planning structures within government. How this institution would link to state governments is also a key aspect of institutionalization and integrated governance as well as policy alignment. Furthermore, there are also debates internally within the Project on how the potential Bureau of Environment will trigger budgetary allocations from government to implement policy. It is promising that this debate takes place now, but it should be stepped up in order to guarantee continuity once project ends.

ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Climate change impact continues to be an environmental risk to the sustainability of Project outcomes. It is even putting at risk obtaining some expected outcomes. For instance, it is considered that the expected result “*Change in status of coral cover at designated sites*” cannot be fully achieved as expected given that climate change has more of an impact upon this expected result than the activities such as planning and management that the Project promotes and/or obtains in these areas.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned represent knowledge generated by reflecting on the actual results of a project until the time of a review and on the experience that has the potential to improve future programming and actions. Lessons learned derive not only from best practices but also from issues identified thus far. The Project gives rise to and motivates a series of lessons learned such as those described below.

- Without a proactive and open participation of relevant national stakeholders in the design process, especially from those stakeholders which would be implementers, design will encounter issues upon implementation. Often this results in design failings and often needs to be adjusted if project is to be properly implemented at all.
- Without the engagement of national consultants from the pipelining stage (early planning and design stages (such as when PIF is being developed) it is difficult to imbed knowledge regarding local conditions and other national aspects.
- There should be an understanding that design is a process also, and strong involvement by national stakeholders should be fostered, in particular when planning is being carried out by outside the country actors. The understanding that this is a process should also permeate to the time required to properly foster input by relevant national stakeholders, with time needed to impel debate, insert corrections to planning documents when they are deemed to contain errors, and other such processes.
- Over ambitiousness at design has indelible impacts upon implementation, and can hinder obtaining results.
- Design and planning processes should not only focus upon technical aspects, they should also integrate issues related to the operationalisation of a project (such as staffing, reality of implementing within a particular national context, etc.).
- For a complex intervention, the project management unit needs to be strong, well-funded, trained and adequately staffed. Training should be based on standard operations procedures and also on other aspects of project management.

- Full engagement by all relevant parties (national government, state governments, communities, civil society) is strategic not only for implementation but also for buy in, ownership and sustainability.
- Projects should be designed and implemented attending to national characteristics and capacities. With regard to situations such as in Palau, being a small island developing state, with limited national resources and national capacities, small governmental structures (at national as well as at the states' levels) in turn entails many times that stakeholders have multiple roles and also many times are overextended. The capacity constraints in SIDS should be taken into account, in project design as well as throughout implementation and these should be bridged with support (technical, managerial, etc.).

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The *Integrating biodiversity safeguards and conservation into development in Palau Project* has reached its mid-point with achievements but also with a number of challenges. The objective of the Project (to mainstream biodiversity conservation into integrated land and seascape governance, planning and management in Palau) is relevant to the country and it touches upon some key cross-cutting issues directly and indirectly related to planning for sustainable human development, including food security and a number of key productive sectors (fisheries, agriculture, tourism, etc.).

Although the design is relevant vis-à-vis national issues as well as global environmental benefits, it is by all analysis too ambitious and has a large number of ambitious expected results and of expected products anticipated to be arrived at. Furthermore, it involves over two dozen implementing institutional entities. This is positive in the sense that it encompasses all relevant stakeholders and with this inclusiveness cements the possibility of consensus in the formulation and further implementation of tools and processes for planning. Nevertheless, on the other hand, this makes it a very difficult project to manage within the planned scope given the myriad of partners, implementers of different parts of the project, and overall stakeholders. It is deemed also that design did not fully acknowledge nor reflected the intricacies of working in Palau with regard to policy vis-à-vis the relation between national government and states. Additionally, it is understood that the overambitious design also reveals that the limitations faced by SIDS in these sort of processes was not fully assimilated at the design and planning stages.

The Project has had a slow start and several start up delays, including delays regarding staffing and regarding meeting with the management and reporting guidelines. Staffing issues (lack of sufficient staff to manage the Project, unclear role definition between the different staff duties and overlap of work, and –lately mainly due to COVID – 19 issues—deficiencies in bringing in technical expertise) has hindered and slowed the implementation processes. The delays have also had an impact on financial flows, which –in turn—have had an impact upon implementation processes and have been further hindered by communication shortcomings. Overall, therefore, the Project delivery stands at the approximate time of this review in nearly 23 percent of total GEF allocated funds.

Even with low financial delivery at midpoint, the Project has had several achievements. These are achievements within what is expected in the results framework arrangements as reflected in the specific achievement indicators (such as seascapes and landscapes effectively managed through participatory approaches, etc.) in other broader achievements such as the individual and institutional capacity being built. There are other attainments which are not tallied but are just as important such as the dialogue between partners and stakeholders regarding planning and natural resource management.

Although the Project has a gender strategy and it has carried-out several gender mainstreaming activities, it encounters several roadblocks in this aspect. Gender mainstreaming as a cross cutting issue is at times misunderstood by some stakeholders or resisted by others.

While the GEF-6 Project is at times perceived as the environmental arm of the Palau government(s) and as the financial mechanism for a myriad of governmental activities at the national and state level (such as studies, land use tools, vehicles, stipends for staff, information dissemination etc.), which some are part of the Project as planned and which are part of the planned architecture (such as what is in the log frame, etc) and others are not. Therefore, there is a need for the Project to focus on defining what is part of the Project and what activities/processes/etc. are outside of its specific mandate and streamline accordingly. This should not only be done looking at the outputs and outcomes that the Project can achieve within its scope, but also in a forward looking manner engendering (and implementing) strategies that provide sustainability. The most important are institutional and governance sustainability as well as financial plans.

The remaining operational period for the Project can be decisive to continue to fulfil its mandate to generate capacity as to have lasting effects. Following is a set of recommendations that could enhance and enrich the implementation process in the remaining period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations presented here reflect feasible suggested corrective actions for the implementation of the Project, proposals for future directions underlining main objectives as well as actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the Project or reinforce what the Project is already implementing. A second set of recommendations are drafted for future programming for GEF and UNDP learning from the experience in Palau.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REMAINING IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD FOR THE PROJECT

- (1) The project needs to be reviewed in order to –among other aims-- correct its course, in particular concerning some design features. The Project can benefit from restructuring its expected outputs and products in order for these to be focused, streamlined, feasible and sustainable acknowledging the over ambitiousness of design and refining as well as targeting accordingly. As pertinent, this review should be reflected in an updated project log frame. As part of this review, stakeholder planning workshops should be convened once MTR report is finalized to support review and updating of key documents/strategies (including log frame, communication strategy, etc.).
- (2) A broad scoped analysis on the indicators has to take place to further refine and aid the reformulation mentioned above. Although it is understood by this midterm review that there have been internal exchanges in Palau regarding reviewing indicators, the recommendation for reviewing indicators from this MTR is broader and should be linked to the above process of streamlining. The review of indicators should not merely be about metrics or retrofitting as to whether or not an indicator can be met, but it should be within a framework of a results-oriented outlook for this Project. Furthermore, it should be envisaged that indicators should (to a large degree) gauge whether impacts and effects arise out of the Project and that they should capture this properly. Review of indicators need to be based on a SMART analysis
- (3) Strengthen the project implementation architecture by hiring additional personnel that can provide backstopping for operational processes and for technical support. The latter also needs to be linked to improved delivery of technical support and knowledge management products.
- (4) The project implementation unit and management structure should not only be strengthened but it should also have clearly defined roles and should follow these roles definitions. Much as it is indicated in the Project Document, the responsibilities of project management staff and of technical hires should be clearly delineated and abided by, avoiding duplication of efforts and standing by job and role definitions.
- (5) In tandem with the above, Project should intensify and increase the technical work needed to implement pilots, and to generate / implement tools for integrated planning, as well as to generate knowledge management products. For this, it needs to increase consultancies offered to provide the technical expertise for these instruments, as well as step up the capacity building and education processes that the partners are demanding.
- (6) The Project should continue training, information dissemination, and other such activities based on its gender analysis and strategy as well as based on the Gender and Natural Resources 2020 National Report that the Project commissioned. While being culturally sensitive, the Project should continue to emphasize gender issues vis-à-vis natural resource use and management in Palau, pointing out that there are indeed gender gaps surrounding this matter in Palau and that mainstreaming is a matter of equity which all UN projects promote. Gender mainstreaming should not be a pillar or only associated to a particular outcome. This is a cross-cutting issue to be imbedded in all pilots, demonstrations, plans and activities. All of these

should undergo a sort of gender-analysis/audit to ensure that they include gender-sensitive components and that they promote equity.

- (7) The Project should begin the elaboration of a sustainability plan / exit strategy, in particular in order to cement capacity within Palau and to secure institutional and financial sustainability, bearing in mind that this is the general expectation for the very first outcome anticipated to be obtained by this project . It is recommended that this should focus on two aspects: institutional/governance sustainability and financial sustainability. For this it will not only need to engender debate but also seek technical support dealing with these issues, and generate documents that can expand upon these matters in a clear manner so that compromises and commitments are clearly set. This sustainability plan / exit strategy should include social sustainability factors (such as community/stakeholder ownership as well as participation issues).
- (8) Regarding governance, and bearing in mind that one of the main aims of the project is to generate institutional capacity to deal with environmental issues and planning that incorporates biodiversity and natural resources to development, the Project needs to begin engendering analysis (including institutional analysis) and internal discussions as to what the structure for this institutionalisation should be, where it would be placed within national administration, how will it be secured structurally, how it will integrate states, how will it integrate in a multi -sector cross-cutting manner other areas of government. Consider and set out the functions of these arrangements and how the decision making processes would take place.
- (9) Regarding financing, there should be a clear link between continuation and sustainability of plans and activities with their financing once external support ends. The plans and pilots being drawn by the Project need to have imbedded a battery of potential financing mechanisms in order for them to be applicable once reached and implemented and foster the effectiveness of planning tools and their institutional arrangements. This should be part of a financing plan imbedded in exit and sustainability strategies. Exit strategy should encompass national, state and community components of the Project.
- (10) UNDP needs to work with and assist the Project in order to aid them in applying processes that support projects' technical and implementation capabilities (specially support project implementation and efficient decision – making capacities) and in applying procurement systems to increase capacity to efficiently implement projects aiding in the fulfilment of a project's objective. As long as UNDP's role is not implementing the project, the Agency should provide information on project management, financial reporting and other such project requisites in order to avoid misunderstandings as well as to generate capacity for implementation. There should be a set of standard operating procedures shared with the Project as guidance, as well as at-large, and capacity generated in – country carrying out this as an ongoing activity (for example, having quarterly discussions with project implementation unit as well as when need arises). UNDP and the Project should work jointly to streamline processes that cause an inordinate amount of managerial burden and in some ways hinder agile delivery. For this, and to speed up the implementation process, both parties should work together to streamline as much as possible reporting, financial flows and recruitment process. There should be agreement on streamlined templates and avoid duplication in reporting. Also, standard operating procedures should be made clear and support given to the Project in order to improve communication with UNDP. Sufficient time needs to be allocated in order for the Project to be able to respond by deadlines, avoiding rushed processes that need to be re done after the fact due to this haste. UNDP should alert the Project of what technical assistance they can receive in order for this to be responsive for managing significant technical implementation problems (e.g. Regional Technical Advisor, etc.). Virtual monitoring or third party monitoring should also be considered in order to speed-up follow up and reporting processes, in particular due to limitations imposed by travel restrictions in the context of the pandemic as well as due to overall small staffing of the implementation unit to properly carry out these processes.

- (11) The Project and all the partners and stakeholders should recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic will have effects upon implementation and cope with the understanding that COVID-19's impact and the pandemic will be persistent in the near future, and that there is an urgent need to move along using digital means of training, capacity building, consulting processes, generation of knowledge management products, UNDP's technical support, as well as overall technical assistance to governments and different partners/stakeholders. In particular when in – island local expertise is not available. Yet, this should be always carried out keeping in mind that there should be mechanisms to build national capacity, for instance by creating teams which would include national and international experts. Lower resistance to at-a-distance and online modalities of support by providing positive examples of where this has worked well in similar settings.
- (12) Although the implementation of the communication strategy as well as the outreach through this has been positive, there is ample room to improve, to make it more suitable, and to upscale its focus. To begin with, and in tandem with the Project's need to streamline and concentrate activities and support the image that this is a project and not a government bureau, the web presence needs to differentiate what products, outreach processes, and other inputs are part of the Project and which are outside of its purview and/or scope (that is, delineate when the Project is communicating its own processes/products/achievements and when its communicating processes/products/achievements of national and state governments outside of the purview of this Project). Keeping in mind that the communication strategy also encompasses knowledge management, these sort of KM products should also be generated vis-à-vis project activities. These will also need to be associated to the forthcoming technical work and technical consultancies that need to be carried out in the near future to increase delivery and effectiveness. Dedicated or part time communication and KM expertise should be incorporated to the PMU. The future of the communication strategy also should be reinforced by capturing best practices, lessons learned, and experience (positive and negative) in implementing the Project in Palau and communicated in a manner that can gain traction from other SIDS or from a global audience, keeping also aligned with GEF and UNDP's communication and visibility goals while broadening its targeted audience.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING FOR GEF AND UNDP

This second set of recommendations are drafted for future programming for GEF and UNDP learning from the experience in Palau from the GEF-6 Project

- (13) Design processes should be extended enough to gather all data, information, and enhance in -country stakeholder participation, even when the design is not done in country. Participation in design should be proactive and open from all relevant national stakeholders and in particular from those agencies and partners which would be implementers. Design should begin as early as possible in order to have adequate time to outline a project and harness national inputs when the design process is being carried out mainly from outside a country. Inputs from national counterparts to the design process should be fully recognized and assimilated. National consultants should be engaged from the pipelining stage in order to have expertise in the local context imbedded from early planning and design stages.
- (14) Design of projects in situations with limited in – country capacity (due a country's size for instance such as in SIDS) should very much be taken into account at planning, inception and preparation of an intervention avoiding, therefore, designs that are overreached and not fully applicable. Design and planning processes should not only be focused on technical aspects of an intervention but also in aspects that deal with the operationalisation of a project.
- (15) UNDP needs to work with and assist the countries where interventions take place in order to aid them in applying processes that support projects' technical and implementation capabilities (specially support project implementation and efficient decision – making capacities) and in applying procurement systems

to increase capacity to efficiently implement projects aiding in the fulfilment of a project's objective. UNDP should provide information on project management, financial reporting and other such project requisites in order to avoid misunderstandings as well as to generate capacity for implementation.

6. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 MTR TOR (EXCLUDING TOR ANNEXES) FOR NATIONAL CONSULTANT



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Reference No.	PN/FJI/030/21
Consultancy Title	National Consultant – Palau Biodiversity Project
Location	Palau
Application deadline	27 th April 2021
Type of Contract	Individual Contractor
Post Level	National Consultant
Languages required:	Palauan, English
Duration of Initial Contract:	30 days over 3 months (May – July 2021).

BACKGROUND

- The project was designed to: protect Palau’s biodiversity by mainstreaming national environmental legislation and policies into practices on the ground and into State government development plans and private business plans. Through the GEF6 Project, the Ministry will protect biodiversity and natural resources by improving National-State communication and coordination and expanding partnerships between the National, State, Nonprofit, and Business sectors. Activities include: 1) Landscape, Seascape, and Master Planning; 2) Biosecurity and management of Invasive Alien Species; 3) Use of Best Practices in agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry, housing, and sustainable tourism; 4) Improved surveillance and enforcement; and 5) Gender and social mainstreaming and inclusivity.
- **Brief project description:** Palau’s economy is projected to become increasingly dependent on tourism that is rising by 30% annually, necessitating new tourism infrastructure and service industries. Agriculture and fisheries, even though contributing barely 4% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) continues to provide the main livelihood for about 20% of Palau’s population. Local food security is a national priority, given the heavy reliance on food imports, and these three sectors (agriculture, fisheries, and tourism) are now growing in line with Palau’s national development policies and plans. However, increasing pressures from tourism and agriculture and fisheries development activities are also resulting in rapidly increasing pressures on the country’s natural resources and biodiversity; and the rich terrestrial and marine natural resources, on which tourism (and agriculture and fisheries) depend, are especially vulnerable to such pressures.
- **This project aims** to address the negative impacts of unsustainable sector-led development practices on biodiversity-rich landscapes of Palau, including its productive coastal and marine ecosystems, while taking into account climate change adaptation needs and inclusive and equitable social and economic development for dependent communities, as well as safeguarding against threats to biodiversity and the introduction and spread of Invasive Alien Species through the tourism and related sectors.
- **The objective of** the project is to mainstream biodiversity conservation into integrated land and seascape governance, planning and management in Palau.

▪ The project recognizes the fact that these land and seascapes underpin the lives and livelihoods of a large number of local communities and that implementation of a coherent strategy to promote sustainable, biodiversity-friendly livelihood options is an integral part of the solution. The project objective is to be achieved through the implementation of four inter-related and mutually complementary Components (Project Outcomes) that are focussed on addressing existing barriers. The four Outcomes of the project are:

- **Outcome 1:** Enhanced national institutional framework for integrated planning and management of land and seascapes.
- **Outcome 2:** Integrated multi-sector land and seascape planning and management operational in Babeldaob states to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies.
- **Outcome 3:** Integrated multi-sector planning and management operational in 264,686 ha of seascapes and coastal areas in the Southern Lagoon to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies; and
- **Outcome 4:** Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation support, equitable gender benefits and biodiversity conservation in Palau.

▪ Since the global Covid 19 pandemic in first quarter 2020, many countries including Palau responded immediately by implemented strict travel restrictions, and so far, Palau is covid-free. Palau's border is effectively closed to all except essential workers and approved returning Palauan citizens and residents. In March 2020 the Palau government instituted a nationwide lockdown period, including school closures, which had a negative impact on the project, resulting in delays to implementation for at least 2 months. Most affected were women, who were generally responsible for childcare during the lockdown. The shift to online Zoom meetings was not successful in country. Although the lockdown was lifted, several partners remain heavily impacted by safety and economic considerations. Some partners are responsible for two-week quarantines for incoming passengers (24 hours/day for 14 days every month) and for disinfection of the quarantine vehicles and sites, some partners have taken on the risk of inspecting incoming vessels (air freight and ships, 3-4 per week), and other partners are dealing with drastic reductions in revenues due to a complete lack of tourists. Despite the impacts of the border closure and covid risks, the project did continue with activities and implemented adaptive management (such as switching from international consultants to local hires) and was back to near 100% implementation by August 2020. To date, there are no known cases of Covid-related deaths in Palau. Government officials continue to monitor the situation and provide regular updates. Palau has started to vaccinate its population with the goal of reaching 100% of eligible residents.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**Scope of Work**

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy and its risks to sustainability. The MTR will also reflect on lessons learnt on this project to inform and be shared with other Projects in Palau and related projects in the Pacific. The MTR is also part of the UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji's evaluation plan (2018-2022) and will be facilitated by the Commissioning Unit, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer with support from terminal evaluation team. MTR team will assess the following four categories of project progress. See the Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects for extended descriptions

Project Strategy

- Project design:
- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- 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, considered 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.
 - ○ Were relevant gender issues (e.g. the impact of the project on gender equality in the programme country, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the Project Document?
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

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

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).

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

Project Strategy	Indicator ¹	Baseline Level ²	Level in 1st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target ³	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment ⁴	Achievement Rating ⁵	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 Tracking Tool/Core Indicators at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Management Arrangements:

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

- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Do the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and/or UNDP and other partners have the capacity to deliver benefits to or involve women? If yes, how?
- What is the gender balance of project staff? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in project staff?
- What is the gender balance of the Project Board? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in the Project Board?
- 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/ log frame as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.
- Finance and co-finance:
- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financer	Type of Co-financing	Co-financing amount confirmed at CEO Endorsement (US\$)	Actual Amount Contributed at stage of Midterm Review (US\$)	Actual % of Expected Amount
		TOTAL			

- Include the separate GEF Co-Financing template (filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team) which categorizes each co-financing amount as 'investment mobilized' or 'recurrent expenditures'. (This template will be annexed as a separate file.)
- 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?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were incorporated in monitoring systems. See Annex 9 of *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
- Stakeholder Engagement:
- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?
- How does the project engage women and girls? Is the project likely to have the same positive and/or negative effects on women and men, girls, and boys? Identify, if possible, legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women's participation in the project. What can the project do to enhance its gender benefits?
- Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)
- Validate the risks identified in the project's most current SESP, and those risks' ratings; are any
 - revisions needed?
- Summarize and assess the revisions made since CEO Endorsement/Approval (if any) to:
 - The project's overall safeguards risk categorization.
 - The identified types of risks⁶ (in the SESP).
 - The individual risk ratings (in the SESP)
- Describe and assess progress made in the implementation of the project's social and environmental management measures as outlined in the SESP submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval (and prepared during implementation, if any), including any revisions to those measures. Such management measures might include Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) or other management plans, though can also include aspects of a project's design; refer to Question 6 in the SESP template for a summary of the identified management measures.
- A given project should be assessed against the version of UNDP's safeguards policy that was in effect at the time of the project's approval.
- 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 & Knowledge Management:
- 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.
- List knowledge activities/products developed (based on knowledge management approach approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval).

iv. Sustainability

- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Register are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.
- In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:
 - Financial risks to sustainability:
 - What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes)?
 - Socio-economic risks to sustainability:
 - Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?
 - 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 sustenance of project outcomes?

Conclusions & Recommendations

The MTR team will include a section in the MTR report for evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.

Additionally, the MTR consultant/team is expected to make recommendations to the Project Team. Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report's executive summary. See the *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table.

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

Ratings

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

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for (*Project Title*)

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 4 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale).	
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Sustainability	(rate 4 pt. scale)	

Institutional Arrangement

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is *the Integrated Results Management Unit, Monitoring and Evaluation of the UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji*.

The Commissioning Unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the National Consultant and will provide an updated stakeholder list with contact details (phone and email). The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, conduct digital meetings, liaise the National Coordinator with stakeholder interviewees, and assist the National Consultant with field visits

Duration of the Work

The total duration of the MTR will be approximately (30) working days over a time of (12) of weeks and shall not exceed five months from when the consultant(s) are hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS	COMPLETION DATE (Indicative)
Assist with document collection, document review, and preparing of the MTR Inception Report under the guidance of the Team Lead (MTR Inception Report due no later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission)	2 days	28 April
MTR in country meetings: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits; preparation of meeting notes and transmittal of meeting and interview notes to the Team Lead; daily communications with the Team Lead to review notes and findings and to set follow-up actions.	15 days	2 May
Presentation of initial findings from interviews, together with the Team Lead (via Zoom/Skype)- within 3 days of the last interview	1 day	25 May
Assist the Team Lead with preparing draft report (due within 3 weeks of the MTR mission)	7 days	27 May
Assist the Team Lead with finalization of MTR report/ Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report (due within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on the draft)	5 days	1 June

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

Duty Station

- Identify the IC's duty station/location for the contract duration, mentioning ALL the possible locations of field works/duty traveling pursuit of other relevant activities, specially where traveling to locations at security Phase I or above will be required
- State whether or not the IC will be required to report regularly or be present at a certain office during the work, including frequency of reporting, even if intermittent

COMPETENCIES

Previous work experience related to Biodiversity, Land Degradation and Sustainable Forest Management preferable.

Experience in evaluating GEF and/or other donor agency funded projects is advantageous.

Previous experience in Palau is necessary.

- Strong networks with Government, Non-Governmental Organizations and communities, and ability to self-monitor, set up interviews, and travel to States on Babeldaob independently if needed
- Experience in implementing and/or supporting community-based activities
- Demonstrated understanding of national and state legislation, policies towards conservation and sustainable management
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and its application in conservation
- Excellent communication skills including the ability to work remotely and use Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, and other digital technologies.
- Ability to work in partnership with a remote Team Leader, including the willingness to hold meetings at compromise times that might not fall within usual business hours
- Ability to synthesize and type notes quickly and transmit meeting notes in English to Team Lead, and excellent responsiveness to requests.
- Demonstrable analytical skills.
- Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset.

REQUIRED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE**Educational Qualifications:**

- Minimum level, Bachelor's degree in social and development studies or equivalent

Experience

- Minimum 5 years of work experience on the preferred field of practice; and if relevant specific international, regional, or local knowledge is needed (if relevant).

Language requirements

- Fluency in written and spoken English required.
- Ability to understand and or speak in Palauan is preferred.

Price Proposal and Schedule of Payments

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	MTR Inception Report	MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	No later than 2 weeks before the National Consultant begins interviews Date: 28 April	MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management
2	Presentation	Initial Findings presented by Team Leader to PMU via Zoom, in collaboration with the National Consultant	No later than 3 days after end of interview period Date 2 May	MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit
3	Draft MTR Report	Full draft report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of conclusion of National Consultant's interviews Date: 25 May	Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP

MTR INTEGRATING BIODIVERSITY SAFEGUARDS AND CONSERVATION INTO DEVELOPMENT IN PALAU PROJECT

4	Final Report*	Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft Date: June 5	Sent to the Commissioning Unit
<p>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 own resources</p> <p>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, prior to travel and will be reimbursed.</p> <p>Evaluation Method and Criteria</p> <p>Individual consultants will be evaluated based on the following methodology Cumulative analysis The award of the contract shall be made to the individual consultant whose offer has been evaluated and determined as a) responsive/compliant/acceptable; and b) having received the highest score out of set of weighted technical criteria (70%). and financial criteria (30%). Financial score shall be computed as a ratio of the proposal being evaluated and the lowest priced proposal received by UNDP for the assignment.</p>				

Technical Criteria for Evaluation (Maximum 70 points)

- **Criteria 1:** Minimum level, Bachelor's degree in social and development studies or equivalent (10%)
- **Criteria 2:** Strong networks with Government, Non-Governmental Organizations and communities, and ability to self-monitor, set up interviews, and travel to States on Babeldaob independently if needed (20%)
- **Criteria 3:** Demonstrated understanding of national and state legislation, policies towards conservation and sustainable management (10%)
- **Criteria 4:** Ability to work in partnership with a remote Team Leader, including the willingness to hold meetings at compromise times that might not fall within usual business hours (15%)
- **Criteria 5:** Demonstrable analytical skills; (5%)
- **Criteria 6:** Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset. (10%)

Documentation required

Interested individual consultants must submit the following documents/information to demonstrate their qualifications. Please group them into **one (1) single PDF document** as the application only allows to upload maximum one document:

- **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the template provided in Annex II.
- **Personal CV**, indicating all past experience from similar projects, as well as the contact details (email and telephone number) of the Candidate and at least three (3) professional references.
- **Technical proposal**, including a) a brief description of why the individual considers him/herself as the most suitable for the assignment; and b) a methodology, on how they will approach and complete the assignment.
- **Financial proposal**, as per template provided in Annex II. Note: National consultants must quote prices in United States Dollars (USD).

Note: Successful individual will be required to provide proof of medical insurance coverage before commencement of contract for the duration of the assignment.

Incomplete and joint proposals may not be considered. Consultants with whom there is further interest will be contacted. The successful consultant shall opt to sign an Individual Contract or a Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA) through its company/employer with UNDP.

Annexes

- Annex I - [Individual IC General Terms and Conditions](#)
- Annex II – [Offeror's Letter to UNDP Confirming Interest and Availability for the Individual IC, including Financial Proposal Template](#)

For any clarification regarding this assignment please write to Mr. Dale Kacivi at dale.kacivi@undp.org

All applications must be clearly marked with the title of consultancy and Reference #, and submitted by 5:00pm, 27th April 2021 (Fiji Time) to etenderbox.pacific@undp.org

ANNEX 2 MTR TOR (EXCLUDING TOR ANNEXES) FOR TEAM LEADER
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Terms of Reference for ICs and RLAs through /GPN ExpRes

Services/Work Description: Mid Term Review for Palau Biodiversity Safeguards and Conservation

Project/Programme Title: Biodiversity Safeguards and Conservation in Palau

Consultancy Title: Team Leader – Palau Biodiversity Project

Duty Station: Home Based (travel to Palau prohibited by Government restrictions)

Duration: 30 days from 7 April till July, 2021

Expected start date: 7 April

BACKGROUND

The project was designed to protect Palau’s biodiversity by mainstreaming national environmental legislation and policies into practices on the ground and into State government development plans and private business plans. Through the GEF6 Project, the Ministry will protect biodiversity and natural resources by improving National-State communication and coordination and expanding partnerships between the National, State, Nonprofit, and Business sectors. Activities include: 1) Landscape, Seascape, and Master Planning; 2) Biosecurity and management of Invasive Alien Species; 3) Use of Best Practices in agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry, housing, and sustainable tourism; 4) Improved surveillance and enforcement; and 5) Gender and social mainstreaming and inclusivity.

Brief project description: Palau’s economy is projected to become increasingly dependent on tourism that is rising by 30% annually, necessitating new tourism infrastructure and service industries. Agriculture and fisheries, even though contributing barely 4% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) continues to provide the main livelihood for about 20% of Palau’s population. Local food security is a national priority, given the heavy reliance on food imports, and these three sectors (agriculture, fisheries and tourism) are now growing in line with Palau’s national development policies and plans. However, increasing pressures from tourism and agriculture and fisheries development activities are also resulting in rapidly increasing pressures on the country’s natural resources and biodiversity; and the rich terrestrial and marine natural resources, on which tourism (and agriculture and fisheries) depend, are especially vulnerable to such pressures.

This project aims to address the negative impacts of unsustainable sector-led development practices on biodiversity-rich landscapes of Palau, including its productive coastal and marine ecosystems, while taking into account climate change adaptation needs and inclusive and equitable social and economic development for dependent communities, as well as safeguarding against threats to biodiversity and the introduction and spread of Invasive Alien Species through the tourism and related sectors.

The objective of the project is to mainstream biodiversity conservation into integrated land and seascape governance, planning and management in Palau.

The project recognizes the fact that these land and seascapes underpin the lives and livelihoods of a large number of local communities and that implementation of a coherent strategy to promote

sustainable, biodiversity-friendly livelihood options is an integral part of the solution. The project objective is to be achieved through the implementation of four inter-related and mutually complementary Components (Project Outcomes) that are focussed on addressing existing barriers. The four Outcomes of the project are:

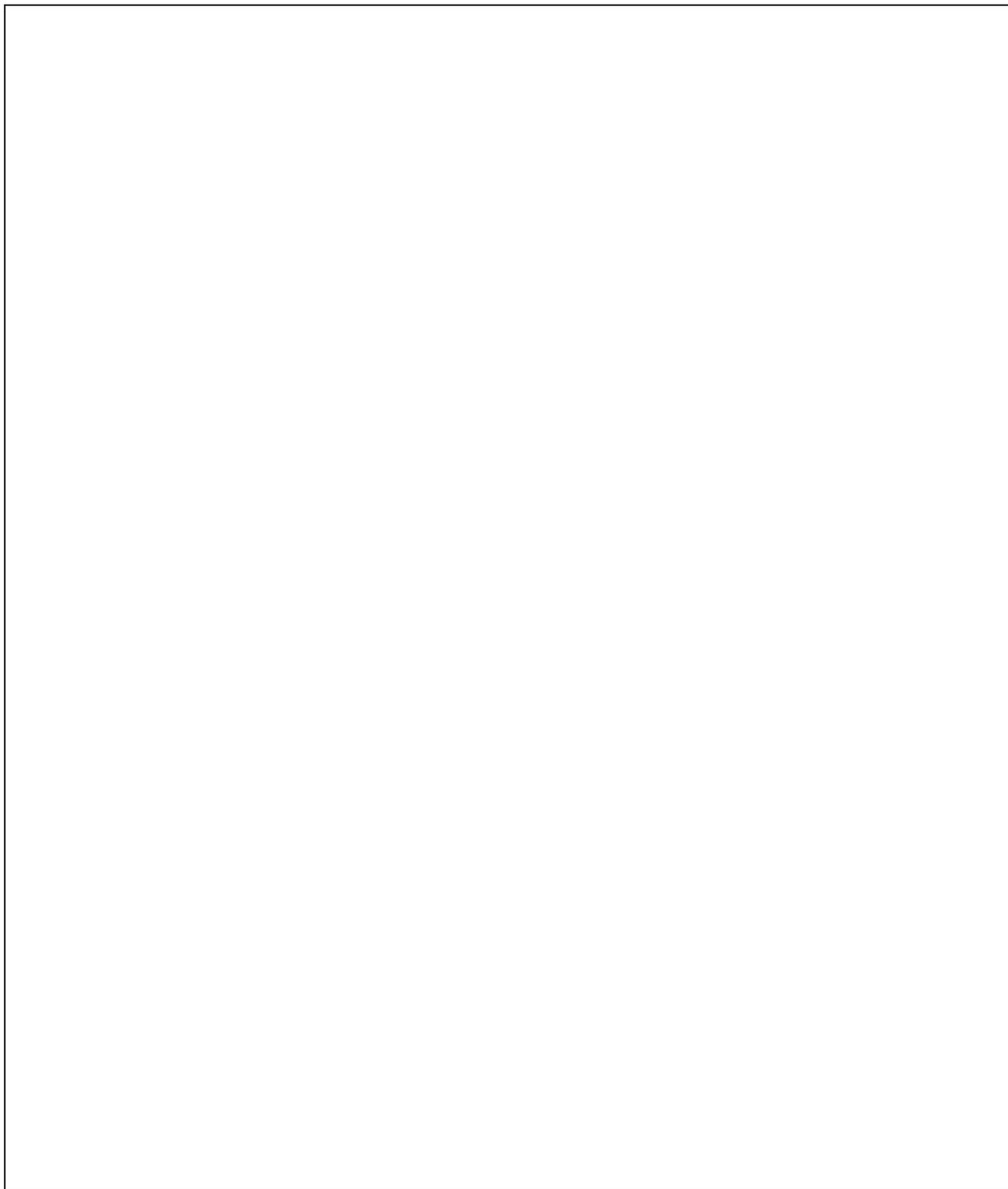
- **Outcome 1:** Enhanced national institutional framework for integrated planning and management of land and seascapes;
- **Outcome 2:** Integrated multi-sector land and seascape planning and management operational in Babeldaob states to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies;
- **Outcome 3:** Integrated multi-sector planning and management operational in 264,686 ha of seascapes and coastal areas in the Southern Lagoon to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies; and
- **Outcome 4:** Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation support, equitable gender benefits and biodiversity conservation in Palau.

Since the global Covid 19 pandemic in first quarter 2020, many countries including Palau responded immediately by implemented strict travel restrictions, and so far Palau is covid-free. Palau's border is effectively closed to all except essential workers and approved returning Palauan citizens and residents. In March 2020 the Palau government instituted a nationwide lockdown period, including school closures, which had a negative impact on the project, resulting in delays to implementation for at least 2 months. Most affected were women, who were generally responsible for child care during the lockdown. The shift to online Zoom meetings was not successful in country. Although the lockdown was lifted, several partners remain heavily impacted by safety and economic considerations. Some partners are responsible for two-week quarantines for incoming passengers (24 hours/day for 14 days every month) and for disinfection of the quarantine vehicles and sites, some partners have taken on the risk of inspecting incoming vessels (air freight and ships, 3-4 per week), and other partners are dealing with drastic reductions in revenues due to a complete lack of tourists. Despite the impacts of the border closure and covid risks, the project did continue with activities and implemented adaptive management (such as switching from international consultants to local hires) and was back to near 100% implementation by August 2020. To date, there are no known cases of Covid-related deaths in Palau. Government officials continue to monitor the situation and provide regular updates. Palau has started to vaccinate its population with the goal of reaching 100% of eligible residents.

MTR Purpose

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy and its risks to sustainability. The MTR will also reflect on lessons learnt on this project to inform and be shared with other Projects in Palau and related projects in the Pacific. The MTR is also part of the UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji's evaluation plan (20182022) and will be facilitated by the Commissioning Unit, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer with support from terminal evaluation team.

4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY



purpose and objectives and answering the evaluation questions, given limitations of budget, time and data. The MTR team must use gender-responsive methodologies and tools and ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues and SDGs are incorporated into the MTR report. Many project partners are women who are responsible for families, and child care needs must be considered in the approach.

The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits and data to be used in the MTR must be clearly outlined in the Inception Report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP, stakeholders and the MTR team.

The final MTR report must 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.

✚ **Additional Text to incorporate into this section, as relevant (please adjust as needed):**

As of 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic as the new coronavirus rapidly spread to all regions of the world. Travel to the country has been restricted since 03/2020. It is not possible to travel to the country for the MTR mission. Travel within the main archipelago of Palau is open and allowed and safe. The MTR team should develop a methodology that takes this into account and conduct the MTR partially virtually and remotely, including the use of remote interview methods and extended desk reviews, data analysis, surveys and evaluation questionnaires, in partnership with a National Consultant who travels within country. This should be detailed in the MTR Inception Report and agreed with the Commissioning Unit.

If all or part of the MTR is to be carried out virtually then consideration should be taken for stakeholder availability, ability or willingness to be interviewed remotely. In addition, their accessibility to the internet/computer may be an issue as many government and national counterparts may be working from home. These limitations must be reflected in the final MTR report. A National Consultant must be able to travel to Babeldaob States, hamlets in Koror, and Peleliu and should incorporate these costs into the MTR Inception Report.

Remote interviews may be undertaken through telephone or online (skype, zoom etc.). International consultants can work remotely with national evaluator support in the field. No stakeholders, consultants or UNDP staff should be put in harm's way and safety is the key priority.

A validation mission is not possible within the MTR schedule. Qualified and independent national consultants can be hired to undertake the MTR interviews in country instead.

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

i. Project Strategy Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- 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.
 - Were relevant gender issues (e.g. the impact of the project on gender equality in the programme country, involvement of women’s groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the Project Document?
- 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.
- Are the project’s objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?
- Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyse beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women’s empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.
- Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART ‘development’ indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

ii. Progress Towards Results

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

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

- Do the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and/or UNDP and other partners have the capacity to deliver benefits to or involve women? If yes, how?
- What is the gender balance of project staff? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in project staff?
- What is the gender balance of the Project Board? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in the Project Board?

Work Planning:

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.
- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
- Examine the use of the project’s results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

Finance and co-finance:

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

Sources of Cofinancing	Name of Co-financer	Type of Cofinancing	Co-financing amount confirmed at CEO Endorsement (US\$)	Actual Amount Contributed at stage of Midterm Review (US\$)	Actual % of Expected Amount
		TOTAL			

² Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards

³ Populate with data from the Project Document

⁴ If available

⁵ Colour code this column only

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

- Include the separate GEF Co-Financing template (filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team) which categorizes each co-financing amount as ‘investment mobilized’ or ‘recurrent expenditures’. (This template will be annexed as a separate file.)

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?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were incorporated in monitoring systems. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?
- How does the project engage women and girls? Is the project likely to have the same positive and/or negative effects on women and men, girls and boys? Identify, if possible, legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women’s participation in the project. What can the project do to enhance its gender benefits?

Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

- Validate the risks identified in the project’s most current SESP, and those risks’ ratings; are any revisions needed?
- Summarize and assess the revisions made since CEO Endorsement/Approval (if any) to:
 - The project’s overall safeguards risk categorization.
 - The identified types of risks²¹ (in the SESP).
 - The individual risk ratings (in the SESP).
- Describe and assess progress made in the implementation of the project’s social and environmental management measures as outlined in the SESP submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval (and prepared

²¹ Risks are to be labeled with both the UNDP SES Principles and Standards, and the GEF’s “types of risks and potential impacts”: Climate Change and Disaster; Disadvantaged or Vulnerable Individuals or Groups; Disability Inclusion; Adverse Gender-Related impact, including Gender-based Violence and Sexual Exploitation; Biodiversity Conservation and the Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources; Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement; Indigenous Peoples; Cultural Heritage; Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention; Labor and Working Conditions; Community Health, Safety and Security.

- sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?
-
- 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 sustenance of project outcomes?

Conclusions & Recommendations

The MTR team will include a section in the MTR report for evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.

Additionally, the MTR consultant/team is expected to make recommendations to the Project Team. Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report's executive summary. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table.

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

Ratings

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

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for (Project Title)

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

	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 4 Achievement	
	Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)	

Sustainability (rate 4 pt. scale)**6. TIMEFRAME**

The total duration of the MTR will be approximately **(30)** working days over a time period of **(12)** of weeks, and shall not exceed five months from when the consultant(s) are hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS	COMPLETION DATE
Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report	<i>4 days</i>	<i>10 April</i>
Liaise with, guide, and oversee National Consultant, and review findings from stakeholder meetings and interviews held by National Consultant, feedback to team	<i>10 days</i>	<i>24 April</i>
Presentation of initial findings - within 3 days of the last interview (via Zoom/Skype)	<i>1 day</i>	<i>28 April</i>
Preparing draft report (due within 3 weeks of completion of National Consultant's interviews)	<i>10 days</i>	<i>12 May</i>
Finalization of MTR report/ Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report (due within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on the draft)	<i>5 days</i>	<i>1 June</i>

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

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	MTR Inception Report	MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of	than consultant MS	MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit

		Midterm Review	No later before National begins int Date: April 10	and project management
2	Presentation	Initial Findings presented by Team Leader to PMU via Zoom, in collaboration with the National Consultant	No later than 3 days after end of interview period Date 28 April	MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit
3	Draft MTR Report	Full draft report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes	Within 3 of weeks conclusion of National Consultant's interviews Date: 12 May	Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFF
4	Final Report*	Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	Within 1 of week receiving U comments draft Date: June 1	Sent to the Commissioning Unit

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is *the Integrated Results Management Unit, Monitoring and Evaluation of the UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji*.

The Commissioning Unit will contract the consultants and will provide an updated stakeholder list with contact details (phone and email). The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, conduct digital meetings, liaise the National Consultant with stakeholder interviewees, and assist the National Consultant with field visits. Programme Officer of UNDP will provide support to the project in review of the report, and collation of project information package.

I. Academic Qualifications:

- A Master's degree in Social Sciences, Environment, Conservation or other closely related field

II. Years of experience:

- Previous experience with a full-size project's MTR, preferably in a Pacific Island country;
- Relevant experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to Biodiversity, Land Degradation and Sustainable Forest Management;
- Experience in evaluating GEF and/or other donor agency funded projects. At least 5 years of experience is necessary
- Experience working in South Pacific. Previous experience in Micronesia is advantageous.
- Experience in relevant technical areas for at least 10 years ;

- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender, Biodiversity, Land Degradation and Sustainable Forest Management; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis.
- Experience in undertaking consultancies and managing teams of consultants
- Excellent communication skills including the ability to work remotely and use Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, and other digital technologies;
- Ability to outline clear needs from, oversee actions of, and analyze findings from a National Consultant; • Demonstrable analytical skills;
- Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset.

III. Language:

- Fluency in written and spoken English. IV. Competencies:
- Previous experience with a full-size project's MTR, preferably in a Pacific Island country;
- Relevant experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to Biodiversity, Land Degradation and Sustainable Forest Management;
- Experience in evaluating GEF and/or other donor agency funded projects. At least 5 years of experience is necessary
- Experience working in South Pacific. Previous experience in Micronesia is advantageous.
- Experience in relevant technical areas for at least **10 years**;
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender, Biodiversity, Land Degradation and Sustainable Forest Management; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis.
- Experience in undertaking consultancies and managing teams of consultants
- Excellent communication skills including the ability to work remotely and use Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, and other digital technologies;
- Ability to outline clear needs from, oversee actions of, and analyze findings from a National Consultant; • Demonstrable analytical skills;
- Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset.

Payment modality

Payment to the individual contractor will be made based on the actual number of days worked, deliverables accepted and upon certification of satisfactory completion by the manager.

ANNEX 3 MTR EVALUATIVE MATRIX (EVALUATION CRITERIA WITH KEY QUESTIONS, INDICATORS, SOURCES OF DATA, AND METHODOLOGY)

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Evaluation Criteria: Relevance			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project's objective align with the priorities of the local government and local communities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and stated priorities of local stakeholders 	Local stakeholders Document review of local development strategies, environmental policies, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local level field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project's objective fit within the national environment and development priorities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and national policy priorities and strategies, as stated in official documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National policy documents, such as National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, National Capacity Self-Assessment, etc. 	Desk review National level interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project concept originate from local or national stakeholders, and/or were relevant stakeholders sufficiently involved in project development? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of involvement of local and national stakeholders in project origination and development (number of meetings held, project development processes incorporating stakeholder input, etc.) 	Project staff Local and national stakeholders Project documents	Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project objective fit GEF strategic priorities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and GEF strategic priorities (including alignment of relevant focal area indicators) 	GEF strategic priority documents for period when project was approved Current GEF strategic priority documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the project linked with and in line with UNDP priorities and strategies for the country? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and design with UNDAF, CPD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNDP strategic priority documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project's objective support implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity? Other relevant MEAs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linkages between project objective and elements of the CBD, such as key articles and programs of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBD website National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review
Evaluation Criteria: Efficiency			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project cost-effective? 	<p>Quality and adequacy of financial management procedures (in line with UNDP, UNOPS, and national policies, legislation, and procedures)</p> <p>Financial delivery rate vs. expected rate</p> <p>Management costs as a percentage of total costs</p>	<p>Project documents</p> <p>Project staff</p>	<p>Desk review</p> <p>Interviews with project staff</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are expenditures in line with international standards and norms? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of project inputs and outputs relative to norms and standards for donor projects in the country or region 	<p>Project documents</p> <p>Project staff</p>	<p>Desk review</p> <p>Interviews with project staff</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project implementation approach efficient for delivering the planned project results? 	<p>Adequacy of implementation structure and mechanisms for coordination and communication</p> <p>Planned and actual level of human resources available</p> <p>Extent and quality of engagement with relevant partners / partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality and adequacy of project monitoring mechanisms (oversight bodies' input, quality and timeliness of reporting, etc.) 	<p>Project documents</p> <p>National and local stakeholders</p> <p>Project staff</p>	<p>Desk review</p> <p>Interviews with project staff</p> <p>Interviews with national and local stakeholders</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project implementation delayed? If so, has that affected cost-effectiveness? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project milestones in time Planned results affected by delays Required project adaptive management measures related to delays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to project implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of cash and in-kind co-financing relative to expected level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is the project leveraging additional resources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of resources leveraged relative to project budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
Evaluation Criteria: Effectiveness			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the project objectives likely to be met? To what extent are they likely to be met? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of progress toward project indicator targets relative to expected level at current point of implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the key factors contributing to project success or underachievement? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of documentation of and preparation for project risks, assumptions and impact drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the key risks and barriers that remain to achieve the project objective and generate Global Environmental Benefits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence, assessment of, and preparation for expected risks, assumptions and impact drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the key assumptions and impact drivers relevant to the achievement of Global Environmental Benefits likely to be met? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions undertaken to address key assumptions and target impact drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
Evaluation Criteria: Results			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the planned outputs been produced? Have they contributed to the project outcomes and objectives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of project implementation progress relative to expected level at current stage of implementation Existence of logical linkages between project outputs and outcomes/impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the anticipated outcomes likely to be achieved? Are the outcomes likely to contribute to the achievement of the project objective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of logical linkages between project outcomes and impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are impact level results likely to be achieved? Are the likely to be at the scale sufficient to be considered GEB? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental indicators Level of progress through the project's Theory of Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
Evaluation Criteria: Sustainability			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are project results likely to be dependent on continued financial support? What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project results once the GEF assistance ends? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial requirements for maintenance of project benefits Level of expected financial resources available to support maintenance of project benefits Potential for additional financial resources to support maintenance of project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do relevant stakeholders have or are likely to achieve an adequate level of "ownership" of results, to have the interest in ensuring that project benefits are maintained? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of initiative and engagement of relevant stakeholders in project activities and results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do relevant stakeholders have the necessary technical capacity to ensure that project benefits are maintained? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of technical capacity of relevant stakeholders relative to level required to sustain project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the project results dependent on socio political factors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of socio political risks to project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of institutional and governance risks to project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project impacts and Global Environmental Benefits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of environmental risks to project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field visit interviews • Desk review
Gender equality and women's empowerment			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of progress of gender action plan and gender indicators in results framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review, interviews, field visits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways did the project's gender results advance or contribute to the project's biodiversity outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of logical linkages between gender results and project outcomes and impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review, interviews, field visits
Indicate whether the gender results achieved are short term or long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of logical linkages between gender results and project outcomes and impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review, interviews, field visits
Is there any potential negative impact on gender equality and women's empowerment? If so, what can be done do to mitigate this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of logical linkages between gender results and project outcomes and impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review, interviews, field visits
Indicate which of the following results areas the project contributed to (indicate as many results areas as applicable and describe the specific results that were attributed to the project): o Contributing to closing gender gaps in access to and control over resources; o Improving the participation and decision-making of women in natural resource governance; o Targeting socio-economic benefits and services for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of progress of gender action plan and gender indicators in results framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review, interviews, field visits
Discuss any further points on the project's gender results in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, country ownership, sustainability and impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of progress of gender action plan and gender indicators in results framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review, interviews, field visits

<i>Cross-cutting and UNDP Mainstreaming Issues</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How were effects on local populations considered in project design and implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive or negative effects of the project on local populations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review, interviews, field visits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how the project results have contributed to disasters or mitigation risks and or climate change mitigation and adaptation measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of contribution to disasters, mitigation risks and or climate change mitigation and adaptation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review, interviews, field visits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss scale of project's benefitting vulnerable groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of beneficiaries such as poor, indigenous, persons living with disabilities and marginalized groups from the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review, interviews, field visits
Describe how the environmental conservation activities of the project contributed to poverty reduction and sustaining livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of contribution of environmental conservation activities towards poverty reduction and sustaining livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review, interviews, field visits
Describe how the project contributed to a human rights based approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of contribution of project to a human rights based approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review, interviews, field visits
<i>GEF Additionality</i>			
Describe if there are quality quantitative and verifiable data demonstrating the incremental environmental benefits	Level of existence of verifiable data and quality/quantitatively data demonstrating the incremental environmental benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review, interviews, field visits
Describe if the outcomes be attributed to the GEF contribution as originally anticipated	Level of linkages between the outcomes in attribution to the GEF contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review, interviews, field visits
Explain if monitoring and evaluation documents provided evidence of the causality between the rationale for GEF involvement and the incremental environmental and other benefits directly associated with the GEF supported project	Level of M&E evidently demonstrating causality between the rationale for GEF involvement and the incremental environmental and other benefits directly associated with the GEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review, interviews, field visits

ANNEX 4 RATINGS SCALES

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

ANNEX 5 LIST OF CONSULTED PERSONS

(1) Sherry Koshiba	Aimeliik State Planning Team
(2) Johnson Joshua	Airai State Planning Team
(3) Keith Mesebeluu	Bureau of Agriculture
(4) Favian Iyar	Bureau of Tourism, Policy & Project Specialist
(5) Brenda Santos	Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection, Bureau of Marine Law
(6) Gwen Sisor	Environmental Planning and Coordination Unit (EPCU), Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and the Environment
(7) Kimie Ngirchechol	Environmental Quality Protection Board
(8) Klouldil Singeo	Former Bureau of Aging, Disability and Gender, Former Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs (BADG, MCCA)
(9) Dolmii Remeliik	G6 Project Palau
(10) Anu Gupta	MAFE
(11) Iolang Remengesau	Governor, Ngeremlengui State, GEF6 Board Member on behalf of Governor's Association
(12) Marcia Inacio	Joint Coordinating Body (JCB) Chairwoman, Ngiwal State
(13) Chubby Mai	Joint Coordinating Body (JCB) Vice Chairman, Ngchesar State Planning Team
(14) Dora Benhart	Koror State Department of Conservation & Law Enforcement
(15) Kirby Sikyang	Koror State Department of Conservation & Law Enforcement
(16) Amory Godwin	Koror State Department of Conservation & Law Enforcement
(17) Charlene Mersai	National Environmental Planning Coordinator, Ministry of Finance/GEF6 Board Member
(18) Meked Besebes	Ngarchelong State Planning Team
(19) Jennifer Ngiraiwet	Ngardmau State Planning Team
(20) Eunice Ngotel	Ngchesar State Planning Team
(21) Siles Kesolei	Ngeremlengui State Planning Team
(22) David Idip	PALARIS
(23) Zina Ringang	Palau Conservation Society (PCS) Policy and Planning Program Coordinator
(24) Umai Basilius	Palau Conservation Society (PCS) Policy and Planning Program Manager
(25) Shari Nicholas	Peleliu State Planning Team
(26) Floyd Robinson	UNDP – Pacific Office in Fiji
(27) Merewalesi Laveti	UNDP – Pacific Office in Fiji
(28) Luisa Katonibau	UNDP – Pacific Office in Fiji
(29) Vinaisi Dilikuwai	UNDP – Pacific Office in Fiji

ANNEX 6: LIST OF CONSULTED DOCUMENTS, INTERNET AND OTHER MEDIA RESOURCES

- ✦ Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services. Subregional programme document for the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (2018-2022): Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. 10 July 2010.
- ✦ Facebook (@GEF-6-PALAU)
- ✦ Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/189071815@N08/>
- ✦ GEF-6 Project Board Meeting Minutes. April 2021.
- ✦ GEF-6 Project Board Meeting Minutes. December 2019.
- ✦ GEF-6 Project Board Meeting Minutes. December 2020.
- ✦ GEF-6 Project Board Meeting Minutes. June 2020.
- ✦ GEF-6 Project Board Meeting Minutes. March 2020.
- ✦ GEF-6 Project Board Meeting Minutes. November 2018.
- ✦ GEF-6 Project Board Meeting Minutes. October 2019.
- ✦ GEF-6 Project Board Meeting Minutes. September 2020.
- ✦ GEF-6 Project. Palau Gender and Natural Resources 2020 National Report.
- ✦ <https://islandtimes.org/babeldaob-joint-coordination-body-begins-island-wide-planning-process>
- ✦ <https://open.undp.org/profile/PW/recipientprofile>
- ✦ <https://sites.google.com/view/gef6palau/home?authuser=0>
- ✦ <https://www.pacific.undp.org/content/pacific/en/home/countryinfo/palau.html>
- ✦ Independent Evaluation Office, 2015. How to Manage Gender Responsive Evaluation. UN Women. pp 4.
- ✦ Instagram (@gef6palau)
- ✦ LinkedIn (gef6-mnret-palau)
- ✦ Project Document
- ✦ Project Implementation Report. 2020
- ✦ Project Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/gef6palau>
- ✦ Standard Letter of Agreement between UNDP and the Government for the Provision of Support Services. July 2018.
- ✦ Twitter (@GEF6_Palau)
- ✦ UNDP GEF. Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects
- ✦ UNDP. Gender Mainstreaming Made Easy: Handbook For Programme Staff. 2013.
- ✦ UNDP. Evaluation Guidelines. The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES): A Methodology Guidance Note.
- ✦ UNDP. Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results

ANNEX 7: CO – FINANCING TABLE

Co-Financing Table for UNDP Supported GEF Financed Projects

Sources of Cofinancing	Name of Cofinancer	Type of Cofinancing	Amount committed at CEO Endorsement (US\$)	Actual amount committed at MTR (US\$)	Actual % of Expected
Local State Government	Aimeliik	In-Kind	50,000	12,350	25%
Local State Government	Airai	In-Kind		1,000	
National Government	BMR	Grant	2,000,000	1,830,000	92%
National Government	BNM	In-Kind	175,000	57,000	33%
National Government	Bureau of Agriculture (BOA)			1,513,246	
	BOA-Bilateral Aid Agency (IAEA)			32,126	
	BOA-Bilateral Aid Agency (FAO)			200,000	
	Total BOA:	Grant	3,066,000	1,745,372	57%
National Government	BOT	Grant	1,000,000	174,400	17%
NGO	CRRF	In-Kind		75,000	
National Government	DFWP	Grant	1,000,000	113,500	11%
National Government	Division of Fire and Public Safety	Grant	360,000	48,100	13%
National Government	WON'T COUNT ANYMORE Co-finance for GEF7 -- Division of Marine Law- Enforcement	In-Kind	1,290,000		0%
NGO	Ebiil Society	Grant	150,000	104,400	70%
National Government	EQPB	In-Kind	360,000	140,400	39%
National Government	Gender Office	In-Kind		69,000	
NGO	Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry	Grant	480,000	375,000	78%
NGO	Island Conservation	Grant	275,000	54,400	20%
Local State Government	Koror	Grant	3,000,000	1,606,000	54%
National Government	MAFE EPCU	In-Kind		60,000	
Local State Government	Melekeok	In-Kind		31,000	
Local State Government	Ngaraard	Grant	300,000	27,160	9%
Local State Government	Ngarchelong	Grant	256,826	25,500	10%
Local State Government	Ngardmau	In-Kind		17,200	
Local State Government	Ngatpang	Grant	315,000	6,000	2%
Local State Government	Ngchesar	Grant	50,000	20,000	40%
Local State Government	Ngeremlengui	In-Kind	213,480	31,950	15%
Local State Government	Ngiwal	In-Kind	30,000	59,000	197%
National Government	PALARIS	In-Kind	750,000	939,719	125%
NGO	PCAA	In-Kind	150,000	76,000	51%
NGO	PCC-CRE	In-Kind	3,000,000		0%
NGO	PCS	Grant	500,000	370,000	74%
Local State Government	Peleliu	Grant	1,400,000	31,000	2%
NGO	PICRC	Grant	1,500,000	258,000	17%
NGO	PVA	In-Kind		60,800	
Other	RISC - Regional Invasive Species Committee	In-Kind		42,800	
Local State Government	Governor's Association	In-Kind		20,000	
GEF Partner Agency	ADB KBUDSAP	In-Kind		370,966	
GEF Partner Agency	FAO / UN / and Ministry of State	In-Kind		25,000	
National Government	NEPC Secretariat	In-Kind		23,600	
NGO	TNC	Grant	1,000,000	-	0%
TOTAL:			22,671,306	8,901,617	39%

ANNEX 9: SIGNED UNEG CODE OF CONDUCT: NATIONAL CONSULTANT

Evaluators/Consultants:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

MTR Consultant Agreement Form

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

Name of Consultant: Cheryl-Ann R. Udui

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

Signed at Palau: July 27, 2021



Signature:

ANNEX 8: SIGNED UNEG CODE OF CONDUCT: TEAM LEADER

Evaluators/Consultants:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

MTR Consultant Agreement Form

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

Name of Consultant: Maria ONESTINI

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

Signed at Buenos Aires, Argentina on July 23 2020

Signature:



ANNEX 11 PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS MATRIX

This matrix is based on the information provided to this review during the data gathering stage. PIR 2021 was being prepared at the same time than this MTR was taking place. Therefore, some information and data included in the final PIR might differ slightly than what was presented here given that it was in the process of being elaborated at the time of this report's drafting.^{22 23}

²² Following indications for Mid Term Reviews, the analysis also concludes whether the end-of-project target: a) has already been achieved (colouring table cell green); b) is partially achieved or on target to be achieved by the end of the project (colouring table cell yellow); or c) is at high risk of not being achieved by the end of the project and needs attention (colouring table red). Achievement ratings and justification are added at the outcome level (following indications in Guidance: "assign a rating on progress for each outcome). For further details on this sort of analysis, see Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews Of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects.

Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved
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²³ Six - point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU. Explanation of rating scale is attached in annexes.

Project Objective: To mainstream biodiversity conservation into integrated land and seascape governance, planning and management in Palau.						
Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Midterm target level	Cumulative progress since project start	MT Level Assessment	Achievement Rating	Justification for Rating
Mandatory Indicator 1.3.1 Area of sustainable management solutions at sub-national level for conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services that benefit from integrated landscape and seascape planning and management approaches	Approximately 115,000 hectares (managed effectively)	At least 130,000 hectares of seascapes and landscapes effectively managed through participatory approaches	<p>This indicator is on track. Partners validate – OK. 146,248 confirmed, 157,896 (TOTAL) potential. See map: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CEPfkikfP1lvqJ81z_Uj9b21Q-gOF_h/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>AS OF 2021: Legislated and regulated includes 144,788 hectares of land and sea in Protected Areas plus 1,460 hectares of land in Riparian Buffer Zones (regulated previously but in 2020-2021 were communicated and enforced).</p> <p>AN ADDITIONAL 11,648 hectares on land has been identified for sustainable management solutions. See spreadsheet: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ruf2hE5EH_46HVFYup2IJUIY8wHclVVtxpGfFCA8Egg/edit?usp=sharing</p> <p>This mid-term value of 144,788 hectares of confirmed sustainable management solutions represents protected areas on land and sea and riparian buffer zones on land. EQPB regulations were also updated for marine areas but protected Class AA and A waters (pristine waters) have not yet been mapped.</p> <p>Work on this indicator is progressing steadily through the land use planning efforts of the Babeldaob Joint Coordination Body (JCB). MAFE EPCU acts as the Secretariat for the JCB. The JCB has mapped and agreed to advocate for protection of an additional 11,648 hectares of land to be sustainably managed. As the JCB has no authority (only State Governments have that authority), this means that JCB members have agreed to use the land use designations as the starting point for negotiations in their home state, as those home states undertake Master Planning and Land Use Planning. This number of 11,648 hectares is the result of a year of integrated planning on Babeldaob with 9 of the 10 States. Additional hectares from Airai State (the 10th State) are expected when a new administration there is elected (Airai has been in political flux for months).</p> <p>The 11,648 hectares represents new agreements on land only, as Project Partners have not had a chance to map or zone for offshore marine areas yet. Significant progress was made in mapping and zoning of Koror's lagoon waters, but as these are already counted within the Protected Areas value of 144,785 hectares (the revised baseline), thus they are not counted here again. The entire Koror Southern Lagoon is a managed area. However, new zones will improve fisheries management in the lagoon. Eventually, each State on Babeldaob plus Peleliu will have a state-wide Master Plan and Land Use Plan that will zone for the entire State.</p> <p>In the next year, work on Babeldaob and Peleliu will also focus on fisheries and aquaculture areas (both nearshore and offshore) and thus Project Partners are confident they will reach the target of 240,000 hectares of sustainable management solutions by the end of the Project.</p> <p>Palau has also zoned 80% of its EEZ as a no-take Marine Protected Area (the Palau National Marine Sanctuary – PNMS – 500,000 square kilometers) which is not counted here because they are counted under a different GEF7-funded project. However, many GEF6 Project Partners are highly involved in the PNMS and implementing types of sustainable management solutions that have been identified in this GEF6 project (such as outreach, enforcement, and zoning).</p>		MS	<p>As a composite expected results are on track of being achieved at the objective level.</p> <p>Groundwork is being laid for the generation of planning tools that integrate biodiversity in governance and management.</p> <p>Engendered collaborative processes, that have aided in linking and discussions between and among different areas (government and states for instance such as within JCB). This not only has helped in coordination, but also presents opportunities for sustainability, given that policies which are debated and analysed joint are perceived to have a greater likelihood of implementation and sustainability. This acknowledges also the complexities of national and states realms for policy making and policy implementation, and</p>
Mandatory Indicator 1.3.2 Number of households	Number of households currently participating in sustainable	At least 45% of HHs in Babeldaob states and Peleliu (at least 340HHs) directly benefit through	Partners agree that measuring by Household is not a relevant way to measure this Indicator. Agree with proposal to revise Indicator to look at individuals if possible. Partners validate that in terms of activities through Project and others, partners have reached and benefitted at least this number of households.			

<p>benefiting from strengthened livelihoods through solutions for improved management of natural resources and provision of ecosystem services</p>	<p>resource management and best practice approaches – 39% of HHs (in 7 Babeldaob states and Peleliu) in 2016 (300 HHs) . (baseline to be validated in Year 1)</p>	<p>sustainable resource management approaches and incomes (At least 50% of the beneficiaries would be women inclusive HHs)</p>	<p>Still analyzing information. Partners who have paid stipends out to community members have reported that information, but it is not cleaned or aggregated yet. Despite differences in types of data collected, it appears this indicator is on track.</p> <p>A rough estimate is that in the past year, 300 households have participated in labor-based State projects that were inspired by access to catalytic GEF6 funding. Many of the projects paid a stipend to participants for their labor. For instance, participants received stipends for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting trees in Ngarchelong, Ngeremlengui, and Ngchesar Pulling out invasive weeds in Lake Ngardok (co-financed with state funds) Cleaning out taro patch waterways in Ngiwal (beneficiaries were mostly women) Cleaning stream debris and trash in Ngardmau Removing invasive vines in Peleliu Aimeliik and Ngaraard did not pay its tree planting volunteers a stipend but provided them with meals. Ngaraard women did receive stipends for cleaning out taro waterways (co-financed with other GEF funds; beneficiaries were 100% women). <p>An additional 60 households have participated in planning; some planning teams offer a stipend while others rely on volunteers.</p> <p>2020 funds of \$43,000 were used by States for these activities. Every state provided at least food to its participants. Because of the delay in receiving 2021 funds, State activities in 2021 were delayed.</p> <p>It is proving to be difficult to confirm the baseline and a new baseline may be necessary. Surveys have reached individuals, not households. For instance, the KAP survey found that 69% of individuals had participated in community-wide or state-wide activities to deal with threats to biodiversity. (58% women, 42% men).</p> <p>For instance, the 2020 Gender and Natural Resources report confirmed that sustainable resource management and best practice approaches are important to nearly 70% of Palauans. Fishing, Agriculture, Invertebrate gleaning, collecting medicine, and collection of medicinal plants are primary uses of natural resources. 748 individuals were surveyed.</p>			<p>creates or strengthens institutional synergies.</p> <p>Collaborative processes very importantly have also included communities and non-governmental entities, which also entails filling gaps of governmental, at the national and state levels, gaps. Opened channels of communication between different stakeholders and between different institutions.</p> <p>Pilot demonstration projects taking place on the ground.</p>
<p>Mandatory indicator 2.5.1 Extent to which Institutional frameworks are in place for integration of conservation, sustainable natural resource use, control and management of IAS, biodiversity and ecosystems and improved livelihoods</p>	<p>No states have comprehensive landscape and seascape planning and management approaches; 4 of 16 states have partial plans or zones (Koror, Airai, Melekeok, Ngardmau)</p>	<p>Integrated Landscape/seascape management “strategy” for Babeldaob Island and ILSMPs developed for at least 3 states</p>	<p>Partners validate – OK, and commit to continued Master Planning. Although this indicator is behind relative to the mid-term target, it is on track to meet or exceed the end of project target.</p> <p>1) Babeldaob-Koror Regional Urban Development Strategic Plan (KBRUDSAP) was adopted by Ministry of Finance. (Partner activity funded by ADB; GEF6 partners were important stakeholders and heavily involved in its development).</p> <p>2) Babeldaob-wide Land Use Guide developed and adopted by Babeldaob JCB with guidance on protected areas, housing, agriculture, and tourism sites. See maps: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YIk75wJTkQ1d4zIHgZ51FvnoYcKuqgbl/edit</p> <p>3) 9 States actively progressing through Master Planning: See spreadsheet: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1A4itu_LPuQzjlfGxQoaqYW_pSKKf7NYL26_T7YFEwQc/edit?usp=sharing</p> <p>MAFE’s Legal Counsel made progress on several pieces of biodiversity-related legislation, although none have been adopted yet. These include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access and Benefit Sharing regulations Endangered and Threatened Species regulations Amendment to the Marine Protection Act and associated regulations for the protection of marine species Amendments to the PNMS law Draft of the Biosecurity Regulations Reef-safe Sunscreen laws and regulations Sustainable Tourism Regulations 			

<p>into integrated land/ seascape planning and management</p>			<p>See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VB1Ek1Lc0_78sFoMpQTMxeiRTZU9TirM/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Project Partners are still working to complete a full Babeldaob-wide strategy but several key aspects have been concluded and agreed, including an island-wide Vision and island-wide Land Use Designation Guidance maps (see #2 above). Agreed elements in the Babeldaob-wide land use designation maps include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low impact uses in the watershed catchments above water sources (all 10 states) • Low impact uses in and around tourism sites (including a 300-foot buffer) on land • Identification and agreement of housing subdivision areas based on agreed criteria that fully incorporated best practices (e.g. appropriate safe soils for septic tanks, protection of cultural resources and agricultural land, avoidance of upland forests and high biodiversity areas, etc.). Criteria included environmental sensitivity and economic/social feasibility in addition to environmental laws and regulations. • Identification and agreement of future large-scale agricultural areas based on best practices for soil fertility and integrated livestock/farming principles. <p>In the past year, Ngardmau State officially adopted its 2015 Master Plan and immediately began a review and update. Ngiwal and Ngaraard found and reviewed old Master Plans that were developed in the late 1990s. Thus, 5 States have existing or resurrected Master Plans (Airai, Ngardmau, Melekeok, Ngaraard, and Ngiwal). All 10 States on Babeldaob plus Peleliu signed MOUs with MAFE agreeing to undertake Master Planning following MAFE's templates and tools (which incorporate biodiversity, social, and climate safeguards). Work has started in 9 of those 11 states.</p> <p>In terms of Institutional Frameworks, the project created Planning Commission legislation and a Master Plan template that are aligned with national law and which will create a state legal basis for master planning. Ngarchelong and Ngaraard have introduced the legislation and it had gone through multiple readings by the end of June 2021. Other states had identifying Planning Commission members while the legislative process takes its time.</p> <p>Significant progress was made in Koror to review its fisheries zones and identify a comprehensive zoning system for its southern lagoon. (This work was co-financed elsewhere but included GEF6-funded GIS work and meeting facilitation and heavy involvement of Project Partners and staff).</p> <p>The KBRUDSAP was finished and adopted. Project Partners took the lead in bringing the new administration up to speed on the KBRUDSAP so that it could would fully align with the GEF6 project. The housing and tourism parts of the KBRUDSAP were reviewed, updated, and localized through by the Babeldaob JCB, with negotiation to localize the housing criteria that had been proposed by KBRUDSAP.</p>		
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Outcome 1: Enhanced national institutional framework for integrated planning and management of land and seascapes						
<p>Indicator 5: Level of institutional capacities for planning, implementation and monitoring of integrated land/seascape management plans as measured by UNDP land/seascape management scorecard</p>	<p>Limited institutional capacities for planning, implementation and monitoring of multiple use landscape and seascapes as measured by UNDP Land/ Seascape Capacity Development Scorecard baseline: (i) National level landscape/seascape capacity score 16/63 (ii) State level average score landscape/seascape capacity 15/60 (iii) National Environmental Management score 22/45 (iv) National biosecurity capacity score 15/45</p>	<p>Increase of institutional capacity as measured by a 10% increase in UNDP Landscape and Seascape Capacity Development Scorecard (national and state levels), National Environmental Management Capacity Scorecard and National Biosecurity Capacity Scorecard</p>	<p>Partners validate – OK. This indicator is on track. Scores increased by at least 10% for all four capacities. The scorecard levels increased for all four capacities: (i) National level landscape/seascape capacity score 33/63. (ii) State level average score landscape/seascape capacity 27/60. (iii) National Environmental Management score 32/45. (iv) National biosecurity capacity score 27/45.</p> <p>Capacities increased the most within the National Government sphere, partially as a result of the Ministry's creation and improved coordination of an Environmental Planning and Coordination Unit (EPCU). The EPCU works closely with the National Environmental Protection Council (NEPC) to coordinate environmental actions such as Best Practice workshops, assessments of national indicators (like SDGs), development of new proposals, etc. Project Partners have collected and collated environmental information, particularly on Best Practices, which are increasingly online and communicated weekly.</p> <p>(i) National level landscape scores - Through this GEF6 project, partners are now following an improved process for integrating biodiversity into national policies. This includes consulting updated spatial maps and spatial data housed at PALARIS; and cross-referencing against national environmental policies, which are now online and which have been shared widely. Some Stakeholder meetings are held under the auspices of the NEPC and with the assistance of the NEPC Secretariat. The Babeldaob JCB was created through the project and has been actively engaged in Landscape/Seascape Planning for the island, and are guided by a common vision: Babeldaob Vision & Core Values. Similarly, a stakeholder group of National, State, and civil society developed the KBRUDSAP, which also has a common vision. The KBRUDSAP fed into the Babeldaob vision and the Babeldaob land use guidance maps. EA/EIS regulations were updated to include specific requirements to measure and avoid harm to biodiversity, with special emphasis on endangered species. Total information and data available has increased, and most is available online on a centralized GEF6 website. Weekly emails appear to have increased knowledge about national biodiversity policies that are being mainstreamed.</p> <p>(ii) State level average scores – Although the project invested heavily in building state capacity, because this indicator is averaged across 11 States, all of which are in different places in terms of planning, growth in the indicator is slow. Through MOUs, the EPCU has secured the commitment of all 11 States (10 on Babeldaob plus Peleliu) to participate in Master Planning using EPCU templates and following the agreed process, which includes safeguards and requirements for protecting biodiversity. Since the project started, States have established planning teams, started working on legislation to create participatory and authorized Planning Commissions, collected spatial data, and progressed on developing State Master and Land use plans. Every State has a Vision.</p> <p>(iii) National Environmental management scores – At the national government and national NGO level, participation is steady and stakeholders regularly participate in decisionmaking processes through forums such as the Conservation Consortium and NEPC, and by consulting centralized spatial data held at PALARIS. Amendments to Title 31 passed the House of Representatives and were introduced in the Senate of the National Congress, and included a framework for national planning that included specific reference to environmental management. With improvements to the housing and use of spatial data at PALARIS, and updates of baseline maps, the ability to monitor and evaluate environmental information is improved and standardized. For instance, planning outside of the Project by tourism partners and climate change partners are now using these environmental tools.</p> <p>(iv) National Biosecurity – Formal MOUs were established with the Bureau of Agriculture and the Bureau of Customs to manage the Biosecurity Division. The National Invasive Species Council (NISC) was reconstituted and has jointly developed positions and identified responses to species issues. The NISC Office also initiated research on fruit flies and CRBs in specific response to needs from agriculture. A draft of the updated Biosecurity Regulation were finally produced, reviewed, and sent back to the Legal Counsel for continued work. Finally, after many funding-related delays, construction on the Biosecurity Quarantine facility commenced.</p>		MS	<p>Institutional framework analysis, review of policy framework, potentially upgrading policy tools, as well as generating plans for biodiversity management, land use planning, and other such plans, to impel sustainable development processes in Palau. Groundwork for aligning national plans and states plans in order for them to be mutually supportive.</p> <p>Contributed thus far to upgrading and mainstreaming policies, plans, etc. Merged, mainstreamed policies in partnership with states and national government are also perceived to be helpful for enforcement. Although it is understood that it is likely that this upgrading</p>

<p>Indicator 6a: Percentage increase in new earthmoving projects requiring environmental assessment (EA)</p>	<p>6a: 7.5% of new earthmoving projects require EA (2016)</p>	<p>6a. At least 10% of new earthmoving projects require EA</p>	<p>Partners validate – Indicator needs to be revised. For large projects, stricter regulations have resulted in more EAs/EISs, but residential/small projects are exempt. Partner confirms that regulations are tighter (stricter). This indicator may not be accurately capturing progress towards this outcome and may need to be REVISED. Regulations have become more stringent, but an increase in small projects makes it appear as if the indicator is trending in the wrong direction. When subsets of data are analyzed, it appears that the intent of the indicator is being achieved. Thus, at a modified level looking only at larger Commercial and Government/NGO permits, this indicator is on track. As of March 2021 (FY 2021):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4% of ALL projects required an EA. This is still an undesirable trend, as tighter regulations would trigger more EAs. • However, the majority of the permits in 2020 were for residential development (including renovations to existing structures) which are smaller projects and thus exempt from EA requirements. • In 2019, 53% of the permits were for residential permits and in 2020 69% were for residential permits. • Only the commercial and government/NGO projects are likely to trigger EA requirements, if large enough. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Looking only at Commercial and Government/NGO permits, in 2019, EQPB required 11% of applicants to produce an EA; and in 2020 EQPB required 18% of applicants to produce an EA. This is the expected, desirable trend. See spreadsheet: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zo7x2ZN3QCy0nDeoQNIYRS7YaSGMDK3EPL7-0prYoGM/edit?usp=sharing <p>Indeed, in 2021 EQPB was called in front of the Palau Senate to respond to claims about making the EA/EIS Regulations too stringent. This was after EQPB added biodiversity criteria and cumulative impacts criteria. The new and more stringent water quality regulations were communicated widely in the last year. Riparian zones were fully integrated into housing subdivision criteria and into the Babeldaob land use guide. EQPB also updated its EA/EIS regulations to include specific criteria about biodiversity and endangered species, as well as cumulative effects. The addition of the language about biodiversity was as a direct results of GEF6 Project Partners. EQPB EA/EIS Regulations (2020).</p>		<p>and mainstreaming might have occurred without GEF-6, stakeholders indicated that the Project has contributed to speeding up the process.</p> <p>Several expected outputs are on track, others are lagging behind.</p> <p>Some expected outputs need analysis and retrofitting due to changing conditions.</p>
<p>Indicator 6b: Percentage compliance with environmental safeguards for all permitted earthmoving projects that are exempt from EAs</p>	<p>6b: 85% of all permitted earthmoving projects that are exempt from EAs comply with prescribed environmental safeguards (2016)</p>	<p>6b: At least 90% of all permitted earthmoving projects that are exempt from EAs comply with prescribed environmental safeguards</p>	<p>Partners validate – OK. This indicator is steady (and on track). As of March 2021 (FY 2021):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% violation rate, or 95% compliance rate. This is holding steady. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The 2020 number was 15 violations:313 earthmoving permits; o The 2021 number is 21 violations:382 permits. • The number of permit applications increased by 22% between the two years, while staffing at EQPB declined from 17 to 16 (including having no Executive Director for part of 2021). • See spreadsheet: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zo7x2ZN3QCy0nDeoQNIYRS7YaSGMDK3EPL7-0prYoGM/edit?usp=sharing <p>Since the project started EQPB has updated its water quality and EA/EIS regulations and held workshops and trainings with developers, contractors, State governments, and other stakeholders to communicate the revisions. EQPB also produced a guidance document: Palau Marine and Freshwater Water Quality Regulations - Implementation Guidance Manual and training materials: Overview presentation on revised EA/EIS Regulations (2020). See photos from a workshop: https://www.flickr.com/photos/189071815@N08/albums/72157717212052307.</p>		

			<p>The KAP survey confirmed that knowledge of zoning is limited and thus education and outreach will be necessary if permit applications are to conform with land use plans that incorporate zones that are being developed with biodiversity safeguards in place. The KAP survey found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Around 75% of respondents said that zoning is important and should be followed. •Majority of the population disagrees that private lands should follow zoning rules, but disagrees differently by age that public lands should only be applied zoning rules. •66.7% of the elderly subgroup, followed by 53.48% of adults and 48.84% of youth view the need for stringent zoning rules be applied to public lands. •Only 20% of people had ever checked to map to see if certain types of development are allowed. <p>See: Final 2020 KAP Report</p> <p>Project partners are also increasing awareness of regulations and biodiversity safeguards through master, action, and land use planning processes. For instance, state planning teams reviewed safeguards and restrictions before identifying 2021 Action Projects, and had to design projects that incorporated safeguards. See:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •https://sites.google.com/view/gef6palau/governance/safeguards, plus •https://sites.google.com/view/gef6palau/governance/endangered-species. •This document that was reviewed in person with all planning teams prior to setting their 2021 AWP: Funding Guidance and Requirements for 2021 State Funds 			
<p>Indicator 7: Comprehensiveness of national level IAS management framework and ability to prevent IAS of high risk to biodiversity from entering Palau, as measured by IAS Tracking Tool</p>	<p>IAS Tracking Tool Score of 9 (out of total of 27) due to lack of national coordinating mechanism; no national IAS strategy; detection surveys non-existent; priority pathways not actively managed, etc.</p>	<p>Improved policies and legislation for prevention of high risk IAS from entering Palau as measured by 20% increased score in the GEF IAS Tracking Tool (from baseline 9 to 11)</p>	<p>Partners validate – OK. This indicator is on track. Continued Slight increase in the Tracking Tool. (This indicator is comprehensive; note there was significant improvement in biosecurity capacity – Indicator 5). IAS Tracking Tool Score of 12 (out of total of 27) due to improvement in management and monitoring of priority pathways (e.g. cargo at the airport and seaport). The nationwide IAS framework continues to improve. Key achievements included production of a draft of the Biosecurity Regulations, which were reviewed in depth and sent back for revision. During the review process, a draft of aquatic species regulations were also reviewed by technical experts and recommended for adoption and inclusion into the final Biosecurity Regulations. After many delays, the project finally began construction on a Biosecurity Quarantine Facility in Ngchesar. The NISC was reconstituted, held its first meeting in more than 18 months, and even drafted a response to a national biosecurity action (next bullet).</p> <p>The Biosecurity Division was moved from the Bureau of Agriculture to the Bureau of Customs and Immigration. NISC organized a response to the proposal when it was first proposed: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1b6bgiXEO3IkKZ3Fs8P1niLEko9ahdkdl/view?usp=sharing. Although the move did ultimately go through, NISC’s concerns were brought up during negotiations for ensuring that Biosecurity’s functions would continue even while under Customs and Immigration.</p> <p>The Biosecurity Division continued to inspect all incoming vessels regularly at the airport and seaport, and the occasional incoming yacht. Several of their forms and procedures (such as Risk Assessment) are under review.</p> <p>Partners also did training of PAN Rangers to improve their ability to monitor and delimit invasive vines and crown-of-thorn starfish. A centralized database was also established and tested and is being refined: https://sites.google.com/view/gef6palau/data-portal. A baseline was established with spatial data showing hotspots and monitoring spots for fruit flies and CRBs in Koror and Babeldaob:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Koror CRB and Fruit Fly / <input type="checkbox"/> Babeldaob CRB and Fruit Fly</p> <p>Project Partners produced sets of Black and White lists: Official Black & White List: Species to Avoid (BOA, 2020) consisting of: • Draft Black & White List - Invasive Plants and Trees / • Draft Black & White List - Marine and Aquatic Invasive Species/ • Draft Black & White List - Invasive Animals+Diseases</p> <p>Finally, a wealth of information on invasive species, including guidance and best practices, were compiled, organized, put online, and communicated: https://sites.google.com/view/gef6palau/gef6-key-sectors/invasive-species The EDRR and Inter-island Biosecurity outputs are still behind, but partnerships to develop the systems have been established.</p>			

Outcome 2 Integrated multi-sector land and seascape “Ridge-to-Reef” planning and management operational in Babeldaob states to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies						
Indicator 8: Number of hectares of high conservation value ecosystems, including forests, mangroves and marine areas zoned/allocated for non-exhaustive use	High Conservation Value Forests (dispersal corridors, biodiversity rich areas and buffer areas) outside protected area network lack appropriate management regimes	High Conservation forests including mangroves and marine areas for non-exhaustive use mapped and at least 2,500 ha, allocated for non-exhaustive use	<p>Partners validate – OK. This indicator is on track.</p> <p>CUMULATIVE: 2,944 hectares of upland forest on Babeldaob currently regulated or identified and potentially set aside for non-exhaustive use on Babeldaob. Values from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,460 hectares of riparian forest regulated by EQPB regulations. ADDED IN 2021: 1,484 hectares (OUTSIDE OF PROTECTED AREAS) potentially zoned for non-exhaustive use for water source protection; agreement from Babeldaob JCB but needs State agreement. <p>See map: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qOZdUUTMvSonWb7t0q4MGr20gFtNr1oq/view?usp=sharing See SPREADSHEET: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1oBPGd6-ISDPL3YrLfqyYlwodlVNI1-t2uJ_ToryKip0/edit?usp=sharing</p> <p>The Babeldaob Joint Coordination Body meets regularly and in the past year agreed to a Babeldaob-wide land use designation guide that incorporated biodiversity safeguards. This included agreeing to tentative housing subdivision areas as recommended by the SMCE (Spatial Multi-Criteria Evaluation) tool first developed by the KBRUDSAP and then localized for Babeldaob by the JCB. The SMCE criteria include avoiding important forest areas (identified in Palau’s Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources, SWARs) plus making high-value areas the lowest possible suitability (mangroves and upland forests). See:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Housing Subdivision Criteria Babeldaob Map with proposed Housing Subdivision Restrictions <p>The Babeldaob JCB also agreed that water sources should be protected and agreed to the drawing of tentative borders around entire watersheds draining into public water systems. JCB Members agreed that these areas would be proposed for non-exhaustive use in the State Master Plans. One State, Ngatpang, is considering turning its watershed above a public water source into a Terrestrial Protected Area and thus contributing to the Palau PAN.</p> <p>Work is also underway to identify marine areas for non-exhaustive use. In Koror’s waters, the entire Southern Lagoon has been mapped with proposed fisheries management areas, which include new protected areas. Similar efforts are underway on the west and east coasts of Babeldaob.</p> <p>All 10 States on Babeldaob participate in the Babeldaob JCB and have agreed to comprehensive land use planning and master planning. In this way, entire States will be zoned in a ridge-to-reef systematic manner.</p>		MS	<p>Most expected outputs on track to be achieved based on midpoint metrics.</p> <p>Identification of information for the development of planning tools underway, including mapping.</p> <p>Contributed thus far to upgrading and mainstreaming policies, plans, etc. Merged, mainstreamed policies in partnership with states and national government are also perceived to be helpful for enforcement. Although it is understood that it is likely that this upgrading and mainstreaming might have occurred without GEF-6, stakeholders indicated that the Project has contributed to speeding up the process.</p> <p>Some expected outputs not on tracks either</p>

					<p>due to changing conditions or over ambitiousness upon design.</p> <p>Technical groundwork for several planning tools laid.</p> <p>Contextual tools developed and evidence/data for informed decision making for planning gathered (GIS, etc.) and identifying needs and priorities.</p> <p>Concrete, and expectantly demonstration pilots for upscaling and replication, carried out: river restoration, reforestation, erosion control pilots –all with community participation—taking place.</p>
Indicator 9: Number of hectares of degraded forests and grasslands and coastal and marine areas outside PAN network rehabilitated	Over 12,500 hectares of forests, grasslands and coastal and marine ecosystems under continued degradation through overuse	At least 100 ha of degraded forests, grasslands and marine ecosystems under restoration through	<p>Partners agree that there is no way this Indicator can be achieved. Work is labor-intensive and soils are very poor. Suggestions include: 1) reduce the target, 2) tracking a different indicator such as number of trees requested, 3) change the indicator so that we are measuring hectares of land converted from degraded land to some better use (e.g. agriculture).</p> <p>This indicator is off-track and may need to be REVISED. Restoration of degraded forests and grasslands is very labor intensive and progress is incremental. The Project may need to identify technical assistance to identify a more realistic target.</p> <p>INCOMPLETE - NEED TO ADD ADDITIONAL PARTNER RESTORATION HECTARES (Ebiil)</p>		

		community actions	<p>As of June 2021, 26.68 hectares had been restored. See online Table: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SiCOHXnHqtuac_x4OmbMjPDeptCZ21g2/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>See map: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qOZdUUTMvSonWb7t0q4MGr20gFtNr1oq/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Prior to accessing funds, Project Partners had to write Action Plans that incorporated biodiversity and social safeguards and using Best Practices, including using native species or otherwise following a GEF6 Native and Non-native Plant Policy. Restoration activities included tree planting to control erosion, removal of eroded sediments from streams to allow for natural water flow, and removal of invasive vines along roads. The GEF6 directly financed efforts in 7 States on Babeldaob plus Peleliu, and there were additional partner-led efforts by BOA, EQPB, and Ebiil Society.</p>		
Indicator 10: Change in status of populations of Micronesian Imperial Pigeon and Palauan Fruit Dove	Declining populations of Micronesian Imperial Pigeon and Palauan Fruit Dove with baseline of 3,000 and 1,600 individuals respectively (2014)	Maintained populations of Micronesian Imperial Pigeon and Palauan Fruit Dove from current baselines	<p>Partners did not have additional information. In terms of activities, Partners agree that activities to achieve this indicator are under way – Partially validated.</p> <p>Partners have not yet analyzed their most recent information. These will be ready for the PIR. Activities to achieve this indicator are underway.</p> <p>The Project has mainstreamed protection of terrestrial biodiversity into its outputs, including protection or avoidance of upland forests in the Babeldaob land use guidance maps and improved IAS frameworks, including monitoring for brown tree snakes at the border. Awareness of biodiversity has increased, and project partners have reviewed the laws protecting native birds and at least one NGO (PCS) has included in its Strategy the goal of updating the Protected Land Life act to better protect birds. Partnerships with the PAN are in place to improve monitoring of IAS in protected areas and thus avoid new threats to birds.</p> <p>Enforcement partners also started a species review. Out of the ongoing Enforcement Partners assessment and review, DFWP identified the need for and then began working with the Attorney General's office to be able to issue citations. (Currently DFWP has to elevate every enforcement action to a criminal case, which is difficult and thus many infractions are not pursued.). Beyond birds, the Enforcement Partnership led to improved enforcement of a Hawksbill Sea Turtle law, thereby better protected an endangered species that uses land and sea.</p> <p>Project partners mapped terrestrial tourism locations, most of which included some forest. The JCB agreed to zone tourism are for non-exhaustive use, further protecting the habitats of birds.</p>		
Indicator 11: Extent of community-based land, forest, coastal and marine management regimes applied, including resultant changes in community incomes from current levels	Current extent of area under community land, forest, coastal and marine management regimes in target project states (to be determined in Year 1)	Areas for community-based management totaling at least 500 ha identified and agreed through a consensus building process, as part of the community-based planning process.	<p>Partners validate – OK. This indicator is on track.</p> <p>Project partners have identified 1,437 hectares across 160 sites and achieved initial agreement (either within the JCB or within State Governments) to manage these areas for low-impact uses, especially with income opportunities. These include access to and improvements to taro patches or farming in Ngarchelong and Ngiwal, access and best practices for aquaculture in Ngeremlengui, and State, village, or community-run tourism in Ngaraard, Ngardmau, Ngchesar, Aimeliik, and Peleliu.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 28.38 hectares in 2021 Action Projects 2) 1,004 hectares from tourism sites (agreed by JCB for non-exhaustive use; sites were identified by State representatives). 3) 405 hectares from tourism buffers (a 300-foot buffer around tourism sites). <p>See map of action sites: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qOZdUUTMvSonWb7t0q4MGr20gFtNr1oq/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>See map of Tourist sites (scroll to page 5): https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YIk75wJTkQ1d4zIHgZ51FvnoYcKugqbl/edit</p> <p>See Spreadsheet Table: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TEu5P5TnTZ1fFzk_crK2mnnJxXpOYS60jZAIUE3cV9Y/edit?usp=sharing</p>		

Outcome 3: Integrated multi-sector planning and management operational in 264,686 ha of seascapes and coastal areas in the Southern Lagoon to reduce threats to biodiversity and improve ecosystem services to benefit communities and state economies

Indicator 12: Change in status of fish stocks in designated reef and sea grass areas based on biomass indices	Protected exposed reefs (outer reefs and channels) of 714kg/ha (with unprotected exposed reefs having 63% of this figure compared with MPAs) and 258kg/ha in protected inner reefs (black reefs and patch reefs/reef flats) with unprotected reefs having 57% of this figure compared with MPAs	Maintained fish stocks in designated zones from existing baselines in unprotected exposed outer and inner reefs	<p>Partners agree – can't measure progress with these measurements. Partners also validate that activities are underway to achieve this work (especially zoning in Koror. Partners updated to say that Koror has included one more additional Marine Protected Area.</p> <p>It is not possible to compare this indicator over time using prior data and the indicator may need to be REVISED.</p> <p>PICRC has completely changed the way it monitors fish stocks, so as to implement a monitoring program that focuses on fish that are harvested - the previously used indicator monitored fish as an indicator of coral reef health and this information could not be used accurately to determine fish stock status. PICRC established a new baseline in 2020 based on data collected in 2017. This program does not monitor fish stocks in seagrass. PICRC will monitor fish every two years.</p> <p>NEW BASELINE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mean biomass across all sites = 17.06 + 2.51 g/square meter. • Mean biomass on Fore Reef West = 30.38 +/- 5.55 g/square meter. • Mean biomass on Fore Reef West = ~19 g/square meter. • Mean biomass on Channel = ~15 g/square meter. • Mean biomass on Fringing Inner Reef = ~6 g/square meter. • Mean biomass on Patch Reef = 4.76 +/- 0.69 g/square meter. <p>See 2020 PICRC Report on 2017 Fish Survey: https://drive.google.com/file/d/19lhIgu6UyH0iGobnBgczbPwezaEPT-cf/view?usp=sharing The report does not assess change over time but sets a new baseline.</p> <p>Prior to Covid, all anecdotal reports suggested a repeated decline in nearshore fisheries stocks. Since the borders closed due to Covid, reports are mixed, with some reports of increased fish stocks and some of decreased fish stocks. There will be no data to compare over time until PICRC repeats its fishery survey. Partners validate – anecdotal reports vary.</p> <p>In terms of action, this indicator is back on track:</p> <p>Regardless of the data, significant progress on fisheries was made in Koror and the Southern Lagoon. Koror State completed revisions of its Rock Island Southern Lagoon Protected Area Management Plan and sent it to leaders for the final approval. It included actions to improve fisheries protections. Immediately after, Koror began a comprehensive mapping and zoning project. The project is co-financed and led by PCS, but other GEF6 Project Partners have been heavily involved and GEF6 funding enabled spatial mapping and zoning of the entire lagoon. Through this project Koror is planning for the sustainable use of 60 species of fish.</p> <p>See:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoning that has been proposed for the entire Southern Lagoon, based on fisheries management zones • Meeting agenda showing partnership of PALARIS and MAFE EPCU (GEF6) • Species of Fish that are being planned for • Presentation on update of RISL Management Plan • Photos of mapping in Koror 		MS	<p>Mostly on track.</p> <p>Issues with baseline however hinder the possibility of properly accounting for achievement of products and/or results.</p> <p>Technical groundwork for several planning tools laid. Contextual tools developed and evidence/data for informed decision making for planning gathered (GIS, etc.) and identifying needs and priorities.</p> <p>Externalities (such as Climate Change) hinder further progress vis-a-vis expectations.</p>
Indicator 13: Change in status of coral cover at designated sites	27% of reefs have "medium" coral cover (25-50% cover), while 13% of reefs have "low" coral cover (Maintained percentage coral cover at designated sites from	<p>Partners agree that Climate Change influences this indicator more than human activity, and indicator may not accurately measure project work such as zoning.</p> <p>Work on this indicator has not yet begun in earnest.</p> <p>It is not possible to compare this indicator over time using prior data and the indicator may need to be REVISED. PICRC has stopped measuring "Areas of High Coral Cover" and instead monitors live coral cover. A revised</p>			

		existing baseline	<p>baseline is possible. In addition, this indicator does not measure project progress as climate change has an overwhelming influence.</p> <p>In PICRC's most recent report the following baselines can be established:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outer Reef West live coral cover at 3 and 10 m: 23 and 44%; • Outer Reef East at 3 and 10 m: 10 and 12.8%; • Patch reefs at 3 and 10 m: 30 and 17%; • Inner Reefs at 3 and 10 m: 45 and 39%. <p>Compared to the previous monitoring period (2016):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live Coral Cover increased at both 3 meters and 10 meters depth on the Outer Reef West and Outer Reef East; • Decreased at both 3 meters and 10 meters depth on Patch Reefs; and • Decreased at 3 meters and increased at 10 meters on Inner Bay Reefs. <p>Compared to a revised baseline, live coral cover decreased in one location due to tropical storm impacts, increased in one location as recovery from a previous storm, was stable in one location, and had mixed increases/decreases in another location.</p> <p>2020 PICRC Report on 2018 Coral Reef Status: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1i_ccqDUdUoGKqEPlySAkBlEQXjaQYPbk/view?usp=sharing They conclude that "coral reefs in Palau are in relatively good state apart from the eastern outer reefs that are still recovering, four to five years after typhoon disturbances"</p> <p>Climate change has more of an impact on this indicator than management. Reefs are in good health, except where storm impacts have reduced coral cover. Live Coral Cover does not appear to be impacted by the project.</p> <p>In terms of action, this Project has so far focused attention on land and terrestrial planning and mainstreaming and has not yet changed its focus to marine areas, especially on Babeldaob. However, zoning in the Koror Southern Lagoon is further protecting critical fish habitats, including coral reefs. Many of these areas already have high coral cover.</p>			
Indicator 14: Change in nesting success rates (number of nests, number of eggs, hatchlings and survival rates) for Micronesian megapodes in selected sites previously occupied by rats	Current status of Micronesian megapodes nesting success in selected islands established in Year 1	Maintained population of Micronesian megapodes from selected sites previously occupied by rats from current baseline values	Partners had no new information. Still waiting for information			

Outcome 4: Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation support, equitable gender benefits and biodiversity conservation in Palau					
Indicator 15: Increase in percentage of sampled community members, tour operators and sector agency staff aware of potential conservation threats and adverse impacts of IAS	Coordinated outreach on conservation threats and biosecurity lacking. Limited awareness of impact IAS among general public. Baseline survey established in Year 1	At least 5% of sampled community members and 20% of tour operators and sector agency staff aware of potential conservation threats and adverse impacts of IAS	<p>Partners agree that current target is not relevant. Tour guides and communities know about adverse threats of IAS. Partners agree with suggested revised targets. This indicator needs to be REVISED. Also, this survey will not be repeated until EOP. The newly established Baseline shows that 46-65% of tour operators are aware of potential conservation threats and impacts of IAS. (Green Fins had already been implemented by the time survey was conducted). Baseline also indicates that 63-84% of community members are aware of conservation threats and impacts of IAS. Given the existing high numbers of awareness about adverse impacts, this indicator does not seem to be relevant.</p> <p>Suggested changes that use the existing KAP data include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) % of survey respondents who report "knowing how to minimize the impact of IAS" <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Baseline would be 34% YES, 37% NO, 29% NO ANSWER. 2) Average number of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) listed by respondents. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Baseline would be 1.5. 3) % of respondents incorrectly identifying native species as Invasive Alien Species. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Baseline would be 65%. <p>See spreadsheet: https://drive.google.com/file/d/15u-jP9hQi1-UoiiEtZdddfcQwWuDU1Ej/view?usp=sharing New Indicators would need stakeholder input and Board approval, but the EPCU suggests the following Targets:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1)% of survey respondents who answer YES to knowing how to minimizing impact by EOP increases to 75%. 2)Average number IAS listed by respondents increases to 5 out of 20 priority IAS plants and 20 priority IAS animals. 3)% incorrectly identifying native species as IAS declines to less than 25%. <p>Partners agree with suggested revised targets, although some concern that 75% is too high. 5 Priority animals is the right number – represents Palau's top 5 species.</p> <p>In terms of action, the Project has collated information on invasive species and begun communicating it to the public and to partners. Project partners (PCS) are also improving IAS awareness and technical skills among PAN Rangers. In terms of Sustainable Tourism, a framework for a Sustainable Tourism Certification program was developed, but it has not yet been reviewed. See: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GqAwyhpYPBpad1XofxnftZnXyFFfinURGOom5PsNG2Q/edit</p>	MS	<p>Communication and monitoring has been very thorough.</p> <p>There is still a need for the strong generation of KM based on robust technical data and advice/consulting.</p> <p>Resistance to gender mainstreaming issues by many key stakeholders</p>
Indicator 16: Percentage of fifth-grade students received updated "ridge to reef" curriculum, including IAS	Fifth-grade curriculum lacks emphasis on integrated landscape and seascape planning and threats of IAS	Curriculum updated to include biosecurity and IAS	Partners confirm educational activities are still planned. No change from baseline. This has not been addressed by project yet.		
Indicator 17: Number of best practices of sustainable land, coastal and marine resource use up-scaled by communities/households	Best practice and lessons from GEF 5 available, but currently resources do not exist for their implementation	At least 1 Best Practice per sector being implemented (total of 5: agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry, sustainable tourism)	<p>Partners validate – OK. This indicator is on track.</p> <p>18 Best Practices developed or advocated by the Project or GEF6 Partners, all being implemented in at least one location in each sector. Those being scaled up (to multiple locations):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 in Agriculture, • 3 in Forestry, and • 3 in Sustainable Tourism = 7. <p>See spreadsheet: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1aXiKJWpLeSyZUNQwAYIYcZ2LprgfC3pxk__5dexzFWc/edit?usp=sharing</p>		

ANNEX 12 EVALUATION REPORT CLEARANCE FORM

Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared by

UNDP Country Office M&E Analyst

Merewalesi Laveti

Name: _____

Signature: Merewalesi Laveti

Date: 31-Aug-2021

UNDP GEF RTA

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Date: 01-Sep-2021