



**JOINT SDG FUND**

---

## **End-of-Programme Evaluation**

**SDG Financing – Component 1 Joint Programme  
Sustainable financing for the 2030 Agenda through viable  
Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFF) in the  
Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa**

---

## **Evaluation Report**

**August 2023**

Submitted to:  
UNDP Samoa/ Joint SDG Fund

Submitted by:  
Nahla Hassan

---

## Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
List of Tables .....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
List of Acronyms.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
Map of Pacific Islands .....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
1.1.Overview .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.2 Context Analysis.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.2.1 Socio-Economic Conditions .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.2.2 Public Finance Management Systems .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.2.3 Climate Change and Natural Disasters .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.3 Joint Programme Description .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<b>EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY</b> .....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
2.1 Evaluation Criteria and Questions .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.2 Evaluation Approaches .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.3 Evaluation Matrix.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.4 Data Collection and Analysis.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.5 Evaluation Process .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.6 Evaluation Limitations .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<b>EVALUATION FINDINGS</b> .....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
3.1 Relevance.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.2 Effectiveness .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.3 Efficiency.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.4 Sustainability.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	30
<b>ANNEXES</b> .....	31

## List of Figures

Figure 1	Map of Pacific Islands
Figure 2	JP outputs
Figure 3	End-of programme evaluation phases
Figure 4	JP activities
Figure 5	JP fund allocations per PUNO
Figure 6	JP fund allocations per output
Figure 7	JP fund allocations per activity

## List of Tables

Table 1	Evaluation Questions (EQs) and proposed modifications
Table 2	Evaluation Stakeholders

---

## List of Acronyms

<b>AAA</b>	Adiss Ababa Action Agenda
<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DFAs</b>	Development Finance Assessment
<b>EDS</b>	Economic Development Strategy
<b>EQs</b>	Evaluation Questions
<b>FGDs</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>INFF</b>	Integrated National Financing Framework
<b>KIIs</b>	Key Informant Interviews
<b>MoF</b>	Ministry of Finance
<b>MAF</b>	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
<b>MCIL</b>	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour
<b>MNRE</b>	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
<b>MWCSD</b>	Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NSDA</b>	National Sustainable Development Agenda
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SDS</b>	Strategy for the Development of Samoa
<b>SUNGO</b>	Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>PDS</b>	Pathway for the Development of Samoa
<b>PFM</b>	Public Finance Management
<b>PIMA</b>	Public Investment Management Assessment
<b>PIFS</b>	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
<b>PUNOs</b>	Participating United Nations Organizations
<b>PwDs</b>	Persons with Disabilities
<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>ToRs</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNDS</b>	UN Development System
<b>UNESCAP</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
<b>UNSDCF</b>	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Overview

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Samoa Multi-Country Office has commissioned an end-of-programme evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Financing Component 1 Joint Programme ***Sustainable financing for the 2030 Agenda through viable Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFF) in the Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa***. It was implemented by three Participating UN Organizations (PUNOs), UNDP, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) between July 2020 and July 2023 with the total budget of USD 1,036,712.

### Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

This evaluation assessed the extent to which the joint programme has achieved its results of unlocking financial resources for SDGs, transforming funding approaches and fostering country-level SDG progress in Samoa, Cook Islands and Niue. It identified lessons learnt and provided recommendations on how to improve design and implementation of future programmes managed through the UN system and implemented in partnership with government and key stakeholders for improved ownership, sustainability, and impact. The evaluation used the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and sustainability. 18 overarching Evaluation Questions (EQs) guided this evaluation, following a theory-based, mixed method and participatory approaches and aspects of human rights, Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) and disability inclusion were integrated. Data collection was undertaken through in-depth desk review and 13 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with PUNOs, government partners and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) carried out in August 2023.

### Evaluation Findings

#### Relevance

The JP demonstrated alignment with international development strategies such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the UN Pacific Strategy 2018-2020, and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. The JP clearly targeted six SDGs with financing components, aiming to enhance financial access and resource mobilization to finance the SDG advancement. It closely adhered to the UNDP Strategic Plans 2018-2021 and 2022-2025, the UN Pacific Strategy outcomes and the Joint Country Action Plan. The JP design was also in line with the national development priorities of the Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa. It aligned with their sustainable development plans and strategies, fostering economic development, gender equality and improved access to services. Feedback highlighted the need for tailored approaches due to differing national contexts and varying familiarity with INFF.

Evidence from this end-of-programme evaluation reflects limited to no consultation or contribution by the governments of the three countries during the programme design processes. However, the JP was broad enough to tailor interventions (given the change in scenario due to COVID-19), and PUNOs contacted relevant national stakeholders to design interventions needed. For example, ESCAP received letters from heads of Ministry of Finance and Samoa Tourism Authority which requested specific support that was provided by the JP, and ToRs were jointly developed between national counterpart and PUNO. To raise ownership further, consultations took place on choice of consultant to be used for

---

*Sustainable financing for the 2030 Agenda through viable INFF in the Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa  
End-of-Programme Evaluation, Final Report – August 2023*

---

the tasks. Nonetheless, in general, limited or no input from national stakeholders during the initial drafting of the JP proposal is considered a weakness in the design of the JP, which reflected views and contributions in the design only from PUNOs' perspective.

### Effectiveness

The JP partially achieved its expected outputs. Good relationship and comparative long partnerships between UNDP and other PUNOs and the governments of Samoa, the Cook Islands and Niue were a valuable asset for this JP. Despite concerns on engagement in the JP design at the beginning, this relationship has helped to build trust, cooperation and a shared vision. Nevertheless, the JP faced a number of constraining factors, predominantly because the ToC was too ambitious, inappropriate to the time frame and the varying government capacities in the three countries. Focusing on the whole INFF and tailoring to national contexts is an extensive process rendering the achievement of the full range of the programme's results unlikely. The overall design phase of the JP lacked proper execution and was done with minimal government buy-in at the outset, which has led to resistance by governments during the inception phase as they questioned their exclusion in the design. Additionally, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented challenge that took its toll on the governments' capacities and resources. It shifted focus of priorities to address the urgent needs during the pandemic and then cope with its economic repercussions. In Samoa, the government was still crafting a new Pathway for the Development of Samoa (PDS) and its costing was not feasible since it had not been established yet.

The JP's contribution to gender equality was primarily seen through Activity 2.2, fostering gender integration in Samoa's budgets. The project's positive impact was evident in institutional capacity strengthening, gender-responsive budgeting, and policy dialogue. Despite partial achievements, the programme laid groundwork for future phases and demonstrated governments' interest in INFF continuation. Sustainability, aligned funding sources, and clear exit strategies were underscored for long-term success.

### Efficiency

A direct implementation approach was adopted by each UNDP, UNESCAP and UN Women, which remained predominantly independent with almost standalone components and limited synergies. UNDP assumed the role of technical lead agency, facing challenges as it was complex to ensure compliance with programme and donor requirements over other PUNOs without a managerial role. The total budget of the JP was USD 1,036,712, including PUNOs' contribution of USD 57,250. UNDP received 61 percent of the fund, UNESCAP 22 percent and UN Women 17 percent. The highest budget allocation went to Output 2 '*SDS, sector plans costed and gender responsive financing frameworks developed for Samoa*' with a total of USD 570,210 (55 percent). UNDP staff shared that they found it challenging waiting for the second tranche of funding from the UN Joint SDG Fund and faced delays in implementation, because the instruction was to complete spending 70 percent of the disbursed amounts by the three PUNOs collectively and UNDP had reached this milestone ahead of the others.

The original programme duration was 24 months to start in July 2020 and end in July 2022, however, it received no-cost extensions until June 2023. Time limitation was a common concern for the PUNOs and

the government alike given the nature of the JP trying to influence policy and strengthen local capacities, which takes time. Implementation was considerably delayed, leading to partial achievement of results, especially for Outputs 2 and 3. This is due to a number of factors, including the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and not having appropriate consultations during the design which led to a long inception phase to ensure governments' buy-in.

In terms of management arrangements, each PUNO operated under its distinct existing management structure, contrary to the ideal scenario of having a dedicated programme management unit, which unfortunately was not established. The required technical expertise was supplemented by international consultants, along with local ones. In the context of Samoa, Niue and the Cook Islands, reliance on domestic consultants was pivotal due to the inability of international consultants to enter due to border closures during the pandemic, and to a lesser extent sensitivity towards international consultants/preference towards national consultants. Nevertheless, their capacities varied; some were proficient in the Cook Islands and Samoa, others were not in Niue.

### Sustainability

The benefits of the JP are likely to continue post-implementation, given the concrete foundation laid by partially achieved results. There's substantial government ownership and interest, although challenges related to financial resources, technical expertise and capacities persist, in addition to shifting priorities post-pandemic. Institutional strengthening through DFAs, gender budget assessments and partnership frameworks is evident. Governments in Samoa and the Cook Islands have clear paths towards INFF continuation, planning to integrate DFAs and reinforce financial strategies. Financial sustainability for the project outputs remains uncertain due to resource-intensive demands and reliance on available funding opportunities. Smaller economies like Samoa, Niue, and the Cook Islands face challenges in initiating INFF phases without external support.

The JP lacked a well-designed exit strategy, despite the need for a phased-out approach. The interviewed staff of the three PUNOs highlighted their interest to continue the work that has been initiated under this JP, noting that a lot still needs to be done noting the governments' interest, which will offer substantial opportunities over the next few years. Several PUNO staff find it crucial to gain a comprehensive understanding of the UN Joint SDG Fund's objectives and strategies for effective planning the way forward and that anticipating the next round of funding is essential and capitalize on available funding streams.

### Conclusions

Criteria	#	Conclusion
	1	The JP is aligned with national strategies and plans of the Cook Islands, Samoa and Niue, demonstrating its commitment to addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in the Pacific context. However, challenges surface in ensuring sustained alignment as national strategies evolve, requiring continuous adjustments to remain effective and cope with competent priorities.
	2	Lack of consultation during the JP design had a negative impact on responsiveness and buy-in by the three governments and on relevance to the specificities in each

		country. This required revisions to the initially planned outputs and activities to align with national priorities; it was only then that the three governments came onboard and engaged. The same was true for the engagement of the civil society and private sector.
	3	There was a consensus amongst interviewed PUNO staff and government officials that the major achievements of the JP were the development of the DFAs for the three countries, and GRBs and the public-private financing framework for Samoa.
	4	The challenges faced by the JP encompass an overambitious ToC with lack of consultations during the design, time constraints and the disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on resources, mobility and competing government priorities. Additionally, complications in Samoa arose due to political transitions and developing a new PDS, impeding effective execution.
	5	While some collaboration occurred between PUNOs, a mostly independent approach to design and implementation and insufficient technical-level coordination hindered potential synergies among PUNOs. There was a recognition by both; PUNOs and governments, that more coordination and engagement are needed to enhance the effectiveness of joint efforts, with a role by RCO.
	6	The JP contribute to gender equality was evident primarily through Activity 2.2, paving the way for the Government of Samoa to potentially make adjustments for gender integration in national budgets and building related national capacities. Other than that, generally, the inclusion strategy for the JP was not formally defined and government staff believe that more emphasis should have been placed on gender and inclusion.
	7	UNDP received the majority of the fund allocations and UNDP highlighted a funding challenge arising from delayed second tranche disbursement. On the other hand, prolonged implementation, partly due to the pandemic and government transitions, impacted timely achievement of results.
Efficiency	8	The absence of a dedicated PMU affected efficiency, causing existing teams to assume additional responsibilities, and sometimes conflicting roles. Technical leadership, assumed by UNDP, faced challenges enforcing authority without a clear managerial role over other PUNOs.
	9	Expertise was supplemented by consultants, especially local ones in the three countries, to cater to contextual sensitivity, closed borders and stakeholder engagement. Capacities of local consultants varied between countries and was not always reliable, especially in Niue.
	10	The resource-intensive nature of applying INFF challenges small economies and pose risks to long-term sustainability, in addition to their competing priorities. Dependence on funding opportunities is vital for initiating INFF phases. Understanding funding sources enables better planning to support government initiatives effectively.

	Financial resources, technical expertise and capacities must be available to sustain progress.
11	The substantial interest expressed by PUNO staff to continue initiated work reflects the programme's positive impact. Institutional capacity was strengthened through DFAs, gender budget assessments and public-private partnership frameworks and government involvement in policy dialogue and specialized training enhanced project outcomes and alignment with national priorities.
12	An exit strategy was absent from the JP, impacting phased-out approach. UNDP's intention for Phase 2 focuses on aligning with INFF pillars, securing additional resources, and formulation of the next programme phase.

## Lessons Learned

The implementation of the JP yielded some important lessons learned that could be considered in future programming and implementation of programmes and projects in the future as follows:

- Upstream and downstream consultations with government officials would ensure ownership at political and operation levels of programme design and implementation which would ensure buy-in and commitment from government. The absence of these two-tiered consultations could result in resistance and implementation challenges.
- Technical assistance programmes including government restructuring approaches such as this one require time for implementation and ensuring effectiveness and results. Designing a project that requires changes in government approaches require advocacy and engagement which can only be achieved through a staggered approach which would require a minimum of four years. Trying to achieve such a complex process such as the INFF in two years and during a global pandemic is not likely to yield positive and sustainable results.
- JPs design could benefit from better integration and synergies between PUNOs. This can only be achieved through forward planning and joint design of activities to ensure maximum leveraging of each agency's mandate and expertise.
- Delivering as one-UN requires a strategic approach to engaging and discussions with governments. This could be better achieved through increasing coordination and collaboration amongst PUNOs and between PUNOs and governments.

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1 (PUNOs and governments):

Enhance stakeholders' engagement and ownership at the onset of programme design through planned policy dialogue and meaningful consultations, which would ensure responsiveness, government buy-in, and alignment with national priorities. Likewise, secure active involvement of civil society and the private sector to enhance project relevance and understanding of needs and challenges of vulnerable populations.

### Recommendation 2 (PUNOs and RCO):



---

In future programming, establish effective technical coordination mechanisms among PUNOs with the active oversight and involvement of RCO to unlock potential synergies, enhance collaboration and maximize impact, as well as approach governments as one UN. Developing a comprehensive partnership strategy could be one way to foster interagency collaboration and ensure government involvement and support from the outset. Another way could be through formalizing joint design and implementation approaches.

Recommendation 3 (PUNOs and RCO):

Establish a dedicated PMU in future JPs with necessary technical expertise to improve efficiency and clarity on managerial roles and responsibilities of the lead agency to effectively guide other PUNOs. Consideration should be given to augment lack of expertise at the national level, at the same time, focus on enhancing capacity and reliability of local consultants for successful stakeholder engagement.

Recommendation 4 (PUNOs and RCO):

Plan for the sustainability of project outputs beyond this JP by securing funding sources, technical expertise and capacities. This is imperative to facilitate government-led efforts to continue and build upon the JP's achievements on INFFs, while considering the resource constraints of these small counties.

---

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Overview

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Samoa Multi-Country Office has commissioned an end-of-programme evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Financing Component 1 Joint Programme ***Sustainable financing for the 2030 Agenda through viable Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFF) in the Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa***. This programme corresponds to Output 2 of the SDG Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda ‘*Additional Financing leveraged to accelerate SDG achievement*’ by providing the governments of these countries with opportunities to greatly improve the management of financial flows and mobilize new, diverse and innovative/catalytic financial instruments. It was implemented by three Participating UN Organizations (PUNOs); UNDP, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) between July 2020 and July 2023 with the total budget of USD 1,036,712.

### 1.2. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The Pacific countries are diverse in their economic, social, and political issues, yet, the region as a whole has certain cross-cutting characteristics. Economies are dependent on imports, populations are scattered across vast distances, governments’ abilities to provide services and infrastructure are strained, especially in emergencies. Socio-economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted health systems and caused the most vulnerable populations to experience difficulties on all fronts, especially for women and girls, conflict-affected people, People with Disabilities (PwDs), young people, key populations and those living in poverty.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1.2.1 Socio-Economic Conditions

Across the Pacific region, humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities are increasing. The impacts of climate change, protracted crises, and the health and economic shocks of COVID-19 continue to take a heavy toll on the world’s most populated region. The COVID-19 economic and social ramifications in 2020 and 2021 have been severe with an average 20 percent decrease in GDP. Border closures, lockdowns, and travel restrictions had wide-ranging effects; from closing local businesses to preventing farmers from accessing agricultural inputs to disrupting the travel and tourism sector. However, GDP growth in the Pacific for 2022 is predicted at 4.7 percent, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The inflation forecasts for the region are maintained at 5.9 percent for 2022, expected to be upset as the war in Ukraine continues to increase the prices of imported goods, especially fuel, and transport costs.<sup>2</sup>

The Pacific region suffers from significant unemployment and under-employment, particularly amongst youth, estimated at 23 percent, who also have low capacities and skills. Subsistence farming continues to be the primary economic activity for several countries, evident wide disparities in male and female employment are in most countries, with the ratio being almost 2:1 in Samoa.<sup>3</sup> In addition, there are

---

<sup>1</sup> UNFPA. 2021. Asia and the Pacific regional programme (2022-2025) [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/admin-resource/PROG\\_SP\\_2022\\_2025\\_Annex4\\_4.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/admin-resource/PROG_SP_2022_2025_Annex4_4.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> ADB. 2022. Asian Development Outlook, Supplement July 2022 <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/811076/ado-supplement-july-2022.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> ILO. 2021. <https://www.ilo.org/suva/areas-of-work/employment-promotion/lang--en/index.htm>

---

limited social protection measures in place to provide a safety net for vulnerable populations. While the Pacific Island Countries have enjoyed progress in recent decades, with an increase in life expectancy and a decline in infant mortality rates. However, economic growth has been well below the global average. Poverty rates are increasing in the Pacific. Approximately 13 percent of the population in Niue, 19 percent in Samoa and 28 percent in Cook Islands live below the national poverty line. Women, children, PwDs and the elderly are disproportionately represented among the poor. Poverty prevalence among children in Samoa and Cook Islands is higher than the national average, 22 percent and 31 percent respectively. Female headed households and elderly women and men are more likely to be poor in Samoa. Higher rates of poverty among the elderly are evident in urban areas in Samoa. In Cook Islands, populations in remote outer islands are more likely to be vulnerable to income and food insecurity and to climate-related risks. In all countries, PwDs are among the most vulnerable.<sup>4</sup>

Geographic isolation is a key challenge in the -Pacific region for people's access to health services who often encounter barriers to healthcare that limit their ability to obtain the care they need. Almost 10 women dying every hour due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth and violence against women and girls is among the highest in the world.<sup>5</sup> UN-Women estimates that 60-80 percent of women and girls in the region experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetimes; in Samoa (60 percent), Cook Islands (39 percent)<sup>6</sup> and Niue (70 percent).<sup>7</sup> In the Pacific region, 1 in 8 adolescent girls aged 15-19 years, and 1 in 50 boys, are married or in union.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, pre-existing gender-based violence (GBV) harmful practices exacerbated and are likely to have longer-term consequences for women's health and well-being, safety and security, and economic participation and empowerment.<sup>9</sup>

In the Pacific Island Countries, the outbreak of COVID-19 has compounded the existing vulnerabilities and affected governments' operations, trading activities and livelihoods of households, in particular the most vulnerable. Most governments cannot fund their SDG priorities with an under-investment in the sustainable development and social protection programmes; only a few countries having formal social protection systems in place.<sup>10</sup> According to UNDP, Cook Islands, Samoa and Niue are one step closer to ensuring that it leaves no one behind with the completion of comprehensive stock takes and reviews of their social protection systems.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> UNDP. 2019. Social Protection Joint Programme Final Report

<sup>5</sup> WFP. 2022. Pacific Islands Annual Country Report 2021 [https://www.wfp.org/operations/annual-country-report?operation\\_id=XP01&year=2021#/23430](https://www.wfp.org/operations/annual-country-report?operation_id=XP01&year=2021#/23430)

<sup>6</sup> UN Women. 2018. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Evidence, Data and Knowledge in Pacific Island Countries.

<sup>7</sup> ICAAD. 2021. Gender-based Violence in Niue: Challenges and Opportunities Research Report. <https://icaad.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Niue-GBV-Report-English-Digital-Pages-1.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> UNFPA. 2021. Diversity of Types of Child Marriage and Early Union in Asia Pacific. [https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/asrh\\_factsheet\\_1\\_child\\_marriage\\_and\\_early\\_union.pdf](https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/asrh_factsheet_1_child_marriage_and_early_union.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> UNDP. 2021. UNDP's regional response to gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. [https://www.undp.org/pacific/press-releases/undp%E2%80%99s-regional-response-gender-based-violence-during-covid-19-pandemic#:~:text=In%20Pacific%20island%20countries%2C%20violence,Solomon%20Islands%20\(64%20percent\)](https://www.undp.org/pacific/press-releases/undp%E2%80%99s-regional-response-gender-based-violence-during-covid-19-pandemic#:~:text=In%20Pacific%20island%20countries%2C%20violence,Solomon%20Islands%20(64%20percent))

<sup>10</sup> ILO and ESCWAP. 2021. Social protection responses to COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific: The story so far and future considerations. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_753550.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_753550.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> ILO. 2022. Social Protection: Samoa. <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/ShowCountryProfile.action?iso=WS#:~:text=The%20social%20protection%20system%20in,extended%20family%20and%20sometimes%20churches.>

---

### 1.2.2 Public Finance Management Systems

Countries in general have in place Public Finance Management (PFM) systems, which articulate how financial resources are managed effectively to deliver and implement public services. But most Pacific Island countries do not have financing strategies in place, whilst few have developed medium-term expenditure frameworks with forward estimates of a period of three years. Furthermore, they rely on public finance and development aid flows to finance their development priorities, while the contribution of private sector investment towards financing the national development plan agendas is very low. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, vulnerable health and economic systems of the Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa are struggling to cope. The private sector and the business community were hit most deeply, the tourism industry, in particular the small to medium size operators, have seen their incomes collapse. workers have been laid-off, affecting income streams of most families, especially the poorest and the most vulnerable.<sup>12</sup>

SDG financing challenges common to Pacific Island Countries include weak public finance systems, misalignment between national development plans and budget processes, between public planning and SDG aligned strategies and between private sector investment and sustainable development. There is lack of capacity and understanding in developing innovative financial instruments for mobilising public and private sector investment around SDG financing, as well as inadequate capacity to collaborate across public and private actors to jointly implement SDG priorities. Planning and budget processes are not fully gender-responsive.<sup>13</sup>

In Samoa, the government produces various planning and strategy documents to reflect its policy goals. These include a multi-year framework that guides resource allocation for different government entities to achieve national and sector targets outlined in the government's Pathway for the Development of Samoa (PDS).<sup>14</sup> Line ministries create sector development plans consistent with the PDS, which guide development partners in sector budget support. Corporate plans are aligned with sector plans and outline activities for implementation and the government budget details funding from foreign aid and domestic sources. The budget serves as a tool to allocate resources for implementing the strategic goals, including the SDGs. However, there is a need to strengthen the PFM system and integrate external finance into the budget presentation.

The Cook Islands is a self-governing country in free association with New Zealand. As a small island economy that has recently graduated from being a middle-income developing country, it faces significant challenges to sustainable development, such as a narrow economic base, highly dependent on the tourism sector that is susceptible to external shocks, reliant on imports for consumption goods, capacity constraints (including shortage of skilled labour, inadequate infrastructure investment, insufficient private investment, etc.) for sustained economic growth, and vulnerable to climate changes and natural disasters. Like many small island countries in the region, it requires significant investment and financing to address these challenges and achieve SDGs and national development goals. This is

---

<sup>12</sup> Pacific Island Forum. 2021. Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in the Pacific Region. <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/SEIA-Report.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Samoa SGD Fund Component 1, Joint Programme Document

<sup>14</sup> Pathway for the Development of Samoa (PDS) 2021/22 – 2025/26. [https://www.mof.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/MOF\\_PATHWAY-DEVELOPMENT-SAMOA.pdf](https://www.mof.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/MOF_PATHWAY-DEVELOPMENT-SAMOA.pdf)

---

especially the case in times of global pandemic and post-pandemic recovery.<sup>15</sup> The country has developed a new Development Strategy to replace the expiring National Sustainable Development Plan with annual budgets directly linked to government agency plans and budgets, with priorities for expenditure determined by the selected goals from the national strategies.<sup>16</sup>

Likewise, Niue is a self-governing country in free association with New Zealand, its National Strategic Plan sets out the government's vision and priorities for the island with broad goals and strategies for achieving prosperity, which are further detailed in sector and subsidiary policies and delivery plans.

### 1.2.3 Climate Change and Natural Disasters

The Pacific region is among the most vulnerable in the world to natural hazards and the effects of climate change and extreme weather events. In 2018, out of 281 natural disasters globally, 50 percent and 8 of the 10 deadliest disasters occurred in the region.<sup>17</sup> An average of 142 million people in the region have been affected annually by disasters since 1970, well above the global average of 38 million, killing two million people, representing 59 percent of the global death toll.<sup>18</sup> Although fewer people have been dying from natural disasters, there has been an increase in the number of people affected. Disasters have significant impacts on economic growth, health, socio-economic well-being and food security in the Pacific.<sup>19</sup> Samoa and Cook Islands have the most exposure, susceptibility and limited coping and adaptive capacities to disasters and climate change, particularly cyclones, and to a lesser extent, Niue.<sup>20</sup> Further, The Pacific Island countries all score in the bottom 50 countries in terms of pandemic readiness out of the 195 assessed countries.<sup>21</sup> In the medium to longer term, climate-related disasters are expected to increase in number and scale. Eight out of 20 countries with the highest average disaster losses scaled by Growth Domestic Product (GDP) are Pacific Island Countries, with US\$ 284 million estimated average disaster losses per year in the South Pacific. One-third of the Pacific cannot meet their basic human needs,<sup>22</sup> and evidence shows that pre-existing inequalities mean that women and marginalised and vulnerable groups are disproportionately impacted by climate change. Further, in several countries, conflict disrupts the provision of SRHR, exacerbates GBV and lead to displaced populations.<sup>23</sup>

## 1.3. Joint Programme Description

According to the Joint Programme Document,<sup>24</sup> the objective of the Joint Programme is to operationalize INFFs in Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa to strengthen governments' existing policies and

---

<sup>15</sup> UNDP. 2023. Development Finance Assessment for Cook Islands Leveraging finance for sustainable development.

<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-05/DDS-UNDP-Cook%20Islands%20Report.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. <https://www.mfem.gov.ck/economic-planning/public-financial-management>

<sup>17</sup> Mangalorean. 2020. Building Resilience is Critical to Minimise the Impact of Humanitarian Crises. <https://www.mangalorean.com/building-resilience-is-critical-to-minimise-the-impact-of-humanitarian-crises/>

<sup>18</sup> UNFPA. 2022. Asia and The Pacific website. <https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/emergencies-and-humanitarian-response>

<sup>19</sup> WFP. 2022. Pacific Islands Annual Country Report 2021 [https://www.wfp.org/operations/annual-country-report?operation\\_id=XP01&year=2021#/23430](https://www.wfp.org/operations/annual-country-report?operation_id=XP01&year=2021#/23430)

<sup>20</sup> The World Bank. 2022. Climate Change Knowledge Portal. <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/cook-islands/vulnerability>

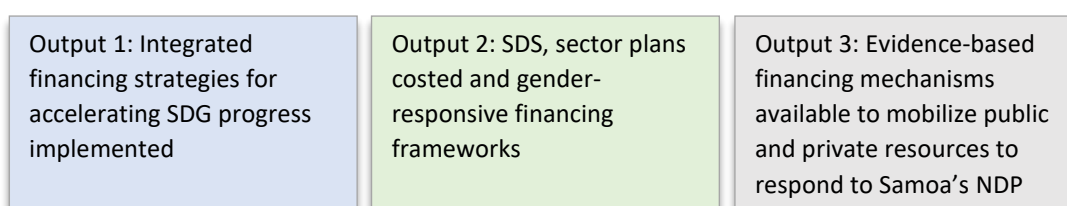
<sup>21</sup> Jessica A. Bell and Jennifer B. Nuzzo, Global Health Security Index: Advancing Collective Action and Accountability Amid Global Crisis, 2021. [www.GHSIndex.org](http://www.GHSIndex.org)

<sup>22</sup> WFP. 2022. Pacific Country Brief. <https://www.wfp.org/countries/pacific>

<sup>23</sup> UNFPA. 2021. Global Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/board-documents/main-document/ENG\\_DP.FPA\\_2021.8\\_-\\_UNFPA\\_strategic\\_plan\\_2022-2025\\_-\\_FINAL\\_-\\_14Jul21.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/board-documents/main-document/ENG_DP.FPA_2021.8_-_UNFPA_strategic_plan_2022-2025_-_FINAL_-_14Jul21.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Joint SDG Fund. 2020. . Joint Programme Document Samoa SDG Fund Component 1

institutional structures for the development and implementation of integrated financing strategies for sustainable development. The INFFs will help create synergies among the governments' plans and policies by engaging development actors across the board to influence the way public and private resources are invested and direct investment towards sustainable development priorities. Involving all development actors in the three countries in the policy dialogue on SDG financing will maximize outreach and rapidly scale up resource mobilization for sustainable development. The overarching outcome for the Joint Programme corresponds to Outcome 2 of the SDG Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda, 'Additional financing leveraged to accelerate SDG achievement'. The outcome will be achieved through the interventions made under the programme's three interconnected outputs.



**Figure 2: Joint Programme Outputs**

➤ **Output 1: Integrated Financing Strategies for Accelerating SDG Progress Implemented (Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa)**

Under this output, Development Finance Assessments (DFAs) for Cook Islands and Niue will be completed, to map development finance flows and identify financing challenges to be addressed within country context. Multi-sectoral dialogue platforms will be established at country level to make financing policies on public and private finance accessible to a wide range of actors. The DFA reports will lay out roadmaps for Cook Islands and Niue to develop financing strategies to enhance public-private dialogue for effective resource mobilization and management. Samoa's 2018 DFA report will be updated to reflect any changes in financing flows and the country's public financial management system. UNDP will be the lead UN agency responsible for implementing JP Output 1 and work closely with the Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economy, Niue Central Agency for Finance and Planning, and Samoa Ministry of Finance.

➤ **Output 2: SDS, Sector Plans Costed and Gender-Responsive Financing Frameworks (Samoa)**

This output aims to develop Samoa's INFF to integrate the SDGs into the PFM system through three coordinated and mutually reinforcing activities. Specifically, budget reforms integrating SDGs into the domestic public finance through reforms to the budget, costing the SDS and sector plans and ensure that they are gender-responsive. The UN agencies responsible for delivering Output 2 are UNESCAP, UN-Women and UNDP. The Samoa Ministry of Finance (MOF) will lead the implementation of activities under this output in collaboration with the Ministry for Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSO).

➤ **Output 3: Evidence-Based Financing Mechanisms available to Mobilize Public and Private Resources to respond to Samoa's National Development Plan**

Focus of this output was on increasing private sector contributions to financing Samoa's national development agenda. Developing the private sector's SDG investment capacity

requires strategic partnerships for co-financing with the public sector. Exploring and testing innovative financing and investment solutions will help to ensure that resource mobilization opportunities identified in the 2018 DFA report are pursued. Additional resources from both the public and private sectors will be generated by addressing current weaknesses in investment policies, processes and procedures. Wherever possible, investments will be directed to advancing gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.

The joint programme was implemented over 24 months between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2023 with a total budget of USD 1,036,712, funded by the UN Joint SDG Fund (USD 979,462 – 94.5%) and co-financed by PUNOs USD 57,250 – 5.5%).

It intended to contribute to relevant SDG goals and targets with a financing component that aim to improve equal access to financial services, as well as to strengthen resource mobilization and management of financial resources. As such, contributing to SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere, SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation, SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries, and SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

## EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The evaluation systematically used the OECD/DAC criteria<sup>25</sup> of relevance, coherence, effectiveness and sustainability with due consideration to aspects of human rights, GEWE and disability inclusion were integrated. The consultant adhered to the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines,<sup>26</sup> the UNEG Evaluation Norms and Standards,<sup>27</sup> including UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Review, UNEG Standards and Norms for Review in the UN System and UNEG Guidance on disability inclusion.

Following a review of the evaluation ToRs and the initial review of the documents shared by UNDP, the consultant proposed alterations to the composition of the EQs in line with the objectives and purpose of the evaluation. The final EQs used are presented in Table 1:

**Table 1: Evaluation Questions**

Relevance
EQ 1: To what extent was the JP in line with national development priorities, country programme outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the SDGs? Are the JP objectives and outputs clear, practical and feasible within its frame? Do they clearly address women, men and vulnerable groups?
EQ 2: To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant JP considered in the design?
EQ 3: To what extent were perspectives of men and women who could affect the outcomes and those who contribute information or other resources to the attainment of results, considered during JP design processes?

<sup>25</sup> OECD. 2021. *Evaluation Criteria*. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

<sup>26</sup> UNDP. 2021. UNDP Evaluation Guidelines. [http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/PDF/UNDP\\_Evaluation\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/PDF/UNDP_Evaluation_Guidelines.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> UNFPA. UNEG/UNFPA review norms and standards <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/guidance-documents>



<b>Effectiveness</b>
EQ 4: To what extent did the JP contribute to the country programme outcomes and outputs, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan and national development priorities? In which areas does the project have the greatest and fewest achievements and how to expand on them? Why and what have been the supporting factors ?
EQ 5: What factors have contributed to achieving, or not, intended country programme outputs and outcomes? What factors contributed to effectiveness or ineffectiveness? What have been the constraining factors and why?
EQ 6: To what extent has the JP partnership strategy and approach been appropriate and effective?
EQ 7: To what extent synergies have been achieved between the different activities implemented by the PUNOs? What value added has been generated through these synergies?
EQ 8: To what extent has the JP contributed to GEWE, the realization of human rights and inclusion of PwDs?
<b>Efficiency</b>
EQ 9: To what extent was the JP management structure as outlined in the project document efficient in generating the expected results?
EQ 10: To what extent were resources used to address inequalities in general, and gender issues in particular?
EQ 11: To what extent have the JP implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective? To what extent has there been an economical use of financial and human resources? Have they been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes? To what extent have funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?
EQ 12: To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by the JP ensure effective and efficient project management?
<b>Sustainability</b>
EQ 13: To what extent is it likely that the benefits of the JP at the national level will continue after its implementation ceases?
EQ 14: Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs affecting women, men and vulnerable groups?
EQ 15: To what extent will financial and economic resources be available to sustain the benefits achieved?
EQ 16: Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs and the project contributions to country programme outputs and outcomes?
EQ 17: To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to allow primary stakeholders to carry forward the results attained on GEWE, human rights and human development?
EQ 18: To what extent do the JP interventions have well-designed and well-planned exit strategies which include a gender dimension? What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability in order to support female and male project beneficiaries as well as marginalized groups?

## 2.2 Evaluation Approaches

### Theory-Based Approach

The Theory of Change (ToC) was an essential building block of the end-of-programme evaluation throughout, from the design and data collection to the analysis and identification of findings, as well as the articulation of conclusions and recommendations. The approach enabled a re-assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the ToC and was fundamental for generating insights about what works, what does not, and why, by exploring how the assumptions behind causal links and contextual factors affect the achievement of intended results.

### Participatory Approach

In line with the evaluation ToRs, the end-of-programme evaluation was based on an inclusive, transparent and participatory approach that preserved the sense of ownership amongst stakeholders and PUNOs for an open discussion of challenges and proposed solutions or corrective measures to be addressed in the next funding rounds. The consultant spoke to a wide range of stakeholders involved in the project's identification, formulation and implementation in Samoa, Cook Islands and Niue, including key UNDP staff and PUNOs, government stakeholders and CSOs.



---

### Mixed-Method Approach

The end-of-programme evaluation used different methods for data collection, with emphasis on qualitative data collection techniques to answer the EQs, including document review and KIIs. The qualitative data was complemented with quantitative data from secondary resources.

### Integration of human rights, GEWE and inclusion

The evaluation considered aspects of human rights, equity, GEWE and inclusion in the scope of data collection and analysis, as well as in the way the indicators were designed and assessed in a sensitive manner by employing a mixed-method approach, appropriate to evaluating these issues. It enabled a better understanding the perspectives and voices of diverse groups of men, women, boys, girls, the elderly, PwDs and other marginalized groups taken into account.

## 2.3 Evaluation Matrix

The evaluation matrix was the center piece to the methodological design of the end-of-programme evaluation as articulated in the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines. The Matrix is presented in **Annex 2**, linking each EQ (and associated assumptions) with the specific data sources and data collection methods required to answer the question. The evaluation matrix played a crucial role before, during and after data collection. In the inception phase, the matrix helped the consultant to develop a detailed agenda for data collection and analysis and to prepare the structure of interviews and group discussions. During the field phase, the Matrix served as a reference document to ensure that data is systematically collected for all EQs and documented in a structured and organized way. In the reporting phase, it facilitated the drafting of findings per question following the indicators and the articulation of conclusions and recommendations.

## 2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

**Desk Review:** In-depth review of documents was an on-going process throughout the different phases of the evaluation, it informed the evaluation design, established the understanding of the implementation framework for the joint programme, and supported the analysis and report writing. It was further used to triangulate with the data provided by primary sources to enrich the evidence base and content of the final report.

**Key Informant Interviews:** 13 KIIs were conducted with stakeholders at national and regional levels across the three countries that are part of the programme. Semi-structured guides were designed and approved during the inception phase and then used based on the agreed EQs, outlined in **Annex 3**. KIIs were conducted in each country, either remotely or face-to-face, with key UNDP team in the Pacific, the PUNOs, government partners in Cook Islands, Samoa and Niue and CSOs.

The data analysis for this end-of-programme evaluation was qualitative in nature, organized around the project's three expected outputs and the SOs of the project. It examined the criteria and questions generated in the evaluation matrix, mapping the facts, perceptions and opinions across the full spectrum of the assumption's enquiry. Cross-checking and integration of different information sources was done using a variety of information sources to increase the validity and reliability of results presented by the consultant. Validation was also guided by the regular exchanges with the evaluation

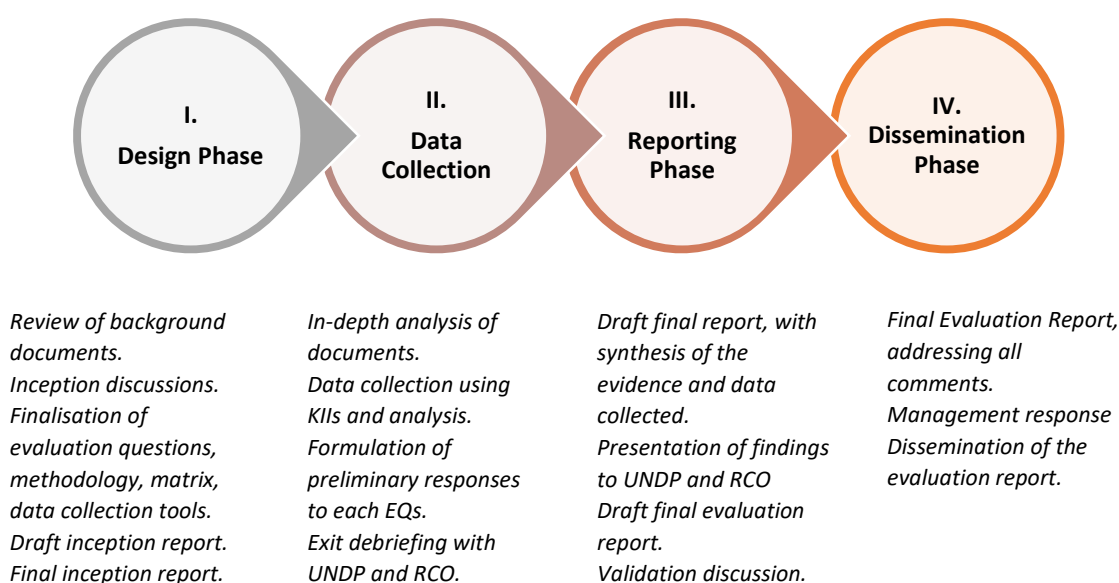
manager and the strategic inputs of the UNDP and SDG Financing teams and the Regional Coordinator Office (RCO) multi-country office in Samoa.

The evaluation was inclusive and engaged wide range of stakeholders who have direct involvement with the joint programme, in consideration of feasibility within the time and budget allocated for this evaluation. The final list of stakeholders interviewed/met during the evaluation is presented in **Annex 4**.

## 2.5 Evaluation Process

The independent final evaluation review will be implemented through four phases in accordance with the UNDP ToRs and outlined in figure 3 and the evaluation workplan is presented in **Annex 5**.

**Figure 3: End-of programme evaluation phases**



## 2.6 Evaluation Limitations

As with any research or field work, there were certain limitations encountered mainly the change in UNDP management team making some of the institutional memory missing from the discussion. Additionally, there was no person to meet from the Resident Coordinator's Office during the field data collection which lasted for 15 days in Samoa. Additionally, some government officials were not available for meetings, including the Ministry of Women, Community and Development and the Samoa Tourism Authority. Lastly, the project has not conducted any reporting on the indicators making the assessment of the achievement predominantly based on qualitative data collected during the evaluation.

## EVALUATION FINDINGS

### 3.1 Relevance

**EQ 1: To what extent was the JP in line with national development priorities, country programme outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the SDGs? To what extent does the JP contribute to the ToC for the relevant country programme outcome? Are the JP objectives and outputs clear, practical and feasible within its frame? Do they clearly address women, men and vulnerable groups?**

#### Alignment with international development strategies

The JP is aligned to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAA)<sup>28</sup> which affirms strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity. Additionally, the JP remains coherent to the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent,<sup>29</sup> which frames the region's cooperation and broader action around seven key thematic areas, including the resource and economic development. The overall aim of this thematic area as stated in the Strategy is for all Pacific peoples to benefit from a sustainable and resilient model of economic development, including enabling public policy and a vibrant private sector, that brings improved socio-economic wellbeing by ensuring access to employment, entrepreneurship, trade and investment in the region.

The JP document clearly outlined six relevant SDG goals and pertinent targets to which the programme contributes to. Those are the ones with a financing component that aim to improve equal access to financial services and to strengthen resource mobilization and management of financial resources. Specifically under SDG 1 'End poverty in all its forms everywhere', SDG 5 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', SDG 8 'Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all', SDG 9 'Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation', SDG 10 'Reduce inequality within and among countries', and SDG 17 'Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development'.

UNDP's Strategic Plan 2018-2021<sup>30</sup> was at the heart of this JP, with the vision to help countries to achieve sustainable development by eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, accelerating structural transformations for sustainable development and building resilience to crises and shocks. The three JP outputs were relevant aiming for the implementation of integrated financing strategies, developing SDS, sector plans and gender-responsive financing frameworks, as well as evidence-based financing mechanisms to mobilize public-private resources to respond to Samoa's NDP. Likewise, the JP remains relevant to the new UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025<sup>31</sup> that identifies development financing as an enabler to maximize impact, partnering with governments and the private sector to align public and private capital flows with the SDGs and mobilise finance at scale.

<sup>28</sup> UN. 2015. Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2051AAAA\\_Outcome.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2051AAAA_Outcome.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. 2022. 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/PIFS-2050-Strategy-Blue-Pacific-Continent-WEB-5Aug2022.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> UNDP. 2017. UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/iq/UNDP--EN--Strategic-Plan-2018-2021-N1733496-20171128.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> UNDP. 2021. UNDP strategic Plan 2022-2025. [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/pacific/UNDP-Strategic-Plan-2022-2025\\_1.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/pacific/UNDP-Strategic-Plan-2022-2025_1.pdf)

---

### Alignment with national development priorities

The JP design was aligned to the national development priorities of the Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa, as outlined in the respective sustainable development strategies and plans. The programme considered national priorities outlined in the Cook Islands' National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2020.<sup>32</sup> Those are under Goal 1: *'Improve welfare, reduce inequality and economic hardships'*, Goal 2: *'Expand opportunities for decent work for all'*, Goal 9: *'Gender equality'* and Goal 15: *'Development for Cook Islands by Cook Islanders'*. In 2021, the Government of the Cook Islands developed its National Sustainable Development Agenda 2020+ (NSDA) along with a 100+ year Roadmap as a living framework that will guide the Cook Islands into the future<sup>33</sup>, accompanied by the Economic Development Strategy (EDS) 2030.<sup>34</sup> The vision is to build a dynamic, prosperous and inclusive future for Cook Islanders that is in harmony with the Cook Islands' culture and environment. The JP programme remains aligned to this vision and the objectives to transforming the economy and promoting investment, for example by capitalising on new economic opportunities, ensuring a stable macroeconomic setting, fostering innovation, increasing economic growth in non-tourism sectors and creative and cultural industries and improving competition and market efficiency and maintaining an attractive business environment.

The JP was aligned to the Niue National Strategic Plan 2016-2026<sup>35</sup> with the vision statement to work together to protect the people and the environment. Specifically, Pillar 1: *'Finance and Economic Development'*, Pillar 2: *'Governance'* and Pillar 7: *'Private sector'*.

Finally, for Samoa, the JP was aligned to the priority area 1 of the economic sector of Samoa National Strategy for the Development 2017-2020, which is relevant to the INFF work. Key Outcome 1 is *'Macroeconomic Resilience Increased and Sustained focuses on achieving 'A stronger and more stable financial sector macroeconomic framework that sustains economic growth'* includes fiscal sustainability, accommodative monetary policy established and external position enhanced. Samoa's 5-year National Development Plan 2020-2025 Pathway for the Development (PDS)<sup>36</sup> and the complementary Samoa 2040 Strategy<sup>37</sup> made commitments at a macro-fiscal level to continue to make improvements to public finance management, debt sustainability and fiscal consolidation, while building adequate fiscal space. Focus is on stepping-up to a higher economic growth trajectory, led by private sector investment and development initiatives.

### Contribution to country programmes

The JP ToC was aligned to three outcomes of the UN Pacific Strategy (UNPS) 2018-2022,<sup>38</sup> which was developed through a consultative process. The programme's ToC contributed to UNPS Outcome 2: *'By*

---

<sup>32</sup> Government of the Cook Islands. 2016. National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2020.

<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cobp-coo-2017-2019-ld-01.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Government of Cook Islands. 2021. Te Ara Akapapa'anga Nui National Sustainable Development Agenda (NSDA) 2020+.

<https://www.pmooffice.gov.ck/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Turanga-Meitaki-100-mataiti-Digital.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Government of Cook Islands. 2021. Economic Development Strategy 2030. <https://www.cookislands.gov.ck/economic-planning/economic-development-strategy>

<sup>35</sup> Government of Niue. 2016. Niue Strategic Plan 2016-2026. <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/niu184000.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Samoa Ministry of Finance. 2021. Pathway for the Development of Samoa FY2021/22 - FY2025/26. [https://www.mof.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/MOF\\_PATHWAY-DEVELOPMENT-SAMOA.pdf](https://www.mof.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/MOF_PATHWAY-DEVELOPMENT-SAMOA.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Samoa Ministry of Finance. 2022. Samoa 2040 Transforming Samoa to a higher growth path. <https://www.mof.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Samoa-2040-Final.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> UN Pacific. 2018. United Nations Pacific Strategy: A Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework in the Pacific Region. [https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/UNDP\\_WS\\_FINAL\\_UNPS\\_2018-2022.pdf](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/UNDP_WS_FINAL_UNPS_2018-2022.pdf)

---

2022, there is improved, equitable access, availability and utilization of quality basic social services for all people, particularly for vulnerable people’, Outcome 3: ‘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 multi-dimensional poverty and inequalities, and promotes economic empowerment’, and Outcome 5: ‘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’ and equivalent Outputs of the UN Joint Country Action Plan (JCAP).

This evaluation underscores the continued contribution and relevance of the JP to the UN Pacific Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023-2027,<sup>39</sup> which acknowledges that the Pacific’s economic transformation and advancement of the SDGs is significantly contingent upon sustainable financing that explores all available financial instruments as part of an INFF and strategy for sustainable development. More specifically, the JP is in line to the ToC of the Prosperity Outcome, where macroeconomic stability and sound fiscal management are key preconditions to progress towards the outcome. There is misalignment between the national budgets and the main national strategic plans of Niue and the Cook Islands and the JP was designed to help align their planning process with the budgetary process and address financing gaps in their strategic development plans and strengthen their management of current financial resources. The vision of the project was that the INFF can function as the key vehicle to strengthen and coordinate resource mobilization, particularly in light of an increasingly complex financing landscape and the need to attract a full range of innovative financing.

---

#### *JP Theory of Change*

*The development of a viable development finance strategy and architecture, aligned with the SDGs in the form of INFF, will increase returns on all investments for the acceleration of SDG attainment. Devising a full range of financing sources and non-financial means of implementation that are potentially available to Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa and laying out a financing strategy to raise resources, manage risks and achieve sustainable development priorities will significantly enhance each country’s capabilities to advance their sustainable development agenda. With a budget structure, financial monitoring and evidence-based course adjustment in the pursuit of the 2030 Agenda will enable more strategic and effective utilization and mobilization of funds to accelerate progress.*

---

Feedback from UN staff and some government officials interviewed during the evaluation shows that adopting the same approach in supporting the three governments towards sustainable INFF was to some extent inappropriate. The three governments were at different stages of advancement in their financing strategies and plans, while the one approach by the JP was not fully tailored to the enabling environment and policy frameworks in each country. This feedback was given despite the fact that the programme allocated two separate outputs targeting Samoa and that it intends to develop roadmaps following DFAs for the Cook Islands and Niue for whom the concept of INFF was totally new. During KII with one UNDP staff, it was mentioned that *“the project was ambitious, but it fell short of its goals. The*

---

<sup>39</sup> UN Pacific. 2022. United Nations Pacific Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2027. [https://micronesia.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/9669\\_UNSDCF\\_pacific\\_A4\\_5.7.23\\_SHORT\\_FINAL\\_version\\_low\\_res.pdf](https://micronesia.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/9669_UNSDCF_pacific_A4_5.7.23_SHORT_FINAL_version_low_res.pdf)

---

*PUNOs and the RC office underestimated the short time available for implementation and the need to give the state and its stakeholders a better understanding of SDG financing”.*

### **Addressing needs of vulnerable groups**

The JP design clearly demonstrated how financing the SDGs in the Pacific can address the needs of vulnerable people. Focus is on the SDGs with a financing component, relating to strengthening partnerships and institutional/ individual capacities and enhancing access to financial services. The design reflects how specifically the JP was likely to promote the principles of inclusiveness and leaving no one and no place behind and on which SDG targets are expected to be impacted. These include, for example, through increased access to credit, financial inclusion and financial services, especially for women, increased allocations made from national budgets to GEWE, employment opportunities created in the non-agriculture sector, increased revenues and financial flows and resources for development from domestic budgets, increased foreign direct investment, volume of remittances, policy coherence mechanisms in place and progress in multi-stakeholder development effectiveness monitoring frameworks.

Nevertheless, despite recognition of the importance of financing the SDGs, interviewed government staff from two of the three countries (Samoa and Cook Islands) mentioned the struggle to prioritize other arising national priorities to address the urgent needs of the population during the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic repercussions and the recovery from the effects on the tourism sector and lost livelihoods.

### ***EQ 2: To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant JPs considered in the design?***

Overall, the design of the JP builds on the collective active presence and knowledge of UNDP, UNESCAP and UN Women in the three countries about public financing management issues, trans-boundary and regional issues and thematic contexts across different sectors. Theoretically, the JP document outlines few other JP programmes in relation to this one, namely, the European Fund for Strategic Investments Business Partnerships Platform, Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Programme and UN Social Protection Joint Programme. However, it was not clear during the evaluation how these programmes had informed the JP in a meaningful way.

Samoa was the first country to be introduced to the DFA in 2018, and the first DFA was developed and launched in 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the DFA was a new concept for the Cook Islands and Niue, and they will need to be convinced of its benefits for their countries in terms of national economy and scale of economy. One UNDP staff said during KII that *“the INFF is a framework that the UN sees as the best way to collectively map out a country's finances and attract additional financing to support its priorities. It touches on all other development areas, including the private sector, how the government manages its finances, and its budget plans. This is the main area where the framework helps countries to come together”*. The programme document of the JP shows that the lessons learned from the 2018 Samoa DFA were considered while designing the outputs and activities, specifically indicating that the national budget documents need to be revised to better reflect the actual level of spending and to make it easier to assess the justification for the proposed allocations. It also recognizes the need to step-up private sector investment in Samoa to match the ambitions for sustainable development and that the government should introduce and operationalize its financing



---

framework to unlock additional financial resources. As for the Cook Islands and Niue, evidence is not clear that the design of the JP was based on lessons learned from other relevant JPs.

***EQ 3: To what extent were perspectives of men and women who could affect the outcomes and those who could contribute information or other resources to the attainment of results, considered during JP design processes?***

Evidence from this end-of-programme evaluation reflects limited to no consultation or contribution by the governments of the three countries during the programme design processes. This is considered a weakness in the design of the JP, which reflected views and contributions in the design only from PUNOs' perspective. Having said that, all interviewed government officials reflected interest and an understanding of the INFFs/DFAs to address challenges in public financing management and the need for a more sustainable financing for the SDG acceleration. They were concerned that their views on factors affecting the achievement of results were not considered during the design, which would have increased ownership, facilitated policy dialogue and formulated more realistic expected results within the given timeframe and specificities of local contexts.

One government staff from Samoa mentioned *"For me, the consultation was not there and when we got a hold of the outline of the projects, I am not sure whether other divisions or ministries were consulted. I had to intervene and talk about realistic outputs that we can deliver from the projects, trying to set what is achievable led to a delay in the implementation process. We acknowledge the support from the UN and they were on the right track but it was not realistic"*. One government staff from the Cook Islands said that *"At the beginning, we were not consulted and we did not know what INFF and DFA were and what was the purpose and this was at the beginning. We looked into it and then we started to understand that we need to do and that it would be useful for us to use in the future, once we had this clarity, we were fully onboard and the consultations from this point forward was easier"*. The engagement of government was more clearly articulated in the implementation of the planned activities and development of DFAs, in which government partners are key.

Likewise, the contribution of civil society and the private sector was limited, primarily centred around the Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organizations (SUNGO),<sup>40</sup> participating in consultations for DFAs and the private sector framework, but not extensively beyond that. Interviewed NGO staff talked about their attendance at a UNDP consultation forum, offering inputs on SDG financing, which was seen as valuable but needing better development, simplicity, local language translation and clear goals to effectively engage communities.

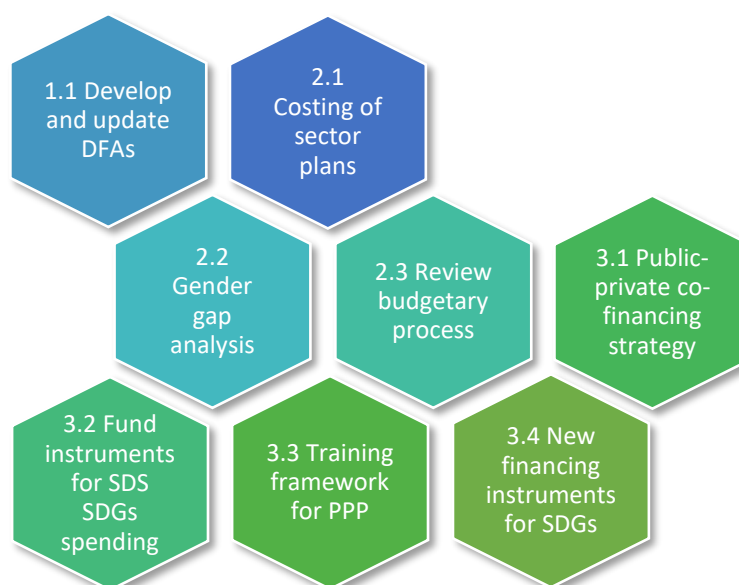
## 3.2 Effectiveness

***EQ 4: To what extent did the JP contribute to the country(s) programme outcomes and outputs, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and national development priorities? In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? How can the project build on or expand these achievements? In which areas does the JP have the fewest achievements?***

---

<sup>40</sup> SUNGO is an umbrella organization that promotes the civil society sector in Samoa focused around capacity building and training for CSOs <https://www.sungoweb.org/>

**Figure 4: JP activities**



**Under Output 1 ‘Integrated financing strategies for accelerating SDG progress implemented’,** one activity was planned and was fully achieved but the output overall was **partially achieved**.

Activity 1.1: ‘*Scoping Mission to Cook Islands and Niue to Establish/Coordinate technical committees, develop DFAs, update Samoa’s DFA*’. The DFA reports for the Cook Islands and Niue were developed and endorsed by both governments and the one for Samoa was updated (yet to be launched by the MoF). The DFAs provide road maps for these governments to take forward policy and institutional reforms for more integrated finance flow management that supports the implementation of national priorities and the SDGs. The DFAs are considered a first step in the INFF process.

**Under Output 2 ‘SDS, sector plans costed and gender responsive financing frameworks developed for Samoa’,** three activities were planned; one was over achieved while two were only partially achieved, as follows.

Activity 2.1: ‘Costing elements of a sector plan and strengthening targeted planning systems’. This activity was **partially achieved**, implemented by UNESCAP who conducted a costing of high priority initiatives in the Samoa tourism sector plan, out of initially two sectors planned. It aimed to assist with the COVID-19 pandemic recovery and beyond. The costing included the development of a cruise tourism strategy and a tourism resilience and asset protection fund, in addition, validation workshops were convened with national stakeholders. As part of capacity strengthening, a manual was developed and workshops were conducted on project planning and cost-benefit analysis. Based on this work in Samoa, a similar joint SDG programme is being implemented in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and a regional knowledge product is underway.

Activity 2.2: ‘Conducting a gender gap analysis in Samoa’. This activity was **over-achieved**, implemented by UN Women who provided technical support to the MoF and the MWCSD to conduct a gender assessment of the national budget. A gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) planning workshop was held



---

and three line ministries (target was two originally) were supported to conduct a gender budget assessment of their 2019/2020 budgets, reports were endorsed by the line ministries, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour (MCIL) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE). A final GRB Results Workshop was held (virtually) where the GRB assessment results, consider the recommendations, identify possible GRB tools to be used, and develop a GRB financing strategy for each ministry (capacity building was not originally targeted).

Activity 2.3: ‘Review of Budgetary Process to improve alignment between policies and annual budgets and develop new budget templates’. This activity was **partially achieved**, implemented by UNDP who faced challenges as the PDS for Samoa was not established and costing was not possible. Hence, there were deviations from the initial JP design by shifting focus to the sector level plans. UNDP is currently developing a national sector planning manual that will be followed by series of sector consultations and dedicated support will be provided to selected priority sectors in terms of sector plan and medium-term expenditure framework development. Progress on this activity remains incomplete.

**Under Output 3: ‘Financing mechanisms available to mobilize public and private resources to respond to Samoa’s national development plan’**, four activities were planned, two were partially achieved and the other two were not implemented.

Activity 3.1: ‘Develop national strategy for public-private co-financing’. This activity was **partially achieved**, implemented by UNDP who developed a national private sector development investment framework for Samoa, informed by a gap analysis of existing policies, systems and mechanisms on public-private partnerships and private sector development and investment. The JP did not develop a strategy as initially planned, but rather an overarching framework aimed to bring together various initiatives and efforts, as the government already had a strategy in place.

Activity 3.2: ‘Develop fund instrument to manage SDS and SDGs related spending’. This activity **was not conducted** and removed as advised by the Government of Samoa as it duplicates ongoing reforms and efforts in relation to investment instruments and incentivized schemes for public-private investment.

Activity 3.3: ‘Develop training framework for public-private partnerships to understand budgetary definition processes and SDG financing strategies and new financing instruments’. This activity was **not implemented** as planned by UNDP.

Activity 3.4: ‘Develop new financing instruments to respond to key SDG oriented goals’. This activity was **partially achieved**, implemented by UNESCAP who conducted a regional study on debt for climate swap, covering Samoa, Niue and the Cook Islands. The study was prepared with Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and findings were presented at a regional debt conference, co-convened by the governments of Fiji and Tuvalu and UNESCAP who provided human resources support during the conference.

In view of the UNDP staff, the biggest achievements of this JP was the development of the three DFAs for Samoa, Niue and the Cook Islands, the development and endorsement of the GRBs in Samoa, as well as the development of a framework for government-private sector development strategy for Samoa’s Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour. The current JP was focusing on Samoa because it was more progressive and had been through the DFA process few years ago, but with the Niue and Cooks the JP only covered their DFAs, which is the first step in INFF process and still needs to be taken forward. Samoa

---

government officials found that the GRB assessments and pertinent reviews, KPIs and capacity building of ministries' staff was the biggest achievement, saying it was very helpful, eye-opening and hands-on *"The GRB was effective in terms of relooking at our indicators and exploring the gender aspect more so for us, this was very helpful"*.

Interviewed UNDP and UNESCAP staff recognize the challenges with the design of this JP, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the specific challenges in Samoa government administration changes (discussed in more detail under EQ 5). They find that there was still a lot to be done if given more time and resources, one interviewed staff said that *"If we review what has been achieved based on the design, this JP was more ineffective than effective. Most of the results framework was not achieved because the results were ambitiously set in the design and we could only develop the DFAs and support the government of Samoa for the finance strategy. We were supposed to mobilise new resources for the government, but we may only do so once the INFF is in place, which did not happen"*.

**EQ 5: What factors have contributed to achieving, or not, intended country programme outputs and outcomes? What factors contributed to effectiveness or ineffectiveness? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can or could they be overcome?**

#### **Enabling factors**

- The good relationship and comparative long partnerships between the UNDP and other PUNOs and the governments of Samoa, Cook Islands and Niue were a valuable asset for this JP. This relationship has helped to build trust, cooperation and a shared vision on the importance of public financing management for the achievements of the SDGs. Despite concerns on engagement in the JP design at the beginning, the governments showed commitment and ownership into the JP and its objectives, especially by the Cook Islands and Samoa, and to a lesser extent by Niue due to the limited human resources and capacities of this island.

#### **Constraining factors**

- The ToC of the JP was too ambitious, as deduced by PUNOs staff. The JP could have been designed to focus on one (or only few) specific pillar of the INFF for more appropriateness to the time frame and better relevance to the government capacities in the three countries and a more tailored approach to their different contexts. Focusing on the whole INFF is an extensive process rendering the achievement of the full range of the programme's results unlikely.
- The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented challenge that had its toll on the governments' capacities and resources. It shifted focus of priorities to address the urgent needs during the pandemic and then cope with its economic repercussions and recovery efforts. The borders were closed for more than two years. Governments were overwhelmed after the borders opened, with many missions coming in and officials going out. On the other front, it was challenging for the PUNOs not being able to work directly with partners due to mobility restrictions and lockdown. UNESCAP staff underscored this challenge saying, *"Essentially not being here in Samoa was a challenge, trying to get work done in Samoa while being based in Suva was a problem and we could have done better if we were on the ground"*. Field visits were

---

restricted and reliance on national consultants impacted work quality, which varied according to consultants' capabilities.

- When the JP commenced in 2020, Samoa's SDS was concluding, with the government crafting a new Pathway for the Development of Samoa and its costing was not feasible since it had not been endorsed yet. Following the election of Samoa's new government in March 2021, the transition was prolonged by a political crisis until June 2021. This transition period, along with the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic hindered progress of the JP activities. The government grappled with internal and political matters, delaying decision-making and engagement. This led to challenges in aligning JP support with the revised PDS, given that programme activities were already approved. Thus, efforts were redirected to revising and updating sector-level planning processes and yet challenges arose due to the varied planning and costing methods in different sectors.
- The overall design phase of the JP lacked proper execution and was done with minimal government buy-in at the onset. During the inception phase, governments engagement encountered resistance, questioning their involvement in the design, which indicated the need for a more gradual consideration of governments into the INFF concept in Cook Islands, Samoa and Niue. Specifically in Samoa, the process was rushed, aiming to swiftly onboard stakeholders to support and implement the project. In an inception workshop in 2021, a recommendation emerged to allow government time for activity discussions and rectify potential duplications. Consequently, under Output 3, an activity was omitted, reallocating funds to support private sector development. One UNDP staff clarified saying that *"It required a lot of meetings and discussions with the government and explain what the INFF is all about and a lot of convincing and trying to get the high-level government to endorse and provide their support"*.
- Time constraint was also a limiting factor that was mentioned by staff of all PUNOs who were interviewed during this end-of-programme evaluation. The INFF process usually takes three years, however, time was not in favour of this JP that faced considerable delays due to several factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and government changes in Samoa.

***EQ 6: To what extent has the JP partnership strategy and approach been appropriate and effective?***

Initially, there was no partnership strategy in place for the JP, it evolved over time recognizing the importance of partnerships. A consultation process was initiated to clarify the objectives and secure government and key stakeholder support, despite their limited engagement at the outset. Partnerships were maintained through frequent meetings with concerned ministries with the Government of Samoa, including with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and line ministers to track progress, seek clearances, and align activities. The Joint Steering Committee convened quarterly to address pending issues and present agreements and resolutions. In Cook Islands, virtual engagements followed a retrospective approach. The management setup and government involvement could have been more effective if established at an earlier stage. Involvement of CSOs and the private sector was minimal, primarily through consultations for the development of the DFA and the private sector framework. This included the SUNGO NGO and the Samoa Chamber of Commerce, while the government were the main

---

party in engagement and partnership activities. Similar patterns were observed in the Cook Islands and Niue.

**EQ 7: To what extent synergies have been achieved between the different activities implemented by the PUNOs? What value added has been generated through these synergies?**

Synergies between the PUNO specific activities varied, and the following two were identified during the evaluation:

- UNDP and UN-Women had a notable synergy through GRB activity which was implemented by UN-Women and integrated into UNDP interventions under the Spotlight Initiative.<sup>41</sup> UN-Women through the JP focused on conducting ministry assessments for GRB within national budgets, whereas UNDP through the Spotlight Initiative provided capacity building to the MWCS.
- UNESCAP and UNDP activities were implemented in synergy, they supported the MoF in updating the sector planning manual. UNESCAP supported how the different programmes are developed in the national planning priorities and UNDP supported the planning process.

Interviewed PUNO staff agreed that the project activities were designed and implemented in silos, they believe that the RCO could adopt a better-coordinated approach within JPs that enables PUNOs to anticipate calls for proposals, align priorities and engage the government early on. Additionally, the JP's coordination mechanisms were at the oversight level, which did not inherently prompt PUNOs to collaborate at the technical level, it solely depended on the ability of UNDP as the technical lead agency to enforce technical coordination and synergies. Commenting about this, one interviewed UNDP staff said *"We work in silos and nothing forces us to come together as PUNOs. While we held a technical leadership role, we lacked a management role and we hoped the RCO could facilitate, but the attempt was unsuccessful. In another JP on Social Protection, we had technical committee meetings, but here, this was not required and we need to have something like this"*.

UN-Women staff mentioned that the GRB inception workshop lacked participation from UNDP and UNESCAP, potentially due to their commitments. This situation reflects the issue of individual agency efforts, potentially obscuring the true nature of collaboration of a JP. The integration of GRB into the INFF and its sharing with other partners remain uncertain. One interviewed staff said that *"If we talk about a JP, the idea was to work together as agencies and be able to reflect each other's work but this was not done"*.

Lack of synergy between PUNOs was also concerning for the governments being supported by the JP, as reflected by some interviewed officials who talked about duplication of efforts and lack of coordination, one said *"PUNOs don't work together. They come as different agencies and each one wanted to have their own consultations... each agency comes with their own methods and it was hard trying to link the two especially on GRB by UN-Women/ JP and by UNDP/ Spotlight Initiative and it would have been better for them to discuss and come together"*. Another one said *"Duplication among UN agencies is also quite prevalent. Duplication among UN agencies is indeed a significant concern."*

---

<sup>41</sup> Spotlight Initiative is a collaborative venture by the UN and European Union, invests in programmes that improve the rights and opportunities of women and girls around the world through the prevention of and response to all forms of VAWG. Participating UN entities include mainly UNDP, in addition to UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNWOMEN <https://mptf.undp.org/project/00119126>

---

*UNESCAP's performance is reasonable, but UNDP encounters duplication issues with multiple entities, particularly the programs originating from the RCO".*

***EQ 8: To what extent has the JP contributed to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights? To what extent does the JP contribute to gender equality, persons with disabilities, and the human rights-based approach?***

Specifically through activity 2.2 of the JP 'Conducting a gender gap analysis in Samoa', gender gap analysis and GRB assessments were conducted for three line ministries in Samoa, making short-term and long-term recommendations for adjustments and areas where gender considerations could be sustainably integrated. For instance, the MWCSD was responsive, aligning data with demographics. The MCIL faced data collection gaps, which could be resolved by adjusting their forms, the MoF was advised to review 16 sectors for clarity, MAF lacked gender data, necessitating data adjustments. Feedback from government officials shows how this was a substantial initiative to push gender forward that was not previously tackled by any development partner before. The GRB assessment of each ministry from the 2020 budget was helpful to identify what was missing and to develop gender-related KPIs that could be included in future budgets. The JP also helped the ministries to develop their capacities to incorporate these KPIs into their budget frameworks.

Other than that, generally, the inclusion strategy for the JP was not formally defined; cross-cutting areas were addressed by individual PUNOs through a quality assurance (QA) role. Specific considerations for GEWE, human rights and PwDs were only integrated through assessment during the QA process, focusing on alignment with these principles and verifying assumptions of their representation within project documentation and outputs. Workshops and processes were designed to incorporate both women and men, project templates were refined to capture beneficiary demographics, including age and gender data. Most interviewed PUNO staff recognize that these aspects needed to be strengthened in the different products developed (assessment reports, strategies and frameworks), beyond the GRB by UN-Women. Some government staff, also, believe that more emphasis should have been placed on gender and inclusion and having a gender expert could have strengthened the final product.

### **3.3 Efficiency**

***EQ 9: To what extent was the JP management structure as outlined in the project document efficient in generating the expected results?***

The JP was implemented by UNDP, UNESCAP and UN Women under the leadership of the UN RC. The Governments of Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa provided overall guidance to the PUNOs on the programme implementation and the existing national coordinating committees oversaw coordination in the three countries for coordination with the governments' programmes. Oversight Technical Committees were designed to coordinate implementation and provide technical advice to the national coordination committees, led by UNDP and comprised of government entities, PUNOs and engaging stakeholders.

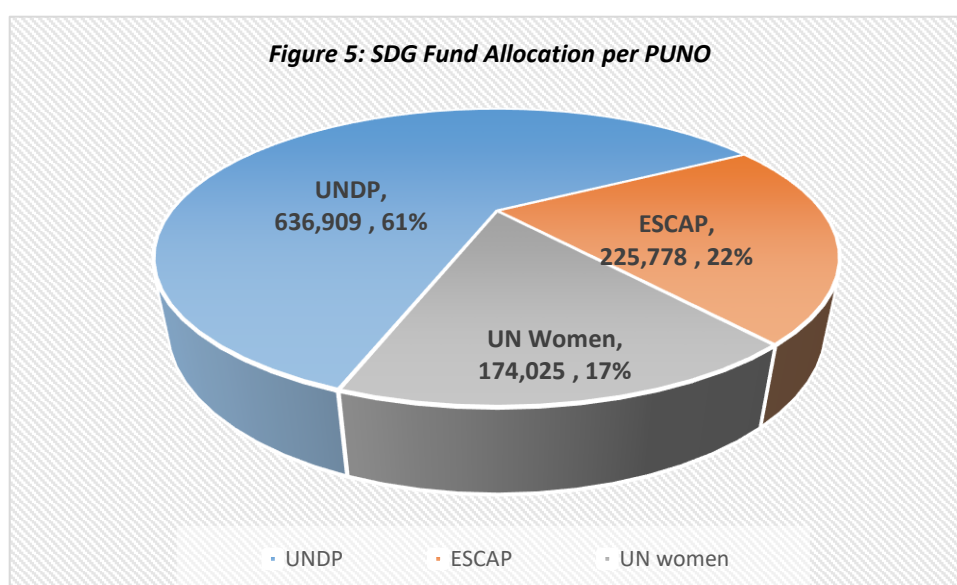
Direct implementation approach was adopted by each of UNDP, UNESCAP and UN Women for the execution of the JP activities. Implementation of activities remained predominantly independent by

each of the three PUNOs, with almost standalone components and limited synergies. This management approach affected collaboration among PUNOs, despite some instances of collaboration, such as with the GRB and the sector planning manual, it could have been more effective. One interviewed staff said, *“Rather than working in synergy, we often operated in separate silos, quarterly meetings were the primary points of convergence for programme-related discussions”*.

UNDP assumed the role of technical lead agency, guiding technical implementation, coordinating reporting, and managing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts. UNDP shared during the evaluation that challenges arose as it was complex to exercise authority or ensure compliance with programme and donor requirements over other PUNOs without a managerial role *“While we held a technical leadership role, we lacked a management role. We hoped the Resident Coordinator's Office could facilitate this aspect, but the attempt was unsuccessful”*.

**EQ 10: To what extent were resources used to address inequalities in general, and gender issues in particular? To what extent have resources been used efficiently? Have activities supporting the strategy been cost-effective? Have resources been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes?**

The total budget of the JP was USD 1,036,712, including PUNOs' contribution of USD 57,250. The budget allocations were divided between PUNOs as illustrated in Figure 5, where UNDP received 61 percent of the fund, UNESCAP 22 percent and UN Women 17 percent. During KIIs, UNDP staff shared that they faced delays in implementation waiting for the second tranche of funding from the Joint SDG Fund, because the instruction was to complete spending 70 percent of the disbursed amounts by the three PUNOs before the second tranche would be transferred. UNDP managed to finish its activities ahead of UN Women and UNESCAP, and was ready for the second tranche before they were. This situation presented a challenge and had a negative impact on the timely execution of UNDP activities, where some year-one activities had to be postponed to year two, awaiting the second tranche of funding. To bridge the gap and keep things going until all PUNOs caught up, UNDP sought funds from internal resources then reimbursed, which created additional complexities.

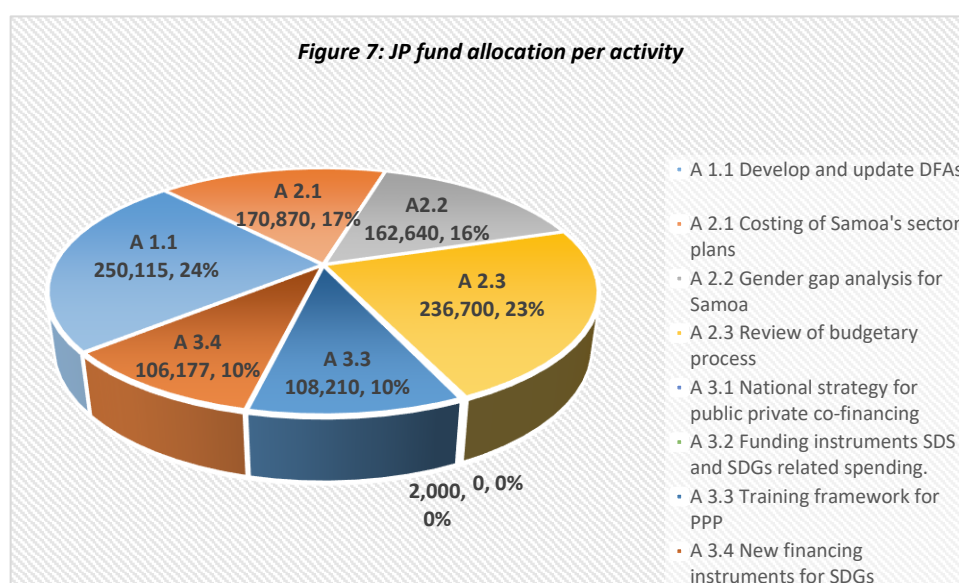
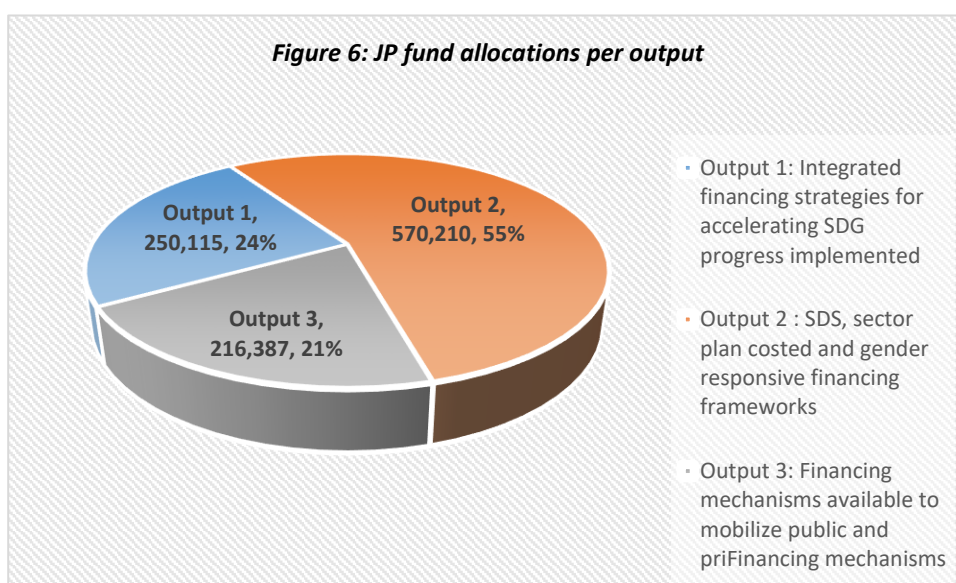


The highest budget allocation went to Output 2 ‘SDS, sector plans costed and gender responsive financing frameworks developed for Samoa’ with a total of USD 570,210 (55 percent), followed by



Output 1 ‘Integrated financing strategies for accelerating SDG progress implemented’ with a total of USD 250,115 (24 percent), then Output 3 ‘Financing mechanisms available to mobilize public and private resources’ with a total of USD 216,387 (21 percent). The distribution of funds per output is presented in Figure 6 and distribution per activity in figure 7.

The interviewed staff of the three PUNOs highlighted their interest to continue the work that has been initiated under this JP, noting that a lot still needs to be done noting the governments’ interest, which will offer substantial opportunities over the next few years. Several PUNO staff find it crucial to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Joint SDG Fund's objectives and strategies for effective planning the way forward and that anticipating the next round of funding is essential and capitalize on available funding streams.



---

**EQ 11: To what extent have the JP implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective? To what extent has there been an economical use of financial and human resources? To what extent have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?**

### **Human Resources**

As indicated by PUNOs' staff during KIIs, an ideal scenario would have involved a dedicated programme management unit, which unfortunately was not established. Instead, the pattern observed was that each PUNO operated under its distinct existing management structure. For example, within UNDP, the JP was managed by the existing Governance unit staff with only the recruitment of a dedicated Finance and Admin Associate for the JP, who was not replaced when he resigned in 2022. This arrangement proved inefficient and counter to the typical function of the Governance unit which focuses on quality assurance within governance initiatives, staff ended up *"wearing double hats"* as described by interviewed UNDP staff. Within UN Women, the Regional Office located in Suva managed overarching tasks of the JP, while operational leadership for Samoa was exercised by the head of office. One UNDP staff mentioned during KIIs that *'It is important to establish a dedicated PMU across PUNOs to bring us together and ensure a distinct separation between the PMU and the agency programme teams. This separation is crucial to guarantee compliance with corporate guidelines. It is important to remember that we need the capacity to both implement and assure the quality of what we are implementing, while also accurately reporting on our progress'*.

The technical expertise required for various aspects of the programme was supplemented by international consultants, along with collaboration with national consultants. In the context of Samoa, Niue and the Cook Islands, reliance on national consultants was a pivotal aspect because of the inability of international consultants to enter due to border closures during the pandemic, and to a lesser extent sensitivity towards international consultants/preference towards national consultants, as underscored by interviewed PUNO staff. They also noted that seeking support by local consultants was significant for the policy dialogue, consultations and for possessing local insight and rapport with stakeholders. National consultants were remunerated on par with international ones. Nevertheless, the capacities of the hired national consultants varied; while some were proficient in the Cook Islands and Samoa, others were not in Niue where everyone had multiple roles, exhausted and with limited technical expertise. Samoa government staff who were interviewed talked about challenges with staff turnover, both at the ministries' side and UNDP's side.

### **Timeframe**

The original programme duration was 24 months to start in July 2020 and end in July 2022, however, it received no-cost extensions until June 2023. Time limitation was a common concern for the PUNOs and the government alike given the nature of the JP trying to influence policy and strengthen local capacities, which takes time. Implementation was considerably delayed, leading to partial achievement of results, for all outputs. This is due to a number of factors, including the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic that were prolonged over two years with lockdown, closed borders and shift in governments' priorities. The change in administration in Samoa also caused some delays, as the new government needed time to become familiar with the JP and to decide how they wanted to proceed to align the JP with the new Samoa PDS. Moreover, not having appropriate consultations during the design phase also led to a long inception phase and dialogue to get the governments onboard and ensure their buy-in for the JP activities, some alterations had to be done too. The project was further delayed due to the need to



---

obtain government approvals for the DFAs. One UNESCAP staff mentioned that *‘Attempting to execute a project within a two-year timeframe sets us up for challenges, especially considering the country’s limited capacity and alignment with our objectives’*.

Consequently, while the JP was originally designed to focus on the whole INFF process, which is a very extensive process, it was later decided to focus on a specific pillar of the INFF, which would allow the JP to be completed within a shorter timeframe. One UNDP staff mentioned that *“The design of the programme was very ambitious if we look at the time frame for it, the novelty of the INFF concept compared to the context of each country required time to do synthesis process to have the government understand the INFF and have an alignment of what it can bring to their national priorities. There was a lot of push back from the government and this is because of how it was set up and we could have done better if the government had been better involved so they can speak about their process”*.

**EQ 12: To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by the JP ensured effective and efficient project management?**

There was no specific M&E system for the JP nor was it unified between PUNOs, and it was not clear how monitoring was designed or implemented to measure the progress on the output/ outcome indicators mentioned in the JP’s results framework.<sup>42</sup> The indicators themselves were too ambitious in their design. M&E followed the internal systems of each of the PUNOs, which may have hindered opportunities to tap into resources for efficiency and conduct joint monitoring or assessments. It was also unclear if M&E experts were engaged in the development or follow-up on the JP. It is apparent that robust M&E measures were lacking during the design phase. Feedback from staff shows that M&E activities were minimal within the project and that each PUNO was only concerned about its own activities. This situation may have been influenced by the complex nature of the JP: the responsibility for monitoring the JP laid with the JP team of PUNO staff under leadership of the lead technical agency of the joint monitoring and learning efforts, while specific components were implemented by various UN agencies. During the evaluation, UNDP acknowledged this gap and confirmed making efforts for improvement as this structure necessitated a higher-level approach to M&E, with PUNOs monitoring activities periodically.

Along the same line, effective communication was challenging due to the expectation of a unified communication approach across diverse agencies. One UNDP staff mentioned during KII *‘Unfortunately, the roles of Communication and M&E are frequently undervalued during programme design, with programme officers often assuming their responsibilities. The distinct roles of M&E in programming remain unclear’*.

Regarding the reporting structure of the JP, PUNOs successfully engaged in joint reporting. UNDP staff clarified that, as the technical lead, they were responsible for coordinating data collection from the PUNOs. This data was utilized for steering committee and donor reporting on biannual and annual basis, and quarterly joint steering committee reports were submitted using templates provided by the RCO. Some staff found that reporting had helped to ensure awareness of each entity’s responsibilities and streamlined operations. While reporting was prepared, the M&E system did not effectively contribute

---

<sup>42</sup> JP document, Annex 2, Results Framework

---

to project management; it primarily centred around reporting on activities, lacking substantial qualitative data.

### 3.4 Sustainability

**EQ 13: To what extent is it likely that the benefits of the JP at the national level will continue after its implementation ceases?**

Although most of the planned JP results were only partially achieved, there are high prospects that those are likely to continue after the JP ends as they represent a concrete base for moving forward into the next phases of INFF implementation, following the DFAs. Evidence from this evaluation shows changes at the enabling environment at varying levels in Samoa, Niue and the Cook Islands in adopting INFFs. Ownership and interest by the three governments (Niue to a lesser extent) exists, however, the availability of financial resources, technical expertise and national capacities are prerequisite factors that need to be considered. Of note by the evaluation is the strong level of ownership to the INFF and GRB in the Cook Islands, but the ability of the government presently to carry this agenda forward is uncertain. The government is unable to make specific commitments in this regard due to competing priorities and limited technical capacity and inadequate funding. This circumstance is mirrored in Niue and Samoa as well.

Institutional capacity strengthening was evident; DFAs were developed with the leadership of the three governments, in Samoa, gender budgets were assessed and GRB reports developed and endorsed by key ministries, public-private partnership framework and costing for the tourism sector plans was developed. Interviewed government officials confirmed engagement in consultations and policy dialogue and participated in the actual development of the policy products conducted through the JP. They also received specialized trainings on GRBs, project costing and cost-benefit analysis.

With the exception of Niue, both Samoa and the Cook Islands governments seem clear about the path ahead towards INFFs. Samoa staff during interviews confirmed they are planning to work with the DFA and consolidate it with some public expenditure and financial accountability assessment this year. Next year, they MoF plans to identify areas that could be strengthened and conduct a review of the finance sector plan and then will implement those in the remaining period. During the evaluation, Samoa government official said *“Looking ahead, sustainability seems promising, irrespective of the acquisition of a new project. What we achieved through this project is the building blocks for moving forward and it will take some time to have all the sectors set up and custom built and from there the alignment and mapping of sectors and achieving the national plan and this will be our plan for costing”*. Government officials from the Cook Islands also confirmed that a significant portion of the DFA content seems to already align with the budgeting and planning process, thereby contributing to their reinforcement. They are doing efforts around finding ways to integrate the DFA effectively; for example, a Public Investment Management Assessment (PIMA) review has been conducted, gradually weaving these elements into the Cook Islands’ planning processes.

**EQ 14: Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs affecting women, men and vulnerable groups? EQ 15: To what extent will financial and economic resources be available to sustain the benefits achieved by the project?**

---

Given that Samoa, Niue and the Cook Islands are relatively small and despite the realization of its value and advantages, applying the INFF process with its associated demands is a challenging and resource-intensive endeavour. This is particularly true when comparing these modest-scale economies to larger ones. Interviewed PUNOs' staff underscored that it is only if funding opportunities become available for these governments that they could initiate the next phases of the INFF process. One said during KII *"Our goal is to finish what we have started and then decide on the next steps and it is important to understand the SDG fund and its purpose and the funding from different donors for various projects. This helps us plan for the future and support government initiatives effectively knowing what funding is available, we can prepare better"*.

***EQ 16: Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs and the project contributions to country programme outputs and outcomes? EQ 17: To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to allow primary stakeholders to carry forward the results attained on gender equality, empowerment of women, human rights and human development?***

The sustainability of the project in each of the countries, in the absence of formal strategies, is dependent on the active involvement and commitment of crucial stakeholders and the line ministries tasked with its implementation. Taking forward the recommendations in the developed DFAs hinges on the MoF in each country to spearhead further actions and it was advised during the evaluation to focus on simpler and the most relevant steps that address their limited capacities and essential needs. However, considering the recent emergence from the pandemic, resources remain limited, and government teams are relatively small and tasked with executing a multitude of actions, causing shifts in priorities away from INFFs over time.

The officials from the Government of Samoa mentioned that the incorporation of new gender-responsive KPIs during assessments was useful, aiming to gauge the integration of gender considerations into the government's services over time. This is also true for the work involving PwDs to embed related aspects into operational frameworks. They explained that the ministries' KPIs were initially operationally focused, but now they encompass a broader scope including sex-disaggregated data on service users, such as workplace grievance cases and their resolutions. A similar approach is taken in areas like labour mobility and investment and industry, where sex-disaggregated data of government incentive beneficiaries is analysed. This detailed review of existing data within ministries has led to insights on gender aspects that previously were unreported and informing fund allocations by MoF and decision-making.

***EQ 18: To what extent do the JP interventions have well-designed and well-planned exit strategies which include a gender dimension? What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability in order to support female and male project beneficiaries as well as marginalized groups?***

An exit strategy for the JP was not developed, whereas the project documentation stipulated the necessity of a phased-out approach but was not carried out as intended. The UNDP's perspective seen during the evaluation was that efforts will be directed towards securing additional resources and formulating a Phase 2 for the programme, either in collaboration with other entities or independently

under the UNDP umbrella. One interviewed staff explained that *“our approach follows a structured progression aligned with the INFF process. Notably, the financing strategy forms the second pillar of the INFF, if we are to have a phase 2 of the JP, it is about coming up with a programme”*.

## CONCLUSIONS

Criteria	#	Conclusion
Relevance	1	By strategically selecting six SDGs with financing components, the JP’s design aimed to improve financial access and resource mobilization to contribute to gender equality, poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth (SDGs 1, 5, 8, 9, 10 and 17).
	2	The JP aligns with the AAA, the UN Pacific Strategy 2018-2020 and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, underpinning a commitment to resource management, financing sustainable development and transparent governance. The continued contribution and relevance of the JP to the UNSDCF 2023-2027 is underscored.
	3	The JP is aligned with national strategies and plans of the Cook Islands, Samoa and Niue, demonstrating its commitment to addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in the Pacific context. However, challenges surface in ensuring sustained alignment as national strategies evolve, requiring continuous adjustments to remain effective and cope with competent priorities.
	4	Lack of consultation during the JP design had a negative impact on responsiveness and buy-in by the three governments and on relevance to the specificities in each country. This required revisions to the initially planned outputs and activities to align with national priorities; it was only then that the three governments came onboard and engaged. The same was true for the engagement of the civil society and private sector.
	5	While the JP was based on prior PUNOs’ insights and best practices in its approach to support governments to adopt INFF, tailoring its approach to the varying contexts, capacities and sizes of the three countries was not realized, except at later stages of implementation.
Effectiveness	6	Output 1/ Activity 1.1 (UNDP) of the JP was achieved with DFAs for Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa endorsed. Considered a first for INFFs, they shall enable roadmaps for integrated finance flows that are aligned with national priorities and SDGs. The DFAs for Niue is yet to be launched.
	7	Output 2 of the JP was only partially achieved. Under Activity 2.1 (UNESCAP), Samoa tourism sector cost analysis, strategy and training manual were developed (initially two sectors were to be covered). Activity 2.2 (UN Women) was over-achieved; besides the conduct of gender gap analysis, gender assessments and GRB strategies for three ministries (originally two were planned), capacity building and apparent interest of ministries was an overarching result. Progress of Activity 2.3 (UNDP) stalled due to challenges as the PDS for Samoa was not established and costing was not possible.
	8	Output 3 of the JP was the least achieved out of the three outputs. Under Activity 3.1 (UNDP), a public-private co-financing strategy was not developed, but rather an

		overarching framework. Activity 3.2 (UNDP) was removed as it duplicates ongoing reforms by the government, which exemplifies insufficient consultations during the JP design. Activity 3.3 (UNDP) was not implemented. Finally, Activity 3.4 (UNESCAP) was partially achieved, only a regional study on debt for climate swap was prepared with the PIFS, that included Samoa, Niue and the Cook Islands among the covered countries.
	9	There was a consensus amongst interviewed PUNO staff and government officials that the major achievements of the JP were the development of the DFAs for the three countries, and GRBs and the public-private financing framework for Samoa.
	10	The challenges faced by the JP encompass an overambitious ToC with lack of consultations during the design, time constraints and the disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on resources, mobility and competing government priorities. Additionally, complications in Samoa arose due to political transitions and developing a new PDS, impeding effective execution.
	11	There was no partnership strategy in place for the JP, it evolved over time recognizing the importance of partnerships. Later, a consultation process took place to clarify objectives and secure government and key stakeholders' support, despite their limited engagement at the outset.
	12	While some collaboration occurred between PUNOs, a mostly independent approach to design and implementation and insufficient technical-level coordination hindered potential synergies among PUNOs. There was a recognition by both; PUNOs and governments, that more coordination and engagement are needed to enhance the effectiveness of joint efforts, with a role by RCO.
	13	To some extent, two synergies emerged; between UNDP and UN-Women integrating the GRB activity into the Spotlight Initiative, and between UNESCAP and UNDP who both supported the Samoa MoF on the sector planning manual.
	14	The JP contribute to gender equality was evident primarily through Activity 2.2, paving the way for the Government of Samoa to potentially make adjustments for gender integration in national budgets and building related national capacities. Other than that, generally, the inclusion strategy for the JP was not formally defined and government staff believe that more emphasis should have been placed on gender and inclusion.
Efficiency	15	UNDP received the majority of the fund allocations and UNDP highlighted a funding challenge arising from delayed second tranche disbursement. On the other hand, prolonged implementation, partly due to the pandemic and government transitions, impacted timely achievement of results.
	16	The absence of a dedicated PMU affected efficiency, causing existing teams to assume additional responsibilities, and sometimes conflicting roles. Technical leadership, assumed by UNDP, faced challenges enforcing authority without a clear managerial role over other PUNOs.
	17	Expertise was supplemented by consultants, especially local ones in the three countries, to cater to contextual sensitivity and stakeholder engagement. Capacities of

		local consultants varied between countries and was not always reliable, especially in Niue.
	18	There was no specific M&E system for the JP nor was it unified between PUNOs, and it was not clear how monitoring was designed or implemented to measure the progress on the output/ outcome indicators, which were too ambitious in their design. This led to challenges in data collection, reporting and meaningful assessments. Joint reporting took place, yet the absence of a robust M&E system limited contribution to inform programme.
Sustainability	19	Partially achieved JP results offer a foundation for future INFF phases post-JP, governments are demonstrating ownership and interest. Specifically, Samoa and Cook Islands governments demonstrate clarity in continuing INFF progress. Samoa plans to consolidate DFAs, while Cook Islands aligns it with budgeting processes. Incorporating gender-responsive KPIs aids sustainability, where ministries now include sex-disaggregated data to inform decision-making and resource allocation.
	20	The resource-intensive nature of applying INFF challenges small economies and pose risks to long-term sustainability, in addition to their competing priorities. Dependence on funding opportunities is vital for initiating INFF phases. Understanding funding sources enables better planning to support government initiatives effectively. Financial resources, technical expertise and capacities must be available to sustain progress.
	21	The substantial interest expressed by PUNO staff to continue initiated work reflects the programme's positive impact. Institutional capacity was strengthened through DFAs, gender budget assessments and public-private partnership frameworks and government involvement in policy dialogue and specialized training enhanced project outcomes and alignment with national priorities.
	22	An exit strategy was absent from the JP, impacting phased-out approach. UNDP's intention for Phase 2 focuses on aligning with INFF pillars, securing additional resources, and formulation of the next programme phase.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The implementation of the JP yielded some important lessons learned that could be considered in future programming and implementation of programmes and projects in the future as follows:

- Upstream and downstream consultations with government officials would ensure ownership at political and operation levels of programme design and implementation which would ensure buy-in and commitment from government. The absence of these two-tiered consultations could result in resistance and implementation challenges.
- Technical assistance programmes including government restructuring approaches such as this one require time for implementation and ensuring effectiveness and results. Designing a project that requires changes in government approaches require advocacy and engagement which can only be achieved through a staggered approach which would require a minimum of four years.



---

Trying to achieve such a complex process such as the INFF in two years and during a global pandemic is not likely to yield positive and sustainable results.

- Joint Programmes design could benefit from better integration and synergies between PUNOs. This can only be achieved through forward planning and joint design of activities to ensure maximum leveraging of each agency's mandate and expertise.
- Delivering as one-UN requires a strategic approach to engaging and discussions with governments. This could be better achieved through increasing coordination and collaboration amongst PUNOs and between PUNOs and governments.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendation 1 (PUNOs and governments):

Enhance stakeholders' engagement and ownership at the onset of programme design through planned policy dialogue and meaningful consultations, which would ensure responsiveness, government buy-in, and alignment with national priorities. Likewise, secure active involvement of civil society and the private sector to enhance project relevance and understanding of needs and challenges of vulnerable populations.

### Recommendation 2 (PUNOs):

Considering the small-scale economies and sizes of the Pacific Islands, tailor INFF programme design and implementation to their varying specificities to ensure effective alignment with national strategies and plans as they evolve over time, as well as to local capacities and resources.

### Recommendation 3 (PUNOs and RCO):

In future programming, establish effective technical coordination mechanisms among PUNOs with the active oversight and involvement of RCO to unlock potential synergies, enhance collaboration and maximize impact, as well as approach governments as one UN. Developing a comprehensive partnership strategy could be one way to foster interagency collaboration and ensure government involvement and support from the outset. Another way could be through formalizing joint design and implementation approaches.

### Recommendation 4 (PUNOs and RCO):

Establish a dedicated PMU in future JPs with necessary technical expertise to improve efficiency and clarity on managerial roles and responsibilities of the lead agency to effectively guide other PUNOs. Consideration should be given to augment lack of expertise at the national level, at the same time, focus on enhancing capacity and reliability of local consultants for successful stakeholder engagement.

### Recommendation 5 (PUNOs):

Develop a programme specific inclusion strategy following relevant UN strategies and make the necessary resources allocations and expertise to ensure robust integration of gender-responsive KPIs and inclusion principles across the programme cycle.

---

#### Recommendation 6 (PUNOs):

Develop a robust unified M&E system with realistic output/outcome indicators for future JPs between PUNOs which taps on their individual systems' capacities, while also allowing for joint and consistent data collection, reporting and assessments. In doing so, systemic progress tracking will be possible and results will be used to inform and guide implementation and necessary adjustments.

#### Recommendation 7 (PUNOs and RCO):

Plan for the sustainability of project outputs beyond this JP by securing funding sources, technical expertise and capacities. This is imperative to facilitate government-led efforts to continue and build upon the JP's achievements on INFFs, while considering the resource constraints of these small countries.

## ANNEXES

The following annexes are presented in the coming section of the inception report:

- Annex 1: Terms of Reference
- Annex 2: Evaluation Matrix
- Annex 3: Data Collection Tools
- Annex 4: Evaluation Participants



---

## **Annex 1: Terms of References**

## Annex 2: Evaluation Matrix

Assumptions to be Assessed	Indicators/Judgement Criteria	Data Source /Stakeholder	Data Collection Method
<b>Relevance</b> EQ 1: To what extent was the JP in line with national development priorities, country programme outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the SDGs? To what extent does the JP contribute to the theory of change for the relevant country programme outcome? Are the JP objectives and outputs clear, practical and feasible within its frame? Do they clearly address women, men and vulnerable groups? EQ 2: To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant JP considered in the design? EQ 3: To what extent were perspectives of men and women who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the attainment of stated results, considered during JP design processes?			
The project approaches and methodologies are well suited to the priorities and policies of the targeted countries, UNDP strategic plan and SDGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent of alignment with UNDP strategies and policies</li> <li>• Extent of alignment with development priorities and country programme outputs and outcomes</li> <li>• Extent of alignment with the SDGs</li> </ul>	Project Documents UNDP staff PUNOs Staff Government	Literature Review KIs
The JP built on the theory of change of relevant country programme and included clear causal links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which JP reflects the ToC of the country programme outcome</li> <li>• Extent of presence of clear causal links between the different levels (outputs and outcomes)</li> <li>• Level of practicality and feasibility (within time frame)</li> <li>• Extent to which JP has considered inclusivity (women, men and vulnerable groups)</li> </ul>	Project Documents UNDP staff PUNOs Staff	Literature Review KIs
The project implementation strategies were backed by context analysis and conflict sensitivity and built on lessons learned from previous JPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of needs assessments conducted</li> <li>• Evidence on context analysis conducted</li> <li>• Evidence of conflict sensitivity and risk matrix developed and continuously updated</li> <li>• Evidence of integration of lessons learned in project design</li> </ul>	Project Documents PUNOs staff	Literature review KIs

Stakeholders played a role during project design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which other stakeholders (men and women) were consulted during project design.</li> <li>Degree of national ownership of project activities</li> </ul>	Project Documents UNDP staff PUNOs Governments	Literature Review KII
<b>Effectiveness</b> EQ 4: To what extent did the JP contribute to the country(s) programme outcomes and outputs, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and national development priorities? In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors? How can the project build on or expand these achievements? In which areas does the JP have the fewest achievements? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can or could they be overcome? EQ 5: What factors have contributed to achieving, or not, intended country programme outputs and outcomes? What factors contributed to effectiveness or ineffectiveness? EQ 6: To what extent has the JP partnership strategy and approach been appropriate and effective? EQ 7: To what extent synergies have been achieved between the different activities implemented by the PUNOs? What value added has been generated through these synergies? EQ 8: To what extent has the JP contributed to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights? To what extent does the JP contribute to gender equality, persons with disabilities, and the human rights-based approach?			
The project achieved its intended results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent of contribution to country (s) outcomes, outputs, the SDGs and UNDP strategic plan and national priorities</li> </ul>	Project Documents PUNOs Government CSOs	Literature Review KII
Project implementation strategies and models have been effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which implementation strategies have been flexible and resilient</li> <li>Extent to which the project has been able to adapt to changes on the ground</li> <li>Extent to which the project approaches have enabled the achievement of results</li> </ul>	Project Documents PUNOs Government CSOs	Literature Review KII
Project was aware of enabling factors and challenges and constantly thrived to address challenges and capitalise on enabling factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which risk matrix was updated</li> <li>Degree of success in addressing challenges</li> <li>Evidence of dialogue with stakeholders to understand and respond to challenges</li> <li>Evidence of enabling factors supporting the implementation</li> </ul>	Project Documents PUNOs Government CSOs	Literature Review KII
JP partnership strategy and approach has been appropriate and effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of partnership strategy amongst the PUNOs</li> </ul>	Project Documents PUNOs	Literature Review KII

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of Steering committee meetings, technical committee meetings and different governance structures</li> <li>• Evidence of joint activities and coordination</li> </ul>	Government CSOs	
Synergies have been achieved between the different activities implemented by the PUNOs and resulted in added value to the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of partnership strategy amongst the PUNOs</li> <li>• Evidence of Steering committee meetings, technical committee meetings and different governance structures</li> <li>• Evidence of joint activities and coordination</li> </ul>	Project Documents PUNOs Government CSOs	Literature Review KIIs
JP contributed to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights, and PwDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence and availability of an inclusion strategy and approach</li> <li>• Evidence of integration of PwDs priorities through consultations and engagement</li> <li>• Evidence of contribution to gender equality and empowerment of women</li> <li>• Evidence of a focus on RBA</li> </ul>	Project Documents PUNOs Government CSOs	Literature Review KIIs
<b>Efficiency</b> EQ 9: To what extent was the JP management structure as outlined in the project document efficient in generating the expected results? EQ 10: To what extent were resources used to address inequalities in general, and gender issues in particular? EQ 11: To what extent have the JP implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective? EQ 12: To what extent has there been an economical use of financial and human resources? Have resources (funds, male and female staff, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes? To what extent have resources been used efficiently? Have activities supporting the strategy been cost-effective? To what extent have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner? EQ 12: To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by the JP ensured effective and efficient project management?			
The project human and financial resources have been efficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of efficient management structure</li> <li>• Evidence of efficient resource management</li> <li>• Organogram of the project</li> </ul>	Project Documents UNDP and PUNO Staff	Literature review KIIs
The project has been on track in terms of implementation and funds were disbursed in a timely fashion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of timely disbursement of funds</li> <li>• Evidence of timely implementation of activities as per workplan</li> </ul>	Project Documents UNDP and PUNO Staff	Literature Review KIIs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which delays have been accounted for by the project</li> </ul>		
UNDP practices, policies, processes and decision-making capabilities have enabled successful implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which UNDP approaches have been conducive to efficiency.</li> <li>Extent to which communication and visibility activities promote project results and achievements</li> </ul>	Project Documents UNDP and PUNO Staff	KIIs
Project M&E systems enabled an effective implementation of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which M&amp;E system is developed</li> <li>Extent to which indicators are adequately developed and well defined</li> <li>Extent to which reporting is conducted in a timely manner</li> <li>Evidence of use of M&amp;E data for project management</li> <li>Examples of changes as a result of M&amp;E data generated</li> </ul>	UNDP Staff (mainly M&E officer) PUNO Staff (M&E or reporting)	KIIs
<b>Sustainability</b> EQ 13: To what extent is it likely that the benefits of the JP at the national level will continue after its implementation ceases? EQ 14: Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs affecting women, men and vulnerable groups? EQ 15: To what extent will financial and economic resources be available to sustain the benefits achieved by the project? EQ 16: Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs and the project contributions to country programme outputs and outcomes? EQ 17: To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to allow primary stakeholders to carry forward the results attained on gender equality, empowerment of women, human rights and human development? EQ 18: To what extent do the JP interventions have well-designed and well-planned exit strategies which include a gender dimension? What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability in order to support female and male project beneficiaries as well as marginalized groups?			
The project has systematically integrated sustainability in all interventions and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which the project has a clear exit strategy</li> <li>Extent to which exit strategy considers vulnerable and marginalised groups</li> </ul>	Project documents PUNO staff Government CSOs	KIIs FGDs
The project has considered sustainability risks and focused on addressing them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which the project identified sustainability risks (social and economic)</li> <li>Extent to which the project considered and addressed financial risks that could affect vulnerable groups</li> </ul>	Project documents PUNO staff Government CSOs	KIIs FGDs

---

National Stakeholders are ready to take over and roll out the outputs of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent of national allocation of funds for the implementation of outputs</li> <li>• Extent of presence of mechanisms, procedures and policies enabling stakeholders to carry forward the outputs</li> </ul>	Project documents PUNO staff Government CSOs	KIIs FGDs

---

## Annex 3: Data Collection Tools

### Evaluation Tools

#### PUNO staff

Relevance
<p>How is the project aligned with UNDP strategies and policies?</p> <p>How is the project aligned with development priorities and country programme outputs and outcomes?</p> <p>How is the JP aligned with the SDGs? Which does it contribute to and how?</p> <p>How was the ToC of the country(s) programme outcome reflected in the design of the JP?</p> <p>How were outputs and outcomes selected?</p> <p>How has the design considered women, men, vulnerable groups in general?</p> <p>How were lessons learned from previous JP integrated in the design? Were risks and needs assessments conducted? Were conflict sensitivity approaches considered? How?</p> <p>To what extent and how were stakeholders consulted in the design of the JP?</p>
Effectiveness
<p>How has the JP contributed to country (s) outcomes, outputs, the SDGs and UNDP strategic plan and national priorities?</p> <p>What has been the achievement of the JP? What enabled these achievements?</p> <p>What has been the challenges? What have been the constraints? How were they addressed?</p> <p>What has been the implementation modality?</p> <p>To what extent the JP has been effective/ineffective? Why?</p> <p>What has been the partnership strategy of the JP? What worked well? What didn't work so well?</p> <p>What has been the strategy for engagement with stakeholders (how often do meetings take place, what is the outcome of these meetings, how were challenges discussed/addressed?)</p> <p>What were the synergies between the PUNOs? What was the added value of this synergy? What are the lessons learned from this approach that could be implemented in future similar projects?</p> <p>What has been the inclusion strategy of the JP? How was gender and empowerment of women, realisation of human rights and priorities of PwDs taken in consideration during implementation?</p>
Efficiency
<p>What has been the management structure of the JP? Was it efficient? What worked well and where were some of the challenges?</p> <p>What was the financial structure of the JP? What worked well and where were some challenges?</p> <p>How was the budget structured to ensure response to inequalities in general, and gender issues in particular?</p> <p>How does the organogram of the project look like? What worked well with this organogram? What should be changed in a future project and why?</p> <p>Have resources (funds, male and female staff, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes? To what extent have resources been used efficiently?</p> <p>To what extent were funds disbursed regularly and how did this allow the implementation of activities according to the work plan? What explains delays if any? How did the JP respond to delays?</p> <p>How has UNDP and other PUNOs systems and approaches conducive to efficiency?</p> <p>How was the M&amp;E system of the JP developed and to what extent are indicators were suited to measure achievements?</p>



<p>What has been the reporting structure of the JP and to what extent were data collected for the indicators? How did the M&amp;E system contributed to effective management?</p> <p>Are there examples of how M&amp;E data resulted in changes in the course of activities by the JP management? What are these examples?</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <p>What is the exit strategy of the project? How does it consider vulnerable and marginalised groups? To what extent has the JP considered sustainability risks especially social, economic and financial risks? How were those risks addressed in the exit strategy of the JP?</p> <p>To what extent there is national ownership of the outputs of the proejct?</p> <p>Has the government (s) allocated resources for the rolling out of JP outputs? How much was allocated?</p> <p>Has the government (s) developed mechanisms, procedures and policies enabling stakeholders to carry forward the outputs? What are those?</p>

### Government Staff/Officials

<p><b>Relevance</b></p> <p>How is the project aligned with development priorities and country programme outputs and outcomes?</p> <p>How is the JP aligned with the SDGs? Which does it contribute to and how?</p> <p>How were outputs and outcomes selected?</p> <p>To what extent and how were you consulted in the design of the JP?</p>
<p><b>Effectiveness</b></p> <p>How has the JP contributed to country (s) outcomes, outputs, the SDGs and UNDP strategic plan and national priorities?</p> <p>What has been the achievement of the JP? What enabled these achievements?</p> <p>What has been the challenges? What have been the constraints? How were they addressed?</p> <p>What has been the implementation modality?</p> <p>To what extent the JP has been effective/ineffective? Why?</p> <p>What has been the partnership strategy of the JP? What worked well? What didn't work so well?</p> <p>How have the PUNOs engaged you in the different activities? (how often do meetings take place, what is the outcome of these meetings, how were challenges discussed/addressed?)</p> <p>What were the synergies between the PUNOs? What was the added value of this synergy? What are the lessons learned from this approach that could be implemented in future similar projects?</p> <p>How was gender and empowerment of women, realisation of human rights and priorities of PwDs taken in consideration during implementation?</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <p>What will continue after the JP ends? How will vulnerable and marginalised groups continue to be considered?</p> <p>To what extent has the JP considered sustainability risks especially social, economic and financial risks? How were those risks addressed in the exit strategy of the JP?</p> <p>To what extent there is national ownership of the outputs of the project?</p> <p>Has the government (s) allocated resources for the rolling out of JP outputs? How much was allocated?</p> <p>Has the government (s) developed mechanisms, procedures and policies enabling stakeholders to carry forward the outputs? What are those?</p>

---

## CSOs

<b>Relevance</b>
How is the project aligned with development priorities and country programme outputs and outcomes? How is the JP aligned with the SDGs? Which does it contribute to and how? How were outputs and outcomes selected? To what extent and how were you consulted in the design of the JP?
<b>Effectiveness</b>
How has the JP contributed to country (s) outcomes, outputs, the SDGs and UNDP strategic plan and national priorities? What has been the achievement of the JP? What enabled these achievements? What has been the challenges? What have been the constraints? How were they addressed? What has been the implementation modality? To what extent the JP has been effective/ineffective? Why? What has been the partnership strategy of the JP? What worked well? What didn't work so well? How have the PUNOs engaged you in the different activities? (how often do meetings take place, what is the outcome of these meetings, how were challenges discussed/addressed?) What were the synergies between the PUNOs? What was the added value of this synergy? What are the lessons learned from this approach that could be implemented in future similar projects? How was gender and empowerment of women, realisation of human rights and priorities of PwDs taken in consideration during implementation?
<b>Sustainability</b>
What will continue after the JP ends? How will vulnerable and marginalised groups continue to be considered? To what extent has the JP considered sustainability risks especially social, economic and financial risks? How were those risks addressed in the exit strategy of the JP? To what extent there is national ownership of the outputs of the project? Has the government (s) allocated resources for the rolling out of JP outputs? How much was allocated? Has the government (s) developed mechanisms, procedures and policies enabling stakeholders to carry forward the outputs? What are those?

## Annex 4: Evaluation Participants

Stakeholder/ involvement in the Initiative	Description
<b>PUNOs</b>	UNDP UN Women UNSCAP
<b>Governments</b>	<p><b>Samoa National authorities:</b> Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour</p> <p><b>Cook Islands National Authorities</b> Ministry of Finance and Economic Management Central Policy and Planning Office Office of the Prime Minister</p> <p><b>Niue National Authorities</b> Secretary of Government Project Management and Coordination Unit</p>
<b>CSOs</b>	<p><b>Samoa</b> Samoa Umbrella of NGOs (SUNGO)</p>

## Annex 5: Evaluation Workplan

Activity	July				August			
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4
1.1 Initial review of background documents.								
1.2 Remote kick-off session.								
1.3 Finalisation of the EQs and methodology, Review Matrix, Data Collection Tools, Stakeholders list and Workplan.								
1.4 Preparation of the Evaluation Inception								
1.5 Submission of the Final Inception Report with revisions.								
<b>Support needed from UNDP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timely review of draft inception report</li> <li>• Final selection of stakeholders</li> <li>• Coordination for feedback from other PUNOs</li> <li>• Logistical support for planning field data collection (visa acquisition and hotel booking)</li> </ul>							
2.1 In-depth analysis of relevant documents.								
2.2 Data collection through KIIs and FGDs and analysis.								
2.3 Formulation of the preliminary responses to each EQs.								
2.4 presentation of the preliminary findings.								
2.5. Development and Submission of Draft report								
<b>Support needed from UNDP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timely provision of background documents including M&amp;E data</li> <li>• Coordination with PUNOs for final selection of stakeholders</li> <li>• Organising field data collection Agenda and Itinerary</li> <li>• Transportation support (guidance) during field data collection</li> <li>• Facilitation of meetings with stakeholders (booking the appointments)</li> </ul>							
3.1 Analysis and synthesis of the evidence and data collected.								
3.2 Preparation of the Draft Final Report.								

Activity	July				August			
3.3 Presentation of findings and recommendations.								
3.4 Submission of Final Review Report, addressing comments.								
<b>Support needed from UNDP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organising the sharing of report with PUNOs and other relevant stakeholders</li> <li>• Consolidation of comments received from multiple reviewers.</li> <li>• Provision of timely and clear feedback on deliverables</li> </ul>							

