



Independent
Evaluation
Office

United Nations Development Programme

INDEPENDENT SUBREGIONAL PROGRAMME EVALUATION PACIFIC COUNTRIES

COOK ISLANDS, FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA, FIJI,
KIRIBATI, MARSHALL ISLANDS, NAURU, NIUE, PALAU, SAMOA,
SOLOMON ISLANDS, TOKELAU, TONGA, TUVALU AND VANUATU



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responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT
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FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the second Independent Subregional Programme Evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Pacific, covering the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. This evaluation was carried out by the Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP, and covers the 2018-2022 programming period.

The Pacific is a very important region, home to diverse cultures and traditions. The international waters of the Pacific, estimated at around 16,690,832 km², provide over 30 percent of the global supply of tuna and constitute an important transport route connecting countries and continents. The Pacific waters and land provide vital ecosystem services, such as carbon sinks, and critical habitats for various species.


The Pacific is faced with adverse development challenges. Despite the region's limited contribution to global emissions, Pacific Island Countries are bearing the brunt of climate change, making development gains fragile and reversible. Border closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic have devastated Pacific economies, which have relied on international tourism and trade. The Pacific also faces unique governance challenges due to its small populations, and limited capacity and infrastructure. Despite these challenges, the people of the Pacific are known for their resilience and camaraderie within and outside of the Pacific community.

The evaluation found that UNDP contributed to sustainable development in the region, working on umbrella issues such as climate change, supporting high-level multilateral agreements related to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and specific niches such as fisheries. UNDP has worked well on climate change adaptation and mitigation, and was able to attract sizeable funding from vertical funds. However, it fell short of building coherence across its expansive portfolio. Considering the relatively small budget for its 'Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Development' outcome, UNDP was able to engage in relevant mechanisms such as financial services and digitalization to improve livelihoods in the Pacific. This was done through effective partnerships with other United Nations agencies.

UNDP work on governance has generally been positive. It is seen as a preferred partner by national governments to work on politically sensitive areas such as strengthening parliamentary processes and election management bodies. UNDP has mobilized resources and managed its programme well, and even as it was constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic it was able to respond with agility and flexibility. The comparative advantages of UNDP are its strength in mobilizing resources, in-country presence, and sizeable operations, making it an important development actor and a sought-after collaborator in the Pacific.

When developing its new multi-country programme in the Pacific, UNDP should continue working in its areas of strength while building a strategic narrative for its portfolio. This would ensure that all of its projects under its diverse themes work towards a common goal. UNDP should continue to take full advantage of the United Nations reform process to build on the recognized success of joint programmes with the United Nations country team. It should take advantage of the large youth dividend in the Pacific for economic programmes that contribute to peace and security. It should capitalize on its Small Island Developing States Offer, such as expanding its digitization portfolio to push an inclusive growth mandate and respond to the needs of youth. UNDP should continue to improve the integration of gender across all outcomes, especially in the governance workstream. Finally, UNDP should ensure that it shares lessons between the two Multi-Country Offices to achieve broader adoption of results within the 14 Pacific Island Countries.

In closing, I would like to thank the Governments of the Pacific Island Countries involved in the evaluation, national stakeholders and colleagues from the UNDP Multi-Country Offices in Fiji and Samoa, and the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific for their support throughout the evaluation. I hope that the findings, conclusions and recommendations contained in the report will strengthen the formulation of the next multi-country programme strategy, to achieve a more inclusive and sustainable development pathway that responds to the aspirations of the Pacific community.



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Access and benefit sharing
ADB	Asian Development Bank
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CROP	Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific
CSO	Civil society organization
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DIM	Direct implementation modality
DRM	Disaster risk management
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ECCU	Environment and Climate Change Unit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFA	Forum Fisheries Agency
GBV	Gender-based violence
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEWE	Gender equality and women's empowerment
GPRU	Governance and Poverty Reduction Unit
HDI	Human Development Index
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture and Development
IFI	International financial institution
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRRF	Integrated Results and Resources Framework
ISRPE	Independent Subregional Programme Evaluation
LDC	Least Developed Country
LiDAR	Light Detection and Ranging
LTA	Long-term agreement
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MCO	Multi-country office
MCPD	Multi Country Programme Document
MP	Member of Parliament
NAP	National Adaptation Plan

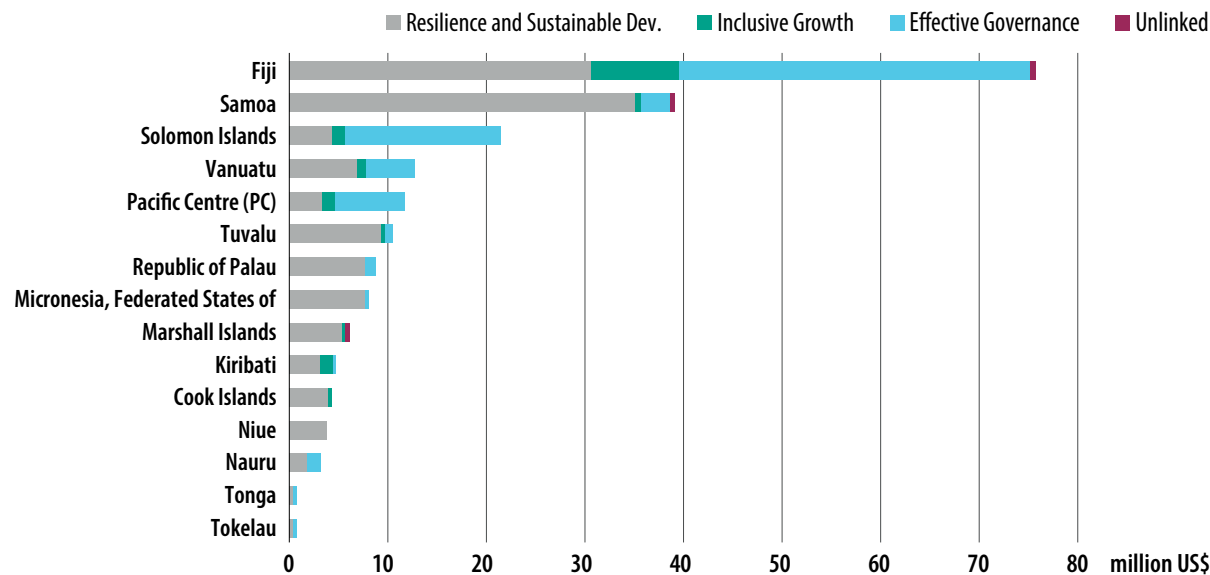
NDC	National Determined Contribution
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIM	National implementation modality
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PIC	Pacific Island Country
PICAP	Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Programme
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PFIP	Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme
PNA	Parties to the Nauru Agreement
ProPa	Protection in the Pacific network
R2R	Ridge to Reef
RBAP	Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific
RESPAC	Disaster Resilience for Pacific SIDS project
ROAR	Results-Oriented Annual Report
RSD	Resilience Sustainable Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small-island developing State
SPC	The Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SRP	UNDP Subregional Programme
SRPD	UNDP Subregional Programme Document
TSM	Temporary special measures
UNCAC	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNE	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN-PRAC	United Nations Pacific Regional Anticorruption Project
UNPS	United Nations Pacific Strategy
USP	University of the South Pacific
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization

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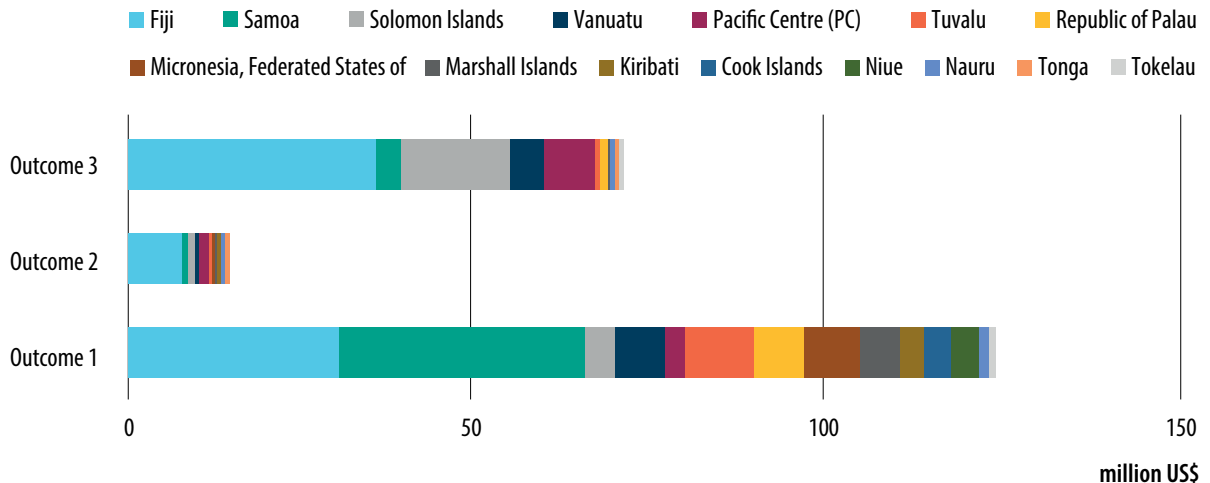
UNDP coverage in the Pacific subregion includes the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, with an estimated total population of 2.5 million people. The region, also referred to as Oceania, can be divided into three major groups: Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. Each country and territory is unique in terms of geography, population, land area, history, culture, economy, natural resource endowment and political systems. Pacific Island Countries (PICs) vary in terms of human development: five have a high human development index (HDI), three have a medium HDI and one has a low HDI.

PICs are some of the most aid-dependent countries globally when measured by aid inflows as a proportion of national income. The subregion is prone to the effects of climate change and natural disasters, which have increased in intensity and frequency over the last decade. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected the economy of the subregion, which is reliant on international remittances, tourism and trade. PICs face governance challenges including small populations, limited capacities, weak institutions, remoteness and infrastructure limitations.

UNDP has three main result areas in the subregion: Outcome 1 (Climate change, disaster resilience and environmental protection); Outcome 2 (Sustainable and inclusive economic empowerment); and Outcome 3 (Governance and community engagement). UNDP expenditure covered by the scope of this evaluation amounts to US\$ 208 million.



Distribution of expenditure among countries in the Pacific subregion, 2018-2020 programme expenditure



Distribution of expenditure across SRPD outcomes in the Pacific, 2018-2020 programme expenditure

Key Findings and Conclusions

The significant size of the UNDP Outcome 1 portfolio (climate change, disaster resilience and environmental protection) reflects its relevance, as it responds to the most pressing needs of the Pacific. Overall, UNDP has largely been effective and successful in delivering project-level results, but needs to move further to influence higher, outcome-level results. However, UNDP was not able to build a strong and strategic narrative for Outcome 1. Instead, though successful, projects were fragmented, and often siloed under several themes.

UNDP achieved notable results under Outcome 2 (sustainable and inclusive economic development), and has engaged in very successful partnerships with other United Nations agencies. Considering the relatively small budget for this outcome, UNDP has engaged in relevant mechanisms such as financial services and digitalization to improve people's livelihoods in the Pacific and effectively utilized joint programming to achieve results. However, UNDP failed to take full advantage of the high youth dividend in the Pacific.

UNDP had promising results in Outcome 3 (governance and community engagement), though with limited implementation in several PICs, especially those with a pressing need to elevate women in government decision-making roles.

UNDP remains an important development actor and a sought-after collaborator in the Pacific. Its comparative advantages are its strength in mobilizing resources, its in-country presence and sizeable operations. UNDP was agile and flexible in responding to COVID-19 in the Pacific. Its ability to negotiate repurposing and attract new funding during the height of the pandemic underscores the trust afforded to it by donors and PIC governments.

UNDP is continuously improving its gender programming. It has achieved significant gender results through joint programming, but there are still considerable opportunities to make its extensive portfolio more gender-responsive.

The usual UNDP model of building capacity at country level might not be applicable in the subregion due to limited human resources in PICs. While UNDP works with agencies from the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP) for project execution in most cases, stakeholders are pushing for more regional mechanisms involving CROP agencies, to improve capacity in the Pacific.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. In the areas of climate change, disaster risk reduction and the environment, UNDP should develop a strategic narrative for its portfolio, to ensure that all of its projects under its diverse themes are working towards a common goal. To move forward with coherence, UNDP could invest in two or three strategic areas, not only based on the existing portfolio, but on further identification of UNDP comparative strengths within them through systems thinking. This might include coastal adaptation, disaster risk reduction and climate finance.

Recommendation 2. In the inclusive growth and governance portfolio, UNDP should develop strategic areas of work and maintain and strengthen the partnerships it has helped to build. UNDP should take advantage of the large youth dividend in the Pacific for economic programmes that contribute to peace and security. UNDP should capitalize on its Small Island Developing States offer, such as expanding its digitization portfolio, and especially in developing policies for digitalization.

Recommendation 3. UNDP should focus its governance programmes in areas where it has a niche and can bring lessons learned and knowledge products from other small island States. The UNDP strength and niche in its governance programmes have been built through its institutional strengthening and capacity-building of national and local leaders.

Recommendation 4. UNDP should continue to improve the integration of gender across its future Subregional Programme Document outcomes, especially in the governance workstream. UNDP should ensure that it is using knowledge management to share lessons between the two multi-country offices and achieving broader adoption of results within the 14 PICs.

Recommendation 5. To ensure coherence across multi-country offices, there is a need for regular programme-level meetings between outcome teams and senior management. The role of the Regional Bureau in building coherence across the whole Pacific subregion should be clarified, given that it is in a position to see the bigger picture, future programming directions and the pipeline of projects (especially for vertical funds), and serves as liaison with the Regional Office.

Recommendation 6. As one of the largest development actors in the Pacific, UNDP should actively monitor the 'overcrowding' of small-value projects in the subregion, and should proactively seek solutions to lessen the factors contributing to this issue.

Recommendation 7. UNDP should ensure that its monitoring and evaluation resources are on par with the size of its portfolio. It should prioritize ensuring that management responses are tracked and there is continuous learning within the programme.

Recommendation 8. UNDP should reflect on and better define its models of capacity-development for the Pacific. A paradigm shift is needed, in which UNDP views Pacific regional organizations as a vehicle for capacity-development and an extension of the Pacific Island Country governments.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION



This chapter presents the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, as well as the methodology applied. It lays out the development context of the Pacific, before introducing the UNDP Subregional Programme (SRP).

1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted this Independent Subregional Programme Evaluation (ISRPE) to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP contributions to development results at the subregional level, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts to achieve development results. The evaluation covers all 14 countries under the UNDP Subregional Programme over the period 2018 to 2022. This ISRPE was carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.¹

1.2 Evaluation methodology

This ISRPE was conducted according to the approved IEO process for Independent Country Programme Evaluations, with adjustments to consider the number of countries comprised in the Pacific SRP. The evaluation focused on UNDP performance at the subregional level with due respect to the common and unique developmental needs of each of the 14 Pacific Island Countries (PICs) covered by the SRP. During the initial phase, analysis was conducted to identify all relevant stakeholders, including those that may not have worked with UNDP but played a key role in the outcomes to which UNDP has contributed.

The effectiveness of the UNDP subregional programme was analysed through an assessment of progress made towards the achievement of expected outputs and the extent to which these outputs contributed to the intended Subregional Programme Document (SRPD) outcomes. To better understand UNDP performance and the sustainability

BOX 1. Evaluation questions

1. What did the UNDP subregional programme intend to achieve during the period under review?
 2. To what extent is the strategy and programming of the UNDP Pacific programme responding to the complex nature of the region and evolving context?
 3. How is UNDP maintaining internal coherence across its programming? How is UNDP positioning itself in the Pacific vis a vis other United Nations entities and regional actors?
 4. To what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives? What factors contributed to, or hindered UNDP performance?
 5. To what extent has UNDP adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic and supported the Pacific region's preparedness, response and recovery process?
 6. To what extent is the UNDP programme and results responding to cross-cutting themes such as GEWE, social inclusion and climate change?
 7. To what extent is UNDP structure and governance in the Pacific fit for purpose? What contributed to the efficient delivery of its programmes and what can be improved?
 8. To what extent did the results of UNDP in the Pacific achieve broader adoption (mainstreaming, replication, sustainability, scaling, market change)?
-

¹ See <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>

of results in the subregion, the ISRPE examined the specific factors that have influenced the SRP, both positively and negatively. UNDP capacity to adapt to the changing context and respond to subregional and national development needs and priorities was considered.

The evaluation methodology adhered to United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards.² In line with UNDP gender mainstreaming strategy, the evaluation examined the level of gender mainstreaming across the subregional programme and operations. Sex-disaggregated data were collected, where available, and assessed against programme outcomes. The evaluation also took stock of the Gender Markers in the UNDP project databases to assist in assessing gender results.

The evaluation relied on information collected from different sources (as listed below) and then triangulated:

- A review of UNDP strategic and programme documents, project documents and monitoring reports, audits, evaluations,³ research papers and other available subregional and country-related publications. The main documents consulted by the evaluation team are listed in Annex 4, available online. Credible papers published by other development actors were also used to substantiate the work done by UNDP.
- Online interviews with 213 stakeholders, including UNDP staff, government representatives, United Nations country team representatives, development partners, civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector, academia and beneficiaries. The interviews were used to collect data and assess stakeholder perceptions of the scope and effectiveness of programme interventions, determine factors affecting performance and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the UNDP programme. A full list of interviewees is available in Annex 3 (online).
- A synthesis of 40 evaluation reports.⁴
- A review of available databases (Atlas, Small Grants Programme, Sustainable Development Goals partnerships, Joint Country Action Plan, World Bank, etc.) to collect secondary information.
- Case studies to dive deeper into themes, results, or issues identified. The criteria for selecting the case studies included programme coverage, ensuring a balanced representation of issues addressed under each outcome, project maturity, budget, implementation modality, geographical areas, 'flagship' projects, as well as those that have experienced challenges.

The draft ISRPE report was quality-assured by the IEO internal peer review mechanism and two IEO external reviewers, then submitted to the Fiji and Samoa multi-country offices (MCOs) and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP) for checking of factual errors and comments, and finally shared with the governments of the 14 PICs and other national partners.

Evaluation limitations

Due to restrictions in place for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the evaluation team had to conduct the evaluation remotely. Poor internet connectivity in most PICs was a limitation in conducting remote interviews. Some development partners and beneficiaries were based in outlying islands, in some cases with no internet connection. To mitigate these challenges, the methodology was adapted to rely on an extensive desk review of available material, and online consultations complemented by email exchanges with stakeholders.

² See United Nations Evaluation Group website: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

³ 40 decentralized evaluations were conducted in the period under consideration.

⁴ According to the Quality Assessment ratings, the evaluations were: Satisfactory (4); Marginally Satisfactory (26); Marginally Unsatisfactory (9); Unsatisfactory (1).

In addition, the evaluation team broadened the scope and depth of its secondary data review by including external reviews, assessments, evaluations and country progress reports to cross-reference the data and validate findings. However, this was a challenge as a full catalogue of background documentation, including monitoring data, was not always available for all projects and programmes, nor was this supplied to the team in a timely manner. The quality of these reports was also an issue, and they needed to be fully triangulated with other evidence. The time difference was also a challenge for the evaluation team, especially covering 14 Pacific Island time zones and with interviewees spread around the globe.

1.3 Subregional context

UNDP coverage in the Pacific⁵ subregion includes 14 countries and territories (refer to table 1),⁶ with an estimated total population of 2.5 million people. The region, also referred to as Oceania, can be divided into three major groups:⁷ Melanesia,⁸ Micronesia,⁹ and Polynesia.¹⁰ Each country and territory is unique in geography, population, land area, history, culture, economy, natural resource endowment and political system. Fiji is the most populous country, with about 849,961 residents, and Tokelau is the smallest with about 1,506 individuals. The atoll nation of Kiribati is one of the most remote and geographically dispersed in the world, spread over 3.5 million kilometres (km)² of ocean, an area larger than the entire Caribbean.¹¹ The islands are small, with limited natural resources, narrow-based economies, large distances from major markets and vulnerable to external shocks.

While most PICs and territories in the region are classified as middle-income countries,¹² Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu are categorized as Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Samoa graduated from the LDC category in 2014, Vanuatu in 2020 and the Solomon Islands is expected to graduate in 2024. Despite improvements in the economic status of some countries within the region, a quarter of Pacific islanders live below the 'basic needs' poverty line.¹³

PICs vary in human development (table 1). Of the nine PICs ranked in the Human Development Index (HDI): Palau (50), Fiji (93), Tonga (104) and Samoa (111) and the Marshall Islands (117) are in the high human development category; Kiribati (133), the Federated States of Micronesia (136) and Vanuatu (140) are in the medium human development category, while the Solomon Islands (151) is ranked in the low human development category.

⁵ The term Pacific is used synonymously with the 14 Pacific Island Countries under the UNDP SRPD unless stated otherwise.

⁶ According to the United Nations classification: Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu are United Nations Members; the Cook Islands, Niue are Non-UN Members/Associate Members of the Regional Commission and Tokelau is a non-self-governing territory: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/wesp_current/2014wesp_country_classification.pdf

⁷ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/regional-groups/>

⁸ Included in the evaluation: Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu. Not covered by the evaluation: New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea.

⁹ Included in the evaluation: Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau. Not covered by the evaluation: Guam, the Northern Marianas Islands, USA Minor Outlying Islands.

¹⁰ Included in the evaluation: the Cook Islands, Niue, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Tokelau, Samoa. Not covered by the evaluation: American Samoa, French Polynesia, the Pitcairn islands, Easter Island, Wallis and Fortuna and New Zealand.

¹¹ UNDP (2017) Subregional Programme Document for the Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

¹² According to the World Bank 2020 classification, Fiji, the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu are upper middle-income countries. Kiribati, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are lower middle-income countries. The Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau are unclassified.

¹³ United Nations (2019) A Quarter of Pacific Islanders Live Below 'Basic Needs Poverty Lines', Top United Nations Development Forum Hears.

PICs in this region are some of the most aid-dependent countries globally when measured by aid inflows as a proportion of national income.¹⁴ Total official development assistance (ODA) receipts in the last 10 years for 13 of the 14 countries is estimated at US\$ 9.7 billion. Inequality is also prevalent in the Pacific. The Gini coefficients of countries such as the Federated States of Micronesia, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Samoa are mid-level, globally. One of the driving forces of this inequality is high unemployment, estimated at 23 percent across the region.¹⁵

TABLE 1. Overview of Pacific Island Countries and Territories

Country/ Territory	Land Area (km ²) ^B	Pop. ^B	Pop. Growth ^A	2019 HDI index ^A	2019 HDI rank ^A	ODA 2010-19 (\$ million) ^C	ODA 2018-19 (\$ million) ^C	GDP Per capita (\$) ^B	ODA Per capita (\$) ^D	Gini Coefficient ^D	CRI ^E
Fiji MCO											
Fiji	18,333	894,961	0.7%	0.743	93	993	246	6,152	118.30	36.7	19
Kiribati	811	118,744	1.6%	0.63	133	597	135	1,636	544.10	ND	131
Marshall Islands	181	54,590	0.7%	0.704	117	633	121	4,337	1,057.90	ND	172
Micronesia	701	105,503	1.1%	0.62	136	1,071	192	3,830	967.98	40.1	40
Nauru	21	11,690	0.6%	ND	ND	295	91	11,666	2,764.01	ND	ND
Palau	444	17,930	0.5%	0.826	50	293	111	15,673	1,659.61	ND	ND
Tonga	749	99,780	1.1%	0.725	104	790	203	5,081	766.81	37.6	77
Tuvalu	26	10,580	1.2%	ND	ND	287	63	4,223	2,585.38	39.1	125
Vanuatu	12,281	294,688	2.4%	0.609	140	1,141	258	3,260	448.14	37.6	37
Solomon Islands	28,230	712,071	2.5%	0.567	151	2,182	414	2,295	414.45	37.1	71
Samoa MCO											
Cook Islands	237	15,281	0.43%	ND	ND	218	62	24,913	1,423.34*	ND	ND
Niue	259	1,562	-1.33%	ND	ND	166	37	18,757	10,630.60*	ND	ND
Samoa	2,934	198,646	0.7%	0.715	111	1,046	249	4,284	557.26	38.7	70
Tokelau	12	1,506	0.20%	ND	ND	ND	ND	6,882	ND	ND	ND

Sources: A -UNDP Human Development Report 2020; B-Pacific Community Statistics for Development Division; C-OECD QWIDS, 22 April 2021; D -World Bank data; E- Global Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2021/German watch

¹⁴ Percentage of gross national income as ODA: Tuvalu (55.8 percent), Nauru (31.2 percent), Federated States of Micronesia (24 percent), Tonga (20.1 percent), the Marshall Islands (19.2 percent), Samoa (15.2 percent), Kiribati (14.8 percent), Solomon Islands (14.2 percent), Vanuatu (13.8 percent). Source: World Development Indicators, 2019.

¹⁵ <https://www.ilo.org/suva/areas-of-work/youth-emp-policy/lang-en/index.htm>

Disaster risk reduction, environment and climate change

Despite the region's limited contribution to global emissions, climate change and natural disasters affect almost every facet of society and the economy, making economic gains fragile and reversible. In 2018, volcanic eruptions on Ambae Island, Vanuatu, prompted the Government to order the long-term evacuation of the entire population; Category 5 Cyclone Gita became the most intense cyclone to hit Tonga on record; and Cyclone Liua was the first September cyclone to form in the Pacific in almost 70 years (the usual typhoon season is from November to April). In 2020, flash floods caused \$28.5 million of damage to infrastructure in Samoa. Several severe tropical cyclones and king tide disasters impacted Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga and Vanuatu. Recently, the 2022 explosion of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano cut off Tonga from the rest of the world and highlighted the fragility of island nations to natural calamities.

Multiple and compounding disasters in the Pacific have become a regular occurrence. The low elevation of many PICs makes them highly susceptible to rising sea levels. PICs such as Kiribati and Tuvalu have raised concerns about their capacity to sustain their populations into the future.¹⁶ The village of Vunidogoloa in Fiji has been recently abandoned because of climate change impacts,¹⁷ and the township of Taro, a provincial capital in the Solomon Islands, is relocating because of rising sea levels¹⁸. The problem is systemic and affects human societies and the environment. Shifts in temperature have increased invasive species. Biodiversity is also at risk from natural and man-made disasters. The degradation of natural resources further exacerbates climate change and natural disasters. Key drivers include population growth and migration (internal and external), poor coastal development and land-use planning, unplanned urban growth, and water and ecosystem degradation, including subsurface and coastal water pollution.¹⁹

Economy

Despite some initial protection from the health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic,²⁰ as many PICs were able to leverage their remoteness and close their borders, PIC economies were devastated by the pandemic, given their heavy reliance on international tourism and trade. For instance, Fiji, Vanuatu and Palau rely on tourism and the Solomon Islands on timber exports. The loss of tourism activity has caused a ripple effect, leading to unemployment and strains on government finances. There have also been supply chain disruptions, including in the fisheries industry, a significant sector in the region.²¹ PICs such as Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru and Tuvalu are highly dependent on tuna and fishing license revenues, and have greater exposure to global market dynamics.

Prior to the COVID-pandemic (2018-2019), the economic outlook of PICs was steady and positive, highly influenced by large economic partners such as Australia, New Zealand and the United States.²² PICs are heavily reliant on remittances, which made up 37 percent of Tonga's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018 and 2019, for example. In 2020, remittance flows in East Asia and the Pacific declined by 7.9 percent (around \$136 billion), although PICs were fortunately less affected, most staying within the ranges of their pre-pandemic remittance rates because of the strong diaspora and the lowering of barriers to remittance,

¹⁶ Lowy Institute (2020) Preparing for When Climate Change Drives People from their Homes.

¹⁷ McNamara and Combes (2015) Planning for Community Relocations Due to Climate Change in Fiji.

¹⁸ Coast Adapt (2017) Case study: Choiseul Bay Township Adaptation and Relocation program: https://coastadapt.com.au/sites/default/files/case_studies/CSS3_Relocation_in_the_Solomon_Islands.pdf

¹⁹ The World Bank (2017) Pacific Possible.

²⁰ In the last quarter of 2019, Samoa experienced a severe measles epidemic which also entailed curfews and the closure of some public services.

²¹ IMF (2020) Pacific Island Threatened by COVID-19.

²² Pacific Economic Monitor (July 2018): <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/434731/pem-july-2018.pdf>

such as high fees. Regional GDP growth, which was low before the pandemic, contracted by 5.8 percent in 2020, to recover and contract by -0.6 percent in 2021, and is predicted to rebound by 4.7 percent in 2022, contingent on vaccinations and the lifting of travel restrictions.²³

Governance

PICs struggle with the structural constraints of being isolated and scattered, drastically affecting their governance structures (refer to the section below on ‘The United Nations and regional organizations in the Pacific’). These governance challenges are compounded by the PICs’ small populations, very limited capacities, weak institutions, remoteness and infrastructure limitations and the threat of climate change and regular natural disasters. This has contributed to poor education outcomes and lack of employment opportunities. Other challenges in the Pacific include slow economic growth, reliance on donor funding and remittances, food insecurity, the high costs of doing business, political instability, and healthcare and other structural and cultural barriers. In addition to these challenges, marginalized groups within the population such as women, youth and persons with disabilities are disproportionately challenged and, in some PICs, side-lined from decision-making.

Most PICs have national and sectoral plans, but these are generally not well resourced or implemented.²⁴ Five PICs were included in the World Bank’s 2022 fragility listing: Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.²⁵ The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to strengthen social protection systems, especially in a very dispersed population, with narrow forms of livelihoods. Several events in 2021 underscored the governance challenges in the Pacific, including riots in the Solomon Islands and the averted constitutional crisis in Samoa.

Gender

While there are cultural differences in women’s standing and variations in gender inequality across Pacific islands, most PICs are characterized by low participation of women in parliament,²⁶ attitudinal and structural barriers to equal participation in decision-making, and obstacles in access to justice, inheritance and ownership. The Pacific is one of the regions with the lowest number of women Members of Parliament (MPs) in the world. Only 48 (11 percent) of the 449 seats in the 14 PICs covered by the SRP are held by women. This is less than half the global average of 24.4 percent women MPs. Vanuatu does not have a single woman MP, and Kiribati, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands and the Solomon Islands have under 7 percent women MPs. Overall, there has been a slow rise in the percentage of women MPs taking office in the Pacific, from 7.9 percent in 2018, to 8.6 percent as of May 2021.²⁷

Women and girls in this region experience some of the highest rates of gender-based violence (GBV) in the world.²⁸ Women and youth also face higher unemployment rates, and are more likely to be employed in the informal sector. The population in the region is exceptionally young, with half of the population under 23 years of age. Skills development and employment remain a challenge because of low educational attainment. Most PICs possess small, slow-growing economies, which are not creating enough jobs to keep pace with population growth.²⁹

²³ ADB (2021) Pacific Economic Monitor.

²⁴ UNDP (2017) Subregional Programme Document for the Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

²⁵ Also classified under “High Institutional and Social Fragility.”

²⁶ Percentage of seats held by women: Palau (13.8), Fiji (19.6), Tonga (7.4), Samoa (10), the Marshall Islands (6.1), Kiribati (6.5) and the Solomon Islands (4.1). Source: UNDP Gender Inequality Index, 2020.

²⁷ <https://pacificwomen.org/our-work/focus-areas/leadership-decision-making/>

²⁸ Pacific Community (2017) Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Pacific.

²⁹ Lowy institute (2020) Demanding the Future: Navigating the Pacific’s Youth Bulge.

The United Nations and regional organizations in the Pacific

The Pacific is a microcosm, with diverse intergovernmental organizations, including 26 United Nations entities with varying degrees of presence, signatories to the United Nations Pacific Strategy (UNPS) and members of the Pacific Joint United Nations country team. Until recently, two United Nations Resident Coordinators, one based in Fiji and another in Samoa, oversaw UNPS implementation and ensured the close collaboration of United Nations entities. Following the recommendation of the 2019 United Nations MCO Review, a third Resident Coordinator for the North Pacific was appointed in 2021, based in the Federated States of Micronesia.

The Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP) was formed in 1988 as a coordination mechanism for leaders of Pacific regional organizations. It is a high-level advisory body for policy formulation at the national, regional and international levels. Nine regional and international organizations make up this regional body (see box 2).

BOX 2. Members of CROP

- **Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS)**, 1971, with headquarters in Fiji and 18 member PICs. It aims to achieve regionalism towards sustainable development, economic growth, good governance and security.
 - **Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)**, 1979, with headquarters in the Solomon Islands. 17 member PICs. Seeks to collectively manage, control and develop their fish stock, focusing on tuna fisheries.
 - **Pacific Aviation Safety Office**, 2005, with headquarters in Vanuatu, 13 member PICs. Oversees aviation safety and security in the Pacific islands.
 - **Pacific Islands Development Programme**, 1980, with headquarters in the USA, the Programme implements diverse activities to promote sustainability in the Pacific.
 - **Pacific Power Association**, 1992, with headquarters in Fiji. 25 electric utility companies are operating in 22 PICs, with 110 Allied Members worldwide. Has interest in the development and operation of power in the Pacific.
 - **The Pacific Community (SPC)**, 1947, with main offices in New Caledonia and Fiji. 26 member PICs. The principal scientific and technical organization in the Pacific region.
 - **Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)**, 1993, with headquarters in Samoa, 26 members. It is mandated to protect and improve the environment and to ensure sustainable development.
 - **Pacific Tourism Organization**, 1983, with headquarters in Fiji, 21 member states and 145 private members. It tackles tourism themes such as strategic management of the sector, governance and advocacy.
 - **The University of the South Pacific (USP)** 1968, 14 campuses and 11 centres across the Pacific. It is co-owned by 12 PICs, and is the leading provider of tertiary education in the Pacific.
-

1.4 UNDP subregional programme under review

UNDP has been working in the Pacific since 1971, when the first Pacific office opened in Fiji.³⁰ Currently, UNDP has two MCOs in the Pacific: Fiji MCO and Samoa MCO, each led by a Resident Representative.³¹ The Fiji MCO office covers Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The Samoa MCO oversees UNDP programming in the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau. The Solomon Islands has a sub-office under the Fiji MCO, with a Deputy Resident Representative since 2007 (refer to Annex 1 – figure 6 Organigram of UNDP Pacific Subregional Programme). Stemming from a recommendation of the 2019 United Nations MCO Review, in 2021, UNDP established a North Pacific sub-office led by a Deputy Resident Representative. A United Nations Resident Coordinator has taken up office in the North Pacific MCO, focusing on the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, the Marshall Islands, Nauru and Kiribati.

The current UNPS for 2018 to 2022 covers 14 countries and territories, has six outcome areas and 38 indicators for monitoring. The six UNPS outcomes are: (1) Climate change, Disaster resilience and environmental protection; (2) Gender equality; (3) Sustainable and inclusive economic empowerment; (4) Equitable basic services; (5) Governance and community engagement; and (6) Human rights. The UNPS has been localized in each PIC through an individual Joint Country Action Plan.

The current UNDP Pacific SRPD (2018-2022) is derived from the UNPS, based on its comparative strengths. Each country and territory also has a standalone Standard Basic Assistance Agreement, which is the localization of the SRPD. The Pacific SRPD aimed to deliver a coherent regional programme through the two MCOs, and has three primary outcomes listed below (refer to sections 2.1., 2.2. and 2.3 for the detailed outputs of each of the outcomes, and Annex 6 for details on the SRPD results framework).

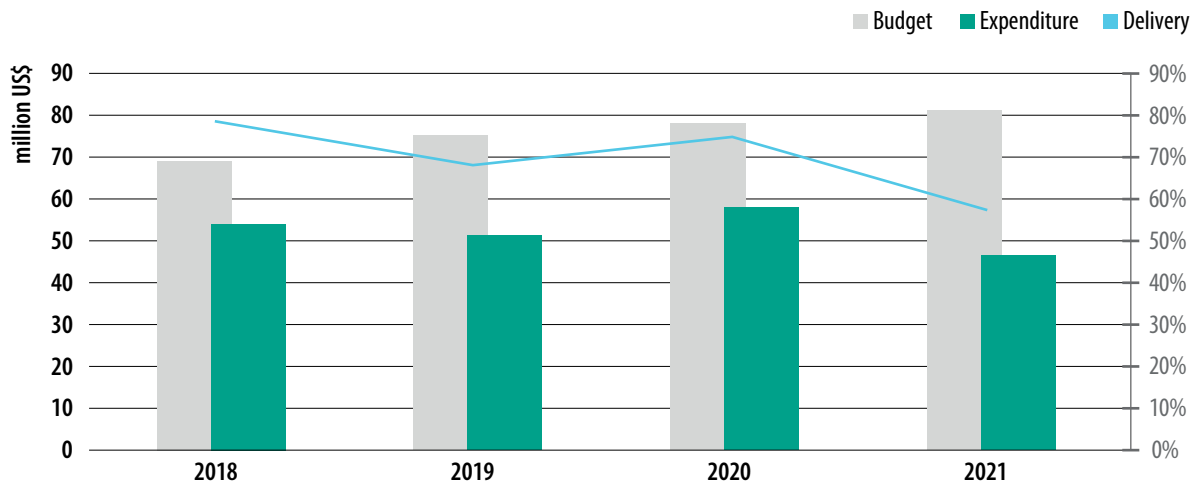
- 1. UNDP SRPD Outcome 1 (Climate change, disaster resilience and environmental protection)** has the largest share of overall expenditure at about \$124 million or 59 percent of total Pacific spending. Samoa has the largest Outcome 1 expenditure at \$35 million, followed by Fiji with \$30 million. The remaining PICs have expenditure of between \$1 million and \$9 million, and all PICs have Outcome 1 expenditure of about 40 to 90 percent (as a ratio of their total country expenditure) except for the Solomon Islands.
- 2. UNDP SRPD Outcome 2 (Sustainable and inclusive economic empowerment)** has the lowest spending, with about \$14 million or 7 percent of total UNDP expenditure in the Pacific. Fiji has the most significant expenditure of \$8 million, and the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have about \$1 million each. In comparison, the rest of the PICs all spent between \$3,000 to \$900,000, with Kiribati, Tonga and Fiji dedicating 11-23 percent of their overall expenditure to Outcome 2. All other PICs have low Outcome 2 expenditure as a ratio of their overall country expenditure (below 10 percent) and Niue and Tokelau had none.
- 3. UNDP SRPD Outcome 3 (Governance and community engagement)** has the second-largest expenditure, of about \$70 million or 34 percent of the total Pacific expenditure. The PICs with the most considerable Outcome 3 expenditure are Fiji (\$35 million), the Solomon Islands (\$16 million), Vanuatu (\$5 million), Samoa (\$3.2 million) and Nauru (\$1.1 million). The Solomon Islands has a considerable governance programme, with 75 percent of its total spending dedicated to Outcome 3. The rest of the PICs have Outcome 3 expenditure below \$1 million.

³⁰ There is a country office in Papua New Guinea (not covered by the Pacific SRPD).

³¹ There are four Deputy Resident Representatives in the Pacific, one each for Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa and the Solomon Islands. Previously, the Pacific Centre (created in 2005), was part of the UNDP regional structure in Asia and the Pacific and provided technical support to the two MCOs and the Papua New Guinea country office. The Pacific Centre closed in 2016 with some responsibilities absorbed by Fiji MCO.

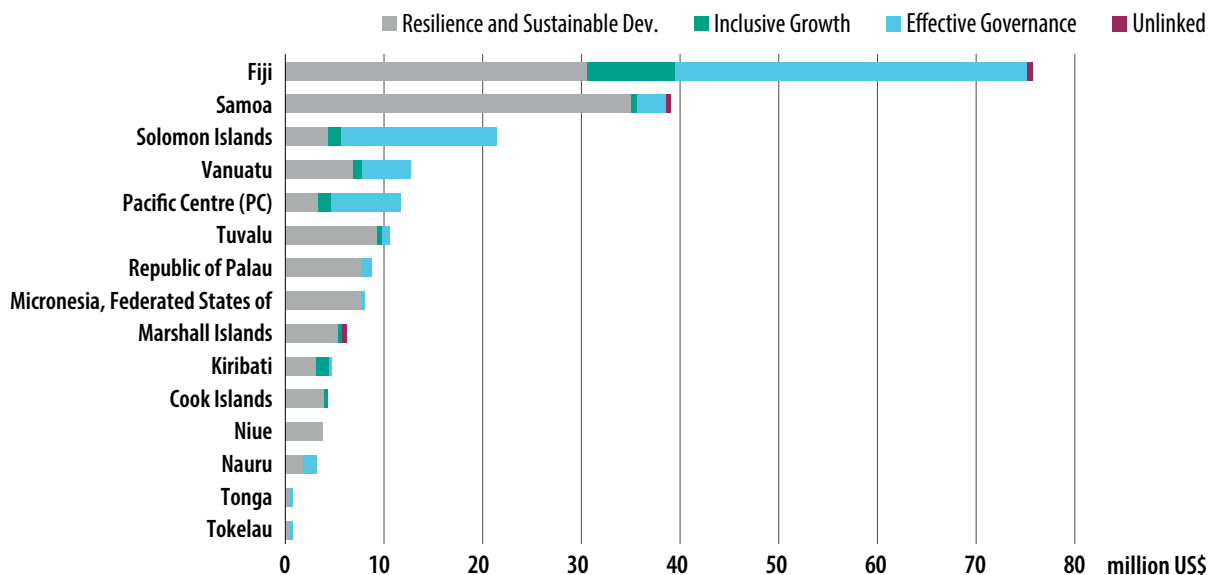
Using the total budget of the two Pacific MCOs in 2018 as a baseline, the UNDP Pacific budget shows an increase of 9 percent in 2019, 12 percent in 2020 and 17 percent in 2021. Comparing expenditure against the year-on-year budget, the overall financial delivery rate has been erratic, at 78 percent in 2018, 68 percent in 2019, 75 percent in 2020 and 57 percent in 2021 (figure 1). Among the 14 PICs, Fiji has the largest expenditure with \$75 million (figure 2). However, it should be noted that some regional projects are tagged to Fiji in the UNDP financial system for accounting purposes. Samoa has the second-largest expenditure at \$38 million, followed by the Solomon Islands with \$21 million. Tonga and Tokelau have the least expenditure with \$705,000 and \$411,000 respectively.

FIGURE 1. Evolution of programme budget and expenditure, 2018-2019



Source: United Nations financial system (Atlas) as of January 2022

FIGURE 2. Distribution of expenditure among countries in the Pacific, 2018-2020 programme expenditure



Source: United Nations financial system (Atlas) as of January 2022

CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS



This chapter presents the results of the outcome analysis and an assessment of cross-cutting issues. The main factors that influenced UNDP performance and contributions to results are also described in this section. The assessment was based on analysing the correlation between project results, their contribution to the expected outputs under each outcome and consequently to the overall outcome objectives.

2.1 Climate change, disaster resilience and environmental protection

SRPD Outcome 1. By 2022, people and ecosystems in the Pacific are more resilient to the impacts of climate change, climate variability and disasters; and environmental protection is strengthened.

Related outputs:

OUTPUT 1.1. Scaled-up action on climate change adaptation and mitigation across sectors which is funded and implemented.

OUTPUT 1.2. Effective risk-informed development plans, disaster preparedness and recovery mechanisms in place at the national sector and subnational levels.

OUTPUT 1.3. Solutions developed at national and subnational levels for sustainable management of natural resources ecosystem services and waste.

Outcome 1. Climate change, disaster resilience and environmental protection. This outcome supports PICs to strengthen their legal and institutional frameworks for environmentally sustainable development. Outcome 1 tackles both climate change adaptation and mitigation. Activities include: supporting the participation of Pacific islanders in global fora, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and assisting the preparation of National Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). Innovative climate finance work includes mobilizing and managing financial resources from government, international donors, international financial institutions (IFIs) and the private sector to address climate change issues.

The outcome also focuses on resilience to disasters using a humanitarian-development nexus approach. This includes: working at national and local levels to assist in developing risk-informed, gender-sensitive development plans; strengthening coordination across government agencies and communities; and promoting blue³² and green³³ economies through poverty reduction,³⁴ sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience initiatives. These are tackled by integrating the sound management of land, water, forest,

³² Blue economy includes "...the necessity of protecting – and restoring where needed – the existing ocean resource base." Also... "blue economy included "opportunities may exist for enhanced or new sustainable economic activity derived from the ocean. Progress and prospects for ocean-related energy, such as offshore wind and tidal energy, appear promising. Opportunities also exist to 'monetize' the value of highly effective coastal carbon stocks such as mangroves and seagrasses into carbon finance markets, or blue carbon." <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2018/blue-economy-sustainable-ocean-economic-paradigm.html>

³³ "One that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities" (2010). <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/environment-energy/www-ee-library/mainstreaming/Green%20Economy%20in%20Action/Green%20Economy%20Compilation%20Report.pdf>

³⁴ Discussed under Outcome 2.

biodiversity and coastal resources. Approaches include Ridge to Reef (R2R) initiatives, people-centred design, drone mapping, community-based conservation in protected areas, and financing for biodiversity and ecosystems.

Outcome 1 was the largest programme area in the whole Pacific programme and comprised 108 projects, implemented by all 14 PICs. The outcome had a total budget of \$182.3 million, total expenditure of \$124 million and an overall delivery rate of 68 percent.³⁵ Table 2 groups the countries in terms of population, above and below 20,000 individuals.³⁶ The average delivery rate for Group 1 (61.2 percent) was lower than that of Group 2 (68.8 percent). Eight PICs fell below the overall average Outcome 1 delivery rate. Of these, six are managed by Fiji MCO (the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Palau, Niue and Tonga) and two by Samoa MCO (the Cook Islands and Tokelau). The evaluation characterized the outcome into six distinct themes to assess the results, including: climate change, biodiversity, disaster risk reduction, COVID-19 and energy.

TABLE 2. Total budget, expenditure and delivery rate of Outcome 1 against 14 PICs grouped by population size

GROUP 1: Population above 20,000

Country/Territory	Total budget (US\$)	Total Expenditure (US\$)	Percent delivery
Samoa	\$48,259,160.17	\$35,157,175.37	72.9%
Fiji	\$44,281,891.57	\$30,629,454.46	69.2%
Micronesia (Federated States of)	\$12,348,242.68	\$7,747,947.73	62.7%
Vanuatu	\$9,919,293.64	\$6,784,982.51	68.4%
Marshall Islands	\$9,469,053.85	\$5,582,331.99	59.0%
Kiribati	\$6,532,029.07	\$3,297,851.40	50.5%
Solomon Islands	\$5,711,743.91	\$4,389,365.54	76.8%
Tonga	\$1,180,334.07	\$354,066.27	30.0%
Average	\$17,212,718.62	\$11,742,896.91	61.2%

GROUP 2: Population below 20,000

Country/Territory	Total budget (US\$)	Total Expenditure (US\$)	Percent delivery
Palau	\$13,856,655.56	\$7,782,086.34	56.2%
Tuvalu	\$12,994,165.62	\$ 9,236,720.53	71.1%
Niue	\$6,896,430.89	\$ 3,746,059.92	54.3%
Cook Islands	\$4,568,350.31	\$4,032,537.05	88.3%
Nauru	\$2,046,019.94	\$ 1,705,152.64	83.3%
Tokelau	\$564,120.25	\$337,099.33	59.8%
Average	\$6,820,957.10	\$4,473,275.97	68.8%
Pacific Centre	\$3,617,211.04	\$3,252,634.88	89.9%

Overall outcome 1 delivery rate = 68%

Source: Atlas (as of January 2022, calculations by the evaluations team)

³⁵ January 2018-December 2021.

³⁶ This was done to contrast the relatively larger and smaller PICs, which have largely different capacity and human resources.

Outcome 1 and its indicators are high-level, and there is a lack of data to measure the UNDP contribution. Regarding outcome indicator 1.1. “Reduction of direct disaster economic loss in relation to GDP”,³⁷ the overall target was eight PICs, and Fiji and Samoa MCOs both reported zero countries achieving this.³⁸ However, the MCOs claim that investments toward this outcome were achieved, based on several ROARs.

For outcome indicator 1.2. “Partial implementation of NDCs and NAPs in PICs”,³⁹ the overall target was eight PICs. Fiji MCO reported supporting the NDCs and NAPs of 10 PICs in varying levels of implementation and Samoa MCO supported one. Though the assistance of UNDP on the implementation of NDCs and NAPs varied, it was clear that UNDP contributed to the formulation of the NDCs and NAPs of several countries (discussed in finding 1 on climate change and environment).

Outcome indicator 1.3. “Increase of protected terrestrial and marine areas in PICs”⁴⁰ with a target of 10 PICs, has the most explicit line of contribution from UNDP (discussed in finding 3 on integrated resource management). The findings below elaborate on the results assessed by the evaluation to contribute to Outcome 1.

Finding 1. Climate change, multilateral environmental agreements, fisheries and energy. UNDP remained relevant in the areas of climate change, environmental protection and disaster risk management (DRM) by implementing a broad programme. Overall, it has achieved most of its project-level goals. The breadth of its programming encompassed support to umbrella themes such as climate change, multilateral environmental agreements and specific niches such as energy and fisheries. The climate change portfolio was most successful tackling ground-level activities, national-level policies and strategies, and international agreements.

Climate Change

Based on the aggregation of project evaluation findings and interviews, there has been general appreciation of UNDP climate change adaptation initiatives at the community level:

- In **Vanuatu**, UNDP installed automated weather stations, improved climate-proofing of vital community infrastructure and rehabilitated and restored threatened coastal ecosystems, activities which were highly praised by participating communities.⁴¹
- In **Samoa**, through an Adaptation Fund project, UNDP focused on community engagement to enable a coastal vulnerability assessment, adaptation planning, awareness and institutional strengthening. The project involved various government ministries, 25 districts and 139 villages in Savaii and Upolu islands. The project undertook climate-proofing measures such as shoreline and watershed protection and rehabilitation. It strengthened the institutional capacity of government sectors to integrate climate and disaster risk and resilience into coastal management-related policy frameworks.⁴²
- In **Kiribati**, UNDP sought to contribute to the long-term solution of ensuring food security within the context of global climate change. Early successes included the establishment of mini hatcheries on three pilot islands, the capacity-development of communities related to food preparation and preservation, and marine surveys and monitoring.⁴³

³⁷ Actual SRPD wording: “Number of PICTs whose direct disaster economic loss in relation to regional GDP, including damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services has reduced based on the latest available data”.

³⁸ Data in the corporate reporting platform mentioned one country (Samoa) has achieved indicator 1.1 in 2019, but the MCO confirmed that this was an error in inputting data for Samoa MCO.

³⁹ Actual SRPD wording: “Number of PICTs with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and National Adaptation Plans (NAP) under the UNFCCC at least partially implemented”.

⁴⁰ Actual SRPD wording: “Number of PICTs with increased coverage of terrestrial and marine areas that are protected.”

⁴¹ Terminal evaluation of the “Adaptation to climate change in the coastal zone of Vanuatu” project.

⁴² UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the “Enhancing the resilience of coastal communities in Samoa” project.

⁴³ UNDP. Midterm evaluation of the “Enhancing national food security in the context of global climate change” project.

There are good examples of UNDP contributions to government strategies and policies related to climate change. UNDP supported the development and implementation of NAPs in various stages in several countries:

- UNDP supported the development of the Climate Change Strategy in **Samoa**, a roadmap for implementing the NAP.⁴⁴
- The NAP project in **Tuvalu** contributed to the greater resilience of marine-based coastal livelihoods, and developed the capacity of island communities to respond to climate-induced hydro-meteorological risks.⁴⁵
- In **Kiribati** and **Fiji**, UNDP partially implemented the NAP through the Kiribati LDCF project and the Fiji R2R project.⁴⁶
- In the **Cook Islands**, climate risk management was integrated into relevant national policy frameworks such as the National Sustainability Plan. UNDP helped to establish basic DRM, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation management structures at grassroots level. It also enabled a basic understanding of hazards, risk and suitable adaptation measures amongst target government agencies, enterprises, island governments/ councils, *aronga mana* (traditional tribal council) and communities. Small grants from UNDP enabled the 11 *Pa Enua* (outer islands) and their communities to implement climate change adaptation and DRR activities.⁴⁷

In terms of building capacity, UNDP worked with the governments of **Fiji**, the **Solomon Islands**, **Tonga** and **Vanuatu** to create resilient development posts, funded by Australia and Sweden. While UNDP initially bore the cost of the resilient development officers, in most cases the positions were eventually taken up and fully funded by the Government or other partners. UNDP also helped to create a network – Protection in the Pacific (ProPa) – an intergovernmental body that promotes gender quality and protection issues by ensuring that development is risk-informed, inclusive and equitable.

Gender-related results include: i) incorporating gender and social inclusion into project proposals and risk-screening tools in Fiji and Vanuatu; ii) ensuring that sex-disaggregated data informs development planning; iii) securing women’s participation and voice in community development planning and agricultural ‘knowledge hubs’; and iv) investing in gender and social inclusion capacity by creating new posts in the Ministries of Women of Fiji and Vanuatu.⁴⁸

Some of the climate change adaptation activities delivered unintended positive results, such as data generation. Early achievements from a Green Climate Fund (GCF) project in **Tuvalu** include sea-level analysis, regional wave climate modelling, and a remote-sensing Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) survey.⁴⁹ Results from these analyses have been a significant step forward in providing a comprehensive assessment of land heights across all the islands of Tuvalu. Results of the LiDAR were shared with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to support preparatory work on Tuvalu ports.⁵⁰ Similarly, in the **Solomon Islands**, UNDP improved early warning systems, water security and resilience to climate change through diversified water supply options,

⁴⁴ UNDP Samoa MCO (2019) ROAR.

⁴⁵ UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the “National adaptation plan of action” project.

⁴⁶ UNDP Fiji MCO (2019) ROAR.

⁴⁷ UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the “Strengthening the resilience of our islands and our communities to climate change” project.

⁴⁸ UNDP Fiji (2019) ROAR. Interviews with donor, UNDP. Midterm evaluation of the “Pacific Risk Resilience” Programme.

⁴⁹ The \$36 million GCF project aims to put in place coastal protection measures, to strengthen the capacity to identify, plan for and execute locally relevant adaptation actions.

⁵⁰ UNDP. Midterm evaluation of the “Tuvalu Coastal Adaptation” project.

including rainwater tanks, improved groundwater supply and rehabilitated wells. During the 2017 eruption of Tinakula Volcano in Temotu Province, the project's groundwater desalination plant at Tuwo village ensured water security for several neighbouring islands where water supplies had volcanic ash contamination.⁵¹

Multilateral Environmental Agreements

UNDP supported several projects in **Fiji** that aimed to mainstream multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, through training on reporting and monitoring. UNDP also supported the production of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, NDC, NAP and the Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Implementation Framework.⁵² A project on ABS under the Nagoya Protocol resulted in knowledge and technology transfer, and a laboratory was established to undertake marine bioprospecting. As part of the project, participants were trained on complex scientific research concepts and skills.⁵³

In **Palau**, UNDP undertook an inventory of environmental databases and protocols for data sharing and reporting.⁵⁴ This played an essential role in developing Palau's Voluntary National Report of progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In **Vanuatu**, support was given for developing the Geospatial and Oceans Policies and provided training in field data collection tools and open-source software for data analysis. These contributed to the strengthening of the country's environmental data management system.⁵⁵

In support of multilateral environmental agreements related to climate change, UNDP provided resources and technical capacity to several PICs to meet their National Communications and Biennial Update Report obligations to UNFCCC.⁵⁶ Of the 14 PICs, four have submitted their third National Communications Report with the assistance of UNDP.⁵⁷

In **Vanuatu**, UNDP helped to develop tailored Material Requirements Planning software, a cloud data tool to collect emissions data from various stakeholders trained in entering the data. While stakeholder interviews suggested that UNDP support was appreciated, documentation on its exact nature was lacking.

In **Fiji**, UNDP supported the Ministry of Economy to begin Climate Budget Tagging, enabling the integration of climate change, disaster, gender and social inclusion dimensions into the Financial Management Information System and Chart of Accounts of its entire national budget.⁵⁸

In partnership with the Pacific Regional National Determined Contribution Hub,⁵⁹ UNDP contributed to activities to enhance NDCs in five of the UNDP Climate Promise countries.⁶⁰

⁵¹ UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the "Solomon Islands Water Sector Adaptation" project. The project has supported some improvements in governance relating to sanitation and water resources security and resilience, although the project's impact in improving water governance at the broader provincial and national levels was not as significant as envisioned.

⁵² UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the "Fiji capacity building for mainstreaming MEAs" project.

⁵³ UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the "Discovering nature-based products and building capacities for the application of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and ABS in Fiji.

⁵⁴ UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the "Palau Global Environmental Priorities" project.

⁵⁵ UNDP Terminal evaluation of the "Mainstreaming Global Environmental Priorities into National Policies and Programmes".

⁵⁶ The National Communication and Biennial Update Reports help to measure the effectiveness of the Convention, highlight issues, problems, gaps and constraints faced by non-Annex I Parties and provide information that guides GEF in providing financial resources towards meeting the implementation costs of the Convention.

⁵⁷ The Cook Islands, Fiji, Tonga and Tuvalu.

⁵⁸ UNDP Fiji (2019) ROAR.

⁵⁹ Launched at the 23rd Conference of Parties (COP23), the mission of the Hub is to enable a sustainable, low-carbon and climate resilient Pacific through the full implementation of the NDC. <https://pacificndc.org/>

⁶⁰ UNDP Fiji (2020) ROAR. Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Tonga and Vanuatu as well as others Fiji and FSM.

Fisheries

Through its long-term collaboration with the FFA, UNDP assisted in mainstreaming the ecosystem-based fisheries management approach at regional, subregional and national levels for the sustainable management of migratory tuna stocks.⁶¹ UNDP supported the implementation of improved management practices, including the wider operationalization of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) Vessel Day Scheme, and a more extensive application of Vessel Monitoring Systems and seasonal Fish Aggregation Device closure.⁶² New and updated management measures were adopted for the conservation of non-target species, including sharks, rays, seabirds and sea turtles. Additionally, UNDP was able to increase the knowledge base of stakeholders on the impacts of climate change on Western and Central Pacific Ocean fisheries.⁶³ In **Kiribati**, UNDP supported the National Fisheries Regulation, which aims to conserve fishery resources by banning destructive fishing methods and stipulating closed seasons for certain species.⁶⁴

Energy

The energy portfolio of UNDP in the Pacific is relatively small, but shows considerable potential. Challenges to this portfolio include restructuring, which left a vacuum on the portfolio, and high staff turnover. Nonetheless, UNDP work in **Samoa** showed a potential model to diversify energy in the Pacific. With support from UNDP, the Government of Samoa launched the first biomass gasification power plant in the Pacific. The plant uses biomass from invasive species to generate electricity that contributes 4 percent to the country's energy mix at the current level. Factors contributing to success include: (1) firm commitment from the Government; (2) alignment with the interests of other development partners such as the European Union and the German development agency, who provided additional support to the plant; and (3) proper selection of a technology provider (Ankur, India), who delivered a biogasification technology suitable to the Samoan environment.⁶⁵

This example illustrates UNDP capacity-development work across the individual, institutional and enabling environment dimensions. Additional examples include:

- in **Vanuatu**, the UNDP 'BRANTV' project held a training-of-trainers workshop for solar photovoltaic technicians to address a key barrier to renewable energy - the maintenance of renewable energy systems in rural and remote areas.
- In **Nauru**, UNDP helped establish the Energy Division, including two full-time staff positions, and supported the development of power utility regulations and technical standards and the Nauru Energy Roadmap.
- UNDP assisted **Fiji** to establish a Centralized Information Forum enabling the public access to energy information targeting potential investors.⁶⁶

⁶¹ UNDP has had a longstanding, multi-phase project on regional and oceanic fisheries with Pacific Islands FFA, the "Pacific islands oceanic fisheries management phase 1" project. The project covers 14 countries. The first phase of this project concluded in 2011. The second phase covers 2015-2021 and a third phase is being planned.

⁶² PNA controls the world's largest sustainable tuna purse seine fishery. PNA Members are Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu plus Tokelau. The PNA Vessel Day Scheme has been recognized as innovative mechanism that enables SIDS to monetize the resources that they cannot maximize due to economic limitations, the scheme applies levies to fishing boats from other countries <https://www.pnatuna.com/>

⁶³ UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the "Global and Regional Oceanic Fisheries" projects. Interviews.

⁶⁴ UNDP. Midterm evaluation of the "Enhancing national food security in the context of global climate change" project.

⁶⁵ UNDP. Midterm evaluation of the "Improving the performance and reliability of renewable power system in Samoa" project (IMPRESS); UNDP Samoa MCO (2020) ROAR.

⁶⁶ UNDP Fiji (2018, 2019) ROARs.

Finding 2. Disaster risk reduction. UNDP effectively supported disaster response and preparedness by using a mix of programming tools. These included South-South cooperation, mainstreaming through national and subnational strategies, leveraging resources from other projects and piloting micro-insurance.

Stakeholders interviewed gave positive feedback on UNDP leadership in the early recovery cluster and agility in responding to crises, especially its ability to leverage the resources of its partners. When Tropical Cyclone Gita impacted **Tonga** in February 2018, UNDP facilitated South-South cooperation as part of its response, arranging for technical support from the Directorate of the National Disaster Management Office of the Solomon Islands to Tonga. UNDP also sent an Early Recovery expert from the Fiji Ministry of Finance to Tonga to help develop the Tropical Cyclone Gita disaster recovery framework.⁶⁷

Progress was made towards mainstreaming climate and disaster risks in national and subnational strategies:

- In **Tuvalu**, through the ‘Tuvalu NAPA 2’ project, all subnational Island councils endorsed their Island Disaster Plans.
- In **Samoa**, the National Disaster Management Plan 2017-2020 was launched with various contributions from UNDP projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and GCF. Also in Samoa, UNDP developed a comprehensive Community Disaster and Climate Risk Management Programme.⁶⁸
- In the **Cook Islands**, UNDP provided technical assistance to the country’s preparedness planning. In addition, UNDP facilitated mechanisms to generate data and train people to use data for DRR. It conducted a Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, assisted in a draft disaster risk and climate change impact survey, disaster risk financing and early recovery training in four PICs.⁶⁹
- In the **Federated States of Micronesia**, UNDP undertook the rehabilitation of deep wells to improve emergency water management and conducted a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion workshop.⁷⁰

UNDP successfully leveraged multiple projects to aggregate support to strengthen preparedness and planning and develop tools to manage disaster recovery processes in several countries. An example is the GCF-funded ‘Vaisigano River catchment’ project, and the Russian-funded ‘Disaster Resilience for Pacific SIDS’ (RESPAC) project,⁷¹ whose synergy resulted in enhancing early warning system installation in 10 PICs.⁷² Another important result enabled through the collaboration of two UNDP programmes was in the area of climate insurance. Through partnerships with the private sector, UNDP was able to pilot one of the first micro-insurance and bundle insurance products in the region (discussed in detail in finding 7 on financial services).⁷³

⁶⁷ UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the “Disaster resilience for Pacific SIDS” programme.

⁶⁸ UNDP. Midterm evaluation of the “Economy Wide Adaptation to Climate Change” project.

⁶⁹ Vanuatu, Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and Samoa; Palau Disaster Preparedness and improved infrastructure” project.

⁷⁰ Through the “FSM disaster prevention and mitigation” project. UNDP Fiji MCO (2020) Annual Programme Review.

⁷¹ The RESPAC project leveraged funding from the Government of Japan for three ongoing projects in Palau and the Marshall Islands to mobilize funds for the “RMI Disaster preparedness and Infrastructure” project.

⁷² Fiji, the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Tuvalu, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tokelau, Niue and Samoa.

⁷³ “In 2018, RESPAC in collaboration with PFIP partnered with FijiCare Insurance Limited and developed a bundled micro-insurance product. The product offers both life and non-life insurance covers. These include funeral, term life, personal accident and fire. The product currently covers dairy, rice and copra farmers; social welfare recipients and civil servants including military, police and correctional officers. In the 2018/2019 national budget presented in the Fiji Parliament in June 2018, the Fiji Attorney General and Minister for Economy announced the micro-insurance scheme will benefit 107,417 Fijians covering 72,376 social welfare recipients and 35,041 civil servants. In 2019, FijiCare Insurance signed up Fiji Meat Industry Association and Tavua Market Vendors Association with 46 and 50 members respectively.” UNDP. RESPAC terminal evaluation.

Finding 3. Integrated resource management. The majority of activities under the integrated resource management portfolio used the ‘Ridge to Reef’ (R2R) approach, which was appreciated for providing data for decision-making through the implementation of concrete activities. Despite some challenges in the overall coordination and coherence, and the inability to systematically incorporate lessons of completed projects into new ones (see Box 2), some significant achievements were made. Most importantly, increasing the appetite of countries to continue integrated resource management work.

The strength of the R2R approach has been to combine the necessary foundational research and data generation with on-the-ground activities in PICs. Stakeholders interviewed were keen on continuing R2R-related work or adapting aspects of the R2R approach in other environmental projects. This was supported by the nine R2R projects and several projects that have used the R2R approach. For example:

- In the **Marshall Islands**, UNDP supported the establishment of the Protected Area Network office and the redevelopment of the National Spatial Analytic Facility, to ensure a systematic repository of data under the Reimaanlok initiative.⁷⁴
- In **Tuvalu**, UNDP helped to expand terrestrial and marine conservation areas. Locally Managed Marine Areas were established in all nine islands of Tuvalu, and some training provided to ensure that communities could manage them.⁷⁵ Other project components include establishing GIS systems for mapping and data analysis and a Biodiversity Rapid Assessment. Data from the Assessment provided an overview of the marine and terrestrial biodiversity and their conservation status in Tuvalu.
- Through the **Niue** R2R project, UNDP supported completing a terrestrial survey and report providing high-resolution imagery and data. This will be used to inform marine and spatial planning and management to provide protection and guidelines for culturally significant species and habitats within the Moana Mahu Maritime Protected Area.⁷⁶
- In **Vanuatu**, nine coastal protected areas were established. However, there is still an absence of upland protected areas with biological corridor linkages consistent with an R2R approach.⁷⁷

In some PICs, integrated resource management activities fell short of their intended results. In **Samoa**, UNDP successfully contributed to the rehabilitation of forest areas (planting native trees covering 7.2 hectares), improved riparian management and reviewed or developed Village Sustainable Development Plans. However, the overall effectiveness of this project was rated unsatisfactory. Although the project engaged a large number of communities, multiple sectors of government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, it achieved only 50-60 percent of what was envisioned at the start.⁷⁸ Similarly, the **Cook Islands** R2R project assisted in developing a Protected Areas Classification System and Protected Areas Management Policy. It also supported National Marine Spatial Planning, a sustainable financing mechanisms study, a Marine Ecosystem Services Valuation study and the Marae Moana Outlook Report. All of which were required for the operationalization, planning and management of the Cook Islands Marine Park, Marae Moana. However, the terminal evaluation concluded that, although the project had

⁷⁴ “The 8-step Reimaanlok Conservation Area Management Planning Framework helps atoll communities in the Marshall Islands think globally and act locally. It employs community-based tools and approaches to articulate local objectives that translate to national, regional and international goals” <https://www.atollconservation.org/reimaanlok>. UNDP. Midterm evaluation of the “Marshall Islands ridge to reef” project.

⁷⁵ UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the “Tuvalu ridge to reef” project; Interviews.

⁷⁶ UNDP. Midterm evaluation of the “Niue ridge to reef” project.

⁷⁷ The “Vanuatu adaptation to climate change-coastal zones” project implemented an R2R approach. UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the “Vanuatu adaptation to climate change-coastal zones” project.

⁷⁸ There were multiple changes in project staffing and delays in implementation. An extension was given in 2018, but the measles outbreak and COVID-19 pandemic compounded delays. UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the “Strengthening of multi-sector management of critical landscapes” project. Interviews.

accomplished quite a lot, it was not nearly as effective as it might have been if it had been better managed from the start and the design had been more pragmatic, or if the implementation had been more adaptive to its changing context.⁷⁹

In **Samoa**, a climate change adaptation initiative called EWACC had a lot of good lessons.⁸⁰ It aimed to integrate and manage adaptation and DRR/ DRM into national development planning and programming. At the time of the midterm evaluation, most of the progress had been achieved, including: (1) the design and initial construction of the Vaisigano river protection wall; (2) finalization of the Integrated Watershed Management Plan for the Vaisigano watershed; (3) the review of the National Building Code; (4) increased capacity of government staff to access information on climate and disaster risks; and (5) monitoring and evaluation (M&E) on climate change adaptation. The effectiveness of the initiative was proven in 2020 when Samoa suffered a flash flood. Measures put in place by EWACC and the GCF VCP project, such as flood walls, river channel works and improved drainage, helped to mitigate the disaster.⁸¹ UNDP was able to build project synergies between EWACC and the GCF project worth \$57 million, the largest project in its Outcome 1 portfolio.⁸²

Finding 4. Development financing for the environment.⁸³ UNDP has successfully taken advantage of the increasing share of vertical funds for the environment in the Pacific.⁸⁴ It has successfully boosted government demand for environmental programming in PICs. A number of interviews flagged concerns with the dominance of vertical funds in the UNDP portfolio for Outcome 1.

The GCF was established in 2010 through UNFCCC, under the Cancún Agreements, and began operating in 2016. The excitement generated by the prospect of GCF funding inspired a very active phase of project development and ambitious target-setting. The newness of GCF meant that processes were still being established. There was a sense of euphoria surrounding GCF and the amount of funding available, and UNDP found itself in a strong position given its decades of GEF experience. Currently, for the Pacific subregion countries,⁸⁵ the pure GCF grant portfolio amounts to \$389 million.⁸⁶ UNDP has the second-largest share of about 29 percent or \$112 million, composed of three projects (figure 3), two of which are the largest single-country projects in the region (**Tuvalu**⁸⁷ with \$36 million and **Samoa**⁸⁸ with \$57 million). These projects were approved in the early years of GCF in 2016, with planned completion by 2024 and 2023 respectively. A third project, 'Addressing Climate Vulnerability in the Water Sector' in the **Marshall Islands** (worth \$18 million), falls below the average value of single country projects (around \$28 million).⁸⁹

⁷⁹ UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the "Ridge to Reef Approach in Cook Islands" project. Interviews.

⁸⁰ "Economy-wide integration of climate change adaptation and DRM to reduce climate vulnerability of communities" project.

⁸¹ UNDP. Midterm evaluation of the "Economy-wide integration of climate change adaptation and DRM to reduce climate vulnerability of communities" project. UNDP Samoa (2020) ROAR.

⁸² "Management to enhance climate resilience for the Vaisigano River Catchment" project. Early results include feasibility studies, handbooks for the training of engineers, carpenters and builders in the infrastructure industry and the construction of some flood protection measures: <https://www.gcfprojects-undp.org/resources/prodocs/gcf-funding-proposal-0>

⁸³ Further detailed discussion on resource mobilization can be found in Finding 22.

⁸⁴ According to Gartner and Khraras (2014) Scaling Up Impact: Vertical Funds and Innovative Governance, "Vertical funds are global programmes for allocating official development assistance that focus specifically on an issue or theme." <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/getting-to-scale-chapter-4.pdf>

⁸⁵ For consistency in this report, these are the 14 countries and territories within the UNDP SRPD.

⁸⁶ GCF used other financial instruments in the Pacific, such as Equities worth \$275 with Pegasus Capital Advisors and a Grant + Loan project worth \$86 million with the World Bank. Some Accredited Entities have multi-country GCF projects, such as ABD, IUCN and UNE (worth \$82 million in combined total). Noting the slow uptake of GCF in the Pacific, GCF has introduced the Simplified Approval Process pilot scheme for low-risk projects with transformative potential, costing around \$10m. The Fiji Development Bank and the Micronesia Conservation Trust have had projects approved through this scheme.

⁸⁷ "Tuvalu coastal adaptation" project.

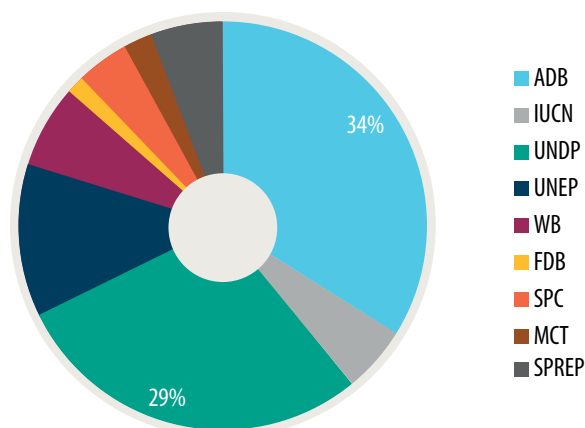
⁸⁸ "GCF Vaisigano River catchment" project.

⁸⁹ The average value of single country projects only included ADB, UNE and World Bank and excluded Simplified Approval Process and UNDP outliers.

Based on GEF project approvals from 2018-2021, figure 4 below illustrates that UNDP has the lion's share of GEF funding in the Pacific with \$63 million, with other implementing agencies below \$13 million. The UNDP accomplishment in the Pacific reflects its global performance as a strong GEF implementer, as recounted in the 2021 GEF Annual Performance Report.⁹⁰ A survey in that report mentioned that countries do not have a preference for implementing agencies. However, in the Pacific, there are some determinants to UNDP performance, including UNDP presence in almost all of the PICs, allowing it to maintain stable and continuous relationships with GEF focal points and helping to facilitate project formation and approvals. Another advantage is the UNDP operational strength.

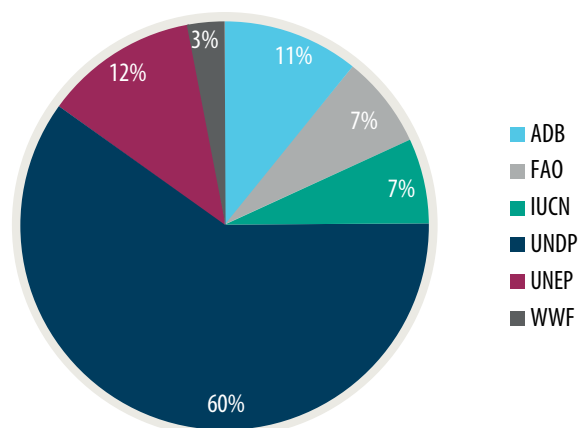
UNDP has high reliance on vertical funds in the Pacific. About 51 percent of its non-core resources from 2018-2021 are from vertical funds (\$148 million), of which the highest concentration is in Outcome 1 (87 percent or \$129 million). Interviewees questioned the UNDP readiness and comparative advantage for engagement in large infrastructure projects in the Pacific, which faced delays and red flags. Other issues identified were related to the GEF and GCF project and replenishment cycles. Even with multi-phase projects, there is always a gap between design and implementation. For example, the 'Pacific islands oceanic fisheries management' project first phase concluded in 2011, and the second phase started in 2015 (see finding 1 on climate change and environment). Hence, stakeholders feel that vertical funds alone are not the best way to build long-term engagement.

FIGURE 3. Distribution of all awarded GCF grants in the Pacific by Accredited Entity from 2018-2021



Source: GCF project database, calculation by the evaluation team.
 Note: Regional projects were considered, but those with coverage outside the Pacific or funded through GCF equity and grant+loan instruments were removed from the analysis.

FIGURE 4. Distribution of awarded GEF grants in the Pacific by Implementing Agency from 2018-2021



Source: GEF project database, calculation by the evaluation team.
 Note: Regional projects were considered; but those with coverage outside the Pacific were removed from the analysis.

⁹⁰ <https://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/documents/council-documents/c-61-e-inf-02.pdf>

2.2 Sustainable and inclusive economic development

SRPD Outcome 2: By 2022, people in the Pacific, in particular youth, women and vulnerable groups, benefit from inclusive and sustainable economic development that creates decent jobs, reduces multidimensional poverty and inequalities and promotes economic empowerment.

Related outputs:

OUTPUT 2.1. National and local institutions enabled to put in place evidence-based, risk-informed and gender-sensitive *policies guiding participatory planning and budgeting processes and aligned with SDGs.

OUTPUT 2.2. Green/blue economic policies in place to support private sector initiatives that create sustainable and environmentally friendly jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities for women and youth.

OUTPUT 2.3. National financial inclusion policies and strategies in place and implemented to expand access to financial services for rural and low-income women and youth.

Outcome 2. Sustainable and inclusive economic development. This outcome supports the region by implementing inclusive growth policies and strategies for increased financial inclusion and reaching out to the poor. This includes working with governments and the private sector to strengthen business policy, and initiatives to increase the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises. MCOs are drawing from their experience in delivering the Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Frameworks to support the localization of SDGs 1, 5, 8, 10 and 17. UNDP collaborates with United Nations entities and regional partners to generate and collate disaggregated data to formulate evidence-based policy and SDG Acceleration Frameworks. The outcome supports SDG Goal 17 through fostering South-South and Triangular Cooperation and implementation of the Pacific SDG Roadmap, the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the SAMOA Pathway and other cooperation mechanisms.

Outcome 2 was implemented in 11 out of 14 PICs. It had the smallest budget and expenditure of the three SRPD outcomes, with a total budget of \$25.3 million, total expenditure of \$14.2 million and an overall delivery rate of 56 percent (January 2018-December 2021). Table 3 shows that the average delivery rate for larger countries in Group 1 (63.2 percent) was higher than that of the smaller countries in Group 2 (39.8 percent). Five PICs fell below the overall average outcome delivery rate, three from Fiji MCO (Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia and Tuvalu) and three from Samoa MCO (the Cook Islands, Samoa and Tokelau). Niue and Tokelau did not have any projects under Outcome 2. Outcome 2 was implemented through about 44 projects, characterized by the evaluation into seven distinct themes to assess the results, including: markets and trade, SDGs, youth, DRR (discussed broadly in section 2.1.) and COVID-19 (discussed in section 2.4).

TABLE 3. Total budget, expenditure and delivery rate of Outcome 2 against 14 PICs grouped by population size**GROUP 1: Population above 20,000**

Country/Territory	Total budget (US\$)	Total Expenditure (US\$)	Percent delivery
Fiji	\$16,546,644.47	\$8,694,813.85	52.5%
Solomon Islands	\$1,482,526.10	\$1,041,470.11	70.2%
Kiribati	\$1,429,429.72	\$1,009,391.76	70.6%
Vanuatu	\$1,191,233.50	\$892,362.54	74.9%
Samoa	\$703,193.64	\$266,717.27	37.9%
Micronesia (Federated States of)	\$560,748.00	\$95,746.97	17.1%
Marshall Islands	\$174,333.09	\$159,048.89	91.2%
Tonga	\$109,992.82	\$100,347.62	91.2%
Average	\$2,774,762.67	\$1,532,487.38	63.2%

GROUP 2: Population below 20,000

Country/Territory	Total budget (US\$)	Total Expenditure (US\$)	Percent delivery
Tuvalu	\$1,255,322.46	\$597,975.47	47.6%
Nauru	\$72,000.00	\$56,505.23	78.5%
Cook Islands	\$24,000.00	\$3,022.94	12.6%
Palau	\$22,500.00	\$22,500.00	100.0%
Tokelau	\$-	\$-	0.0%
Niue	\$-	\$-	0.0%
Average	\$230,637.08	\$113,333.94	39.8%
Pacific Centre (PC)	\$1,686,873.11	\$1,294,158.53	76.7%

Overall outcome 2 delivery rate = 56%

Source: Atlas (as of January 2022, calculations by the evaluations team)

Similar to Outcome 1, Outcome 2 indicators are too high-level and there is not sufficient data to measure the UNDP contribution. For Indicator 2.1 “Decrease in the proportion of people living below the poverty level in PICs”, the overall SRPD target was eight PICs.⁹¹ Fiji MCO reported achievement in Kiribati, but with limited information supporting this claim.⁹² The Samoa MCO reported achievement in four PICs in 2018 and 2019, though only the Cook Islands, Samoa and Niue (to an extent) have up-to-date and verifiable Household Income and Expenditure Surveys which the Samoa MCO used as evidence. From 2020, there have been several reports of the regression of economic gains made in the Pacific caused by COVID-19, but data are too limited to be conclusive.

⁹¹ Actual SRPD wording: “Number of PICTs in which the proportion of men, women, youth and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions, according to national definitions, has decreased, based on the latest available data”.

⁹² UNDP Fiji (2018) ROAR. “UNDP supported the development of national policies and strategies, including the Trade Policy Framework, Investment policy, Competition policy and coconut sector development policy. These policies, once implemented, are expected to contribute to the reduction of basic needs poverty in all its dimensions, according to national definitions”.

On Indicator 2.2 “Increase of population’s access to formal financial services in PICs”,⁹³ the target was five PICs. MCO Fiji reported achievement in eight PICs, but the data produced to support this were limited to project data from PFIP, which is not statistically representative of the population of the PICs. The Samoa MCO reported four PICs referencing the Alliance For Financial Inclusion Pacific Islands Regional Initiative Financial Inclusion 2017 Status Report, but the data from this report precedes the SRPD period. There are examples of UNDP work in this area that are good precursors for the outcome (discussed in finding 6 on support to trade policies and finding 7 on financial services). The findings below describe the results assessed by the evaluation that contributed to Outcome 2.

Finding 5. Support for SDG integration. UNDP played a crucial role in the SDG reporting of PICs. It assisted various measures to help generate and align national data to the SDGs. UNDP used the momentum built to help integrate the SDGs with national strategies.

In 2019, UNDP supported the improvement of statistical capacity in five PICs,⁹⁴ to enable more robust data collection and analysis, including the disaggregation of data required by SDG databases. Work on aligning the SDGs into national planning and reporting continued. UNDP assisted **Fiji, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu** to report on SDG progress at the High-Level Political Forum in New York.⁹⁵ In 2020, UNDP worked with the Governments of **Fiji** and the **Federated States of Micronesia** to incorporate the SDGs into national strategies and monitoring frameworks. Work progressed against SDG 17 and the first major forum was held on ‘Climate Financing in the Pacific.’ The forum was attended by development partners and was facilitated through the Fiji MCO. The forum discussed the need to invest in development and build resilience continually. Facilitation toward the High-Level Political Forum continued, where UNDP partnered with PIFS, SPC and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) to support the Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the **Federated States of Micronesia**.⁹⁶

The 2020 United Nations Pacific Report commended UNDP programmes for advancing the SDGs, noting the “Farm to Table” programme as an example of progress towards SDG 8. The programme promoted small businesses through organic farming. One of the UNDP Blue Economy projects was highlighted to have contributed towards SDG 17 through facilitating alignment between private sector initiatives, financial institutions, civil society and governments.⁹⁷ Other UNDP programmes that contributed to progress in the monitoring and financing of the SDGs are the ‘SDG financing - component 1’ and ‘Subregional SDG Localization’ projects, which included the development of Samoa’s second VNR.⁹⁸

- In **Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu** and the **Marshall Islands**, UNDP SDG financing projects aimed to build a more integrated country approach to financing national plans, including aligning policies, operationalizing financing strategies and prioritizing and implementing reforms, to meet 2030 agenda commitments and support the transition out of LDC status.
- In the **Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa**, UNDP SDG financing support aimed to develop viable financing strategies in national frameworks. This support, rolled out in 2021, faced delays, and to date progress has only been made in Samoa. This programme also sought to help develop financing

⁹³ Actual SRPD wording: “Number of PICTs in which the percentage of the population with access to formal financial services has increased, based on the latest available data”.

⁹⁴ The Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu.

⁹⁵ UNDP Fiji MCO (2019 and 2020) ROAR.

⁹⁶ United Nations Pacific results report 2020.

⁹⁷ Joint SDG Fund. (2020). Component 2 joint programming document. Fiji - investing in coral reefs and in the blue economy.

⁹⁸ Specific actions include working with government departments to strengthen planning and budgeting the delivery of commitments and targets against SDGs. Additionally, sector planning and individual programmes, like the Samoan Youth Unemployment Programme have been implemented (UNDP, 2017).

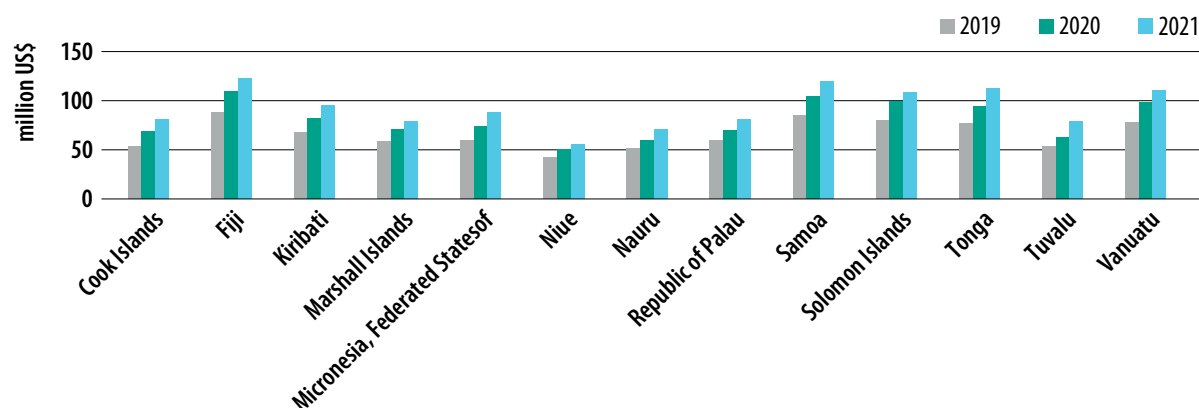
strategies, raise resources, manage risks and achieve SDG priorities.⁹⁹ This was to be delivered in partnership with UNESCAP, UN Women, national governments, the World Bank, private sector, CSOs and national authorities. No evaluations or monitoring data were available to test results.

- Recent activities of the Samoa MCO to help strengthen national statistical capacity included collaboration with Oxford University’s Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, which supported the capacity development of 21 public servants from the **Cook Islands** (2), **Samoa** (17) and **Tokelau** (2) on how to use the Multidimensional Poverty Index to provide a more comprehensive measurement of vulnerability and poverty through a six-week training and certification programme in 2021.¹⁰⁰

In collaboration with PIFS, SPC and UNESCAP, UNDP supported governments with their VNRs. The importance of the VNR process is that, in addition to reporting their achievements on the SDGs, countries are able to reflect on their own systems and capacity needs, especially for SDG-related statistics. UNDP has provided technical assistance to PICs in reviewing their SDG tracking systems. A common finding was a lack of attention to age and sex-disaggregated data and tracking of public resources on gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) and marginalized communities. In collaboration with UNESCAP, UNDP worked to develop principles and guidance notes for SDG reporting.

Figure 5 shows the annual increase in SDG indicators being reported in the region. This is testament to the increase in data generated by various PICs with the support of development partners, including UNDP (i.e., support to statistics departments, collaboration with ESCAP). However, there is still room for growth in SDG reporting. Using the Asia-Pacific Platform,¹⁰¹ the evaluation looked at the SDGs for which UNDP is the focal point,¹⁰² nine in total,¹⁰³ and found that none of these indicators had sufficient data for all 14 PICs. Four indicators had “insufficient data” for the majority of PICs,¹⁰⁴ while the rest had “no data”.

FIGURE 5. Evolution of SDG indicator reporting in the Pacific



Source: Asia-Pacific SDG partnership <https://sdgasiapacific.net/sdg-data/sdg-progress#>; <https://data.unescap.org/data-analysis/sdg-data-availability>

⁹⁹ Joint SDG Fund, 2020.

¹⁰⁰ <https://samoa.un.org/en/158085-strengthening-national-capacity-measure-poverty-using-multidimensional-poverty-index>

¹⁰¹ This platform is a collaboration of UNESCAP, UNDP and ADB: <https://sdgasiapacific.net/sdg-data/sdg-data-explorer>

¹⁰² “At its 48th session in March 2017, the United Nations Statistical Commission kindly requested custodian agencies to provide a list of national entities which provide data to the international system and to share their data collection calendars.” <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataContacts/?selectIndicator=&selectAgency=UNDP>

¹⁰³ 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.c.1, 16.3.3, 16.6.2, 16.7.1, 16.7.2, 17.15.1 and 17.16.1.

¹⁰⁴ 5.2.1, 5.c.1, 16.7.1 and 17.15.1.

Finding 6. Support for trade policies and job creation. UNDP successfully partnered with various development actors to support the development of trade policies and strategies, strengthening informal businesses and creating job opportunities for various groups, such as women, though less so for youth.

UNDP successfully partnered with other United Nations agencies to deliver activities to reduce economic risks. The ‘Markets for Change’ programme, in partnership with UN Women, was praised for having a risk reduction strategy building the economic empowerment of women. The programme assisted women to earn an income, advocated for reduced market fees and helped to distribute water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and agricultural inputs to help vendors operate safely and cost-effectively. PFIP, a collaboration between UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), aimed to help vulnerable citizens access funds to recover from natural disasters in seven PICs.¹⁰⁵ The **Samoa** MCO also supported small businesses and vulnerable families through annual Youth Co-Lab events, which ran in parallel to the Regional Digital Pacific Conference and Koko capacity-building and farming opportunities.

In **Tuvalu**, UNDP worked with the Chamber of Commerce and the South Pacific Tourism Organization to help formulate a tourism policy in light of COVID-19. UNDP also assisted in incorporating trade into Tuvalu national strategies and developing specific sector strategies in agriculture, fisheries and tourism. It facilitated memoranda of understanding between government and NGO umbrella organizations and government with private sector associations. The Tuvalu government stakeholders interviewed validated the results and identified achievements in establishing a National Trade Steering Committee and the formulation of Tuvalu’s Trade Policy and an update of the Tuvalu trade studies report.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the 2020 United Nations Pacific Report highlighted achievements in new partnerships between UNDP, the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNESCO and the International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD) to address unemployment and support sustainable enterprises in informal sub-sectors in **Fiji, Palau, Tonga and Vanuatu**, to advance the Decent Work Agenda.

Two separate analyses conducted by the Lowly Institute and SPC described the challenges faced by the Pacific’s “youth bulge”, as half of the region’s population is under the age of 23.¹⁰⁷ Stakeholders interviewed also underscored the importance of working with the youth sector, noting that, despite having some activities, UNDP has not been significantly visible. The evaluation found five youth-related projects implemented by UNDP, and which received positive feedback from stakeholders.¹⁰⁸ Reports from these projects detailed increases in employment for youth in the project areas, though the evaluation found inconsistencies in the reporting. The 2018 and 2019 Samoa MCO ROARs reported assistance to over 100 vulnerable families to establish small businesses. This seems inconsistent with the 49 new businesses reported for the region in the 2019 Samoa Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) reporting. Also, the terminal evaluation of the “Youth employment programmes” in **Samoa** found that the programme had delivered well on training and had assisted youth in finding employment, but that other planned outputs and outcomes were not fully achieved. The small business incubator plan was not established at all and the youth employment network did not deliver the anticipated interface between youth and business.

¹⁰⁵ Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga and Vanuatu.

¹⁰⁶ UNDP Fiji MCO (2019 and 2020) ROAR. Interviews. Tuvalu Trade development programme.

¹⁰⁷ “Of all the challenges the region faces, this ‘youth bulge’ will be one of the most significant. It will affect employment, health outcomes and sustainable urbanization, as well as peace and security... Future social stability, political success and economic prosperity will depend on whether the young are treated as a boon — harnessed to drive economic growth, innovation and leadership — or instead subjected to political and economic marginalization and frustration.” Wilson, C. (2020) Demanding the future: navigating the Pacific’s youth bulge. https://www.lowlyinstitute.org/publications/demanding-future-navigating-pacific-youth-bulge#_ftn1; <https://sdd.spc.int/topic/population>

¹⁰⁸ These projects are: “Organic farming programme with youth in Fiji and Vanuatu”; the “Kiribati coconut sector support” programme; the “Youth employment” programmes in Samoa; the “Markets for change” programme; and PFIP.

Finding 7. Financial services. UNDP had notable results in supporting financial inclusion and increasing financial services through its work on digitization, insurance and remittances. Some activities were used as an entry point to engage in gender-related work. However, some projects did not have sufficient monitoring data to assess results.

UNDP contributed to improved access to financial products in the Pacific. Its results in financial innovation and consumer empowerment were seen as relevant, timely and in sync with the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) offer on digitization:¹⁰⁹

- In 2018, UNDP supported the governments of seven PICs to develop National Financial Inclusion Strategies.¹¹⁰
- In **Fiji**, through its partnership with USP and Vodafone, UNDP launched ‘PacFarmer App’, which provides farmers with aggregated information, including weather and commodity prices, and creates linkages with consumers and buyers through digital payments.¹¹¹
- In 2020, UNDP collaborated with the private sector to strengthen online marketplaces in **Fiji, Samoa** and the **Solomon Islands**, to enable farmers to continue to provide goods to customers during the height of the pandemic.
- In **Samoa**, UNDP developed a multilingual interface in support of the ‘Maua App’ eCommerce platform. The Maua App is a product of the SkyEye Pacific company, supported by UNDP, ESCAP and UNCDF. Since its launch, there has been an increase in active online vendors, assisting in accessing markets under COVID-19 disruptions.¹¹² The Maua App was highlighted by the Samoan Government in the ‘Samoa 2040’ Plan as an important vehicle for the digital economy. The success of the Maua App was attributed to a hybrid of digital orders and cash-based payment, which broadened its customer base to those who have yet to subscribe to digital finance, a common feature in the PICs. Lessons from Maua App could inspire digital solution programmes in other PICs.¹¹³

In its programming, UNDP found that women were less likely to access financial services, especially in post-disaster situations. To identify the reasons for this, research was initiated in the **Solomon Islands** and Papua New Guinea.¹¹⁴ The reasons identified were related to the disproportionate household burden on women post-disaster, existing socioeconomic inequalities, and the different needs of cohorts within the population.¹¹⁵ Through PFIP, there was an observed increase in financial inclusion in its project countries, from 64 percent to 85 percent (47 percent of whom were women).¹¹⁶ Interviews with farming associations validated a growth in stakeholder access to their financial services through PFIP assistance. These achievements were triangulated through interviews with the programme team, government partners and donors. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) noted that the UNDP programme

¹⁰⁹ The SIDS offer is the UNDP articulation of its response to the pressing needs of SIDS. The three main areas of the offer are Climate Action, Blue Economy and Digitization.

¹¹⁰ Through PFIP. Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu.

¹¹¹ See <https://www.fijivillage.com/news/Farmers-now-have-access-to-various-information-on-farming-through-PacFarmer-mobile-App--kr9s52>

¹¹² “Maua App was developed by SkyEye, a Samoan start-up developing services that harness mobile and geospatial technologies solutions to solve logistical challenges. As the App is now bilingual (English and Samoan), language barriers for buyers and sellers have been overcome and wider access was achieved particularly in rural communities.” UNDP Samoa MCO (2020) ROAR.

¹¹³ “Since its creation, SkyEye has not only managed to onboard local payments providers – Digicel and Vodafone Samoa – but has also connected with Stripe. This partnership allows individuals living overseas – for example in New Zealand or Australia – to make payments and purchases from abroad.” <https://www.unescap.org/blog/how-one-digital-solution-enabling-samoas-digital-economy>

¹¹⁴ UNDP Fiji MCO (2019) ROAR.

¹¹⁵ UNDP (2021) Pacific insurance climate adaptation programme. Semi-annual report. January - June 2021.

¹¹⁶ UNCDF (2020) Empowering Women with Technology: Lessons Learnt from a Talanoa Dialogue. <https://www.uncdf.org/article/5790/empowering-women-with-technology-lessons-learnt-from-a-talanoa-dialogue>. UNDP Fiji Country Office (2020).

area on Inclusive Growth had been “efficient and effective in supporting the development of COVID-19 Livelihood Response Challenge and COVID-19 Livelihoods Response Business Models for NGOs and social enterprises in Fiji and Vanuatu in 2020, where they work with grassroots and vulnerable communities.”

With a large diaspora, and limited economic opportunities within PICs, remittances remain a vital income stream for the Pacific. However, an article by the GSM Association noted that the average cost of transferring \$200 to the Pacific was 10.4 percent, higher than the global average of 6 percent and far behind the SDG target of 3 percent.¹¹⁷ As early as 2011, UNDP collaborated with companies such as Digicel and Klikex to reduce remittance fees through mobile finance, but there has been slow uptake due to factors such as: (1) limited financial literacy at consumer level; (2) limited digital infrastructure especially in outer islands; (3) low development of digital remittance regulation including banks’ risk-averse approach in the Pacific; and (4) high starting costs for mobile remittance agent services. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and after the landfall of Typhoon Harold in **Fiji**, UNDP engaged with Vodafone to waive remittance transfer fees for two months. Remittances jumped from a pre-pandemic level of \$900,000, to \$3.1 million in May 2020, one month after the programme was initiated. Stakeholders appreciated this effort but hoped for longer-term solutions. In 2021, UNDP and several collaborators contributed to the stocktaking report and call to action: Remittances in Crisis – How to Keep Them Flowing (Advancing the Development Case from the Lessons of the Pandemic). This is an important document which was able to bring together bilateral donors, IFIs, the private sector and the United Nations.¹¹⁸

In **Kiribati**, an evaluation of the UNDP programme on trade capacity development found that UNDP had achieved and, in some cases surpassed, its targets. The evaluation observed that capacity and institutional changes continued beyond the programme implementation period. The enablers to achieve these results: were (1) UNDP support for trade governance infrastructure; (2) the use of adaptive management approaches; (3) strong leadership through a National Steering Committee; (4) a dedicated programme management unit, trade and technical advisors; and, most importantly, (5) country ownership of the outputs.

In **the Solomon Islands**, senior government stakeholders identified the UNDP “Market for change” programme as successful in building women’s economic empowerment. The programme helped project stakeholders to plan and save for the future, access formal financial services and improve financial management. In **Fiji**, UNDP helped to develop a market-based parametric micro-insurance product. With proper uptake and usage, it is envisioned to support faster post-disaster recovery and build financial resilience. Building on lessons from the Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Programme (PICAP), replication in other countries is possible and would contribute significantly to regional aspirations for building disaster risk resilience.¹¹⁹ However, there was a lack of monitoring data for PICAP, the ‘Tuvalu Trade Capacity Development and Institutional Strengthening’ project, and the regional ‘Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development’ project.

¹¹⁷ <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/blog/remittances-a-lifeline-for-pacific-nations/>

¹¹⁸ Government of Switzerland, Government of the United Kingdom, KNOMAD, the World Bank, UNDP, IOM, International Association of Money Transfer Networks and International Chamber of Commerce. https://www.knomad.org/covid-19-remittances-call-to-action/documents/call_to_action_stocktaking_report.pdf

¹¹⁹ Through PICAP.

Finding 8. Blue economy.¹²⁰ The majority of activities under the UNDP blue economy portfolio are new, and the most mature activities that yielded results are those related to fisheries (refer to finding 1 on climate change and environment). The lack of definition of the blue economy within the Pacific context presents an opportunity and a challenge, where UNDP is well-positioned to assist with its knowledge, global experience and networks.

In 2021, UNDP launched a project entitled ‘Leveraging COVID-19 Recovery for Sustainable Blue Economy in Fiji and the Pacific’. The focus of the project is to dovetail with the Pacific Climate Finance and Insurance Incubator (known as the Drua Incubator). The Drua Incubator was launched by **Fiji** to convene leaders in finance, investment and insurance in the region to identify and develop transformational and scalable solutions.¹²¹ This puts UNDP in a strategic position to influence Fiji’s COVID-19 recovery, by providing technical advisory services to the Drua Initiative in developing a blue economy investment portfolio. This will include collaboration with the UNDP Youth: Co-Lab and Accelerator Lab. UNDP launched two other projects on the blue economy in 2020 and 2021, both in their infancy stages.¹²²

The blue economy is one of the three components of the UNDP SIDS Offer.¹²³ Although UNDP has been brainstorming the area of blue economy and some projects already bear the title, interviewees noted that it means different things in different places.¹²⁴ At worst, the concept is used as a form of ‘greenwashing, or ‘bluewashing.’ The term ‘greenwashing’ was coined in 1986 and usually refers to attempts by businesses to brand themselves as environmentally responsible when in fact, they engage in damaging practices.¹²⁵ Bluewashing is a newer term used in relation to falsely claiming high social and ethical standards for environmentally unsustainable businesses. In some interviews, stakeholders highlighted the possibility that environmentally unsustainable practices (such as unregulated deep-sea mining) might be interpreted to fall within the ambit of the blue economy.

The blue economy concept had been discussed for years with limited headway. It is imperative to understand blue economy in the specific context of LDC SIDS. Internal UNDP stakeholders mostly associate it with fisheries, such as the study in Kiribati to understand the viability of preferential tuna trade agreements with the European Union. For other stakeholders, a wider understanding of the blue economy encompasses tourism, waste and the circular economy. However, it is not clear what this means for PICs without those sectors established. Stakeholders mentioned that UNDP should work with PICs to establish sustainable blue economy sectors with appropriate safeguards. It will be essential to work on tailored local strategies where the blue economy concept is grounded in PIC priorities.

¹²⁰ An economy that “comprises a range of economic sectors and related policies that together determine whether the use of ocean resources is sustainable.” https://www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/rok_part_2.pdf

¹²¹ <https://cop23.com.fj/initiative-develop-pacific-finance-insurance-products-launched-e1-million-support-luxembourg/>

¹²² UNDP Joint SDG Fund (2021) 1st call on SDG financing. Component 2 Joint programme document. Fiji - investing in coral reefs and the blue economy. UNDP Joint SDG Fund (2020) Component 2 joint programming document. Fiji - investing in coral reefs and in the blue economy.

¹²³ Including Climate Action and Digitization: https://www.sparkblue.org/system/files/2021-01/Rising%20Up%20for%20SIDS_UNDP.pdf

¹²⁴ Investing in Coral Reefs and the Blue Economy (Fiji) and Blue Economy Component 2 (Fiji).

¹²⁵ The term was coined by environmentalist Jay Westerfield. For definition see United Nations/DESA: Policy Brief #77: How can investors move from greenwashing to SDG-enabling? <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-77-how-can-investors-move-from-greenwashing-to-sdg-enabling/>; <https://earth.org/greenwashing-companies-corporations/>

2.3 Governance and community engagement

SRPD Outcome 3: By 2022, people and communities in the Pacific will contribute to and benefit from inclusive, informed and transparent decision-making processes, accountable and responsive institutions and improved access to justice.

Related outputs:

OUTPUT 3.1. Increased voice and more inclusive participation by women, youth and marginalized groups in national and subnational decision-making bodies that are more representative.

OUTPUT 3.2. Increased transparency and accountability in governance institutions and formal and informal decision-making processes.

OUTPUT 3.3. More women and men benefit from strengthened governance systems for equitable service delivery including access to justice.

Outcome 3. Governance and community engagement. This outcome aims to improve the capacity of parliaments, subnational ministries and CSOs to improve service delivery and inclusive decision-making and promote social cohesion. It has activities centred on peace, justice and building strong institutions, which aim to create innovative mechanisms to increase dialogue with marginalized groups, particularly women and youth. This outcome also encompasses the portfolio of work on gender equality, good health and well-being, peacebuilding, the rule of law and access to justice, transparency and accountability. Collaboration on this outcome includes PIFS, SPC and UN Women for gender equality; the South Pacific Community, the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Ministries of Health for health-related topics; and the United Nations Peacebuilding Office and UN Women for peacebuilding.

Outcome 3 was implemented in all 14 PICs, with a total budget of \$93.7 million, total expenditure of \$70.4 million and an overall average delivery rate of 75 percent (January 2018 to December 2021). Table 4 shows that the average delivery rate for Group 1 countries (77.4 percent) is observably larger than Group 2 (38.7 percent). Nine PICs fell below the overall delivery rate, including six countries from Fiji MCO (Fiji, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau and Tuvalu), and three from Samoa MCO (Samoa, the Cook Islands and Niue). This outcome was comprised of 82 projects, characterized by this evaluation into five distinct themes to group projects and assess results: governance, justice, gender, elections and COVID-19. Gender and COVID-19 are discussed in-depth in sections 2.4 and 2.5.

TABLE 4. Total budget, expenditure and delivery rate of Outcome 3 against 14 PICs grouped by population size

GROUP 1: Population above 20,000

Country/Territory	Total budget (US\$)	Total Expenditure (US\$)	Percent delivery
Fiji	\$50,288,934.03	\$35,885,489.22	71.4%
Solomon Islands	\$18,057,928.56	\$16,002,248.15	88.6%
Vanuatu	\$6,218,825.80	\$5,004,054.99	80.5%
Samoa	\$4,395,569.08	\$3,220,820.38	73.3%
Tonga	\$272,000.00	\$251,036.68	92.3%
Kiribati	\$161,047.00	\$133,188.38	82.7%
Marshall Islands	\$55,000.00	\$43,495.88	79.1%
Micronesia (Federated States of)	\$54,416.50	\$27,827.91	51.1%
Average	\$9,937,965.12	\$7,571,020.20	77.4%

GROUP 2: Population below 20,000

Country/Territory	Total budget (US\$)	Total Expenditure (US\$)	Percent delivery
Nauru	\$2,961,206.29	\$1,191,929.41	40.3%
Tuvalu	\$986,473.89	\$685,258.22	69.5%
Palau	\$2,055,941.00	\$777,901.87	37.8%
Tokelau	\$87,984.00	\$74,340.61	84.5%
Cook Islands	\$89,550.00	\$	0.0%
Niue	\$20,000.00	\$	0.0%
Average	\$1,033,525.86	\$454,905.02	38.7%
Pacific Centre (PC)	\$8,022,165.69	\$7,132,919.19	88.9%

Overall outcome 3 delivery rate = 75%

Source: Atlas (as of January 2022, calculations by the evaluations team)

Note: The difference between the Subtotal and Total Budget is neither tagged as Repurpose nor New Fund in Atlas.

Outcome 3 indicators are high-level and challenging to measure in terms of the UNDP contribution to MCOs. The target for Indicator 3.1 “Anti-corruption policies in PICs” was seven PICs.¹²⁶ The way that this indicator was measured was vague. In 2021, the cumulative achievement for this indicator reported by both MCOs was 10 PICs, but this did not align with the evidence presented by MCOs, which showed that most achievements were toward strategies rather than policies (discussed in finding 10 on strengthening transparency and accountability). The evaluation also noted that the results for Papua New Guinea were reported by Fiji MCO, though the country is not part of the Pacific SRPD.

The target for Indicator 3.2 “Women in parliament in PICs” was 14 PICs.¹²⁷ This indicator was straightforward and the UNDP contribution could be traced to it, but the achievement was four PICs (discussed in finding 9 on inclusive political processes). For Indicator 3.3 “Decrease in unsentenced detainees in PICs”, only one achievement was reported for either MCO, from Fiji MCO in 2018 in one PIC.¹²⁸ A review of the narrative justification on this outcome shows a mismatch in what is being asked by the indicator and what is being measured or not by the MCOs.

¹²⁶ Actual wording: “Number of PICTs with established and implemented anti-corruption policies”.

¹²⁷ Actual wording: “Number of PICTs in which the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments has increased, based on the latest available data”.

¹²⁸ Actual wording: “Number of PICTs in which the unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population has decreased, based on the latest available data”.

Finding 9. Inclusive political processes. UNDP programming to support women in national and subnational decision-making bodies was fragmented. Aside from the Solomon Islands, Samoa and Vanuatu, UNDP did not consistently work in those areas with the least number of women in elected leadership roles. There were no governance programmes in the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau during the period under review.

Under this outcome, Fiji MCO mostly worked in **Nauru**, the **Solomon Islands** and **Vanuatu**. The evaluation did not find substantive work in countries such as Kiribati, Palau, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, in all of which under 7 percent of MPs are women, low percentages of elected women in local seats or women chairs/ heads. Kiribati, with 233 elected representatives in local government, only has 10 (or 4.3 percent) elected women, Tonga has only one elected woman out of 179 elected seats, and the Federated States of Micronesia has four women elected in government posts out of 85 available positions. The relative absence of UNDP in these countries constitutes a missed opportunity to increase women's participation in governance in the Pacific.¹²⁹

Where UNDP had positive results in building precursors to elevate women in national and subnational elected positions (i.e., **Samoa** and the **Solomon Islands**), the key elements were: (1) a consistent push to advocate for Temporary Special Measures tailored to the country context;¹³⁰ (2) leadership programmes involving women from different sectors of society and aiming to develop long-term leadership pathways; (3) communication skills were a priority in capacity-development activities to increase the confidence of women in electoral campaigns and governance roles; (4) women were given support for leadership training in formal education institutions, which added to their credentials and confidence; (5) mock parliaments were effective in familiarizing aspiring leaders on governance processes; and (6) building a network of women leaders generated mentor/ mentee relationships.

In **Samoa**, UNDP delivered a multi-year leadership training initiative for women aspiring to be members of public sector boards, through formal education sector institutions, under the Women in Leadership in Samoa joint programme with UN Women, funded by Australia. This included training on the role and responsibilities of the director and analysis of budgets and financial reports to be able to make meaningful contributions to board decisions. 60 percent of the women trained by UNDP who applied were successful in becoming board members, and two of the women became chairpersons of public body boards. UNDP has contributed to Samoan women's leadership aspirations, which have been growing since the 1990s, driven by women's merit and the progressive policies and decisions of past Governments. These factors contributed to an increase in women's directorship of public body boards from 24 percent in 2019 to 33 percent in 2021. This makes Samoa one of three countries identified by a recent report as having higher proportions of women directors and chief executives than most countries in the Pacific region. The overall proportion of women on boards in Samoa is 33 percent, well above the regional average of 21 percent. Furthermore, women in Samoa hold 19 percent of chair positions on boards, also above the regional average of 11 percent.

- In broader terms, UNDP had some success with increasing participation in governance through its long and continuous presence and support in PICs. In **Fiji**, UNDP has been involved with the Fiji Parliament support project since the long-delayed democratic election in 2014. Stakeholders mentioned that UNDP was one of the few partners that had helped Fiji's return to parliamentary

¹²⁹ UNDP data was compared to statistics from Pacific Women in Politics: <https://www.pacwip.org/women-mps/local-govt-women/>

¹³⁰ "Temporary special measures (TSMs) are proven strategies to increase women's political representation and have allowed women to bypass persistent challenges in seeking election. They are a set of laws, policies and government sanctioned processes intended to end the effect of specific forms of discrimination. CEDAW Article 4 encourages the use of TSMs to accelerate 'de facto' equality between men and women". UNDP (2015) Temporary Special Measures to Increase Women's Political Participation in the Pacific: Case Studies of Implementation in the Region: https://www.undp.org/content/dam/fiji/docs/UNDP%20PO%20TSM_Womens%20Political%20Participation.pdf

democracy since 2006,¹³¹ and stated that UNDP support had strengthened parliamentary processes and improved the capacity of MPs and the Secretariat. UNDP also facilitated Fiji's return to the global family, by helping it renew its membership with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the International Parliamentary Union. Interviewees from the Office of the Secretary-General of Parliament commended the 'excellent support' of UNDP to Fiji's Parliament over the last four years, and cited benefiting tremendously from the timely advice of UNDP. It was noted that UNDP and the Fiji Parliament have both ensured that gender inclusion was well incorporated, for example, the inclusion of gender in its Standing Orders.¹³² In addition, UNDP and the Fiji Parliament have ensured that the SDGs are incorporated into the Parliament's committee work and documentation. The Speaker of Parliament stated that "support to national parliaments is UNDP's strength and niche. UNDP support has enhanced the MPs' understanding of parliamentary processes, such as the work of parliamentary committees."

- In **Nauru**, UNDP supported key democratic institutions responsible for ensuring effective, inclusive and accountable political governance.¹³³ This included the national Parliament and the Nauru Electoral Commission. The project promoted the active participation of the people of Nauru in politics, with specific work to promote gender equality, promoting the engagement of women of all ages in politics and public life. In support of the Nauru Electoral Commission, UNDP recruited an electoral expert and a legal expert, providing much-needed expertise to support the recently appointed Electoral Commissioner. Nauru is the only country in the Pacific headed by three female Electoral Commissioners. UNDP Technical Advisers have provided the Electoral Commission with capacity support to design an election-related curriculum to be incorporated into Nauru's education programmes. The project has a significant inclusion element with a focus on women and youth. The Electoral Commission has developed a strong partnership with the Youth Department to incorporate election-related programmes into its activities and training.
- In **Vanuatu**, the electoral and civil registration reforms currently underway with departments across the Government are testament to the success of UNDP support. The use of identity cards, produced through collaboration with UNDP, facilitated transactions during the COVID-19 pandemic in Vanuatu.¹³⁴

Finding 10. Strengthening transparency and accountability. There is a mismatch between SRPD Outcome 3 indicators and the associated SRPD outputs, which could have hindered planning for results and measurement. Nonetheless, UNDP was able to support five PICs to develop their anticorruption strategies, and the accession of two PICs to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC).

The Samoa MCO 2019 ROAR mentioned that, "Overall, there is a disconnect between the regional UNPS M&E framework and country-level progress, which makes it difficult to determine if an outcome is on or off track." This is especially true for Outcome 3, which aimed to count policy work, as reflected in its outcome indicator. None of the SRPD outputs or output indicators discussed any support to anticorruption policies, but to some extent, UNDP has assisted **Kiribati**, the **Federated States of Micronesia**, **Tuvalu**, **Vanuatu** and the **Solomon Islands** in the development and implementation of their anticorruption strategies.¹³⁵

¹³¹ The elected Government was removed by the military through a coup d'état.

¹³² Standing orders are rules agreed by the House that govern the way its business operates in the Chamber and committees. Each rule has a number and is sometimes divided up into paragraphs, which are also numbered. Standing orders are available on Parliament's website and in hard copy from the Vote Office.

¹³³ Through the "Accountable and inclusive governance" project.

¹³⁴ Direct feedback from Ministry of Internal Affairs-Vanuatu.

¹³⁵ In 2020, Cook Island Fiji requested the assistance of UNDP in the implementation of their anticorruption strategies. UNDP Fiji MCO 2018, 2019 and 2020.

A cornerstone project of UNDP in strengthening transparency and accountability in the Pacific is the 'United Nations Pacific Regional Anticorruption Project' (UN-PRAC). This regional project is a joint initiative of UNDP and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to prevent and implement UNCAC and develop anticorruption systems that promote 'clean' government and create an enabling environment for increased trade, business, investment and sustainable development in the region.

The 2019 midterm evaluation of the project indicated that the project outputs were all on track. In the **Solomon Islands** and **Vanuatu**, key anticorruption institutions and monitoring bodies had been established and enhanced. The biggest impact of UN-PRAC was supporting PICs' accession to UNCAC,¹³⁶ and the adoption by all Pacific Forum Leaders of the 'Teianiwa Vision.' Launched during the first-ever Leaders' Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption Conference in Kiribati in February 2021, the Teianiwa Vision recognized the importance of strong leadership and building political will to address corruption. Through UN-PRAC, UNDP assisted PICs to coordinate research discussion papers for the plenary meeting and formulate the language of the Teianiwa Vision, that was adopted by the Pacific leaders.

UN-PRAC has produced nine publications and, following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of national borders, circulated a Pacific advisory note on "COVID-19 and Corruption in the Pacific," highlighting the need to update public procurement systems to handle disasters, collaborate with the private sector to promote business integrity,¹³⁷ and provide clear objectives and transparent criteria to qualify for COVID-related assistance.¹³⁸ Gender and disability inclusion was significant in the project and well received by the PICs, and UNDP continues to work closely with national governments to address inclusion issues, given that women are disproportionately affected by corruption.

UNDP also assisted in improving capacity for parliamentary project finance management, providing technical support to tax governance frameworks in selected countries, encouraging favourable tax legislation and change in practices. The UNDP partnership with the Pacific Association of NGOs was cited as one of the key elements that enabled its success.¹³⁹ In the **Solomon Islands**, the 2019 Floating Budget Mission, supported by UNDP, was lauded by the Government. The mission included a parliamentary specialist and researchers from Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, which helped the parliamentary team develop independent analysis of the National Budget for 2020.

Finding 11. The rule of law. Stakeholders in the Pacific considered UNDP work on the rule of law and access to justice to be relevant and timely. However, UNDP needs to reconsider its programme timescales to ensure that it builds on the peace dividends resulting from its interventions.

UNDP access to justice activities in the Pacific was limited. In the **Solomon Islands**, UNDP supported the Public Solicitor's Office to enhance access to justice for people at national and provincial levels, particularly women, youth and marginalized groups outside of urban centres.¹⁴⁰ UNDP implemented a two-tiered initiative, with provincial paralegals and community legal advocates to bridge remote communities to the Public Solicitor's Office. Results cited by stakeholders include: the opening of a Legal Aid office in Munda in the Western Province with an approved five-year strategy plan; the establishment of paralegal offices in different parts of the country, which has reduced work pressure on the Public Prosecution Office in the capital, Honiara; and steps to improve access to justice for people who live outside Honiara city. UNDP has

¹³⁶ Two PICs accessioned in the current SRP cycle, Samoa in 2018 and Tonga in 2020. All PICs except Tokelau have now accessioned to the UNCAC.

¹³⁷ UNDP continues to encourage private sector representatives to focus on business integrity and seek anticorruption entrepreneurs.

¹³⁸ UN-PRAC Newsletter, June 2020.

¹³⁹ UNDP. Final Evaluation of the Strengthening Pacific Public Finance Management and Governance Project.

¹⁴⁰ Through the "Access to justice" project.

also addressed inclusion elements in its activities by ensuring that the paralegal office in Honiara is housed in the Disability Office, with appropriate accessibility in place. It also ensured the deployment of a Legal Aid person to the Disability Office to provide advice and support.

Also in the **Solomon Islands**, UNDP secured a project supported by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (around \$3.2 million over 21 months) to support the national Government's efforts to sustain peace in this post-conflict country. The Solomon Islands was the only country in the Pacific where the Peacebuilding Fund was deployed during the current SRPD period. Stakeholders interviewed stated that the project had directly benefitted target recipients and, through a strong partnership with the Ministry of Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs, enabled the delivery of activities which contributed to the Government's collective effort to meet its SDG-related commitments. The project evaluation assessed that it had moderately contributed to progress in the country's post-conflict peacebuilding activities, noting that the project's goals were ambitious and may have "displayed a lack of understanding on how challenging and time consuming behavioural and institutional change is in any societal context."¹⁴¹ An 18-month project was too short to deliver the serious institutional, collective and individual behavioural changes sought by the project. Stakeholders mentioned that UNDP should consider a long-term investment and in-depth engagement and partnership with other regional organizations in this peacebuilding initiative in the Solomon Islands. Recent civil unrest and looting in the capital of Honiara is a clear indication that some of the issues the project tried to address remain present.¹⁴² If not dealt with substantially, the Solomon Islands could revert to ethnic conflict that led to the destruction of key institutions of governance and the absence of law and order in the past.

2.4 COVID-19 response and recovery support

Finding 12. Overall, the UNDP response to the COVID-19 pandemic was rapid and targeted. It negotiated the repurposing of funds with donors and attracted new funding. Stakeholders appreciated UNDP agility and flexibility in responding to challenges and changes to projects under implementation. Support for remote working, which aligns with the UNDP digitalization agenda, was greatly appreciated.

UNDP reported about \$12 million budget for COVID-related activities in 2020-2021 (refer to table 5). Tracking these funds shows an overall delivery rate of 54 percent. Ten countries had a delivery rate above 50 percent. Fiji, Nauru and Palau, the countries with the largest COVID-related budgets, had a delivery rate of below 50 percent.¹⁴³ About 16 percent of the overall budget was composed of repurposed funds from seven donors.¹⁴⁴ The highest amount of repurposed funds came from UNDP, at about \$1.9 million, and contributions from other donors ranged between \$9,000 and \$200,000. The total COVID-19 expenditure of seven PICs was purely from repurposed funds.¹⁴⁵ In 2020, repurposed funds amounted to \$1.8 million, and in 2021, they fell to \$321,000 as expected since most repurposing was a one-off measure.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ UNDP. Terminal evaluation of the "Solomon Islands Peace Building Project II".

¹⁴² In November and December 2021, there were widespread riots in the capital Honiara. Australia deployed over 100 police and military personnel in aid of the Government to control the unrest.

¹⁴³ The Federated States of Micronesia also had delivery below 50 percent and a comparatively low budget.

¹⁴⁴ These are: Australia, Brazil, Sweden, UPS Foundation, UNDP, UNOCHA/ CERF, Vertical fund, Global Fund.

¹⁴⁵ The Cook islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Niue, Tonga and Tuvalu.

¹⁴⁶ The United Nations country team 2020 report stated that 30 percent of its \$160 million UNPS budget (or \$48 million) was reprogrammed to address COVID-19 preparedness and response. The UNDP contribution was about 4 percent.

TABLE 5. Repurposed and new funds for COVID-19 programming by recipient country (2020-2021)

	Repurposed funds (A)	New funds (B)	Subtotal (A+B)	Total Budget	Total Utilization	Delivery rate*
Cook Islands	22,000		22,000	22,000	22,746	103%
Fiji	872,940	1,162,286	2,035,226	3,584,110	1,673,844	47%
Micronesia	47,794		47,794	47,794	21,206	44%
Kiribati	43,000		43,000	43,000	38,638	90%
Marshall Islands	40,000		40,000	40,000	30,992	77%
Niue	39,051		39,051	39,051	24,014	61%
Nauru				2,970,874	1,000,000	34%
Palau	40,000	648,000	688,000	1,140,000	563,222	49%
Solomon Islands	543,043	1,983,187	2,526,230	2,658,279	2,159,973	81%
Tokelau	84,869	249,941	334,810	543,262	324,570	60%
Tonga	56,000		56,000	56,000	55,982	100%
Tuvalu	40,000		40,000	40,000	35,418	89%
Vanuatu	40,000	150,000	190,000	230,328	185,693	81%
Samoa	267,944	1,105,555	1,373,498	1,581,531	898,382	57%
Subtotals	2,136,641	5,298,969	7,435,609	12,996,230	7,034,679	54%

Source: Atlas (as of December 2021, calculations by the evaluations team)

Note: The difference between the Subtotal and Total Budget is neither tagged as Repurposed nor New Funds in Atlas.

It is commendable that UNDP was able to draw new funding given the prevailing conditions of uncertainty in 2020. The world was in limbo, with donors, governments and UNDP staff all experiencing the effects of the pandemic. Yet UNDP sourced \$3.8 million in 2020, and \$1.4 million in 2021.¹⁴⁷ Japan was the largest donor with \$2.7 million, followed by Australia with \$1.3 million.

UNDP was able to quickly mobilize resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, mostly through UNDP rapid response and financing facilities. UNDP responded to immediate basic needs assistance for the most vulnerable people, including people with disabilities. Some examples of UNDP COVID-related work highlighted by stakeholders include the support for refurbishing quarantine isolation facilities and increased border screening of passengers arriving in **Tokelau**, and monitoring systems support for quarantine sites in **Niue**. UNDP also worked through the Spotlight Initiative on GBV in Fiji and Samoa, which spiked during the lockdowns.¹⁴⁸ One of the most immediate priorities of the various governments was connectivity. **Fiji's** Parliament was able to host a 'hybrid-session' for the first time following UNDP support to extend Microsoft Office 365 licenses and technical training for the Speaker, MPs and the Parliament Secretariat. This enabled MPs to virtually attend Parliament sittings and Standing Committee meetings in Suva.

In **Samoa**, UNDP was able to mobilize support for rapid COVID-19 testing capability. Digital-related support was extended to the main and district hospitals through the provision of ICT equipment to improve remote diagnostic and online medical consultations. Support for business continuity for public service delivery during lockdown periods included the provision of Zoom licenses to all government ministries for 24 months and virtual conferencing equipment to the Office of the Legislative Assembly. Similar Zoom

¹⁴⁷ If we assume that the difference between the total budget and subtotal is "untagged new funds," then new resources in 2021 are estimated at \$7.6 million.

¹⁴⁸ The Spotlight Initiative has three components: Samoa, Vanuatu, and Regional.

licensing support was provided to the Governments of **Niue** and **Tokelau**. Support for the development of eLearning platforms allowed the continuity of education services and delivery of school curriculums for seven secondary colleges. In addition, UNDP was able to put resources into digital commerce in **Samoa** to make sure that people could sell and buy basic goods online.

UNDP also faced challenges in its COVID-19 response. In the **Marshall Islands**, poor internet connectivity led to poor attendance of online training.¹⁴⁹ Several stakeholders mentioned that even if internet hardware (i.e., undersea cables) is out of the scope of UNDP support, and other more qualified institutions (such as the IFIs) are fit to act in this area, UNDP is the appropriate organization to facilitate policies to establish digital infrastructure in their countries.

UNDP also generated a socioeconomic report for the region.¹⁵⁰ The 2020 United Nations Pacific report identified that the development of a joint United Nations Socio-Economic Impact Assessment ‘provided an opportunity for substantial collaboration and exchange between United Nations Agencies, new partnerships and for the re-design of programmes that address multidimensional needs.’¹⁵¹ However, this report has drawn criticism from a number of other donors and IFIs in the region who were working on similar assessments in parallel. Interviewees mentioned that the report contained inaccuracies, was not developed inclusively and became out of date quickly. Multiple external development partners interviewed noted that the assessment was developed in isolation and was a replication of more robust studies by other development partners (refer to finding 14 on strategic positioning). The suggestion was that other organizations, with more economists in the region or a joint approach, would have been more effective.

The pandemic led to shifts in the focus of Pacific Governments toward COVID-19 responses. The pandemic created significant challenges in project coordination and implementation, and oversight and coordination of pre-pandemic projects were strained due to the distance and infrequency of travel between PICs. The strong relationship of UNDP with governments came into play during this time, and UNDP was able to cope effectively. UNDP staff developing projects in **Tuvalu** were able to successfully tap into another UNDP adaptation programme as a vehicle to broker relationships without physically going to meet with the Government.

UNDP was also able to shift activities online. The introduction of Zoom to both UNDP and government partners allowed UNDP staff to get involved in more meetings in remote places like **Niue**, the **Cook Islands** and **Tokelau**. Whereas previously, they would attend two quarterly project board meetings, they could attend all of them virtually. The regional project RESPAC, was able to deliver guidance on the installation and maintenance of Automatic Weather Stations, usually delivered through in-person demonstrations, through remote communications. The ‘Global and Regional Oceanic Fisheries’ project responded by implementing remote methods for stakeholder engagement and redirecting funds originally earmarked for travel expenses to technical assistance. This remote way of working has also intensified access to global expertise.

¹⁴⁹ “Ridge to Reef” project.

¹⁵⁰ Through the “COVID-19 Response support in the Pacific” project.

¹⁵¹ United Nations (2020) Pacific Report.

2.5 Gender

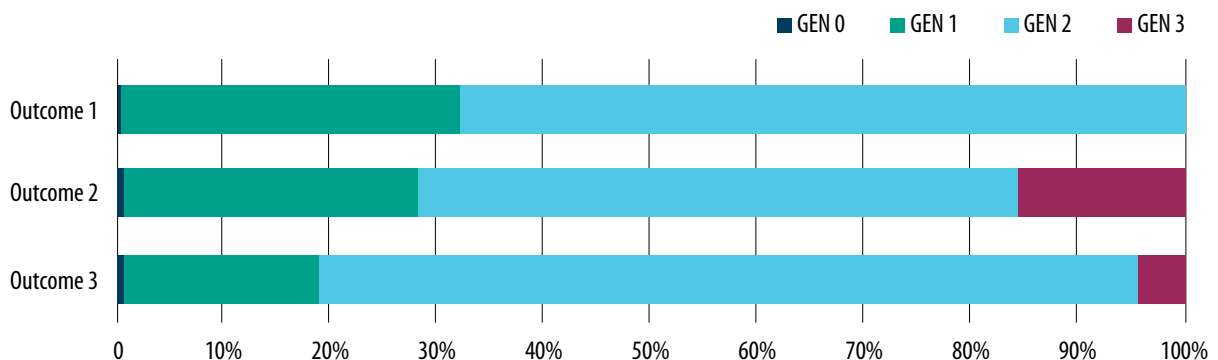
Finding 13. There were some noteworthy gender-related results in the UNDP Pacific portfolio. However, these results fell short of replication or communication across countries and MCOs. The overall lack of internal coherence within and across MCOs, and the siloed nature of gender specialists within projects, contributed to the slow adoption of best practices in gender-sensitive programming.

The evaluation noted that activities related to the development of strategic gender documents took place in 2021, more than halfway through the SRPD (2018-2022). Nonetheless, this showed the strong commitment of UNDP to gender equality, further highlighted in the UNDP Gender Equality Seal Action Plan (2021-2023), the UNDP Pacific Gender Equality Strategy and Implementation Plan 2021-2022, and the development of the Terms of Reference for its gender team aligned to the UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2022. The same level of structure was not found in Samoa MCO, which had more gender activities at project level. Only recently (in August 2021) was a Subregional Gender Specialist recruited to bring coherence to the gender activities of both MCOs.¹⁵²

Within the evaluation scope, the majority of the portfolio falls under GEN 2. This includes 150 projects, or about \$146 million in expenditure. GEN 1 follows with 126 projects and about \$57 million spent. GEN 3 projects are lowest in number and value, with 13 projects and about \$5 million. GEN 0 accounts for 17 projects, worth almost \$1 million in expenditure. In relative terms, GEN 1 projects are 2.5 times as small as GEN 2 projects, while GEN 3 projects are only 2 percent of the entire portfolio and 30 times as small as GEN 2. It should be noted that GEN 0 projects are less than 1 percent of the portfolio, (\$2 million budget), and GEN 0 projects represent a significant loss in moving GEWE forward. The high proportion of GEN 2 projects highlights the commitment of UNDP to GEWE, which has been a constant developmental issue in the Pacific and featured prominently in the 2013-2017 and 2018-2022 outcome statements of the UNPS and UNDP SRPD.

Figure 6 looks at expenditure across the outcomes against the Gender Markers. Almost all outcomes have an equal percentage of GEN 2 projects (outcome 1 = 68 percent, outcome 2 = 56 percent and outcome 3 = 77 percent). Outcomes 2 and 3 have GEN 3 projects (15 percent and 4 percent of their portfolios, respectively). Outcome 1 represents a missed opportunity to target gender because of its sheer size and value (\$206 million in budget and \$106 in expenditure). Even a small increase in Outcome 1 GEN 2 projects or introduction of GEN 3 projects would have been significant.

FIGURE 6. Expenditure by outcome and gender marker expressed as 100 percent per outcome



Source: Atlas (as of January 2022)

¹⁵² The evaluation data collection ended in September 2021 and was not able to gather data on this new position.

The Spotlight Initiative is an important United Nations global programme, supported by the European Union, as a concerted effort to end all forms of violence against women. Spotlight centres on improving data and strengthening the capacity of non-state actors. Since its global launch in 2018, Spotlight has been present in two countries under the SRP, **Samoa** and **Vanuatu**. In 2020, the Spotlight regional programme was launched to cover 16 PICs,¹⁵³ led by the Resident Coordinator in collaboration with UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA and IOM. In **Samoa**, through the Spotlight Initiative, UNDP helped to establish Village Family Safety Committees to assist in eliminating violence against women and girls and target gender inequalities at the subnational level. UNDP also conducted an assessment of 23 CSOs to gauge their capacity in addressing GBV. In 2020, UNDP supported communications and counselling related to GBV and suicide prevention in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. UNDP gender analysis in its parliamentary work was highlighted in the Spotlight Initiative 2020 report, mentioning that UNDP worked synergistically with Spotlight to cost GBV and push for gender-responsive budgeting in PIC Governments.¹⁵⁴

UNDP supported the integration of gender into policies, the production of gender strategies, plans and awareness-raising. For example:

- In **Vanuatu**, UNDP supported the development of a gender and social inclusive Integrated Coastal Zone Management Framework.
- In **Niue**, UNDP conducted an overall country gender assessment to underpin its environment and climate change pipeline and ongoing projects.¹⁵⁵
- In **Fiji**, UNDP supported the Ministry of Economy to begin Climate Budget Tagging. This hopes to ensure the integration of the dimensions of climate change, disaster, gender and social inclusion in the national budget. UNDP assisted in the approval of the integration of climate change and gender policy and strategy in the Ministry of Rural Development in Fiji. These documents were intended to guide programming and budgeting in the Government and have already been utilized to assist with infrastructure projects.
- Four risk-informed projects in **Tonga** incorporate gender and climate change into their design and budget.

Although the 'Global and Regional Oceanic Fisheries' project did not propose anything specific on gender, the project took the initiative to produce a publication called *Moana Voices*, about women working in the tuna fishery sector at various levels.¹⁵⁶ One result of interest is the Pacific Risk Resilience Programme, which worked with governments to create resilient development posts within ministries and create the ProPa network, an intergovernmental body to promote gender equality and protection issues across countries by ensuring that development is risk-informed, inclusive and equitable.¹⁵⁷ This was seen as having contributed to embedding gender and social inclusion within the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific.

Considering the small populations (and limited government staff) in PICs, and the traditional roles women play, perhaps one of the most substantive UNDP gender results was related to training and encouraging women's participation in male-dominated spaces:

¹⁵³ Fiji, Samoa, the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Nauru, Tuvalu, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tokelau, Niue and the Cook Islands.

¹⁵⁴ Spotlight Initiative Annual Narrative Programme Report (December 2020); At the time of writing the report the Spotlight Regional project was being evaluated. The draft report was requested from the Spotlight Secretariat; however, the evaluation has not received a copy.

¹⁵⁵ Samoa MCO ROAR 2019.

¹⁵⁶ Fiji MCO ROAR, 2019,2020.

¹⁵⁷ This was a five-year Australian and Swedish Government funded programme (AUD \$16m) which operated in Tonga, Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands. It has been extended to 2024 to continue to develop across the region.

- In **Kiribati** and **Tonga**, six female technical officers from the Meteorology Service received training at India's National Institute of Hydrology, gaining the skills to monitor and use meteorology and hydrology data.
- In the **Solomon Islands**, 13 women from the Santa Catalina community were trained in the operation and maintenance of their water reticulation system.
- In **Fiji**, women served in the male-dominated role as field coordinators for the eradication of invasive species.
- In **Palau**, members of the National Emergency Committee attended a workshop on protection, gender and social inclusion in DRM, and one of the recommendations was greater gender representation in the Committee. This has been acted upon and there are now a greater number of women representing their agencies.¹⁵⁸

In the area of economic empowerment, UNDP assisted in increasing the uptake of new financial products such as insurance by women consumers. The value-added tax exemption for insurance products in **Fiji** led to more affordable products for low socioeconomic populations, often those most affected by climate change and natural disasters across the region. PFIP paid close attention to inclusion issues in the project design phase, with attention to women, low-income and other marginalized populations like people living on remote and outer islands. The monitoring, evaluation and learning framework for its second phase included consumer protection metrics and indicators measuring the reach of the programme in marginalized cohorts, particularly the number of women able to access the benefits of the programme.¹⁵⁹ Interviews validated that inclusive approaches were being taken by PFIP. In addition, the 'Markets for Change' programme worked on women's financial literacy. UNDP also applied digitalization tools in their gender programming, appreciated by stakeholders, and PFIP and PICAP both utilized mobile apps which improved access to financial products for women and people with disabilities (refer to finding 6 on support to trade policies).

Most gender results are reported 'by numbers', and it is hard to see whether this represents substantive progress. UNDP has done well in observing sex-disaggregated data, driven by donor requirements. Some project evaluations have pointed to the need for a more nuanced approach to collecting gender data to measure change.¹⁶⁰ Some projects did not include gender aspects in their design or were not specific about what gender equality should entail.¹⁶¹ For example, in the **Palau** 'Biodiversity and Safeguards' project, there was very little acknowledgment from partners of gender gaps. Some gender plans were produced but not used, and the topic was not always given due importance, or projects had gender plans that were not implemented.¹⁶² For example, the 'Strengthening Multisectoral Management of Critical Landscapes' project in **Samoa** produced a Gender Analysis Report that contained recommendations relating to: (1) access to and control over assets and resources; (2) gender division of labour; (3) women's participation; (4) gender-based livelihood patterns; and (5) power and decision-making. This was accompanied by a Gender and Social Inclusion Action Plan. However, there was no follow-through, according to the terminal evaluation.

¹⁵⁸ Fiji MCO ROAR, 2019,2020.

¹⁵⁹ Narrative progress report. Reporting period: 1 January - 31 December 2018.

¹⁶⁰ The terminal evaluation for the 'Cook Islands R2R' project mentioned that participation numbers are often mentioned in gender evaluations with the assumption that this is adequate. Also, there were no specific activities that focused on women's potential contribution to biodiversity conservation or to the development and management of protected areas.

¹⁶¹ The 'Fiji Capacity Building for Mainstreaming MEAs', 'IMPRESS Renewable Energy', and 'Niue R2R' projects.

¹⁶² The 'Enhancing resilience of coastal communities of Samoa' 'Invasive Alien Species', and 'Strengthening Multi-Sectoral Management of Critical Land' projects.

2.6 Strategic positioning, coherence, programme implementation and other cross-cutting issues

Finding 14. Strategic positioning. UNDP is recognized as a trusted, valuable and in-demand partner. UNDP comparative advantages are: its in-country presence and long-term relationship with PICs; its openness for joint programming; and its ability to capitalize on the technical skills of its partners. Stakeholders lauded its responsiveness and competence to mobilize resources. However, there is a need for nuance in its approach in each country and awareness of duplication with the work of other development actors to maximize effectiveness. Aid coordination was flagged as a potential area where PICs could use UNDP assistance.

United Nations agencies

There are 85 United Nations joint programmes in the Pacific, and relative to other agencies UNDP has the highest number (38) and greatest spread (across 13 countries).¹⁶³ UNICEF has 35 joint programmes in 12 countries, ILO has 26 in 12 countries and IOM has 15 in 12 countries. The average number of joint programmes in a country is three. The country with the most joint programmes is **Samoa** with six, and the least are the **Federated States of Micronesia** and **Nauru**, with one each. For example, through the United Nations Joint Programme on Social Protection, centred on the principle of Leaving No One Behind, UNDP supported a review of the social protection systems in **Samoa** and completed a stocktaking and review exercise of existing social protection systems in the **Cook Islands**, with a view to making recommendations for further strengthening social protection in the country.

UNDP is viewed as a good leader in working groups such as UNPS Outcome 1 and the 'Early Recovery' Humanitarian Cluster. United Nations agencies appreciate UNDP ability to use partners' technical expertise to efficiently avoid duplication. For example, UNDP employs the strength of WHO in health and UNICEF in education. UNDP needed instruments (such as grants) to deliver PFIP, and its partnership with UNCDF provided the needed financial instruments, and as such was truly synergistic. In addition, UNDP and UNCDF were able to create internal and external synergies by using the expertise of PFIP to deliver financial literacy training in its joint programme with the UN Women 'Markets for Change' project. UNDP is also working with UNCDF and the United Nations Environment (UNE) on blue economy programming.

Examples of joint programmes with positive results include the 'Global Oceanic Fisheries' project with UNDP and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Regional Coordination Group for the 'Regional R2R PICs' programme with UNE and FAO (refer to finding 1 on climate change and environment). For governance, stakeholders mentioned the 'Vanuatu Electoral Environment' project as a good example of UNDP partnership with UNICEF, WHO, UNESCAP and UNCDF. The close collaboration between UNDP, UNODC and other relevant agencies under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator's Office for some UN-PRAC activities was a good example (refer to finding 10 on strengthening transparency and accountability). Some partnerships were less successful, however. For example, the **Fiji** and **Vanuatu** youth programmes were designed with IFAD, but the 2019 evaluation did not mention any contribution of IFAD to the implementation.¹⁶⁴ Interviewees pointed out that partnership is not necessarily the exchange of funds across agencies to work better together. United Nations agencies cited various models to foster collaboration, such as sharing staff, offices, work plans and joint missions. However, there is still a strong tendency for United Nations agencies to implement projects in siloes (refer to finding 14 on strategic positioning).

¹⁶³ United Nations (2021) Joint Country Action Plan reporting.

¹⁶⁴ Sustainable Development Fund, 2015. Rana (2019).

Pacific Island Country governments

PIC governments view UNDP as an essential partner in the region, although its approach needs to be nuanced to each country and aware of duplications with the work of other development actors to maximize effectiveness. In general, government partnerships are strong, with variances depending on the country, diversity and scale of the UNDP portfolio, and the context. In multiple discussions, aid coordination was flagged as a potential area where PICs could use UNDP assistance, and UNDP support and possibly leadership could be strengthened. The **Tuvalu** Government identified that UNDP could extend its support to establish a country-level cross-donor committee. The Government identified the need for programme coordination and efficient use of funds. A donor roundtable has been discussed but not yet implemented. Similarly, the **Tonga** Government observed a lack of coordination and harmonization among development partners with common themes.

Governments identified duplications of work as a result of weakness in aid coordination. In **Fiji**, UNDP is coordinating activities with UNESCAP to avoid duplication. However, some stakeholders interviewed claimed that there was some duplication of activities (i.e., coordination with focal agencies and organizing meetings). UNDP conducted a preliminary meeting to scout for programmes related to the COVID-19 effects on gender, but the Government pointed out that they were already doing this work with UN Women. Other related examples are discussed in section 2.4 on COVID-19. Some lessons could be learned from **Vanuatu**, where a government stakeholder noted the strength of UNDP relationship with the Government, made possible through UNDP interaction with the Aid Coordination Group in the Prime Minister's Office. The UNDP creation of a sub-office in the Federated States of Micronesia to focus on countries in the North Pacific was seen as timely and with potential to provide coordination support.

Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific

UNDP engages with CROP agencies on various regional-level initiatives, but mostly in a task-oriented manner and less on a strategic level. Stakeholders identified that UNDP could engage CROP agencies earlier in proposal development, rather than presenting projects as *fait accompli*. In climate mitigation, UNDP works with SPC on the regional NDC platform, with monthly and quarterly discussions and lesson sharing. UNDP also worked with FFA, PIFS and SPREP, through the CROP plus one mechanism to help prepare Pacific delegates for the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26). Programmes also worked closely with SPC and PIFS on data collection and reporting on SDG progress through VNRs, and through PIFS, UNDP is part of a technical working group on climate finance and supported a comprehensive review of the Framework for Action on Energy Security in the Pacific 2010–2020.¹⁶⁵ UNDP has allocated funding for USP, SPREP and the Fiji Met Service to pursue the establishment of a Pacific Regional Training Centre accredited with the World Meteorological Organization.¹⁶⁶

Through the partnership with USP, a private sector innovation hub has been established in **Fiji** and co-working spaces in the **Marshall Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu**. These were complemented with technical assistance in developing mobile apps for financial and market services provided in these centres through other programmes (i.e., PFIP and PICAP). UNDP partnered with SPC through the 'Tuvalu Trade Capacity Development' programme, for work with agriculture and fishery elements.

¹⁶⁵ UNDP Fiji MCO (2019) ROAR.

¹⁶⁶ UNDP Fiji MCO (2020) ROAR.

Under Outcome 3, UNDP worked closely with individual CROP agencies and PIFS. For example, UNDP supported work on anticorruption leading to the adoption of a new regional framework by the 18 Pacific Island Heads of State in February 2021.¹⁶⁷ In addition, UNDP work on effective governance in the region is anchored in the Biketawa Declaration, the Boe Declaration on Regional Security and its supporting action plan, and the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration, amongst other key regional commitments.¹⁶⁸ UNDP has a strong partnership with PIFS through its regional anticorruption work and the UN-PRAC project. However, concerns were expressed by some PIFS stakeholders about the lack of communication or working relationship in other key governance areas in which UNDP is engaged, such as parliamentary support, strengthening of electoral commissions and access to justice.

Some opportunities to create strategic alliances have been missed. For example, the Pacific Resilience Partnership Task Force is an apex body hosted through a tripartite arrangement between PIFS, SPREP and SPC. This arrangement looks at directions in climate and disaster resilience and ways to create synergies amidst funding competition. Stakeholders observed that UNDP could add value by engaging in this task force.

At project execution level, UNDP recognizes and uses the strength of its regional partners to achieve results. For example, UNDP works with SPC, which has the regional mandate for marine hazards characterization and mitigation,¹⁶⁹ and has long-standing involvement with FFA on tuna fisheries. However, stakeholders mentioned that often UNDP approaches partners with finished projects, rather than involving them earlier in proposal development. This means that UNDP is either missing opportunities or possibly creating duplication. Stakeholders feel that, at times, UNDP does not recognize the mandates of regional organizations in certain areas of work.

Non-state actors and international financial institutions

UNDP had successful but limited collaborations with non-state actors and the private sector, but little evidence of any strategic partnership with IFIs. In some cases, there was duplication of efforts. In **Fiji**, PFIP worked with farmers' associations and consumer groups, both of which were very positive about the approach of the programme in interviews, describing PFIP as a way to reach grassroots communities and businesses. The associations meet quarterly with PFIP, and were also provided with financial and insurance literacy capacity-building. High-level indicators were used to monitor their performance with monitoring, evaluation and learning plans. The Cane Cooperative of Fiji even presented PFIP results to the PIFS meeting, where it was picked up for replication in other PICs. The key element noted by associations was the continuous UNDP engagement and adaptability, and they noted that UNDP listens to suggestions, such as the streamlining of reporting.

In working with the private sector, PFIP is a good example of effective UNDP work with banks, telcos and insurance companies. In addition, PFIP is part of the disaster risk financing working group of the Pacific Resilience Partnership, which enables it to bring ideas from NGOs and the private sector into discussions. The programme also involved national and regional stakeholders and there was robust sharing of knowledge, experience and coordination. In **Tuvalu**, UNDP worked with the Chamber of Commerce and the Pacific Tourism Organization, and helped to facilitate formal engagement between the Government and NGOs (refer to finding 6 on support to trade policies).¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ The Teieniwa Vision against Corruption.

¹⁶⁸ The Boe Declaration recognizes that climate change is the single greatest threat in the Pacific. <https://www.forumsec.org/2018/09/05/boe-declaration-on-regional-security/>

¹⁶⁹ Projects with SPC include the 'Regional R2R' and the 'Tuvalu Coastal Adaptation' projects.

¹⁷⁰ UNDP Fiji (2019 and 2020) ROARs.

There was little evidence in documentation and interviews of formal cooperation between UNDP and IFIs. In general, MCOs link with donors and IFIs such as ADB, DFAT and the World Bank through the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office, which holds quarterly meetings with donors and IFIs on specific areas like social protection and SDG financing. One particular result highlighted was the sharing of LIDAR data from the **Tuvalu** Coastal Adaptation Project with ADB. This data will be used for ADB construction of boat harbours, and the Marine Department wants to use it to update navigational charts.

Finding 15. There is limited project absorption capacity in PICs due to systemic reasons, one of which is the limited number of civil servants. Stakeholders reported an 'overcrowding' of small projects, and UNDP has contributed to this saturation with its expansive portfolio. Some PICs consider that the transaction costs outweigh the overall cumulative benefits. UNDP has recognized this dilemma and been proactive, as seen in its vertical fund portfolio where it has made efforts to increase the average value of its projects and implemented regional projects to reduce transaction costs.

The 'overcrowding' of projects is a broad and systemic issue in the Pacific for all development actors. To better understand this, figure 7 compares the number of public servants in PICs against the number of interventions or activities by United Nations agencies and their total US\$ value. This analysis is based on data reported by different United Nations agencies against the Joint Country Action Plan. The evaluation notes that, in some cases, the interventions and activities fall within the purview of the same project. Nonetheless, in most cases implementation of interventions and activities are led by individual agencies, which entails its own coordination activities with the government partners.

The data is arranged by increasing size of total public servants from left to right (gray areas). It is contrasted by the number of interventions/ activities (green columns) and the total US\$ value of interventions/ activities (blue columns). A visual assessment of figure 7 shows that PICs with a small number of government staff, such as Niue and the Cook Islands have almost the same number of interventions and activities than PICs with a 'medium-sized' civil servant population (such as the Federated States of Micronesia or Kiribati, and 'larger-sized' civil servant population (such as the Solomon Islands and Fiji).

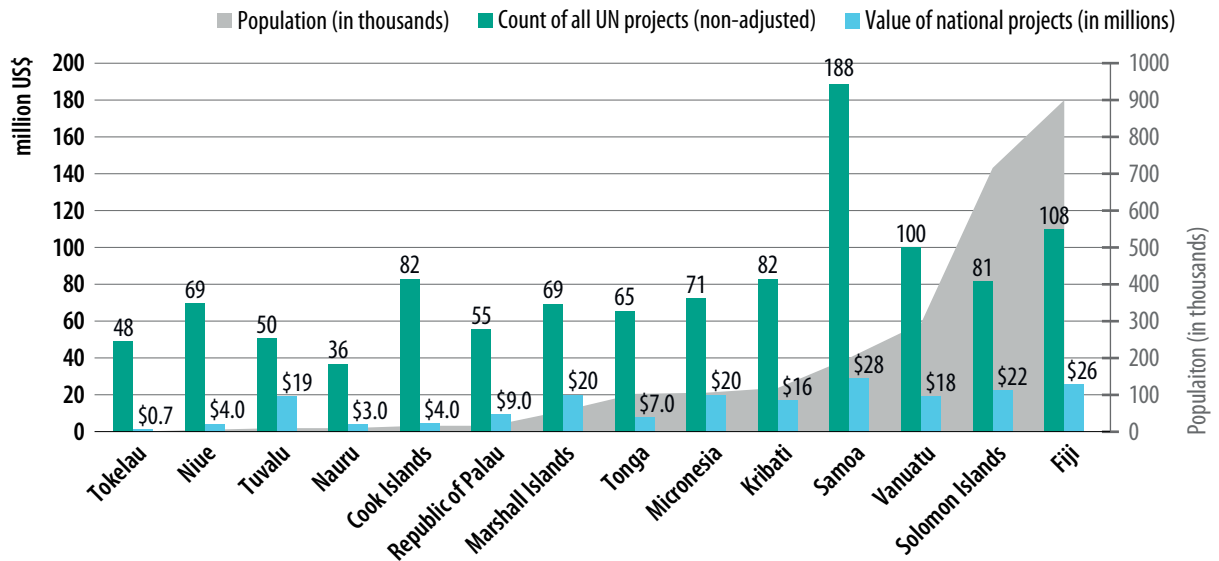
The majority of the interviewees, including national governments of PICs, supported this finding. Interviewees stated that UNDP (and the United Nations more broadly) have a large number of these small-value projects compared to bilateral donors and IFIs (i.e., ADB and World Bank). Stakeholders are appreciative of UNDP development assistance, but the transaction costs of implementing numerous projects was often too high because of a limited number of civil servants, often with multiple roles. This was mentioned as a substantial consideration that causes delays in project implementation. To put the issue of 'overcrowding' into perspective, in a country like **Tonga**, with about 99,000 people, the number of employees in public administration is estimated to be around 1,600.¹⁷¹ The country has 15 ministries, across five divisions and 23 districts. The Ministry of Justice has 123 employees, and the Department of Statistics has 50. In total, Tonga is implementing 65 projects (worth \$7 million in total), all with different levels of coordination and human resource costs to the Government.

Figure 8 shows the number of UNDP projects (blue column) relative to the number of United Nations projects (green column) in a country. Except for Samoa, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Fiji, PICs have comparable numbers of UNDP projects. This is supported by a large number of interviews that lauded UNDP as having a continuous and noticeable presence in the majority of PICs. At the same time, this illustrates a similar challenge of large numbers of projects in comparison to the local population. Given that Samoa, Fiji and the Solomon Islands are MCO hubs (or a sub-office in the case of Solomon Islands), they have a

¹⁷¹ Government of Tonga (2018) Tonga Labour Force Survey Analytical Report. p.22.

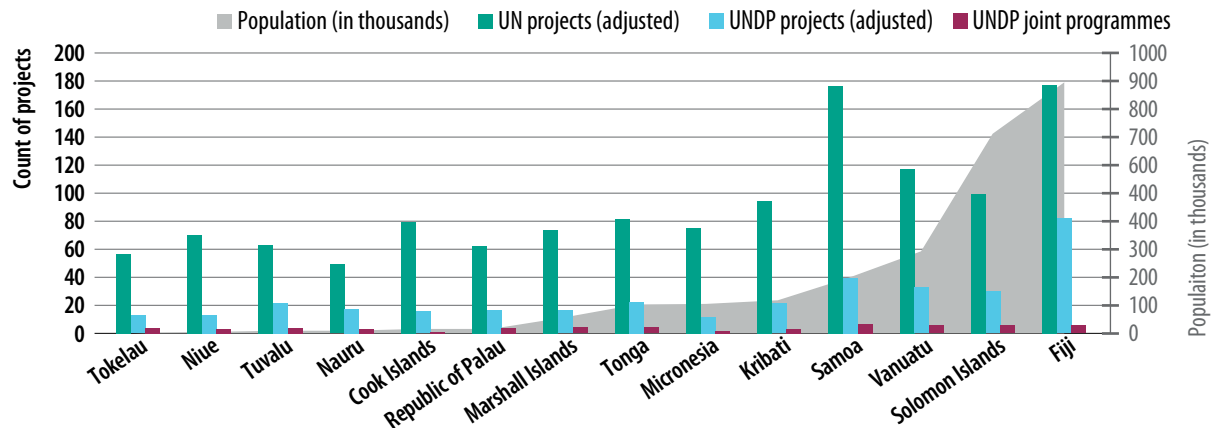
relatively larger number of projects. For Outcome 2, although some projects were regional on paper, implementation was limited to one of these hubs. UNDP has had mixed success in implementing a smaller number of high-value (\$) projects. For example, the **Federated States of Micronesia** has 16 projects in its SRPD portfolio with a budget of \$12 million, while **Tonga** has 22 projects but a budget of only \$1.5 million.¹⁷²

FIGURE 7. Comparison of the number of United Nations interventions/ activities, \$ value of interventions/activities and population size¹⁷³



Source: Joint Country Action Plan (2021), calculation by the evaluation team; Estimated number of public servants calculated from ILOSTAT

FIGURE 8. Comparison of the number of United Nations projects, UNDP projects, joint programmes with UNDP and population size



¹⁷² Atlas data as of January 2022.

¹⁷³ <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/> and ADB <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/rcs-pacific-2016-2020-ld-01.pdf>

Finding 16. Coherence between MCOs. There has been weak internal coherence and synergy between the two MCOs in the framework of the SRPD, due to lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities for the SRPD outcomes and indicators. There was a lack of shared services, such as knowledge management, M&E and communications. Outcome-level synergies between MCOs were mainly ad hoc and depended on project or donor requirements. There were some good, but limited, examples of synergies in themes such as climate change, DRR and markets and trade.

The joint IRRF for the two MCOs theoretically aimed to deliver a regional approach while tailoring programming for each of the 14 PICs. However, similar to the findings of the performance audits of Fiji MCO (2020) and Samoa MCO (2021), the evaluation found that the design of the SRPD was not fit for purpose to deliver a coherent and synergistic programme between the two MCOs. There was an expectation of pooled financial and human resources from the two MCOs, but this did not transpire as the two MCOs were each implementing the SRPD autonomously.

There was no clear delineation of responsibilities between the MCOs in terms of: (1) the share of target budget for the outcomes for each of the two MCOs; (2) who leads or initiates the process of managing, harmonizing and knowledge management of outcome-level results; or (3) who leads the monitoring of SRPD results (refer to finding 18 on M&E). This was compounded by separate reporting by both MCOs to individual modules of the UNDP corporate IRRF reporting (refer to Annex 6). In several instances, the evaluation found that the MCOs had different ways of interpreting, measuring and reporting against the SRPD output indicators in the corporate IRRF monitoring module. Other unclear roles and responsibilities included the extent of involvement of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support advisors assigned to the Pacific region and based in Bangkok in the programme management of the SRPD.

In addition, there was a lack of clarity around who should ensure the implementation of a cohesive portfolio and anticipate needs, specifically relating to the vertical funds: GCF and GEF. The evaluation consulted with the staff from headquarters, regional office and the MCOs, but it was not clear who is responsible for forecasting the needs for capacity and operational tools for the two MCOs.¹⁷⁴ These might include tools and capacities on administration, finance (such as procurement officers or procurement tools such as long-term agreements [LTAs]¹⁷⁵) or technical needs (i.e., Chief Technical Advisors and technical skills such as engineering). In the vertical fund's portfolio, pre-positioning of human resources and capacity is possible, given that: (1) UNDP has an extensive portfolio of GCF and GEF projects and more are in the pipeline (see finding 4); (2) there is significant lead time to inform decisions about needs, starting from the inception, design and implementation phases; and (3) vertical fund projects in the region are known to be procurement-heavy at the start. The evaluation noted that some LTAs were established in 2021, but it is not clear to what extent both MCOs can use these LTAs.

Outcome-level coherence between MCOs was minimal. Where cohesion was observed, outcome leaders reported regular one-on-one meetings and technical consultations on specific projects rather than at the level of the outcome. There were mechanisms to promote internal coherence, although some were relatively new. For example, since December 2019, the Deputy Regional Director based in the UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub brought senior management of the two MCOs together to discuss programme issues and challenges.

¹⁷⁴ Funded projects are co-designed in the Pacific region with significant support from the regional office in Bangkok and headquarters.

¹⁷⁵ "A 'long term agreement' is a written agreement between UNDP and a supplier that is established for specific goods or services at prescribed prices or pricing provisions for a defined period of time, year, against which specific orders (call-offs) can be placed at any time, during the defined period and with no legal obligation to order any minimum or maximum quantity." UNDP POPP.

In Outcome 3, Fiji MCO has the bulk of the governance portfolio and funds. Until early 2020, Samoa MCO did not have a Governance team, meaning that Fiji MCO had more capacity to pursue activities to implement activities under Outcome 3. The Governance team leader in the Samoa MCO acknowledged and commended the technical and advisory support they had regularly received from colleagues in the Fiji MCO. Prior to COVID-19, the two MCOs held annual coordination meetings for the overall regional programme. In addition, when designing regional projects, the Fiji MCO engaged and consulted with the Samoa team to strengthen collaboration and synergy. This provided a relatively higher-level coherence at the outcome level. Examples of recent regional pipelines include the ‘COVID-19 Border Management’ project and the ‘Pacific Elections’ programme. Some examples of good thematic-level synergies within MCOs are discussed in findings 3 on DRR and 7 on financial services.

Within the current setup of the MCOs, outcome leaders (and in some cases outcome teams) are expected to manage and create outcome-level synergies within and across the MCOs. Three significant factors constrained this. First, the number of projects in the outcome portfolio was quite large and the number of programme staff inadequate. The evaluation notes that projects have additional project staff involved in implementation, but programme staff are differentiated for having an overview of an outcome area, and as such have the resources and capacity to build coherence across an outcome area. While the evaluation recognizes the excellent calibre of UNDP staff, the multiplicity of their roles reduces the depth of their engagement on specific issues and their effectiveness, such as for outcome coherence. For example, MCO staff often lead Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) projects and provide backstopping support for National Implementation Modality (NIM) and other DIM projects.

Table 6 below provides a snapshot of programme staff per outcome in the two MCOs. Fiji MCO has a team of six assigned to Outcome 1 to manage the results and create synergies for 111 projects (\$122 million), while Outcome 3 has 78 projects (\$90 million) backstopped by two staff. In Samoa, three national officers manage the Outcome 1 portfolio of 33 projects (\$69 million). In comparison, three programme staff are managing both Outcomes 2 and 3 with almost the same number of projects but half the value.

TABLE 6. Number and value of projects in Fiji MCO and Samoa MCO by SRPD outcome and programme staff

	Fiji MCO			Samoa MCO		
	Count of projects	\$ value of projects*	Programme staff*	Count of projects	\$ value of projects*	Programme staff*
Outcome 1	111	\$122,179,269	2 (P), 4 (N)	33	\$69,612,726	3 (N)
Outcome 2	44	\$23,946,716	1 (P), 1 (N)	7	\$8,695,659	2 (N), 1 (UNV)
Outcome 3	78	\$90,362,338	1 (P), 1 (N)	21	\$24,741,689	

Source: Atlas (January 2022), Fiji MCO and Samoa MCO organigrams as of September 2021

Note: In this table, regional and multi-country projects overlapping between Fiji MCO and Samoa MCO were intentionally double-counted to show the expanse of an MCO’s portfolio. Hence, the \$ values of the two MCOs should not be aggregated.

*Programme staff includes professional post (P), national officer (N) and United Nations Volunteer (UNV). General staff were excluded from the analysis.

Second, the Pacific portfolio has a complex matrix of diverse governance structures that are based on projects. The SRPD was expected to have an SRPD-level board to provide oversight. Similarly, large projects would have their own project board or steering committees. In addition, DIM and NIM projects require different levels and intensity of coordination.¹⁷⁶ Some PICs, such as **Vanuatu, Kiribati** and **Tonga**, have field programme analysts that act as country liaison officers, but the programmatic role of these staff members, in terms of building synergy, is limited. In the case of **the Solomon Islands**, there is a dedicated Deputy Resident Representative that is expected to have overall programmatic oversight. Similarly, a new Deputy Resident Representative was assigned in Palikir as part of the new UNDP sub-office in the **Federated States of Micronesia**.¹⁷⁷

The third constraint has been the weak governance structures of the SRPD. Due to regional complexities and logistical challenges, there is no programme board to monitor the SRPD, unlike in other subregions. The MCOs used individual project boards as an alternative, but this was not optimal because each board was focused at project level. In interviews, UNDP programme staff mentioned that the level of engagement is low in these project board meetings and they have not contributed to building outcome-level coherence.

In 2020, Annual Programme Reviews were introduced with national partners in lieu of an SRPD Board and to meet audit recommendations. Ideally, different outcome groups would come together to receive and give updates regarding the programme in their country. However, this has been limited to project-level updates. The review process could have been a good barometer of UNDP work, but was not frequent enough or designed as a formative process to mine and create synergy. As an added mechanism for coherence, it was mentioned that the annual meeting for GEF managers includes sharing of experiences.

In retrospect, the Pacific Center, which was dissolved in 2016, provided a mechanism for outcome-level coherence. The Center was fully aligned to the SRPD outcomes and managed regional projects. Technical expertise in the Center provided services to regional projects and countries when needed. These elements provided the Pacific Center with both the mandate and resources to manage and create synergies between outcome-level results.¹⁷⁸

Finding 17. Capacity-development. There was a lack of comprehensive and systems thinking within UNDP on what effective capacity development for sustainability looks like for the Pacific. UNDP use of its global model of building capacity across individual, institutional and enabling environment dimensions, focused on the national level, was not as effective given the context of the Pacific.

Capacity-development is a genuinely systems-level issue in the Pacific. It involves related concerns such as the 'overcrowding' of projects (refer to finding 15) and regional partnership (refer to finding 14 on strategic positioning). As discussed in the previous section, the regional capacity to absorb multiple programmes, and the capacity of smaller nations to take longer-term ownership, are areas requiring more consideration.

One of the frequently used models of the UNDP approach to capacity-development is the three capacity dimension model – individual, institutional and enabling environment - with the involvement of the public sector. This model is not a good match for the Pacific, which has a limited number of civil servants who often have multiple roles. In some cases, those who have built expertise leave the region for better opportunities and compensation. Such factors lead to high turnover in government, and reliance on experts from outside the region, who rarely stay longer than their project assignments. Also, most donors have never favoured

¹⁷⁶ Another issue mentioned by stakeholders that contributed to the large transaction footprint of UNDP.

¹⁷⁷ This is in line with the creation of the United Nations MCO to cater for the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, the Marshall Islands, Kiribati and Nauru in 2019/2020.

¹⁷⁸ UNDP IEO (2012) Pacific Assessment of Development Results. Interviews.

funding staff in government offices due to the lack of sustainability. This reflects the view that funding government posts, while it may enable projects to run smoothly, is a short-term measure that does not increase the resource-base of the government to employ people for the long term.

Stakeholders have put forward alternative models that take into consideration the context of the Pacific, with its limited human resources and capacity. In these models, the focus is on the long-term, including capacity-development at the institutional and enabling environment dimensions, with strong consideration to building the capacity of regional organizations, which should be seen as an extension of PICs and the private sector. Diversifying the recipients of capacity-development activities showed positive results. In some projects, capacity-building efforts aimed at the private sector had encouraging results and led to opportunities to establish linkages between the private sector and the government. Interviews with CROP agencies underscored that smaller populations had limited skilled government staff to manage the complex programmes. For this reason, CROP agencies were created and mandated to supplement the technical capacity of countries in the Pacific (refer to finding 14 strategic positioning). Interviews with senior government officials called for UNDP to include building a cadre of 'national experts' and having a plan to engage them as a key component of the projects to enhance capacity-building and ensure the sustainability of outcomes.

One of the dominant findings in the discussion about external programme coherence was the importance of personal connections. In the Pacific, the pool of expertise is small and people know each other and choose to work together because they've worked done so previously. Although there are many task forces at the regional level that discuss different issues, most effective collaboration happens at a personal level. It is not necessarily expertise that makes certain people such heavy players in the region, but their openness, approachability and communication skills, which underscores the value of the 'soft skills' for the frontline personalities of UNDP.

Finding 18. M&E was relatively robust for DIM projects and less for NIM projects. M&E was weakened by overstretched human resources to meet stringent donor reporting requirements. This situation hindered systematic lesson learning.

The evaluation found that the number of staff supporting M&E processes was inadequate to the increasing M&E and reporting requirements from the growing UNDP portfolio. In the Fiji MCO, there are two dedicated regional M&E officers. One is responsible for Outcome 1, providing M&E oversight to a total of \$123 million, about \$76 million of which is under DIM. DIM projects often have project-funded M&E officers but still require support from the Fiji regional M&E officer. A total of \$46 million is under NIM projects, which need more support from the regional M&E officer because data is dependent on the implementing partner, usually national governments or NGOs. Another regional M&E officer supports Outcomes 2 and 3, which cover about \$92 million in mainly DIM projects.

The Solomon Islands sub-office and Samoa MCO have one dedicated regional M&E officer each, providing direct M&E support or backstopping project-funded M&E officers. The regional M&E officers are also given *ad hoc* duties to monitor the SRPD. To put the inadequacy of M&E staffing into perspective, a \$40 million, three-year programme in the Philippines in response to Typhoon Haiyan by another United Nations agency had 10 full-time M&E officers, two reporting officers and a dedicated Information Officer. A \$4 million GEF project in nine sub-Saharan countries had two full-time M&E officers and a knowledge management officer.

In some cases, project M&E systems were over-complicated and human resource intensive, considering the small budgets. In some projects, M&E activities ran the risk of duplicating efforts or creating parallel mechanisms to national systems. In some cases, insufficient attention was paid to the technical challenges

or costs of M&E and data acquisition at the project design phase. These costs can be substantial (i.e., external data acquisition, consultants for tasks such as baseline surveys and the equipment needed to complete M&E tasks). For example, national counterparts interviewed for the 'Regional R2R' project and midterm evaluation noted that the M&E expectation is a significant burden on national resources.

Donors (i.e., Australia, New Zealand and Japan) noted the deficiency in UNDP M&E. The evaluation of the '**Kiribati** Enhancing National Food Security' project suggested that it would have benefitted from the recruitment of a monitoring expert, or specialist training for the project coordinator, to enable the identification of indicators that were neither too ambitious nor difficult to monitor. The midterm evaluation of the 'Vaisigano River Catchment' project in **Samoa** found that efficiency levels were affected because Implementing Agency staff lacked the time or dedication to follow the strict project monitoring protocols required by GCF.

It is not always possible to compensate for a weak start in M&E, meaning that M&E skills and capacity should be front-loaded onto a project. For example, in the 'Enhancing Resilience of Coastal Communities of **Samoa**' project, efforts were made to improve M&E after the midterm review, but stakeholder involvement in M&E remained weak for the entire duration of the project. At the time of its interim evaluation, the '**Tuvalu** Coastal Adaptation' project did not yet have a finalized M&E plan, as the Project Management Unit did not have the relevant experience and capacity to develop one.

Finding 19. Decentralized evaluation has improved over the last four years, both in quantity and quality. Although, follow-up to evaluation recommendations and management responses were not systematically observed.

Compared with other UNDP MCOs and UNDP offices in island countries,¹⁷⁹ Fiji MCO has the highest percentage of evaluations completed. Table 7 provides an analysis of decentralized evaluations by the two MCOs. GEF evaluations make up 64 percent, or 27 out of 41, for Fiji MCO, and 62 percent, or 8 out of 13, for Samoa MCO. The evaluation load has increased every year, especially for Fiji MCO. Based on IEO Evaluation Resource Center's Quality Assurance scoring, evaluation quality in the Pacific has increased over the last four years.¹⁸⁰

The Fiji MCO has continuously improved its evaluation quality since 2019, with an average rating of 4.08 (Moderately Satisfactory). In Samoa MCO, the average quality assurance score increased from 2019 to 2021. However, the 4.3 (Moderately Satisfactory) score average for 2021 is composed of one Unsatisfactory (2) and one Satisfactory (5) evaluation. Considering only three evaluations were completed in 2021 and the Samoa MCO still has two overdue evaluations, this could be considered a suboptimal performance.

The total investment in evaluation was about \$1.45 million and the average cost for an evaluation is about \$25,000. These costs are quite significant and should be viewed as added incentives for the MCOs to use evaluation lessons in project design and implementation. Based on the current portfolio, in 2022, Fiji and Samoa MCOs will close around 42 projects (about 18 above \$1 million), with a total of roughly \$88 million. This presents an implementation challenge and an opportunity to take advantage of the experience and lessons learned.

¹⁷⁹ Barbados MCO, Jamaica MCO, UNDP Maldives.

¹⁸⁰ In reading table 7, the average quality assurance scores should be viewed together with the number of evaluations that have been quality assured.

TABLE 7. Data on MCO-led evaluations for Fiji and Samoa

		2018	2019	2020	2021	Totals
Fiji	Number of completed evaluations	6	12	10	14	42 (10 planned/ 9 cancelled/ 10.5 average per year)
	Number of evaluations with QA	3	4	10	12	29
	Average QA scores	4	3.75	3.6	4.08	3.86
	Average cost of eval	27,196	30,388	27,500	24,251	27,334 (1.1 million \$ in total)
Samoa	Number of completed evaluations	6	1	4	2	13 (3 planned/ 2 overdue/3.5 average per year)
	Number of evaluations with QA	4	3	2	3	12
	Average QA scores	3.5	3.3	3	4.3	3.56
	Average cost of evaluation	30,000	20,000	27,500	23,500	25,250 (.35 million \$ in total)

Source: UNDP IEO ERC (as of December 2021), calculations by the evaluation team. * QA = quality assurance

Evidence suggests that UNDP could do better in bringing forward lessons learned from previous projects or evaluations. For example, in the case of the ‘**Cook Islands R2R**’ project, it appears the findings from the midterm evaluation and project implementation reports were not considered. The project was consistently given a moderately unsatisfactory rating until the terminal evaluation. The UNDP MCO senior management was under the impression that the project was going well and considered it one of their more successful projects. This indicates a lack of full awareness and a possible need to review internal communication systems regarding project performance monitoring (similar example in finding 2 on DRR).

Finding 20. Adaptive management. There were some good examples of adaptive management in UNDP work. However, there is a need for more systematic documentation of lessons and improvement on information management, especially when staff turnover is high.

UNDP adjusted its coastal protection measures in Funafuti, **Tuvalu**, shifting plans from sea walls to land reclamation measures in 2019 after local stakeholders identified this approach as preferable. A LiDAR survey was integrated into the project activities, a major step forward in terms of providing a comprehensive assessment of land heights across all the islands of Tuvalu. At the beginning of 2017, two tropical cyclones affected the progress of the ‘**Vanuatu Coastal Adaptation**’ project. To adjust to the context, the project team partnered with stakeholders and implemented response and rehabilitation activities in some of the sites. These activities were still aligned with the pre-planned project activities, but the timing and approach for implementation were adjusted. PFIP actively utilized its M&E framework, using research-informed design, and institutionalized quarterly reflections with corrective actions.

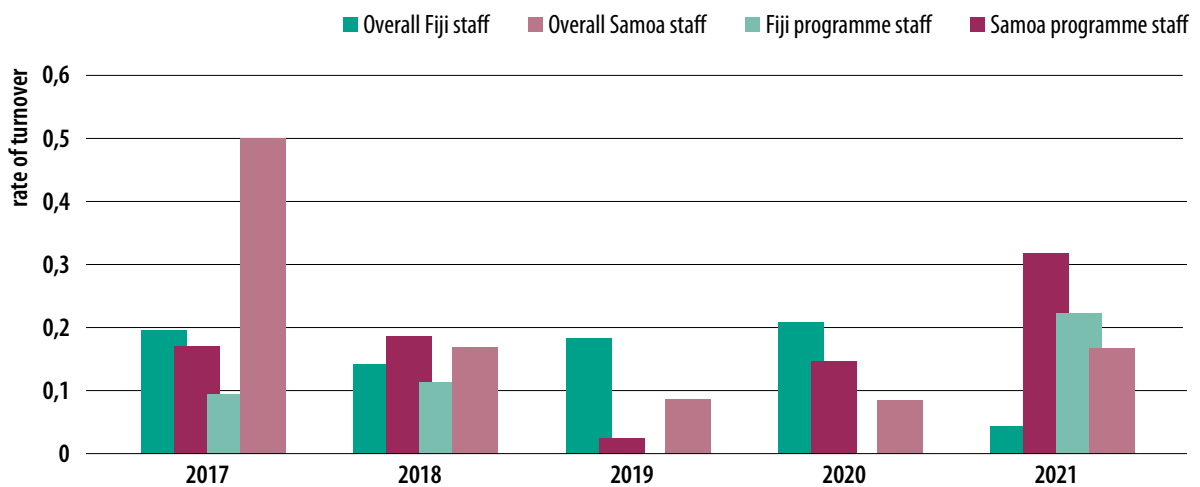
Figure 9 provides a comparison of staff turnover rates in Fiji and Samoa MCOs. The solid column (blue and green) represents the overall turnover rate. The patterned column (vertical and horizontal) represents the turnover specific to programme management of the SRPD outcomes (1, 2 and 3). The rate of turnover is contrasted with the number of projects closing.

From 2018 to 2020, the overall staff turnover rate (blue column) for Fiji MCO was constant and averaged about 17 percent. Fiji MCO has kept the turnover rate low for programme staff specific to SRPD outcomes 1, 2 and 3, (vertical striped column). In 2019 and 2020, the programme staff turnover rate was nil, rising in 2021 by 20 percent, coinciding with about 89 projects closing. Over the same years, Samoa MCO had a low average rate of staff turnover at 11 percent. However, the overall turnover rate per year was erratic (green column), with an observable peak in 2021. In discussions with UNDP staff, the main reasons provided for

staff turnover included: (1) the temporary contract arrangement is not attractive; (2) there are many agencies competing for skilled staff and UNDP is treated as a good training ground, but then people move on for better compensation; and (3) the salaries are higher and workloads more manageable at CROP agencies.

Given the limited human resources in the Pacific and the disruption and loss of institutional memory caused by staff turnover, UNDP should actively pursue avenues to improve staff retention. Forecasting waves of turnover coinciding with multiple project closures should be imperative for staff succession planning. Moreover, this data on staff turnover should be an impetus for improving and systematizing data and knowledge management. The occurrence of high waves of turnover, especially for outcome programme staff, stresses the importance of building institutional memory.

FIGURE 9. Comparison of staff turnover per MCO against closed projects



Source: HR data and ATLAS data, calculations by the evaluation team

Finding 21. Project design. UNDP has been strong in attracting large complex projects in the Pacific. In some cases, the successful implementation of these projects was hampered by causes related to project design. Although adaptive management can be applied to adjust project design, the context of PICs with limited and overloaded government staff is often limiting and causes further delays to implementation.

The year-on-year increase in UNDP budget from non-core or project resources shows its strength in developing bankable projects. Particularly on climate adaptation, UNDP projects are increasingly large and complex. The evaluation found that implementation challenges were often rooted in the design phase of projects. Project delivery was often delayed due to staff shortages, lack of data sharing mechanisms and financial constraints. Some projects had too many components, and while these might look good on paper, they did not fully consider operational challenges (i.e., numerous subnational units within small PICs, distance, logistics). In addition, there was a lack of continuity of technical skills and staff oversight from project design to the implementation phase. Often vague, project documents were left for the implementation team to decode, resulting in added delays. Some projects were designed with a paucity of local knowledge and without a detailed theory of change, SMART indicators, targets or baselines.

For example, in **Samoa**, the IMPRESS project document covered all types of renewable energy-based generation, but did not clarify the wide range of technologies, target groups and applications. Also, in **Samoa**, the engineering flood wall designs produced and presented within the funding proposal for the

'Vaisigano Catchment' project were not fully complete. As a result, the implementation of activities veered from the original project design, which led to a GCF risk flag. In the regional 'Disaster Resilience for Pacific SIDS' programme, the project document was not written by an early warning expert and the quality was questioned by stakeholders and implementers. In the **Kiribati** 'Enhancing National Food Security' project, areas targeted for mangrove reforestation were unrealistic and the method for measuring fish stocks was not optimal.

Project design and implementation were often disjointed and conducted in silos. It is rare for any UNDP staff member (especially technical staff) to follow a project throughout its lifetime. After a project is approved, it is often entirely devolved to an implementation team, leaving a knowledge gap that often causes delays. This is a systemic issue related to finding 22 on resource mobilization. Another factor contributing to knowledge gaps between design and implementation phases, especially for vertical fund (GEF and GCF) projects, is the frequent turnover of the Regional Technical Advisor role, which provides project oversight from Bangkok. The short design phase of the '**Marshall Islands** Disaster Preparedness and Infrastructure' project resulted in the lack of engagement of an expert for accurate cost estimates, detailed design and a feasibility study for the construction of an Emergency Operations Centre, for which over \$4 million was allocated out of a \$7.5 million budget. The accelerated implementation of the 'Enhancing the Resilience of Coastal Communities in **Samoa**' project may have resulted in some risks being taken on the quality of outputs, such as roads built without a climate-proof national standard.

The project design phase is critical because there is limited flexibility once a project is approved due to limited government staff capacity, especially in the Pacific (related to finding 1 on climate change and environment). In the case of the **Solomon Islands** 'Multisectoral Management of Critical Landscapes' project, the Senior Technical Advisor and Project Manager flagged early on that some indicators could not be measured and some targets could not be achieved. However, changes to targets were discouraged due to the lengthy process that it would incur. Similarly, there is little flexibility to modify annual government work programmes once they are agreed upon, such as the case of the R2R approach in the **Cook Islands**.

Finding 22. Resource mobilization. Stakeholders lauded UNDP ability to attract funding in the region, including from non-traditional donors. However, there is a growing perception among some PIC governments that UNDP projects can be donor-driven and opportunistic. This is substantiated by the siloed, often disjointed nature of the UNDP portfolio with an unclear outcome-level strategic narrative. There are positive signs of UNDP coherence-building in resource mobilization in the Pacific. Only recently, UNDP made efforts towards portfolio-level sensemaking and revamping of national project review committees.

As presented in finding 4 on vertical funds and finding 21 on project design, UNDP has shown its comparative advantage in developing an expansive array of projects. From 2018 to 2021, UNDP had the highest \$ value for its GEF portfolio (\$63 million) and the second largest GCF portfolio (\$112 million). It has mobilized around 55 donors, including non-traditional donors for the region such as the Russian Federation that funded the \$7.5 million RESPAC project. The 2020 United Nations country team report recognized UNDP ability to leverage financial resources, with a 400 percent increase in funding for the Pacific in 2020 from 2019.¹⁸¹ This claim was reinforced during interviews with donors.

For Outcome 3, the key bilateral donors to governance projects for the PICs were Australia (DFAT), the European Union, Japan and New Zealand. Donors acknowledged UNDP strength and its niche position in delivering governance programmes and strengthening key democratic institutions. They perceive UNDP as not only a recipient of development funds, but as a key implementing partner for governance programmes in the region.

¹⁸¹ United Nations Pacific (2020)

PIC governments are appreciative of these funding channels being tapped by UNDP. Nonetheless, many stakeholders feel that UNDP has not been strategic in developing its portfolio, and that some projects are designed to fit donor funding windows. This links to the ‘overcrowding’ of small projects (refer to finding 15). Since January 2021, a Pre-Investment Screening Committee has been convened, internal to UNDP and mostly for vertical funds, to discuss whether projects are a strategic fit before they go too deep into development. The results of this mechanism are yet to be seen. The Accelerator Labs¹⁸² have also assisted in sensemaking for the Pacific portfolio, to identify relevant themes in preparation for the new SRPD.

There are positive signs of UNDP coherence-building for resource mobilization. Joint programming has increased from 8 to 28 initiatives between 2019 and 2020, as reported by the United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office. UNDP has been at the forefront of this funding modality (refer to finding 14 on strategic positioning). Another way to foster collaboration between United Nations agencies is pooled funding. The UNPS Fund was established in 2020 and received its first ever pooled financing of \$24.7 million from New Zealand. This goes to finance five United Nations agencies in three areas of the UNPS: gender empowerment; basic services (WASH); and anticorruption.¹⁸³ However, due to the short timeframe for preparation of proposals for the Fund, agencies had to retrofit existing and complementary work rather than co-designing activities.

2.7 Subregional programme performance ratings

The following table provides an overview of the performance of the subregional programme, using five internationally agreed evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and a set of parameters for each. A four-point rating scale is used, with 4 being the highest and 1 the lowest rating.¹⁸⁴ This table should be read bearing in mind the findings presented in the previous sections, which provide more detailed justification for the ratings.

Finding 23. UNDP performed well, designing a relevant programme (Relevance = 4). It was successful in achieving output-level targets but did not present a clear pathway toward outcome goals (Effectiveness =3). Its portfolio is expansive and it has delivered considerably complex projects, but based on delivery rates, its performance was suboptimal (Efficiency = 2). Although there are good examples of coherence within its programming, there is a broader gap in creating synergy between the two MCOs and between outcomes (Coherence = 1). There are some signs of sustainability within UNDP programming, but this will largely depend on how capacity is created and sustained in the Pacific (Sustainability =3).

¹⁸² “The Accelerator Labs are designed to close the gap between the current practices of international development in an accelerated pace of change.” <https://acceleratorlabs.undp.org/content/acceleratorlabs/en/home/about-us.html>

¹⁸³ UNODC, UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP.

¹⁸⁴ 4 = Satisfactory/Achieved; 3 = Moderately satisfactory/Mostly achieved; 2 = Moderately unsatisfactory/Partially achieved; 1 = Unsatisfactory/Not achieved.

TABLE 8. Subregional programme performance ratings

Criteria and parameters	Overall rating (scale 1-4)	Remarks/ justification
1. Relevance	4	The SRPD was aligned with national development priorities outlined in the Development Plans of different PICs. It was responsive to the corporate-level strategic direction of UNDP, such as the UNDP SIDS Offer on climate action, blue economy and digitization. The two MCOs coordinated closely with their government counterparts in the planning of activities. UNDP was responsive, agile and adaptive to the changes brought about by COVID-19, which shifted some programme goals. The programme logic could have been better nuanced at the onset (or midway) to respond to the unique context of the Pacific in terms of scarcity of human and technical resources and capacity, and project absorption.
1.A. Adherence to national development priorities	4	
1.B. Alignment with United Nations/ UNDP goals	4	
1.C. Relevance of programme logic	3	
2. Coherence	1	Within individual MCOs, outcome coherence was weak and variable. There were fragmented themes that did not link up to a systemic outcome result. Coherence between the MCOs along the SRPD framework was lacking and, at times, ad hoc. Outcome leaders were not systematically creating synergy.
2.A. Internal programme coherence	1	
2.B. External programme coherence	2	There were exceptional examples of good external programme coherence through joint programming, mostly attributed to partner agencies. The overall saturation of projects in the Pacific is seen as a result of a lack of external coherence. As one of the largest development actors in the Pacific, UNDP bears much of the responsibility.
3. Efficiency	2	UNDP has been efficient in getting projects funded. However, the delivery rate of outcomes across the Pacific was below 65 percent. In addition, weaknesses in project implementation readiness (i.e., the lack of forecasting of project needs) contributed to implementation delays. Though the staff were of excellent calibre, they were overwhelmed by the large programme and multiple responsibilities.
3.A. Timeliness and management efficiency	2	
3.B. Management efficiency	2	
4. Effectiveness	3	UNDP has mostly achieved project or output-level goals. Outcomes could not be measured, but precursors to some outcome-level results were achieved.
4.A. Achieving stated outputs and outcomes	3	
4.B. Programme inclusiveness (especially those at risk of being left behind)	2	
4.C. Prioritizing GEWE	3	
4.D. Programming processes adhered to sustainable development principles	3	
5. Sustainability	3	There is a significant weakness in the sustainability of capacity, which should have been a major contextual consideration in the Pacific.
5.A. Sustainable capacity	2	UNDP has been successful in attracting development financing in the Pacific from traditional and non-traditional donors.
5.B. Financing for development	4	

CHAPTER 3

**CONCLUSIONS,
RECOMMENDATIONS AND
MANAGEMENT RESPONSE**



This chapter presents the evaluation conclusions on UNDP performance and contributions to development results in the Pacific, along with recommendations and the management response.

3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The significant size of the UNDP Outcome 1 portfolio (climate change, disaster resilience and environmental protection) shows its relevance and demonstrates that it is responding to the most pressing needs in the Pacific. Overall, UNDP has been largely effective and successful in delivering project-level results, but needs to move further into influencing higher, outcome-level results. A trade-off of success was that UNDP fell short of building coherence across its expansive portfolio. It was not able to build a strong and strategic narrative for Outcome 1. Instead, it had successful but fragmented, often siloed, projects under several themes.

UNDP implemented a broad programme of diverse themes in the area of DRR and the environment that enabled it to respond to the different needs of all 14 PICs. UNDP successfully worked on umbrella issues such as climate change, supported high-level multilateral agreements such as those related to the UNFCCC and specific niches. UNDP worked well in the area of climate change adaptation and mitigation. It was able to attract sizeable funding from vertical funds. Also, it was able to leverage its climate change portfolio and move forward some important economic issues such as climate-related insurance. Some themes in Outcome 1, such as energy and fisheries, had good results but limited coverage. UNDP tried to standardize some approaches, such as the R2R approach for integrated resource management. This allowed it to aggregate lessons and push for more robust messaging on environmental conservation to PICs.

Conclusion 2. UNDP achieved notable results in its Outcome 2 (sustainable and inclusive economic development). It engaged in very successful partnerships with other United Nations agencies. Considering the relatively small budget for this outcome, it engaged in relevant mechanisms, such as financial services and digitalization to improve people's livelihoods in the Pacific. However, it did not take full advantage of the high youth dividend in the Pacific. UNDP effectively utilized joint programming to achieve results.

UNDP work on inclusive growth responded to the fragility of PICs due to their size, small populations, limited resources and the risk of natural disasters, including those exacerbated by climate change. One of the most important contributions of UNDP was its work on insurance which opened opportunities for small businesses, especially for women. It was able to build collaborative work with the United Nations country team (i.e., Markets for Change with UN Women and PFIP with UNCDF). The MCOs are fully aligned with the UNDP SIDS offer on blue economy and digitalization. However, the blue economy concept still needs to be clearly defined and nuanced across different PICs to ensure that it is anchored to sustainable development principles.

UNDP had limited programming related to youth, a missed opportunity considering the high youth dividend in the Pacific. Overall, UNDP has been strategic in dovetailing the work of its joint programming partners, often stepping back and letting partners lead in delivering projects outside of the usual areas of UNDP expertise or where it lacks capabilities.

Conclusion 3. UNDP had promising results in Outcome 3 (governance and community engagement) but with limited implementation in several PICs, especially those where there is a pressing need to elevate women in government decision-making roles.

UNDP work on governance has been generally positive, but limited. National governments view UNDP as the preferred partner to work on politically-sensitive areas such as strengthening parliamentary processes and election management bodies. UNDP has developed a good track record in these areas, but needs to work harder to build a strong partnership with PIFS in delivering this important governance support to PICs.

UNDP continues to deliver needed support, highlighted by its work with parliamentarians in several PICs, the Solomon Islands Peacebuilding Fund project and the Regional Anticorruption project. Changes in governance structures are always slow and incremental, especially in the Pacific, and UNDP is best suited to work in this area due to its long history, presence and intimate relationships with PICs.

Conclusion 4. UNDP remains an important development actor and sought-after collaborator in the Pacific. Its comparative advantages are its strength in mobilizing resources, its in-country presence and sizeable operations. UNDP performed well in resource mobilization and programme management, even though it was constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic. UNDP was agile and flexible in responding to COVID-19 in the Pacific. Its ability to negotiate the repurposing of existing funds, and attract new funding during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the trust afforded to it by donors and the governments of PICs.

UNDP has gained respect and trust in the Pacific through its strong commitment to its normative values and ability to mobilize and implement numerous projects. United Nations agencies see UNDP as a strong project implementation machine. PIC governments view UNDP as an institution that attracts donors. CROP agencies and Non State Actors see UNDP as a competitor for limited funding in the Pacific, as well as a strategic partner that can help to build regional capacity. While IFIs view UNDP as a good development actor, they have not engaged in strategic partnerships with each other. Because of its large portfolio, UNDP has a responsibility to minimize the ‘overcrowding’ of small projects in the Pacific. Some PICs identified donor coordination as an area where UNDP could provide support.

As evidenced by its vertical fund portfolio, UNDP has successfully mobilized resources for Outcome 1. Outcome 3 achieved twice the amount it had planned at the start of the SRPD, while Outcome 2 attracted the least amount of funding and was \$10 million short of its intended target.

UNDP performance during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic underscored its comparative advantage in the Pacific. It was able to respond to the immediate needs of PICs in providing COVID-related support (i.e., isolation facilities, personal protective equipment). The UNDP SIDS offer on digitalization gave an added impetus for UNDP to focus on solutions for business continuity, especially to challenges brought about by pandemic restrictions. UNDP provided remote working tools to PICs and furthered its work on market digitization. Internally, UNDP adjusted and thrived with new ways of working remotely.

Conclusion 5. UNDP is continuously improving its gender programming, and has achieved significant results in gender through joint programming. There are still considerable opportunities to make its extensive portfolio more gender-responsive.

UNDP has helped to mainstream gender in the Pacific. Gender results were seen at the individual and household level under Outcomes 1 (environment and DRR) and 2 (inclusive economic growth). These include an increase in the financial independence of women and opportunities for women to enter traditionally male-dominated areas of work. However, UNDP work to integrate women into political spaces was not sufficient, with good but limited examples of empowering women to take up political roles. Due to a lack of coherence between the two MCOs, some results and lessons were not more broadly adopted.

Conclusion 6. The two MCOs have implemented the SRPD as two parallel programmes with limited coherence and synergy. This was due to unclear roles and responsibilities in the SRPD, in addition to the challenging nature of working across the vast area of the Pacific.

The design of the SRPD, with a joint IRRF, was not fit for purpose. The two MCOs were administratively and operationally functioning independently. To some extent, regional projects offered opportunities to create synergy, but these were limited. The largest missed opportunity was the ability to apply tried and tested lessons from one MCO to another, pooling capabilities and building stronger messaging on common issues in the Pacific.

The limited coherence between MCOs, and within MCO outcome areas, can be traced back to the lack of proper SRPD governance that takes into consideration the uniqueness of the Pacific, alongside a lack of dedicated programme managers who could find, build and maintain synergy between the MCOs. The inability of donors to fund portfolio approaches has been a key driver of projectization in the Pacific, but the separate implementation of the SRPD by the two MCOs also contributed to this, and to some degree to the 'overcrowding' of projects decried by stakeholders.

Conclusion 7. The application of M&E across the Pacific has been relatively variable. The understaffing and overburdening of the M&E function (including knowledge management) has caused interlinked issues such as lower project effectiveness and efficiency, poor documentation and absorption of lessons from previous projects, insufficient follow-through of evaluation recommendations and management responses, and some weak project designs.

M&E was weak in several key aspects. First, the outcome result descriptions and indicators of the SRPD were high-level and there was a lack of output-level indicators that were fully aligned to the outcome metrics. This limited what the M&E system could measure. Second, there was a lack of coherence and unclear roles and responsibilities between the two MCOs regarding the SRPD, which left the two M&E systems to concentrate on their own MCOs. Third, the portfolio was too large and understaffed. This did not enable a well-functioning M&E system to provide oversight and backstopping support to NIM and DIM projects, track management responses, conduct syntheses of lessons and portfolio-wide sensemaking, and ensure lessons were integrated into project design and implementation.

Conclusion 8. Capacity-development is one of the most significant precursors for the broader adoption (replication, mainstreaming, scaling and sustaining) of results and lessons in the Pacific. The usual UNDP model of building capacity at country level might not be applicable in PICs due to their limited human resources. While UNDP works with CROP agencies, in most cases for project execution, stakeholders are pushing for more regional mechanisms involving CROP agencies to improve capacity in the Pacific.

Capacity-development in the Pacific is limited by the small population and geographical distance between island nations. There is a recognised need to reimagine capacity-development in the Pacific. Currently, UNDP is still applying its global model of working across three capacity-development dimensions (individual, institutional and the enabling environment), focusing at the country level. As a leading agency in the Pacific, UNDP has the trust of its stakeholders, and the resource and the technical capacity to start a reflective discussion on what capacity-development should look like in the context of the Pacific.

3.2 Recommendations and management response

RECOMMENDATION 1.



In the areas of climate change, DRR and the environment, UNDP should develop a strategic narrative for its portfolio, to ensure that all of its projects under its diverse themes are working towards a common goal. There is an ongoing tension between responding to the funding opportunities vertical funds offer, fulfilling the needs of countries for individual projects, and acting strategically within the vast array of challenges under Outcome 1. To move forward with coherence, UNDP could invest in two or three strategic areas under Outcome 1, based not only on the existing portfolio, but by further identifying UNDP comparative strengths within them through systems thinking. This might include coastal adaptation, DRR and climate finance.

A coastal adaptation cluster could draw together UNDP work on coastal adaptation with R2R integrated management and innovation under the Global Fund for Coral Reefs. UNDP plays a leadership role in DRR and there are examples of innovative financing that it has initiated. In the area of climate finance, UNDP is well poised to directly remedy some of the barriers countries face in accessing and managing vertical funds, taking full advantage of its in-country presence and relationships with PIC governments.

UNDP could reasonably foresee strategic commitment to these strategic areas over the next decade, and commit to embedding and maintaining technical focal points in the Pacific. This commitment would, to some extent, address the internal capacity issues evident with project-based funding. The evaluation also suggests that UNDP could improve programme cohesion in vertical fund projects through better linkages between project design and implementation, staff retention within and beyond projects, and better information management, communication, responsiveness and evaluation.

Management response: **Accepted**



Given the critical development challenges and priorities in PICs with regards to climate change and the fact that vertical funds are the largest funders of such interventions, we see vertical funds continuing to play a significant role moving forward. However, this will be balanced with resource mobilization from non-vertical funding sources. UNDP is developing a strategic narrative of its portfolio within the framework of the next Multi Country Programme Document (MCPD) for the Pacific (2023-27). The current outcome-level narrative is that the people of the Pacific are resilient in the face of climate change, disasters and environmental degradation, whereby UNDP will focus its efforts in the three areas of: (1) Climate Change Mitigation, Adaptation and Climate Security; (2) DRR, Recovery and Risk-informed Development; and (3) Protection and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources. It is important not to focus too narrowly, given the vast array of differentiated existing and emerging needs of PICs under Outcome 1, while being strategic. Going forward, in full alignment with the national priorities, the next programme cycle will synchronize resource mobilization efforts from vertical funds with strategic approaches.

◀ Recommendation 1 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.1 Build and review a pipeline of projects in line with the strategic narrative of the portfolio of the new MCPD mobilizing resources from new and potential financiers (bilateral, IFIs, United Nations joint programming, etc.) (also see key action 6.1)	Building pipeline is ongoing work Review of pipeline Q1 each year.	Resilience Sustainable Development (RSD) in Fiji MCO Environment and Climate Change Unit (ECCU) in Samoa MCO		Ongoing
1.2 Both MCOs will align their respective Partners & Communication Action Plans to the high-level narrative to support resource mobilization accordingly	October 2022	Deputy Resident Representative		Not initiated

RECOMMENDATION 2.



In the inclusive growth and governance portfolio, UNDP should develop strategic areas of work and maintain and strengthen the partnerships it has helped to build. UNDP should continue to take full advantage of United Nations reform to build on the recognized success of the UNDP and United Nations country team joint programming. It should take advantage of the large youth dividend in the Pacific for economic programmes that contribute to peace and security. UNDP should capitalize on its SIDS Offer, such as expanding its digitization portfolio, especially for developing policies for digitalization, to push its inclusive growth mandate and respond to the needs of the youth sector.

UNDP has built strategic partnerships under Outcome 2 (inclusive growth) and Outcome 3 (governance). These partnerships could be used to build coherence, and advance the UNDP integrator role in the Pacific. For example, UNDP has built synergy through the exchange of expertise between its 'Markets for Change' project with UN Women and PFIP with UNCDF. This kind of integrator role will be more challenging and need more programme-level sensemaking, but will be more beneficial in the long term.

The UNDP SIDS Offer, made up of climate action, the blue economy and digitization, presents a strong mandate and negotiating tools to rally support from PIC governments and donors for sustainable and inclusive growth. In doing so, UNDP should ensure that the blue economy concept is not green/blue washed in the process of being defined. Through its vast experience in PICs and with non-Pacific SIDS, UNDP has the capability to facilitate the process of defining the blue economy with nuance for the Pacific context while aligning it to the SDG principles.

As peace and security issues are tied to economic growth and inclusivity, UNDP should ensure that programmatic linkages between the two are observed in its programming. This is especially true for countries with high youth populations and unemployment. In the case of digitization work, while other actors could be more suited to work on the hardware, such as undersea cables, stakeholders agree that UNDP could work in the digital policy space to prepare PICs for digital transition. UNDP should take advantage of its Global Policy Network and Accelerator Labs for reimagining what a digital economy could look like in the Pacific.

Management response: Accepted



Under the development of the new MCPD, UNDP is identifying strategic areas of work in its portfolio to harness digitalization, youth dividend as well as taking to scale successful partnerships to advance economic prosperity that could contribute to broader peace and security. Furthermore, UNDP takes note of the recommendation to leverage the SIDS Offer to promote inclusive growth and create specific outcomes for youth. Building on digital assessments being done in multiple countries, governance teams will enhance the application of digital solutions such as e-governance systems to strengthen institutions focused on improving the enabling environment, among others, to advance inclusive growth outcomes.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Within the framework of the new MCPD, UNDP will include a strategic narrative articulating integrated solutions to enhance the implementation of the SIDS Offer vis-à-vis inclusive growth, climate change and governance	Q4 2022	Inclusive Growth, Effective Governance and RSD unit in Fiji MCO Governance and Poverty Reduction Unit (GPRU)/ECCU/Strategic Team in Samoa MCO	SIDS Blue Economy Policy Specialist has commissioned an Option Paper on the Governance Offer under Blue Economy	Initiated

◀ Recommendation 2 (cont'd)

2.2 Identify strategic areas for integrated response and support in the new country programming period through sensemaking and foresight methodologies	Q4 2023	Inclusive Growth, Effective Governance and RSD units and Accelerator Lab in Fiji MCO GPRU/ECCU/ Accelerator Lab in Samoa MCO	The Accelerator Lab supports sensemaking and foresight approaches	Initiated
2.3 Develop new joint programmes in both MCOs that provide for an integrated service offer in support of economic prosperity, especially for youth	Q3 2023	Inclusive Growth, Effective Governance and RSD units in Fiji MCO GPRU in Samoa MCO		Initiated
2.4 Expand digital transformation project portfolio in both MCOs	Q3 2023	Inclusive Growth, Effective Governance and RSD units and Accelerator Lab in Fiji MCO GPRU/ECCU/ Strategic Team/ Accelerator Lab Samoa MCO	UNDP Governance team working on consolidating and upscaling digital initiatives started during pandemic in a structured approach	Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 3.



UNDP should focus its governance programmes in areas where it has a niche and can bring lessons learned and knowledge products from other small island States. The UNDP strength and niche in its governance programmes have been built through the institutional strengthening and capacity-building of national and local leaders.

UNDP needs to continue working in partnership with UN Women and other key development partners in the region (in particular Australia and New Zealand) to encourage women’s political participation. The Pacific has the lowest number of female MPs, and more work is required to address this.

UNDP needs to do more research and work at local and subnational levels to encourage bottom-up democracy to empower local communities, so that local decision-making can have an impact at national level. There has to be recognition that more formal governance work may not be suitable in micro-States like Niue and Tokelau, where local governance structures are better suited to address local issues. UNDP should continue to ensure that any governance programmes are designed and tailored to the unique national contexts of each PIC, and more thinking is required for UNDP to ensure that governance programmes benefit the diverse societies of PICs.

Management response: Partially accepted



UNDP has a well-formulated and effective governance portfolio that has grown pragmatically. The programme focuses on five distinct niche areas in institutional strengthening, which are: 1) inclusive political processes and enhanced social cohesion; 2) enhancing the rule of law, access to justice and human rights; 3) strengthening transparency and accountability mechanisms and institutions; 4) strengthening core governance and subnational structures for enhanced service delivery; and 5) Health systems strengthening. In all of the pillars, key cross-cutting themes with dedicated programming and resources are: gender equality; governance responses to COVID-19; citizen engagement; and digitalization.

We would like to note that the analysis presented in the evaluation does not adequately capture the overall efforts undertaken by UNDP to strategically position its support, strategically develop new areas of work in the area of effective governance and the extent to which it has scaled up various interventions under Outcome 3, reaching \$14-17 million per annum. Similarly, UNDP has developed a number of knowledge products, and documented key lessons learnt which enabled it to build a strong institutional strengthening governance programme that is responding to the needs of PICs, including building the capacity of national and local leaders. The agility of the UNDP effective governance programme to adapt to changing circumstances during COVID-19, enabling PICs to enhance service delivery through the application of digital solutions, has been widely recognized and is being scaled up by countries outside of the region.

Notwithstanding, the two MCOs would like to note that we will continue to upscale, systematically taking the lessons learned and knowledge generated from one PIC to another to create more demand for our governance programme across the region.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Building on our successes, within the framework of the new MCPD, UNDP will articulate the strategic narrative on the UNDP governance offer with a focus on: (i) institutional strengthening-both national and subnational); (ii) gender equality; and (iii) enhancing social cohesion	Q3 2022	Effective Governance team of the two MCOs		Initiated
3.2 Enhance the application of digital solutions for effective governance – e.g., e-governance for public service delivery	Q4 2023	Effective Governance team of the two MCOs		Initiated

◀ Recommendation 3 (cont'd)

3.3 Develop knowledge products, using insights generated from decentralized evaluations as well as new research on areas where progress is lagging in the Pacific e.g., women's political participation, to inform project design (see also key action 7.3)	14	Inclusive Growth, Effective Governance and RSD units in Fiji MCO GPRU/ECCU/ Strategic Team in Samoa MCO	Gender specialists will support the effort of the Programme and Policy team	Initiated
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RECOMMENDATION 4.



UNDP should continue to improve the integration of gender across its future SRPD outcomes, especially in the governance workstream. UNDP should ensure that it is using knowledge management to share lessons between the two MCOs and achieve the broader adoption of results within the 14 PICs.

UNDP should take advantage of the experience it has accumulated over the last decade working on gender in the Pacific. The current SRPD has fully integrated gender in its outcome areas, but still needs further refining to ensure that UNDP is working in areas and PICs where deeper intervention is needed, such as the governance workstream. UNDP should maintain and capitalize on the strength of sister agencies such as UN Women in implementing wider and regional activities in the region.

Management response: Partially accepted



Within the development of the new programme, UNDP is undertaking deep gender analysis to inform all of its outcome areas. The two MCOs will share key lessons learnt for potential adoption within the wider regional setup. In relation to integrating gender, specifically into the governance workstream, the two MCOs will deepen and scale-up successful efforts from the current SRPD, including through work with Pacific legislatures to analyse legislation and national budgets from a gender perspective, and support to electoral management bodies and political party regulatory bodies on options for increasing women's political participation in elections and through political parties, *inter alia*.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Both MCOs strengthen their gender mainstreaming capacity by completing the 2021-23 round of the UNDP Gender Seal	Q1 2023	Gender focal teams in both MCOs	Supported by the economist and Team Leaders	Initiated

◀ Recommendation 4 (cont'd)

4.2 Conduct portfolio gender screening to ensure the integration of gender across programme areas as part of the ongoing pipeline development and quality assurance process	Q2 2023	M&E team, gender focal teams in both MCOs, ECCU/ GPRU in Samoa MCO	Supported by gender focal team	Not started
4.3 Conduct data analysis to identify innovative approaches to advance gender equality and inclusivity in the political, decision-making and economic spaces	Q4 2023	Governance team in both MCOs	Undertake one analysis in Nauru to start before scaling up to other countries	Started

RECOMMENDATION 5.



To ensure coherence across multi-country offices, there is a need for regular programme-level meetings between outcome teams and senior management. The role of RBAP in building coherence across the whole Pacific subregion should be clarified, given that it is in a position to see the bigger picture, future programming directions and the pipeline of projects (especially for vertical funds), and serves as liaison with the Regional Office.

The next UNDP programme in the Pacific could still be under one SRPD for Fiji MCO and Samoa MCO. However, separate IRRFs need to be developed for the two MCOs. This would fit the current operational structure and corporate-level reporting of UNDP, and will manage expectations in terms of the level of coherence that could be achieved. If the MCOs decide to have a common IRRF, then shared services such as M&E, knowledge management and communication should be organized to ensure programme coherence, in addition to regular coordination meetings senior management and outcome teams.

A separate IRRF for the two MCOs would clarify their commitments to the SRPD, roles and responsibilities and the target budget to be mobilized. In doing so, the MCOs will not be expected to have an overall SRPD Board. Instead, there could be smaller manageable boards that could be linked. Neither would there be an expectation from oversight functions that the programme be implemented as one. The time and resources of both MCOs should be concentrated on areas where coherence and synergy are expected to naturally occur, such as regional and multi-country projects, common approaches such as R2R projects, or umbrella themes such as climate change.

This would require the senior management of both MCOs to push for more regular coordination between outcome leaders/ teams and working groups (i.e., gender working group, M&E, knowledge management). At the very least, the outcome teams of both MCOs should be aware of project concepts being prepared or pipeline projects to ensure collaboration and lesson sharing.

Regardless of whether there is one joint or two separate IRRFs, under the leadership of RBAP the two MCOs should improve the forecasting of projects and needs, especially for large vertical fund projects. In addition, LTAs should be made available to all Pacific MCOs and sub offices.

Management response: Partially accepted 

Within the development of the new MCPD for the two MCOs, UNDP will explore the possibility of having a system in place to ensure broader strategic results for the regional programme, accountability for the two MCOs and allow efficient reporting using one IRRF. This could potentially include target-setting by the two MCOs within one IRRF that enables clear accountability for results. Regular programme-level meetings shall be organized including the two MCOs and RBAP, at least annually, as part of the implementation of the M&E plan of the new MCPD.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
5.1 Develop new MCPD IRRF	Q1 2023	Deputy Resident Representatives	Supported by M&E and RBAP	Initiated
5.2 Develop M&E plan for the new MCPD	Q1 2023	Deputy Resident Representatives	Supported by M&E teams and RBAP	Not started

RECOMMENDATION 6. 

As one of the largest development actors in the Pacific, UNDP should actively monitor the ‘overcrowding’ of small-value projects in the subregion, and should proactively seek solutions to lessen the factors contributing to this issue.

PICs have been voicing that the high transaction costs of implementing multitudes of small value projects are taking a toll on their governments’ ability to deliver projects on time and of high quality. UNDP has recognized this, and should continue to minimize or consolidate small-sized projects. Working through joint programmes has been proven to minimize the implementation and coordination burden of PICs.

Donor coordination has been identified by several PICs as an area where UNDP could assist or build capacity. As a trusted partner in development, UNDP is in a position to engage its partners in discussions around the saturation of small projects in the Pacific, advocate on this issue with donors and push for pooled funding where possible. UNDP should work with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and individual PICs to find solutions for this unique development challenge.

The evaluation notes the existence of project appraisal committees, convened by all PIC governments to review the integrity of project designs, and to a certain extent possible activity-level duplication. The evaluation sees the need to further strengthen these committees and align the review of projects at outcome level, contrasting UNDP projects against those of other development actors to see opportunities for synergy, coherence or joint programming.

Management response: Accepted 

UNDP will put in place a solid pipeline development and quality assurance process that ensures that projects are designed with appropriate size considering the transaction cost for the Pacific countries with limited capacity on the ground.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
6.1 Strategic discussion annually held on pipeline development for the new MCPD	Q1 2023, Q1 2024, Q1 2025, Q1 2026 and Q1 2027	Deputy Resident Representative	Supported by team leaders and M&E	Not started
6.2 Undertake an analysis to understand small size projects and identify possible solutions for an integrated approach	Q4 2022	M&E team and COSQA specialists from RBAP	Supported by Deputy Resident Representatives	Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 7. 

UNDP should ensure that its M&E resources are appropriate to the size of its portfolio. It should prioritize ensuring that management responses are tracked and there is continuous learning within the programme.

In addition to the geographical isolation of PICs and the logistical challenges of conducting monitoring exercises, restrictions brought about by COVID-19 have made M&E more demanding. National M&E capacity should be strengthened in PICs, especially since there is a sizeable number of NIM projects being implemented. This means that regional M&E officers should strengthen their oversight function and help to build the capacity of national M&E officers in government-administered NIM projects. Due to the unique context of the Pacific, UNDP should also highly consider bolstering its support for National Evaluation Capacity (i.e., facilitating engagement with the Global Evaluation Initiative).

There has been a wealth of lessons gained through evaluation and project implementation over the last decades in the Pacific. This presents an opportunity to conduct syntheses on various topics, thematic or portfolio, which could be identified at the onset of the coming SRPD. Conducting regional syntheses would be an opportunity to bring the two MCOs together. For example, the work on gender could be an interesting theme since this identified that lessons on gender do not often attain broader adoption.

Measurement of the current SRPD outcome was challenged by the high-level nature of the outcome statements and indicators. In some cases, SRPD output indicators were not directly aligned with SRPD outcome indicators, so measurements toward the outcomes were not prioritized or fed into programming. Moving forward, SRPD outcome statements and indicators will still be directly derived from the UNPS, and UNDP should establish a direct relationship with its UNDP SRPD outcome and output indicators or add outcome-level indicators that are within its purview. This should be observed, because UNDP designs projects at output level and needs to track its own progress against the SRPD outcomes.

Management response: Accepted



Within the framework of the MCPD and the MCO Review, the two MCOs will seek to align M&E resources with the size of the portfolio. UNDP Fiji MCO has started already a system to institutionalize the tracking of management responses to evaluations through Project Boards. This approach will be consistently applied to all projects. The Samoa MCO will adopt a similar approach.

Similarly, on the sharing of lessons across the UNDP programme and with national partners, UNDP will explore a MCO review to establish the required capacity for knowledge management and establish a mechanism for cross-learning between Fiji and Samoa MCOs.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
7.1 Consistently track management responses from evaluation through Project Boards/ Annual Programme Reviews	Q1-Q4 2022-2027 Project Boards Annual reviews Q1-Q3 2023 -2027	Team Leaders (Pacific and Samoa Offices)	With support from M&E teams, project boards vary in their timing and for every project	Initiated
7.2 As part of the MCO review, assess the required capacity for knowledge management and lesson sharing	Q3 2022	Resident Representative and Deputy Resident Representatives	With support from Team Leaders	Initiated
7.3 Develop knowledge products to share key lessons based on decentralized evaluations on at least two selected strategic areas	Q4 2022	M&E specialists	With support from Team Leaders	Initiated
7.4 Establish a mechanism for systematic sharing of lessons learned across the two MCOs	Q4 2022	M&E specialists, Deputy Resident Representatives		Not started
7.5 Support the Pacific Duavata Group including Global Evaluation Initiative in sharing of lessons learned and building national M&E capacity initiatives	Q4 2022	M&E specialists, Deputy Resident Representatives		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 8.



UNDP should reflect on and better define its models of capacity-development for the Pacific. A paradigm shift is needed, in which UNDP views Pacific regional organizations as a vehicle for capacity-development and an extension of the Pacific Island Country governments.

The Pacific regional organization has the mandate directly from PIC governments to complement capacity in the Pacific. In most cases, regional organizations have more contextual knowledge and institutional memory compared to global development agencies, which often rely on expertise from outside the region. UNDP needs to engage more with regional partners at a strategic level, in addition to collaboration for project implementation. For example, UNDP needs to be more active in regional platforms and discussions such as the Pacific Resilience Partnership Task Force and the SPC Governing Council Meeting. Similarly, UNDP Annual Programme Reviews in the current form are used as a reporting mechanism to PICs. UNDP could further their use by inviting observers such as the Regional Organizations and joint programming partners to add another layer of external coherence-building.

UNDP should work harder to strengthen its partnership with PIFS and other development actors and collaborate where possible in delivering governance interventions to PICs. PIFS governance engagement is delivered under the Forum Regional Framework endorsed by all Pacific Forum leaders. UNDP should help to build the capacity of their PIFS counterparts through lessons learned from other small island countries in other regions where it is engaged in similar governance interventions.

Moving forward, UNDP could take advantage of regional mechanisms to engage deeper with regional organizations. For example, the CROP charter is the guiding document for coordinating the regional architecture against PIC leaders' priorities. This strategic document was amended in 2018 to include a high-level discussion between the heads of CROP agencies and heads of United Nations agencies. The discussions were supposed to be piloted at the end of 2021, but this was postponed. Once that process occurs, there will be an opportunity for greater coherence. Also, there are existing CROP working groups in specific areas such as human resource development. Drawing in UNDP engagement through these existing working groups could strengthen its relationship with the regional CROP agencies. It could also decrease the transaction costs that burden countries, especially smaller PICs. In addition, UNDP has been invited to Governing Council meetings as an observer, and its increased attendance is welcomed to facilitate coherence.

Management response: Partially accepted



Within the development of the new MCPD, UNDP will explore appropriate capacity-building approaches relevant to the Pacific context, including by working with regional organizations. The roll out of the pilot high-level discussions between the heads of the CROP agencies and heads of United Nations agencies under the revised CROP charter offers an opportunity to coordinate and bring greater coherence to UNDP work *via-a-vis* CROP.

◀ Recommendation 8 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
8.1 Conduct strategic discussions with selected CROP agencies and regional bodies within the framework of the MCPD to enhance collaboration guided by deep partnership analysis	Q4 2022	Deputy Resident Representatives	Supported by Team leaders and Partnership specialists	Initiated
8.2 Update Partnership and Communication Strategy and Action Plans for the new MCPD (MCO-specific)	Q4 2022	M&E team and communication specialist	Pacific Office in Fiji and Samoa MCO have had an Action Plan in place since October 2021, which it will update	Not started
8.3 UNDP will enhance its current effort in the working group/ coordination mechanism with Pacific Regional Organizations to support coordination various actors working in the governance space in the Pacific including by exploring the opportunity to act as the Secretariat to the working group	Q4 2023	Effective Governance and Inclusive growth team	In 2020, UNDP had begun discussions with PIFS Governance Programme on the establishment of the Working Group	Initiated

* Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

ANNEXES



Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/13393>

Annex 1. Evaluation terms of reference

Annex 2. Evaluation framework

Annex 3. People consulted

Annex 4. Documents consulted

Annex 5. List of projects for review

Annex 6. Status of Subregional Programme Document (SRPD) outcome and output indicators matrix



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