

UNDP/GEF Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in Niue

Mid-term Evaluation

DRAFT REPORT – Dr David J. Butler

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Introduction

This draft evaluation is based on 16 working days including a two-week visit to Niue in July during which meetings were held with Government officials, the Mutalau village community and other stakeholders and site visits were made (Annex 1). Project documents were reviewed (Annex 2). A preliminary report with key recommendations was submitted following this visit. Further work was undertaken in Apia at the UNDP Multi Country Office in early September with a team of key Niuean personnel involved in the project including detailed work planning for a possible project extension (Annex 3). Comments on this draft report will be incorporated in a final report due to be submitted by 30 September. (The initial TOR is attached as annex 4).

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1. Introduction to project

The objective of the project is to build capacity for SLM in appropriate government and civil society institutions/user groups in Niue, and ensure that SLM is mainstreamed into government planning and strategy development. It was designed to take a participatory approach with practical reinforcement which involved the establishment of a community-based demonstration site – the SLM farm on land owned by the village of Mutalau.

The lead executing agency is the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) whose Director is the Project Manager and this houses the Project Management Unit (PMU) including a full-time Project Coordinator and Technical Assistant.

The project falls within a global GEF project entitled 'LDC and SIDS Targeted Portfolio Approach for Capacity Development and Mainstreaming of Sustainable Land Management' developed in 2004. This followed the GEF becoming a financial mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and land degradation becoming a new Focal Area of the GEF. The aim of the global project is to develop individual, institutional and systemic capacity for sustainable land management and eligible countries were able to access an expedited medium-sized project under this Portfolio. Niue acceded to UNCCD in 1998 and formulated its National Action Plan (NAP) under the convention in 2004.

The Niuean project has four objectives and the responsibility for each is shared among four different government agencies as follows:

Outcome 1: Human Resource/Institutional Capacities are adequately trained in SLM (*Responsible: DAFF*)

Outcome 2: Capacities for Knowledge Development and Management for SLM are developed (*Responsible: Department of Justice, Lands and Survey (DJLS)*)

Outcome 3: Resources are mobilised for the implementation of Niue's completed NAP (*Responsible: Economic Planning Development & Statistics Unit (EPDSU)*)

Outcome 4: SLM principles are mainstreamed into national policies, plans and legislation (*Responsible: Department of Environment (DOE)*).

The project's was envisaged in the Prodoc (project document) as a three-year project with an estimated start date of 31st August 2006. Its actual initial schedule was:

- Prodoc signed February 2007
- Steering Committee approved by Cabinet – March 2007
- First quarter reported on – Jan-Mar 2007
- Coordinator and Technical Assistant appointed – March 2007
- Inception workshop – April 2007

This mid-term evaluation began in July 2009 and thus took place at the end of the project's tenth quarter (if the first quarter is taken as Jan-March 2007) of a proposed twelve quarters (3 years). The Tripartite Review of the project conducted on 26/11/08 noted the slow progress on the establishment of the Mutalau Farm and concluded that the present mid-term evaluation should serve as the 'official review of progress thus far and provide recommendations on the future of the project'. It also stated that 'activities following the TPR should be scaled down, particularly at the Mutalau farm, until this evaluation was completed and a revised work plan and log-frame has been accepted by both parties.'

The timing of this evaluation means that one of its priorities is to consider whether the project should be extended. If this is not considered appropriate then the evaluation should recommend what activities can be completed in the final quarter.

2. Executive summary

This project was initiated in March 2007 and scheduled for completion at the end of 2009. It had a relatively long gap between planning and implementation during which there were changes in key personnel.

This was an ambitious project from the outset with many activities to fit into the relatively short time-frame of 3 years and it was beset by a number of challenges. Some of these resulted from major changes that happened within its first year and others were

systemic and appear to affect the delivery of projects in Niue more generally. The project team could have addressed some of these more successfully but lacked capacity and support, while others were outside its control.

Recent changes within the project team and a reaffirmed commitment by its leadership provide some confidence that the project can still achieve many of outputs if given more time.

As a small country with a limited pool of people, there is typically an issue finding people with experience to run projects in Niue. The two individuals recruited by the project initially lacked the experience and skills identified in the TOR's for their positions and the staff managing or assisting them faced many competing demands on their time. The Department had a large number of different projects on the go at the same time. A Steering Committee was established that met fairly frequently and assisted in furthering some issues. However it did not take on the role of monitoring the project's team's progress effectively, and was limited in its ability to encourage the different departments to fulfil their obligations and in its liaison the Mutalau community.

There were problems with the resourcing and timing of global and regional support programmes for SLM so that these appear to have been of little direct benefit to Niue's project. However several regional agencies contributed valuable support directly under co-financing arrangements.

A change of Government mid-way through the project had a significant impact when the project's former 'champion' lost his position as Minister of DAFF. He had been a very influential figure as a senior member of Mutalau Village Council and the Government. This change was a setback for the project and some activities based on verbal commitment made by him suffered. This key event was outside the project team's control but its possible occurrence should have been identified at the outset as a risk.

Staff at the UNDP Multi-Country Office in Samoa have shown good commitment to the project and endeavoured to keep it moving forwards. Better induction could have been provided to project staff and there were some problems with financial management and some delays caused by the many commitments staff there have. The quarterly reporting system is a huge drain on resources and could productively be extended to 'thirdly'. But in general the slow delivery rate of the project was due to issues in Niue not outside the country.

The demonstration farm at Mutalau is a key output that is significantly behind schedule though work there is currently gathering some momentum. Its development was hampered particularly by a failure to resolve leases with landowners and the unavailability of labour and heavy machinery. As a result it was scaled back from the original concept and is still undergoing establishment at a time it should be delivering training and research results. A more sustained recent effort has seen the site tidied up and new elements added. What is needed now is a firm plan setting out all the crops to be planted with consideration given to the future once the project finishes and the farm is

handed over to the community. This will need to rank the relative importance of food security, import substitution and potential export crops. An 'end-of-project' agreement should be established between the Government and the Mutalau community.

The project has at times struggled to match the needs of the donor, Government and local communities and it is by no means special in this regard. As an example there has been endless debate about where to locate an implement shed and the absence of this has caused delays. The project will need to be managed more decisively if it is to make full use of the proposed extension to achieve sufficient useful outputs. I have confidence that steps are being taken to ensure that this happens.

3. Key Recommendations

The project appears just as relevant today as when it was devised. Agriculture was described to me as the 'backbone of the economy' by a senior Government official and the Minister of DAFF affirmed its importance for food security and economic growth – alongside fisheries and tourism.

The project is starting to make good progress after falling substantially behind schedule but cannot complete key activities within the time remaining (to 31 December 2009). An extension should be granted ideally for one year – upon certain conditions - to allow it to achieve many of its original objectives. There is a need to formalise several arrangements through written agreements. The size of the demonstration farm will continue to be scaled back due to issues over land availability and labour.

An extension of time would allow:

- The establishment of a significant farm unit as a tangible output to bring benefits to the community in the years ahead
- Completion of the delivery of training outputs which have been delayed because the farm was not developed enough to allow them all to occur
- Compilation of several national strategies and guidelines required to ensure that the principles of SLM are incorporated into national practices. (Many of these are year 3 outputs which have not yet been started after other activities fell behind schedule).

An extension of time is recommended because the project team have addressed some of the issues that have affected progress to date and committed to putting other measures in place. Specifically they have:

- Appointed an experienced DAFF person as Project Coordinator following the resignation of the previous holder of this role
- Appointed the Deputy Director DAFF to take on the Project Manager role after her time has been freed up by the completion of another major project
- Provided two full-time workers for the Mutalau Farm using the Coordinator's previous DAFF salary

- Committed to sort out the issues of land leases for the demonstration farm by early next month.

Any project extension needs to be on the basis of a revised work plan with clear milestones that are used to carefully monitor progress.

Recommendations

1. The project is granted an extension of time.

I would suggest that this is subject to the condition of having leases in place for the land being utilised for the demonstration farm at Mutalau (see 5 below).

Clearly there also needs to be a review of the budget to assess whether enough funds remain for an extension, particular to cover the salaries of the coordinator and assistant which have only been budgeted for three years. However this seems to be the case.

2. A new detailed work plan, log-frame and associated budget are developed for the remainder of the project.

Ideally this work plan would cover a 15-month period based on an extension to the end of 2010; however this task is recommended however long the project has left. A review of the project's Detailed Framework (Prodoc Annex BII) suggests that the initial design was quite ambitious and there will be some elements that would need to be dropped from a revised work plan.

Note: Following the circulation of an initial draft of this evaluation, this work planning and a review of the preliminary findings of the evaluation was carried out in Samoa along with the Project Manager, Coordinator and the GEF Operational Focal Point between 14-16 September as detailed in Annex 3. A 3-day contribution to the draft work plan became a further output of this consultancy.

4. Previous Reviews and Audits

A Tripartite Review (TPR) was conducted in Niue in November 2008 though the Coordinator was overseas at the time. This identified significant setbacks with the Mutalau Farm and minor gains in capacity training activities (e.g. land use planning, GIS, equipment safety) and in the preparation of an Agro-Forestry Policy. It sought a renewed commitment from the PMU to put in place urgent measures to advance the project further and concluded that this Mid-Term Evaluation would serve as the official review of progress.

The audit of the project for 2007 produced a 'qualify' rating due to some issues reconciling accounts, expenditure expected to be provided as co-financing coming out of the project's account and incorrect use of exchange rates. Some procedural changes were agreed at a meeting with the Treasury Department.

The second audit for 2008 was conducted in June/July 2009 and a draft report was made available by UNDP. This audit did not ‘express an opinion’ on several aspects which indicates a serious situation. The auditor was not able to examine a complete detailed transaction listing or complete detailed expenditure report which reconciled with the reported expenditure of US\$88,099.56 dollars. In addition the Combined Delivery Report did not include salary expenditures of the project coordinator and the project assistant of approximately US\$19,959.42. Finally, the NZ\$ expenditure appearing on the quarterly financial reports for 2008 was converted to US\$ using a rate of 1.4 which was the same rate used for the whole of 2007. The bank account had not been reconciled to the cash book balance or to the balance on the statement since September 2008. The resolution of these issues has been left as part of the auditing process and not addressed in this evaluation. It is understood that most are now resolved.

This recent audit also identified many of the same progress issues as in this evaluation. It concluded that: ‘There has been little progress on the project and there are issues with the financial management processes as well as the acquisition of assets which have not yet been fully utilised due to a number of reasons.’

5. Assessment by Issue

5.1 *Project Inception*

Niue was the first country in the Pacific to begin its SLM project which indicates a good initial level of organisation and commitment.

5.1.1 Inception phase

There was a 22-month period between the initial consultations to design the project and its inception. The reasons for this long interval were not assessed in detail as this evaluation was focussed on the project rather than the preparatory phase. It was indicated that one factor was delays at UNDP/GEF in setting up the budget. However an interval of this length is not unusual in my experience of projects involving UNDP and GEF and it is clearly not ideal.

A detailed inception programme was designed to take place over 8 weeks in April/May 2007 to bridge this long interval and allow all the stakeholders to review the project. This is reported on in a comprehensive Project Inception Report. A national workshop was held, and meetings with the Mutalau community and the five Government departments involved. I received some feedback that the workshop content was not always appropriate for the audience with farmers having to sit through PowerPoint™ presentations on project management and reporting. There were also significant delays in completion of the Inception Report which may have limited its value. Though the report is dated May

2007, the Steering Committee meeting in January 2008 noted that it was ‘long overdue’ so it apparently took almost a year to complete.

The Project Document (Prodoc) developed by Felicia Nemaia was signed on 28/2/07 and the two initial staff were recruited around that time and signed contracts on 8/3/07 so the project itself got off to a prompt start.

With hindsight there were two issues that could have been addressed more fully during the inception process. Firstly, the Year 1 Annual Work Plan, which mirrored the Prodoc contained a range of figures with little detail behind them, e.g. US\$158,000 for the procurement of tolls, machinery, equipment, etc. These figures were apparently developed during project formulation by Ernest Nemaia, then the Director of DAFF. However his ongoing involvement in the project was limited to an advisory role following a move to New Zealand. A further document in the form of a project manual had been planned but never eventuated. This would have broken the figures in the work plan down into components and it would have been very helpful if these components had the appropriate UNDP budget codes beside them. This would have saved the management and coordinator a lot of time trying to find out what was behind the figures and providing appropriate codes when preparing requests for funding advances and reports.

Secondly, there was apparently not enough time spent discussing the project with the Mutalau community, to judge by feedback received. One farmer owning land within the area identified for the farm was unhappy about not being fully informed about the project and finding the proposed boundaries of the farm being drawn without his involvement. He thus did not make his land available and he indicated that others felt the same. The team did make a particular effort to engage with the community at the start of the project with meetings with the village Land Commission Working Group on 7/3/07 and with the village community as a whole on 2nd May, but there was perhaps a need for more one-on-one meetings with individual families. There will however always be issues and misunderstandings working with a village community, due to the individual dynamics of that community. Much village support for the project was based around the leadership of Bill Motufoou its MP and those who opposed him politically might inevitably have taken a different stance. The village indicated that they could take care of many issues like leases through their Land Committee but subsequently did not do so.

In addition the opportunity was not apparently taken to re-visit the detail of the Prodoc’s work plan and budget and question whether changes needed to be made. The Inception Report notes that the project’s five assumptions still held. However if a more comprehensive review of project risks had been done at that time some future problems would probably have been identified and the work plan revised accordingly. Risk management is addressed further in section 5.7. Re-visiting the Prodoc might have also identified issues with its scope (section 5.1.2 below).

I have found problems with the transition between those who developed a project and the team due to implement it in almost every evaluation I have carried out of UNDP projects

and I have no doubt it is not restricted to these alone. This gap needs to be bridged more successfully.

Recommendations:

- 1. Every effort should be made to reduce the interval between project conception and inception in similar new projects.**
- 2. An assessment should be made at project inception of the gap between project development and implementation. If significant time has elapsed and those involved in the former (sometimes an international consultant) will not be closely involved in the latter, some specific bridging activity needs to take place. This could involve the preparation of a separate document, as discussed earlier, to explain more of the detail behind the Prodoc. It could also involve the project's developers being recruited to work alongside the project team for an initial few weeks.**
- 3. Community-based projects need to devote large amounts of effort to gain the initial support and understanding of that community. Village or village council level meetings are rarely adequate in themselves and individual discussions will be needed.**
- 4. A detailed review of the Prodoc's risk evaluation and work plan should be carried out at project inception.**

5.1.2 Initial scope of project

The project's scope, as defined by the Prodoc, was very comprehensive aiming to address the SLM issue on all fronts. One can see why the different work plan activities were proposed but it appears far too ambitious for a 3-year time frame in a small country with limited capacity.

To take one example, Activity 2.5.1 is stated as 'Develop a system for monitoring agricultural sustainability and management.' This seems a huge task that few developed countries have mastered. Other activities required carrying out detailed research, e.g. into trees for agro-forestry or different cover crops. While these could have been achievable if significant outside support had been obtained from CROP agencies or universities, this would have required significant forward planning during the first two years of the project which was not achieved due to all the other issues being faced.

5.2 Project Management in Niue

To evaluate project management, several different levels of management need to be identified. Many people had some role in management from the Minister, Project Manager and the Steering Committee down to the Coordinator and issues can be identified at all levels. This evaluation is not a place to assess individual performance but to look at the systems in place and how these could be improved. There were some apparent shortcomings at all levels, but it was the cumulative effect of these rather than any single one that meant that project management was not as effective as it needed to be. Strong management was required because the project was a complex one working with multiple objectives that were the responsibility of several different Government Departments, NGO's and a village community.

5.2.1 Project Management Unit (PMU)

The Project Inception report identifies a Project Management Team consisting of a project manager, project coordinator, technical assistant, international consultant and national consultants, together with project stakeholders. In reality the key team was a PMU which evolved over time. Initially the Project Manager and Coordinator were involved but then others were drawn in including the Technical Assistant, Technical Adviser, Deputy Director DAFF, Head of Crops Research, and DSAP project staff. The project was reported on at DAFF Section Heads meetings as if it was a section.

The contribution of the PMU and decisions that it took to advance the management of the project could not readily be evaluated as no minutes were kept of its meetings. However clearly problems were recognised and attempts made to address them.

Recommendation:

Future meetings of the PMU should be 'minuted'.

5.2.2. Project Manager

The Prodoc states that: *'the Project Manager is responsible to the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for the overall management of the project activities in close consultation with the UNCCD Steering Committee and the project team'* and this is repeated in the Project Inception Report.

This role presumably included the overall responsibility for the delivery of the project, being the signatory for key project documents and reports and supervision of the Project Coordinator. It fell to Brendon Pasisi the Director of DAFF.

Several issues were identified relating to the carrying out of this role as follows:

- The Director had not been involved in the development of the project which was done by the previous Director, Ernest Nemaia. Mr Nemaia had started as head of Crop Research Division (for 9 years) where he was the only person involved with the UNCCD, and he continued this role all the way through including while Deputy Director and Director. No other officers, including Poimatagi Okosene (the current SLM Project Coordinator who replaced Ernest as head of Crop Research) had his exposure and corporate knowledge in this area. Both Ernest and Minister attended all meetings relating to UNCCD while project was being developed.
- The Director's was a national role including travel overseas on behalf of Government and in regional roles with fisheries commissions.
- He carried over many fisheries tasks while there was a delay in replacing him as head of Fisheries, at a time of major developments in the development of the domestic long-line industry development (Fish processing plant, infrastructure, services, licensing, data collection, etc). This put a major demand on his time as new young fisheries recruits only came on board one by one.

These work commitments and lack of background on the project meant that the Director did not provide close supervision of the Coordinator or close monitoring of progress. This support was required because of the relative inexperience of the Coordinator.

The Deputy Director, Gaylene Tasmania who also sat on the PMU was well placed to take on the project manager role when the Director was away. There were however a few occasions when both were absent – or one was away then the over with limited time for passing on information between them. At these times the Coordinator sometimes struggled to obtain consistent direction and support. The Deputy Director did assist the Coordinator and Technical Assistant with the finances as she was familiar with UNDP systems through a Persistent Organic Pollutants project.

The Director recognises that the Department's management was spread too thin over this time. One measure taken in response was to include the Head of Crops and other DAFF staff in meetings of the PMU. The Steering Committee records in its January 2008 meeting that Poi Okosene and Charlene Funaki had been brought across to work with the SLM at least three days a week and they physically moved into the SLM Office to support the project coordinator.

However it is apparent that the other projects (FAO TCP Irrigation project, DSAP project and FAO RFSP pilot phase) that were also being run and coordinated by DAFF meant that mobilizing these other staff to assist did not have a great impact. Several also travelled a lot for the Ministry. Very few of them had any involvement in the development of the SLM project so arguably had little ownership and thus put priority on their own work.

The recent appointment of a senior officer within DAFF as the new Coordinator (see 4.2.2) should mean that the Project Manager role becomes less significant now. In addition, the Director has recently responded to this evaluation by assigning the role of Project Manager to the Deputy Director whose time has been freed up by the completion

of an FAO project she managed. The Director will retain his role as head of the PMU and thus retain overall oversight of the project. Following these changes I would not expect some past problems to recur.

However it should be noted that the Department has some major projects with FAO beginning in the first part of 2010 and care will be needed to ensure that sufficient staff resources continue to be allocated to the SLM project to complete its outputs.

Recommendations

- 1. More careful thought needs to be given to who takes on the Project Manager role in complex projects like this that require significant management and oversight.**

Clearly the Director has a major role with ultimately responsibility and sign-off and only he/she can move his/her staff and resources around. However day to day supervision of project staff and their work plans may be appropriately delegated to someone else with fewer other high-level commitments.

- 2. Options for delegating more authority to project staff should be considered.**

I was told that there was some flexibility in this regard. The initial coordinator did have some problems getting requisitions signed off when senior staff were travelling. Delegating financial sign-off to her was probably not an option given her inexperience but could be considered for her more experienced replacement.

- 3. There should be the flexibility to change the management of the project if required.**

It appears that UNDP had concerns about project management for some time and that these were never fully addressed. Assigning parts of the project manager's role to a staff member at a lower level could have been done earlier, though there would have been some problems with this as all had their own projects to manage.

- 4. Closer involvement of UNDP in direct project management could be considered.**

It was suggested to me that the Project Manager could share his travel dates with the UNDP MCO in advance which would allow officers there to take a more direct role managing the project in his/her absence. This should now be unnecessary with the new staffing arrangements in place.

5.2.3 Project Coordinator

The Coordinator is the key person in a project like this and progress tends to depend on their skills and dedication, the support they receive and what they are in a position to coordinate, manage or control. The following are extracts from the TOR for this role in the Prodoc. They show that the role had an extensive list of duties/responsibilities and some demanding selection criteria.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Supervise and coordinate the production of project outputs as per the project document;
2. Ensure the technical coordination of the project;
3. Mobilize all project inputs in accordance with UNDP procedures for nationally executed projects;
4. Finalize the ToR for the consultants and subcontractors;
5. Coordinate the recruitment of project personnel;
6. Supervise and coordinate the work of all project staff, consultants and sub-contractors;
7. Work closely with project partners to closely coordinate all the actors involved with achieving Project Outcomes, Outputs and Activities ;
8. Disseminate project reports to and respond to queries from concerned stakeholders;
9. Report progress of project to the Steering Committee.
10. Oversee the exchange and sharing of experiences and lessons learned with relevant conservation and development projects nationally and internationally.
11. Preparing a detailed annual work plan for the project
12. Undertaking any other activities that may be assigned by the Steering Committee.

Selection Criteria

1. Relevant academic and professional qualifications with at least 5 years professional experience;
2. Proven extensive experience and technical ability to manage a large project and a good technical knowledge in the fields related to SLM and participatory approaches
3. Effective interpersonal and negotiation skills proven through successful interactions with all levels of project stakeholder groups, including senior government officials, business executives, farmers and communities;
4. Ability to effectively coordinate a complex, multi-stakeholder project;
5. Ability to lead, manage and motivate teams of international and local consultants to achieve results;
6. Good capacities for strategic thinking and planning.
7. Excellent communication skills;
8. Knowledge of UNDP project implementation procedures, including procurement, disbursements, and reporting and monitoring highly preferable;

However in a small country like Niue there will be few people capable of fulfilling all the requirements of this role. There was also an issue with the Government restricting the salary that could be offered for such a role to a level inconsistent with the qualifications and experience required.¹ Thus some suitable candidates did not apply. There were only three applicants for the two positions of Project Coordinator and Project Assistant and

¹ The Government has recently relaxed its rules in this area which should increase the pool of applicants for such positions in the future.

one subsequently withdrew her application leaving two. Neither fully met many of the criteria for both positions but both were identified as having the potential to do a good job. The stronger applicant was appointed as Coordinator and the other as Assistant.

I found the appointee, Inangaro Vakaafi, to be an enthusiastic articulate young woman who set out to make things happen. However she clearly lacked the experience and confidence required for this role and needed considerable support and supervision which was not always available. This lack of experience and support was particularly important when setbacks occurred, meaning that she was sometimes unable to find a way around them.

The TPR in November 2008 did question the commitment of the Project Coordinator and her absence from that review. My discussions indicate that her commitment to the project may have reduced by this date following the many setbacks it faced and this was to be expected. Frustration with progress, and recognition of the problems the project faced were apparently among the reasons for her resignation from this role (final day 28 March 2009).

The choice of Inangaro held some obvious advantages in that she came from the village, Mutalau, where the project's demonstration farm was to be located, and she was also the daughter of the Minister of DAFF the key project 'champion'. In addition her brother was enrolled within the NZAID-supported Young Farmers Scheme and two others in Mutalau were also part of this. However some of these were potentially also disadvantages, particularly in how she was perceived by other stakeholders.² The project team did recognise the risks in her appointment, e.g. the potential accusation of nepotism, and took specific action to address this with a thorough selection process. The panel's report and ranking of candidates went to the Public Service Commission.

A key issue was that the Coordinator seemed not to be in a position to influence many events, possibly due to being a young woman from outside the Government hierarchy with limited networks. As examples, she could not control the availability of machinery for the farm as its allocation was decided at a higher level in Government, nor could she dictate the order that things happened at the farm. She wanted somewhere to store the equipment purchased by the project but could not obtain agreement on where this should be. She had difficulty encouraging other departments to achieve their parts of the project and struggled to manage what happened at the farm. One explanation for this was that she had to spend too much time on project administration. This in turn appears to relate to a lack of training and induction on the part of UNDP and the role of the Technical Assistant not being fully developed.

The coordinator referred to the induction that she received from UNDP as a 'crash course' carried out as a few hours with Meapelo Maiiai and Frank Wickham (SPREP)

² Many donor-driven, nationally-executed projects in the region working at the village level appoint a coordinator. I would interested to know of any research or analysis that has looked at the question of whether or not it is advantageous for the coordinator to be closely connected to the village(s) involved.

around the Induction Workshop. This included what codes to use for different budget items but was clearly ineffective as the wrong codes were used for a period. The requirements for reporting, developing work plans and requesting funds proved to be a long demanding process. She did receive further training at different times from UNDP and DAFF staff on financial management and work planning but this does not appear to have been part of a planned approach.

Recommendations

1. Project Coordinators should receive a thorough induction from UNDP staff either in country or more appropriately at the MCO Office in Apia.

This induction would clearly cover UNDP reporting and financial procedures. It could also advise the Coordinator on how to set up his/her own recording systems. For this project the Deputy Director organized for the coordinator and technical assistant to keep their own financial records, assigning budget codes to each requisition, recognising that Treasury statements were often late for reporting purposes or contained errors. This same issue occurs in a number of countries. UNDP could thus assist coordinators to design their own Excel spreadsheets to manage project finances that would easily link to UNDP financial reporting systems. Similarly, coordinators could be shown how to take the project work plan and build a spreadsheet from this with further columns so that they could record achievements and the reasons for any activities falling behind schedule. (Looking at the computer system in Niue it looked as if a lot of time had been spent developing too many different spreadsheets.) Finally this induction could cover principles of project management, time management and risk management.

2. Once a coordinator is selected UNDP should work with them to prepare an individualised training and support plan. This would match the person specifications in the TOR with the CV of the coordinator, identifying the specific areas in which he/she would require training or backstopping and defining a programme to provide this.

3. If an appropriate coordinator cannot be found following an application process other options should be considered.

In this case the successful applicant was considered to have the potential to 'grow into' the job. However other options could have been considered including looking for a United Nations Volunteer – though this is problematical as the Government needs to find some resources of its own to support such a position.

4. Review coordinator's appointment after 6 and 12 months based on a specific performance agreement.

The alternative approach is to make an appointment but with some strict performance review. There was a 6-month probation period but little activity occurred over that time

particularly due to delays in funding coming through and a longer period, or a second review, appears needed.

With hindsight, management feel that the issue of the first coordinator's performance could have been addressed earlier as their expectations were not being met. However making a change was difficult politically because of her relationship with the Minister and more importantly, her links to the village.

The new Coordinator, Poimatagi Okosene was appointed on 1 April 2009. He was previously involved in the project as Head of the Crops Division and had several years of experience at DAFF. At the time of my visit he had not received induction from UNDP, or an effective handover from the previous Coordinator. He has been instructed to ignore his previous work and while he has not been replaced at Crops other staff have been shuffled to cope with this. His appointment was a considered effort by management to address project problems.

5. If a change in a key project officer occurs every effort should be made to ensure a smooth transition by having the previous incumbent return to assist the new appointee for a period.

Arrangements for such a handover were organised but did not happen when the first Coordinator travelled overseas. It is now more difficult as she has work commitments and requires the approval of her new employer.

My assessment is that Poimatagi has the skills, experience and commitment to be a very effective coordinator. A major issue for the project has been the relative lack of progress at the Mutalau Farm and his background within DAFF should allow him to push this aspect of the project along. It should be noted however that in early 2008 he was brought across to help out the SLM three days a week with the specific task of designing and implementing the farm plan. This was not fully achieved but I consider that it will happen now that he has responsibility for the project.

Poimatagi's appointment has also had a significant additional benefit with his departmental salary being used to recruit two full-time workers for the farm. He does need an effective induction from UNDP as soon as possible and the training provided at a recent workshop in Fiji seems insufficient in this regard.

- 6. The new Coordinator should receive full induction in UNDP procedures in Apia as soon as possible.**
- 7. It is recommended the previous and new Coordinator meet to review the many spreadsheets and work plans on the laptop to identify the key documents for ongoing use by the coordination team.**

5.2.4 Technical Assistant

The Prodoc included the following within the TOR for the Technical Assistant position.

Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Draft TOR for consultants and subcontractors
2. Prepare and revise project work and financial plans, as required by PC, PM and UNDP;
3. Manage procurement of goods and services under UNDP guidelines and oversight of contracts;
4. Ensure proper management of funds consistent with UNDP requirements, and budget planning and control;
5. Establish project monitoring and reporting;
6. Arrange for audit of all project accounts for each fiscal year;
7. Prepare and ensure timely submission of quarterly financial consolidated reports, quarterly consolidated progress reports, mid-term reports, and other reports as may be required by UNDP.
8. Undertaking any additional related activities that may be assigned by the Project Coordinator

Selection Criteria

1. Relevant academic and professional qualifications within the environmental/SLM field with at least two years experience
2. Adaptable personality with the ability to work effectively with a large range of people and under various conditions.
2. Good capacities for strategic thinking and planning.
3. Excellent oral and written communication skills
4. Knowledge of UNDP project implementation procedures, including procurement, disbursements, and reporting and monitoring

Again like the Coordinator's role this expected a lot for a limited salary range that could be offered. The successful candidate Pamela Togiakona had a banking background so was considered well placed to deal with the administrative requirements of the project. She was absent from the office during the second week of my visit so I was unable to interview her and find out what tasks she did undertake. Her role clearly included minute taking at Steering Committee meetings, organising requisitions and managing purchases and payments. However I doubt that she was playing the full role as envisaged in the Prodoc. She was not appointed with knowledge of UNDP procedures (c.f. selection criteria) and received limited training from UNDP during the Inception Workshop. It seems that she was not fully utilised by the first coordinator and as a consequence may not have contributed as much as she could have if pushed more.

Recommendations

1. **The Technical Assistant in the project should aim to take on further administration freeing up the Coordinator to spend more time on project implementation.**

2. The Technical Assistant should receiving training on UNDP procedures in Samoa to be able to do this.

The Director has indicated that the position will be re-evaluated at the end of the year prior to being confirmed for any project extension.

5.2.5 Project Advisor

This title was assigned to Ernest Nemaia, the former Director of DAFF and instigator of the project in the Project Inception Document. His involvement in the induction process was clearly very valuable to help bridge the time gap since the project was first developed.

There was discussion at the first Steering Committee about whether the Advisor was considered an International or Local Consultant. The response from the Project Manager was that he was in a category of his own as an advisor who would provide assistance when requested, with the budget to be adjusted to allow his involvement and travel to Niue if required. This was because he was still employed by the Niue Government at this stage.

It appears that Ernest has had a limited role since project inception, necessitated partly by his commitments in New Zealand since the untimely death of his wife Felicia, a tragedy that affected the whole project and project team. Felicia had also been providing much advice and support. He provided frequent assistance to the Coordinator early on, advising on the thinking behind different activities and budget figures. He made two visits as adviser but these were often impacted significantly by Government's demand on him in another capacity as Investment Adviser.

5.2.6 Steering Committee (SC)

Stated Role:

The project document states that the project will receive guidance from the UNCCD steering committee or the National Council for Sustainable Development. The latter has apparently been endorsed but never implemented and a specific committee was set up for the SLM project. The steering committee will *'monitor the quality of outputs achieved by the project team by reviewing quarterly reports, draft reports and will ensure that views of stakeholders are taken into account in decision-making and project implementation. The steering committee in turn will be responsible to the GEF Operational and Political Focal Points³ who are in turn responsible to Cabinet through the Minister.'*

³ Note: The Chair of the Committee, Sauni Tongatule is the GEF Operational Focal Point but his work in the committee has been primarily as representing the Department of Environment that he heads.

The following TOR for the committee was drafted and presented at 2nd meeting:

1. Provide guidance to project team
2. Meet frequently to discuss project progress and review activities
3. Monitor quality of work achieved by project team
4. Review and discuss changes to work plans and activities
5. Review quarterly reports, financial reports and draft reports prepared by PMT
6. Ensure stakeholders views are considered when making decisions during project implementation
7. Each member provide section reports from each relevant department or organization they represent with relevance to project
8. SC member to be present at all meetings or have a proxy to sit in on behalf, but must have a de-briefing each time to ensure continuity

Representation:

This was discussed at the first meeting in May 2007. Departments to be represented were DAFF (Head of Department (HoD) and project management team), DOE (HoD), DJLS, EPDSU, Public Works Department (PWD) (water supply/land clearance) together with the Niue Island Organic Farming Association (NIOFA) and Mutalau Village Council. Bill Motufoou the Minister of DAFF was elected as the first chairperson and he was replaced in this role in an acting capacity by Sauni Tongatule, DOE HoD for the 4th and 6th meetings in the Minister's absence and from the 8th meeting onwards.

Meeting frequency:

The project work plan envisaged quarterly meetings and monthly meetings were suggested to begin with at the first meeting.

Assessment:

The committee was well designed with a good TOR and representation. It met with impressive frequency to start with (monthly from May to October 2007) but then less frequently than desirable (only twice in 2008).⁴ Preparations for the South Pacific Forum held in Niue in August 2008 was stated as the reason for the lack of meetings after April that year, together with the absence of the Project Manager from September to December. The frequency has been stepped up again in 2009 (3 meetings to date).

The TOR identified that representation was a key issue to ensure continuity with proxies de-briefed – and ideally briefed before meetings. The following table shows that attendance was quite uneven. This is not unexpected given the many commitments that

⁴ An incomplete record of SC meetings has been obtained to date. The 3rd meeting was apparently held at the DOE on 5 July 2007 but minutes cannot be located and may never have been completed. The minutes of the 6th meeting in October 2007 refer to the next meeting taking place on 7/11/07. However it seems unlikely that this was held and the 7th meeting took place in January 2008.

people have, but it does suggest that the proxy system did not work well. The absence of one or more agencies from many meetings meant that these were not fully able to provide an update of project activities. The overall number attending meetings has dropped off since the start (8-11 people at first 5 meetings, 5-6 at subsequent ones and back to 8 at the last).

Table 1: Attendance at Steering Committee meetings:

| Agency | Representative | No. of meetings attended |
|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| DAFF | Minister | 4 |
| | Director | 10 |
| | Deputy Director | 8 |
| | Coordinator | 12 |
| | Project Assistant | 9 |
| DOE | Director | 10 |
| DLJS | Director | 1 |
| | GIS Technical Officer | 6 |
| EPDSU | Head of Unit | 4 |
| | Proxy | 1 |
| NIOFA | Representative | 8 |
| PWD | Head, Water Supply Division | 10 |
| Mutalau VC | Sifa | 2 |

Note: Bill Motufoou apparently replaced Sifa as Mutalau representative after his Ministerial role ended but he appears to have attended no meetings after this point.

Meetings have varied in their management. Minutes of the first meetings contained a list of action points and responsibilities which were tracked at subsequent meetings. Some of the later meetings list action points but others do not. Some of the later meetings do not refer to the minutes of the previous meeting nor give a date for the next meeting.

It was good to see that representatives agreed that there should be no sitting fees as the project was about capacity building so attendance should benefit the different agencies. It was agreed at the second meeting that subsequent meetings would be held at different departments to create a sense of ownership but this appears not to have been followed through and only one meeting was held outside DAFF (at DOE).

It was also agreed at the second meeting that someone would set up an online discussion forum for the SC but this does not appear to have happened.

Conclusions

While the committee was well set up, its effectiveness has been compromised by the lack of attendance from all agencies and its efficiency in the way that meetings have been run and ‘minuted’ has varied. Both attendance and efficiency have dropped off as the project

has proceeded, perhaps not surprising due to some of the difficulties and delays experienced. There are signs that both have improved.

The committee has not fulfilled some of the detailed tasks identified in the TOR. It has proved effective at information exchange and reporting on the work of other Departments except where this was limited by their attendance as in the case of EPDSU for example. However it has not truly monitored the work of the project team nor reviewed many reports. The Annual Work Plan envisaged many project products such as guidelines and policies being sent as drafts for the SC to review and sign off before finalisation but it seems unrealistic to expect committee members to have the time to do this effectively. A better approach may be for the PMU to review documents and seek approval to publish from the SC once the unit is happy with them. It has also played a limited role in coordination with Mutalau Village.

Recommendations

- 1. The Steering Committee should be strengthened and meet regularly during the balance of the project – at least quarterly but with additional meetings if required.**
- 2. An effort should be made to increase attendance to what it was at the outset with proxies required in the absence of representatives.**
- 3. A review of representation should be undertaken once the work plan is revised to ensure that those responsible for different activities are present. An invitation should be provided to the Treasury Department, as recommended following the first audit. The merit of External Affairs representation should be assessed.**
- 4. The committee should establish a set format to be reported in the minutes which includes:**
 - a clear listing of action points with a name(s) against each of the person assigned the task and a time frame**
 - a review of the action points from the previous meeting – identifying those completed and explaining the reasons for any not completed**
 - a proposed date for the next meeting**
 - updates from the different agencies referring to the specific activities in the revised project work plan that they are responsible for**
 - acceptance (or otherwise) of quarterly reports, financial reports and draft reports prepared by the PMU (as in TOR).**
- 5. Minutes of meetings should be kept in a single file along with any reports tabled.**

- 6. The committee needs to formerly elect a Chair at its next meeting. Sauni Tongatule has fulfilled that role on an ‘Acting’ basis for some time since Bill Motufoou lost his role as Minister for DAFF (see 5.2.7).**
- 7. The Minister of DAFF is invited to join the Steering Committee.**

Alternative committee structures

The above recommendations are based on the SC continuing largely along the lines outlined in the MOU. Some changes could be made to address the areas where it has proved less effective or alternative structures put in place for the remainder of the project.

In order to properly monitor the work of the project team the SC would need to see detailed work plans and targets and be able to check progress against these each meeting. This could be done for the balance of the project as a revised work plan is being produced for any extension of time. Improved mechanisms for liaison with Mutalau and other Government Departments could be put in place.

Recommendations

- 8. Consider establishing a separate committee for liaison with Mutalau village.**

This would meet as required to address specific issues and have representation appropriate to these. For the village there should be representation of both the Village Council and the specific landowners who are participating in the farm. On the Government side it would comprise the PMU from DAFF together with other Departments depending on the issue – e.g. DLJS staff would attend for lease discussions.

- 9. Consider a Heads of Department committee.**

While the SC has received some reports of progress from the other three Departments working alongside DAFF it has not apparently been able to ensure that they are achieving their project elements on schedule. Periodic meetings of their Heads could facilitate this.

5.2.7 Role of former Minister of DAFF and Steering Committee Chairman

Bill Motufoou was a key player in this project and a strong advocate for it from the outset. He was closely involved in its design when he was Minister and Ernest Nemaia was Director of DAFF and then its initial delivery. A change of Government in May 2008 that saw him lose the Ministerial position was a major issue for the project for a variety of reasons.

Bill while Minister had a pivotal role. At Government level he could influence the supply of resources and labour, in particular directing nonu and vanilla teams to work at the Mutalau Farm and direct DAFF and encourage other Departments to meet their project obligations. He was the Member of Parliament for Mutalau Village where the farm was to be situated and thus had the support of many of the villagers and farmers there. As a result he could bring all the different stakeholders together.

A consequence of Bill's pivotal role, and the status and respect that he had, was that a lot was taken on trust based on verbal agreements - the traditional way that things are done in Niue. This is particularly relevant to the Mutalau Farm where some landowners provided their land and others did not based on unwritten understandings of what the arrangements would be. Though there was frequent discussion about written agreements, particularly leases over the land, these never happened. Bill was in a position to organise the delivery of both sides of an agreement.

Recommendation

Written agreements are now needed in relation to the Mutalau Farm (described in detail in section 5.4.1).

I met with the current Minister of DAFF, Hon Pokotoa Sipeli, who identified Fisheries, Tourism and Agriculture as three priorities for the current Government and saw the last as important for food security and economic growth. However like all Ministers, Hon Sipeli has multiple portfolios. He is also not from Mutalau Village thus cannot be expected to replace Bill Motufoou in the same pivotal, 'two-sided' role for the balance of the project.

5.2.8. Liaison with Mutalau Village

The PMU recognise the need to maintain closer liaison with the village and meetings were held recently. A revised committee structure was suggested above.

The UN has recently established a Community-Centred Sustainable Development Programme (CCSDP) in Niue with pilot activities in two villages. This involves working with communities to formulate Village Sustainable Development Plans. It is intended to take this approach to Mutalau which may be of assistance to achieving SLM project outputs.

5.3 *Project Support outside Niue*

5.3.1 UNDP Multi-Country Office (MCO) support

The UNDP MCO is the implementing partner for the project using National Execution procedures. The key contact is Meapelo Maiai the Environment Programme Officer.

There is some frustration in the UNDP Multi-Country Office that they have been unable to assist Niue to achieve more in this project to date. The first Coordinator noted that there was almost daily contact with Mr Maiai but she was absent during two of his visits to Niue including the Tripartite Project Review. Whether this was due to poor communication on travel dates, last-minute issues beyond anyone's control, or deliberate action is uncertain.

It is apparent that on several occasions actions were agreed to move the project along during discussions between UNDP and the PMU which were not then followed through on. While some of this may represent shortcomings within the PMU there were a number of issues beyond their control, a key one being the change of Government referred to above.

As identified earlier, UNDP could have made more effort to provide detailed induction for the Coordinator and Technical Assistant. In my experience staff in Apia are very busy with a number of projects and not always able to give timely support to any one. A delay in the organisation of this mid-term evaluation, originally scheduled in the TOR for February, is one example of this. It had been agreed at the TPR that all additional funding requests and activities would be stopped until the MTE that month and this led to delays before it was realised that the evaluation was not going to happen quickly.

Recommendations

- 1. UNDP should clarify the services available to the project team.**
- 2. The possibility of increased support from UNDP should be re-visited once the work plan has been revised to determine the areas of support that will be needed and identify which UNDP can help with.**

Note: Any assistance beyond UNDP's role as project implementer will need to be paid for from the project budget.

5.3.2 Global Support

The Global Prodoc refers to the establishment of a Global Project Coordination Unit in South Africa to oversee the execution of the project for 3-4 years (subsequently called a Global Support Unit (GSU). Its responsibilities included:

- Prepare and implement the knowledge management component of the project, including regional workshops, exchanges, networking and dissemination
- Supervise and arrange for portfolio-wide monitoring, evaluation and lessons learnt, including development of a harmonized set of "impact indicators" for use by each MSP to allow portfolio-wide monitoring.

The Prodoc refers to the GSU which would provide services to countries such as Niue from its global budget. It was to compile requests from participating countries and

develop a work plan/strategy based on available funding, to provide services needed, and list the types of services it could offer.

It appears to have played a very minor role in the Niue project. The GSU started in April 2005 and ceased at the end of March in 2008 so it was only in operation for the first year of Niue's project and thus limited in its potential contribution. The fact that none of the project team had attended UNCCD meetings and were familiar with what was offered globally probably meant Niue did not utilize what might have been available. I note comment from the staff of one regional agency who attended a regional SLM workshop in Fiji that: *'A highly technical presentation was given by the UNDP Global Support Unit (GSU) on the use of economics to support SLM. The presentation was not pitched at a level that was understandable or relevant to most countries.'* This suggests that the GSU was operating at a level of limited use to Pacific countries which meant that regional support (next section) was more important.

The Project Advisor advised during inception that the GSU would come and help prepare a resource mobilisation strategy for Niue's UNCCD National Action Plan (Outcome 4). This never happened. The recent workshop provided by UNDP-GEF Bangkok in Nadi and attended by the Coordinator and Deputy Director is to some extent the eventual realisation of this. How useful it will prove to Niue's project outcome 4 remains to be seen. One result of this delayed support may have been that EPDSU did less work on the issue while awaiting GSU input.

The GSU did produce a Resource Kit for monitoring, evaluation & reporting for Sustainable Land Management in SIDS Countries in 2006 but it is unclear if Niue has used this. It also prepared an Environmental Economics Tool Kit in 2007 providing guidance on the application of environmental economics, specifically the analysis and valuation of ecosystem services, to analyze the costs of land degradation and the benefits of sustainable land management. This has not proved relevant to Niue's SLM project.

A Tool Kit on the Inception Phase was also produced in 2008 which was clearly too late to be of any value to Niue.

The global unit closed in March 2008. The LDC SIDS Portfolio Project website is currently located within the site of the UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok. It has a matrix of country activities last updated in March 2009 and news of current events which includes the recent regional workshop in Nadi (see below).

The key issue of the life of the GSU not being well synchronised with the life of the Portfolio Project was raised in an evaluation of the Unit. Funds were only available for a three-year term so that the GSU was finishing at a time that most countries were just beginning their projects. An extension was recommended but rejected by the GEF CEO.

Recommendation

Donors need to give more thought to the establishment of global support units and their duration and provide enough resources for them to be of significant value.

This is the second GEF & UNDP programme that I have reviewed at the country level this year. In both cases countries expected significant support from a global unit but this unit received inadequate funding/support and was unable to deliver at that level.

5.3.3 Regional Support

A matrix was prepared that identified the regional and international support available in different areas to Pacific Countries undertaking their SLM projects. As examples, SPREP had roles in land-use planning, EIA, Waste Management and Monitoring & Evaluation; SPC offered help with training, research and technical aspects of soil and forestry management and agriculture; the Forum Secretariat covered mainstreaming; and USP educational activities and research.

Apparently the original Portfolio approach was agreed to, at least in the case of SPREP, on the promise of direct funds from a global source to their officers to provide back-support for Technical Officers on the ground. At a regional workshop in 2005 follow up actions included 'Confirmation of the resources available to support SPREP backstopping MSP design and implementation' with 'UNDP – GEF GSU to confirm longer term arrangements as agreed in supporting Portfolio Approach 2004'. This never eventuated.⁵ As such the technical support system was based in South Africa and difficult to access. Countries thus had to make their own arrangements with different regional agencies or experts rather than receiving a coordinated programme of support.

Niue has made some use of regional support:

- from SOPAC for GIS training
- from SPC through the DSAP project
- from SPREP for project inception workshops

However it needs to consider making more use of technical support if it is going to complete all the activities in the proposed work plan for a 1-year extension.

Three regional workshops were provided. The first coordinated by SPREP in Suva, Fiji in August 2005 introduced the SLM MSP portfolio approach and aimed to identify and agree on technical back-stopping services to be provided to countries to design and implement the SLM MSP. The meeting was attended by Minister Motofoou and Mr Nemaia listed then as a Trade Officer. This workshop was presumably valuable for Niue helping the country to develop its MSP proposal.

The next workshop for countries participating in the SLM project was held in Nadi in October 2007 with the objective of preparing countries to execute their projects. Niue's Project Coordinator Ms Vakaafi attended but found that Niue was well ahead of other

⁵ The same situation occurred with support for the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) programme in the Pacific.

countries which were still developing proposals. The content was thus of limited value and there were no other coordinators in place to learn from.

Finally there was the recent workshop in Nadi last month looking at financial mechanisms mentioned in the previous section.

Recommendations

- 1. UNDP-GEF should honour apparent commitments to provide resources to regional organisations to support countries in project implementation. (Applicable both to SLM and to NCSA).**
- 2. The Project team needs to make more use of technical experts from regional agencies to complete the project.**
- 3. Linkages should be established with other country SLM projects at the Coordinator level.**

Niue was one of the first countries in the region to secure funds for an SLM project but others are now in place (Samoa 2007, 6 countries 2008 and 4 countries 2009). Close communication should be obtained with these projects to see what ideas, results and resources can be shared.

5.4 Assessment of Outcome 1

This key project outcome includes the development of the Mutalau Farm.

5.4.1 Mutalau Farm Development

Initial choice of village for farm

The Government established a joint venture farm at Vaiea in Oct 2004 and it was planned then that there would be another set up at the northern end of island to spread the risk against cyclones, following the recent devastation caused by Cyclone Heta (Jan 2004). The purpose of this replication was to be economic development but it was to be linked to UNCCD principles. Mutalau was chosen among northern end villages because it had a strong history of agriculture production including the largest areas in nonu (5.55 acres planted) and vanilla (16.25 acres planted – next nearest only 8.25) of any village in 2005/06 (DAFF 2006 stock-take). There had also been a large Government cattle farm there in the past with leases with individual landowners and it was planned to use this area and set up a similar arrangement.

There was clearly some questioning of the choice of Mutalau as Bill Motufoou who was a key driver of the project was from this village. I received a comment that DAFF had never fully supported this choice though I see no evidence of that today.

Objectives

The original concept of the farm at Mutalau was to build capacity, through an ‘outside classroom’ as a joint venture between Government and the village community and leave something tangible. It would also look at ways to address some of the funding and land issues involved in creating a northern farm. An initial Cabinet paper mentions best practices in sustainable agriculture, land settlement & ownership, mapping, irrigation, organic, research into crops. The farm was to use SLM principles and aim to be organic where practical. It was also to help farmers to think as business people and after 3 years to be self-funded and self-sustaining with the hope that other villages would replicate it.

The establishment of the farm has been problematical. There have been major issues over the provision of land and labour and a series of more minor setbacks.

Land issues

The issue of leases over the land has been discussed at every Steering Committee meeting and every review! Initially it seemed that some owners made land available based on their understanding of what would happen later, as provided by the then Minister and the project team during Inception. Others refused to provide land.

Surveying boundaries and some form of titling so that leases could then be set up was a difficult problem. Initially the view of the landowners was not rush things like titling and boundaries when some of them were absent and they agreed it would be easier to survey and title once the land was cleared. By the 4th Steering Committee meeting in August 2007 work started on boundaries of areas already cleared. It was agreed that for areas where there were still difficulties the village’s Land Committee would work with the landowners involved. If there was no resolution they could decide whether to opt in or out of the farm. It was noted then that ‘a big part of this project is to find new ways of dealing with land matters.’ (If so it appears not to have succeeded to date). The Land Committee agreed that leases could be developed later. They could be based on the same four common ancestors as for the cattle farm years earlier, with the individual family members involved to be decided later.

There appear to remain differing views about the approach to adopt, but I feel that the original model of owners leasing their land to Government and then Government sub-leasing the land back to the Mutalau community through the Village Council (VC) or Mutalau Business Management Unit (BMU) is the best one. A key issue for the head leases is how much the Government will pay as an annual rental to landowners and for the sub-lease how much the community will pay the Government. Figures seen on draft of the latter (e.g. \$25,000 a year) seem quite unrealistic. Land at the Vaipapahi Research Farm is leased at \$3000-4000 a year which is more realistic.

This evaluation clearly cannot get to grips with a complex issue like this. Apart from the inherent difficulties of resolving it, many agencies became involved in trying to sort it out and no single one has managed it. The village apparently told DAFF that it would sort this issue out within its Lands Committee. However this committee was not representative of all with land at the site. It would probably eventually resolve matters but not within a time-frame appropriate to the project as delays in sorting out leases certainly delayed farm development. Timely leases were also required by UNDP so that any investment in the site was protected in some way. An implement shed could not be built on land without a lease for example. The EPDSU took on some responsibility for resolving the issue and DLJS were involved in drafting leases bringing in their Minister who had his own differing views on how things should work. Throughout DAFF were trying to move the issue along but with little effect.

Once the lease issue is resolved it looks likely that further owners will provide land for the farm if required.

Recommendation:

- 1. Leases over the land being utilised for the Mutalau farm need to be completed and signed as soon as possible as a requirement before the project is granted an extension of time.**

At the recent work planning meeting at UNDP in Apia the Director DAFF indicated that he expected to have this issue resolved by mid-October.

Labour

The provision of labour for the farm is an example of an issue that worked out for a time under previous arrangements but then became a problem. Motufoou was able to direct workers employed within Government projects like the Vanilla/Nonu one to clear much of the land for the farm and he could also encourage villagers to become involved. Now there is a need for the Government and the community to agree on who will provide labour and other resources for farm development.

When the project was developed it was assumed that labour would be freely available from Govt and the community. However it was clear at the inception workshop that DAFF did not have the labour to develop the site and while Government could use labour from schemes like the vanilla one the future of those projects was uncertain. At the same time Mutalau Village Council reported that there was a shortage of labour in the community. This is now an issue throughout the country. No longer can villages draw on a significant labour force of young people as most either work for Govt. or in the private sector or have their own businesses and commitments to young families. At the start of the project three young men from Mutalau were participating in the Young Farmers Scheme and they were perhaps ideally placed to take on the management of the farm long-term. However two have since gone overseas and the third is working elsewhere.

By early 2008 the need for a contingency plan for labour was identified and the PMU were to work on this. By then it was clear that NZAID were not happy for personnel within the Vanilla/Nonu project paid with their funding to be doing things other than they were employed to do, i.e. working at Mutalau. This issue is revisited in section 5.6.1. There were suggestions to look for volunteers from overseas but little happened. While efforts were made to provide more DAFF staff to support the project, the labour issue has only been resolved to an extent recently with the appointment of the new Coordinator and the use of his salary to employ two full-time workers (both previously with the vanilla team). In addition the excavator driver is based at the farm at present and staff from the DSAP project are also involved.

Not only was Mutalau Village unable to provide much labour for the farm, but for at least a year it gave it little attention at all because it became pre-occupied with a proposed major hotel development. A significant area of land was apparently cleared for this and work was undertaken on leases but it eventually fell through. At the same time it was working on its own small-scale eco-tourism developments and a coconut oil plant so its resources were spread very thin.

Recommendation:

- 2. The PMU needs to identify what labour will realistically be available to work on the farm for the balance of the project and plan accordingly.**

Currently the Coordinator is aiming to spend 2-3 days there, there are two full-time workers plus the excavator driver (for a period) plus DSAP team people (for a period). Assuming little labour input from the village there needs to be careful assessment within the work plan of the eventual size of the farm and the crops to be planted there (see later).



Photos: Mutalau eco-tourism development and coconut oil factory equipment (following page)



Farm development

Farm development has proceeded with quite a few hiccups largely through a lack of capacity and perhaps insufficient time being spent there by project staff in the past. The original plan was: ‘remove rocks, level and survey, plant things’ however it generally happened the other way round, partly through the then Minister’s enthusiasm to get things started. As a result the rock-breaker is currently trying to work around planted nonu trees in removing rocks from part of the site which is proving a slow process. A farmer’s pigs escaped from pens at the site and destroyed new plantings of bananas and this issue has still not been resolved as one pig was out of a poorly-latched pen when I visited the site. Later on a vanilla team crew doing mowing destroyed an agro forestry crop because the weeds were too high by then and the planted trees not visible. Such an event is rather inexcusable but should not recur now that management of the farm has been stepped up.

Recommendation:

- 3. The pigs held on the edge of the farm need to be better secured and the Mutalau VC should work with the owner to ensure this happens.**



Photo: Pig pens and escaped pig.

Current state of the farm

The following photos show the farm as it was when I visited in July. The rock breaker was working in the nonu block, the site was clear of weeds, the compost bins were full with good fish mulch-based product and most plantings looked healthy. Since then some development has proceeded at part of the site allocated to DSAP including construction of a shade house. The site is starting to develop well and there appears to be sufficient labour available for this to continue. Detailed planning for the scaled-back farm is considered in the next section.



Photo: Row of recently planted kafika (agro forestry)



Photos: Rock breaking working within nonu plantings





Photo: Project Coordinator Poimatagi inspecting lime plants.



Photo: Nonu plantings before and after rock removal.



Photo: Partly utilised compost bin (vegetation cover has been left on bin in background to reduce compost being taken from the farm.)

Recommendations

4. The development of the demonstration farm at Mutalau should continue.

One option for this review could be to recommend that demonstration farming activities are pulled back to the existing Government research farm at Vaipapahi where land is still available. However it is considered that sufficient progress is being made at Mutalau and the reasons for choosing that site at the outset are still valid so that its development should continue. This could be made dependent on the next two recommendations being achieved. The farm's development needs to be based on a detailed farm plan identifying all the elements that will be put in place before the end of the project.

Current plan for the farm

Maps viewed in Niue showed plans for the farm as discussed during my visit when it contained:

- Coconuts covering part of the site
- Large areas of nonu planted under the coconuts, some cleared of rocks
- Plantings of kafika (indigenous tree for agro forestry)
- Some shelter belt fencing
- An area of old citrus (limes, etc) in poor condition
- Two large compost bins

The following additional elements were planned at that time:

- DSAP demonstrating site growing vegetables with drip irrigation and cover crops with a shadehouse and small shed
- Bananas – several varieties
- Citrus – several varieties
- Taro inter-planed between agro forestry plantings
- Composting trial for nonu
- Implement shed
- Ring road and more shelter belt plantings
- Further agro forestry plantings utilising kieto, puka, futu.

More recently there has been discussion about adding:

- Passionfruit
- Avocado
- Malayan apple
- Pineapple
- Lychee

It is now urgent that a detailed farm plan is completed – a task identified back near the start of the project. This plan will need to answer a series of questions including:

- How can the farm best achieve its key objectives of:
 - researching SLM principles and providing training on these
 - generating lessons learned and informing policies
 - demonstrating the farming techniques and practices that improve soil management?
- How much emphasis should be placed on creating an economic unit?
- Should emphasis shift from commercial to food security?
- Whether importance is placed on crops that may have an export market, or those that can substitute for imports or provide food security and nutrition?
- What crops are best placed to demonstrate sustainable land management principles?
- What emphasis will be placed on growing organically? (The farm cannot come under the NIOFA organic umbrella because it is such a large area like the Vaiea Farm. It would have to be managed by a Farm Manager and go through a separate organic certification).
- How large an area can the staff currently available for the farm manage?
- How much of the farm can be cleared so that the area between plantings can be mowed – a key element of the current design to minimise the labour requirement? Is this approach truly sustainable? (Maybe it is applicable to a large unit but not to the smaller units that most farmers have).
- To what extent will composting be developed? (It was recorded at the 5th SC meeting that the original concept developed by Ernest was based on the Building Division of PWD developing plans for construction of composting facility at Kofekofe. However there was comment that not only would labour be needed at Kofekofe but also trucks to load up organic matter and deliver to the farm. The approach of building compost bins at the farm was favoured.)
- What linkages can be established with other programmes?

As an example of the last question, a review of the NZAID-funded vanilla growing programme has suggested that the emphasis should now be placed on marketing and increased productivity. The Mutalau farm could play a role in the latter if the review's recommendations are accepted, evaluating the benefits of mulches, compost, improving soil productivity through use of green crops, etc. However this would probably be impractical given the lead-in time required to grow plants to support the climbers unless there are opportunities to utilise existing small trees with land cleared around them.

Crop options

The following are some of the issues identified relating to the selection of crops.

Nonu –The initial emphasis on nonu came about through the availability opportunity of the NZAID-funded nonu team to carry out plantings and the Vaiea farm⁶ planning to buy nonu at 50c/kg. However Vaiea is fully certified organic which Mutalau is not and there is a need to register nonu at the farm as organically grown to have a market for it. While Reef Group Ltd has a new and modern processing plant available Vaiea is not buying at present. Nonu can be stored in drums as a partly processed product for some time and that is proposed at Mutalau in the hope that a market can be found.

Vanilla – There may be the potential to establish vanilla if a 1-year extension is granted as an intensively managed plant at Vaipapahi farm has produced a large number of beans within a year. There may then be an opportunity to demonstrate techniques to increase productivity such as mulching or composting as recommended by (Manhire 2007). Again however there are questions about finding a ready market.

Vegetables The table below from Manhire (2007) shows the cost of vegetable imports from New Zealand in 2004/05⁷ and there is clearly an opportunity to grow more locally as import substitution. George Mason (a New Zealand Rotarian) met with Brandon Tauasi recently and discussed sending over seed for new varieties (lettuce, Chinese cabbage, sweetcorn, etc).

Table 1: Niue/New Zealand Bilateral Trade

| HS Code | Product | Niue Imports | | Niue Exports | |
|-----------|--|--------------|--------|--------------|--------|
| | | 2004 | 2005 | 2004 | 2005 |
| 0203 | Pork | 10,342 | 31,151 | 0 | 0 |
| 0304 | Fish fillets | 0 | 7,544 | 0 | 1,951 |
| 0409 | Honey | 0 | 0 | 9,733 | 7,400 |
| 1211 | Plants and parts of plants used primarily in perfumery etc | 132 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Vegetables apart from taro | 65,869 | 98,058 | 0 | 0 |
| 0714 | Taro | 0 | 0 | 7,876 | 44,475 |
| 0805-0810 | Fresh fruit | 11,014 | 12,776 | 0 | 0 |
| 1401 | Vegetable materials of a kind used primarily for plaiting | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,427 |

Coconuts – When the project started there was a market for coconuts for oil production with several local factories including at Hakupu and Mutalau. However none are currently producing so there is no market and transport can be a problem.

Citrus – there seems widespread support for planting new types of citrus for import substitution, sale to tourists, and as a contributor to good health.

Pineapples – used to be grown successfully in Niue in the past but hardly at all now.

⁶ A joint venture between the Government and Reef Group Ltd

⁷ It would be useful if the team obtained updated data to assist in crop selection.

Tree crops – planting relatively long-lived trees such as avocados and mangoes would provide long-term assets for the farm.

Recommendations

5. A detailed farm plan is produced as soon as possible.

The plan needs to show what can realistically be achieved with the resources available to address the original project objectives to the greatest extent possible.

6. It is recommended that support is sought from SPC to provide a specialist to advise on the farm plan, to consider the economic return of different potential crops, varieties available, etc.

It seems particularly difficult to plan farms in Niue when markets fluctuate so much. Currently, for example, there appears no market for the nonu produced on the farm and dry coconuts are not being harvested as the factory at Mutalau is not operating.

End of project scenario

I think that it is important to now set out what the ‘end of project’ scenario will be. What is likely to be possible now? As a minimum the project will leave something for the community to build on with land much easier to manage than it used to be through the clearance of rocks and vegetation. If the farm is producing some financial results then there is every hope that the community will continue to manage and develop it. However if this does not happen it seems likely that the community as a whole will lose interest and individual landowners may continue to look after their parts if productive crops have been planted there or leave them to revert to scrub and forest. One issue that will need to be covered is the implement shed which will be located within one of the individual leases. Under what conditions will this be left there or removed? Discussions have indicated that clarity over leases and end of project arrangements may encourage other owners to make land available for the farm.

The concept was for the farm to be owned and managed for the benefit of the community. Individual owners would receive some income in the form of lease payments but the crops grown on their land would belong to the community as a whole. How can one ensure this happens rather than the alternative of those whose land happens to be the site of a profitable crop taking the funds from this crop themselves?

Other questions to be asked as part of this process are:

- Does the Government walk away completely at the end of the project or have some ongoing involvement – e.g. could Mutalau join Vaipapahi as another research site?

- What opportunities might there be for further funding – e.g. a Small Grant scheme?
- What formal links will be maintained if any with other organisations, e.g. NIOFA?

Recommendation

- 7. A written agreement should be signed between the Government represented by DAFF and the Mutalau Community VC detailing the expected inputs from each and arrangements for the end of the project.**

Most of the arrangements regarding the farm have been based on verbal agreements and trust up to now, as discussed earlier. However I recommend that a written agreement is prepared. Some provisions can be included in the sub-lease referred to above but a separate document is probably required.

5.4.2 Demonstration activities at Mutalau

The project document identifies several training workshops to be delivered from the farm and only a few have happened to date. It was suggested to me that there have been many training workshops for farmers over the years so that there is some ‘workshop fatigue’ and any further ones need to be well targeted. There is also mention in the project document of the production of training modules including visual, audio and published mediums. Quite a number of fact sheets, videos and DVD’s have been produced over the years both in Niue and by regional organisations like SPC and FAO and these should be reviewed before any more are proposed.

Recommendations:

- 1. A training schedule needs to be written identifying workshops that will be of most value to be delivered at Mutalau.**
- 2. A review should be undertaken to decide what further training materials should be produced. Consideration could be considered to seeking an expert in the production of such training materials perhaps as a volunteer through the UN, New Zealand or Australia.**

5.4.3 Research activities at Mutalau

The Prodoc includes two specific research activities for Year 3:

- Evaluation on superior performance of indigenous tree spp. and silvaculture practices.
- Evaluation of suitability of various cover crops and planting densities.

It seems unlikely that the existing staff will have time to undertake this research or perhaps even sufficient land available, though they should manage a proposed trial of the

impact of compost on nonu. The research will require quite a complex experimental design with many sample plots. If this research is still considered important then the possibility of bringing in a research student or involving researchers outside the country should be investigated.

Regarding the composting trial for nonu, soil and possibly leaf samples have been collected and analysed and it is now a matter of selecting groups of trees to receive compost or no compost and then re-test soils and leaves after a defined interval.

There was also an intention for the farm to undertake cropping capability assessments of different plots, to assist farmers identify what to plant where, particularly in more degraded sites. However it sounds as if there is little variation across the farm in respect of soils etc. so that this assessment is not possible. The Prodoc was too ambitious in this regard.

Recommendation

- 1. Assess how worthwhile the two specific research outputs in the work plan are. If one or more are to proceed then investigate the use of students or professional researchers to assist.**

5.4.4 Equipment

Significant equipment purchases were built into the project. While these were directed at the development of the Mutalau Farm, it is worth noting that planning for this project began soon after Cyclone Heta in 2005⁴ which damaged much of the country's infrastructure so this equipment was of wider significance.

No detail was provided in the Prodoc or Incept Report on the equipment to be purchased under the project so the Project Adviser advised the Coordinator in this regard. Several issues have been identified in relation to equipment:

- Availability to project
- Storage
- Inventory and management
- Usefulness
- Ownership

These are addressed in turn.

Availability to project

Much of the delay in developing the farm seems to have been due to the unavailability of the project's heavy machinery. The SLM project contributed half the costs to what was only the second large excavator/digger in the country and this was frequently unavailable as it was called on by Government when the other one broke down. There will be times

when the use of the SLM machine elsewhere is essential – e.g. as one machine that can dig graves or major power cables in the event of failure if the other is unavailable. Now there is a formal policy of pooling machinery which makes sense in a small country. But at times DAFF may need to look to the Government to place appropriate priority on the excavator being used for the purpose it was provided and UNDP may need to enter this discussion.

Recommendation

- 1. The use of the project's equipment may need to be discussed between UNDP and the Government.**

Storage

This issue has taken a long time to resolve and it was discussed from the first SC meeting onwards. The village and Minister wished to renovate part of the old school at Kofekofe for an implement shed. The advantages of this were that it was crown land and helped to restore village infrastructure next to a large shade house. However the Steering Committee wished to see the shed and compost facility located on the farm for ease of use and UNDP supported this. Estimates were however obtained for the renovation of Kofekofe storage rooms at \$44,000 and it was noted in a meeting that the village could not provide any labour towards this.



Photos: Former school buildings at Kofekofe.



My understanding is that an implement shed is now to be built at the farm once a lease is in place and that PWD are preparing specifications. Management of the project's smaller equipment (wheelbarrows, weed-eater, etc) has been challenging to date because no dedicated storage has been available.

Recommendation:

- 2. A firm schedule needs to be agreed for the construction of the implement shed as soon as possible.**

Inventory and management

I passed an Inventory management spreadsheet developed by Mr Maiai of UNPD to the Coordinator as it did not appear to be on the SLM computer and had yet to be used. It has been very difficult to manage equipment without proper storage and once the shed is built and the Coordinator has a chance to go through and assess all the equipment, the spreadsheet should be used for future management. DAFF has committed to replace some minor items of equipment which audits have suggested are missing.

Usefulness

The project vehicle was recorded as arriving on the Dec.2007 boat but it did not meet expectations based on specifications when purchased. The Coordinator questioned the supplier why it cost 12K and verified the specs as it should only have been worth \$7K.

A fish waste mulcher costing \$33,250 (funded 50% from the project and 50% from the Venezuela Fund) and built by Mertech Engineering in New Zealand is still there. This was no longer of any use when the fish factory on Niue closed. However there are discussions about the factory re-opening and this should be known by 9 October. If the factory is not to re-open it should be sold.

The project has recently taken delivery of a 'harvester' and 'catcher' to make mulch or compost from mowing of the airport runway surrounds and perhaps other sites. This is wide and requires the large (blue) DAFF tractor to pull it. A proof of concept trial is required as there seem some challenges in making this productive.

A smaller scale development to use collect and use grass clippings is being set up with SPC next month.

Recommendations

- 3. A decision on whether the fish waste mulcher should be sold should be made in October.**
- 4. Trials need to be carried out shortly to prove the merit of the large grass harvester concept.**

Ownership:

Who owns the different items of equipment at project end will need to be decided. Some could be passed to Mutalau for the farm with UNDP approval.

Recommendation:

- 5. Decide on recommendations for end of project dispersal of equipment now, subject to later UNDP approval.**

5.4.5 Other outputs within Outcome 1.

The preceding section on the farm addresses the first two outputs within Outcome 1.

Output 1.3 Capacity developed to adopt and implement current environmental planning guidelines and resource data as a planning tool for SLM

This output was based on 2 training courses in year 1.

Recommendation:

- 1. Formal assessment is needed on the current relevance of this output but at the recent work planning in Apia it was suggested that it proceeded no further.**

I was unable to obtain clarity on some preliminary training delivered here but the full courses were not provided.

5.5 Assessment by Outcomes 2-4

This section assesses achievements against the three outcomes assigned to Departments other than DAFF. Performance has also generally been slow within these and many activities are well behind schedule. There was discussion at the second SC meeting that the PMT was working on MoU's to formalise partnerships between departments and that it was reviewing how MoU's had been organised within other projects to do this. This appears not to have happened and should have. The first Coordinator was also relatively ineffective in pushing Departments to achieve the outputs they had signed up to. This might have been due to her limited Government status but without MoU's it was always going to be hard to enforce commitments when they were often over-committed to their own work. The Steering Committee was also not effective in this area.

Recommendation

- 1. The four Heads of Department should meet as soon as possible to assess progress on Outcomes 2 to 4, reaffirm the activities to be completed during**

the balance of the project and the finances and other resources required. They should consider holding similar meetings regularly to review progress.

5.5.1 Outcome 2 - Capacities for Knowledge Development & Management for SLM

Responsibility for this outcome was assigned to the Department of Justice, Lands and Survey (DJLS) though it is unclear what the impact of this was. Only two of the five outputs in this outcome were the responsibility of DLJS. The others were to be led by DAFF and it is not clear if they received less emphasis by being grouped in this way.

Reviewing the outputs:

2.1 Participatory assessments of the sustainability of land use systems and functionality of ecosystem services

This had the ambitious indicator of: *‘The causes and severity of soil fertility loss have been identified for major agricultural systems and best practices/lessons learned for each agricultural system have been identified.’* There were two activities within it, a synthesis of best practice to be completed in Year 3 and training using the farm in years 2/3. Neither has started with the training delayed by the slow development of the farm.

The information required for the synthesis is said to exist so a consultancy could be issued as planned. It has been suggested that the training could be used as a wrap up to the project with the assistance of a soil scientist from SPC.

The Prodoc suggests that research would be undertaken at the farm looking at different soils systems and how they could be improved. However this seems to have been unrealistic because the farm only covers a single soil type though it has some variation in ‘rockiness’.

2.2 Knowledge sharing, information resources and access to these improved

This output includes training modules and policy briefs for decision makers and no work has happened to date. As recommended in section 5.4.2 there is a need for a training schedule to be developed for the balance of the project and a review to be undertaken to see what resources are already available before any modules are developed.

Policy briefs were to be a year 1 activity and apparently done by the Project Advisor. The GEF has produced a leaflet on SLM and it has been suggested that this could be modified and expanded to make it relevant to Niue, translated and distributed as part of the work under Outcome 4.

2.3 Enhanced institutional/stakeholder capacities in the use of integrated land information systems/GIS/remote sensing for SLM and enhancement/maintenance of ecosystem functionality

This output is incomplete. Matt McIntyre was contracted to deliver some training in year 1 but follow ups identified in the Prodoc for years 2 and 3 have not occurred. McIntyre indicated that his input was more to assist with Inception, centering on assisting to gather, aggregate and update GIS info and site information and he only had 4 days in Niue. The ‘training’ session delivered was more of a capacity assessment overview (i.e. what was done in the past, why, where things had got to, and it highlighted some capacity needs). It did touch on GIS training materials that were still available from the LMRUP and went through all their systems and aggregated many GIS layers into a common base (many disturbed by Cyclone Heta) and reviewed their integrity with DJLS staff.

There was a problem in the period between project development and inception during which time McIntyre began work for a consultancy firm. There were insufficient funds allocated to his planned contribution in the budget to cover the rates charged by this firm for him to be involved.

A second activity under this output was delivered as a workshop by SOPAC under their co-financing arrangement.

Recommendation:

- 2. Assessment is needed of the importance of bringing McIntyre back to complete the planned training and whether there is sufficient budget remaining to facilitate this. Alternatively DLJS staff should be asked to conduct a refresher course.**

It is difficult for people to absorb sufficient understanding of working with GIS and LIS databases from a single training unless they use it regularly. Such use has not happened so some refresher training appears needed. The questions are whether this is important to the SLM project and continued work under UNCCD and whether this requires outside support or whether DJLS staff can deliver it themselves.

2.4 Land Information Systems for SLM developed and operational

This output centres on developing an inter-agency protocol on: ‘on LIS information access; sharing and data standards for resource users, Govt. institutions and investors’ and was to involve some SOPAC input and take place in Year 3. It seems that discussion is needed to determine what is actually required here and I would think that it might now be something simpler than envisaged in the Prodoc.

Recommendation:

- 3. Discuss with DJLS what is required here and develop a simplified output with a reduced budget as appropriate.**

2.5 Monitoring and evaluation systems for SLM developed and operational

No work has yet been undertaken on this output which envisaged a series of monitoring systems being developed in Year 2 by DAFF in collaboration with co-financers. A primary cause has been the delays in farm development which meant that the growing of crops over several seasons together with associated detailed monitoring was not possible.

The first activity 2.5.1 was defined as ‘Develop a system for monitoring agricultural sustainability and management’. This seems a very ambitious and rather ill-defined task and in our work planning discussions we felt that it should be dropped. Even developed countries struggle to have such a system.

Activities 2.5.2 and 2.5.3 were to develop systems to monitor soil organic matter and soil fertility. It seems that guidelines may be what are needed here as the techniques for such analyses are clearly available internationally. The guidelines would define how samples were to be taken, where they were to be sent (either locally or more likely overseas) to get analysis undertaken, how to interpret the results received and how to improve soil conditions. This work could be assisted by an international consultant, as identified in the Prodoc, or by experts from a CROP agency such as SPC.

Activity 2.5.4 is to develop a system for monitoring water use. This is covered within the GEF-funded Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) project being implemented by the Water Supply Division of the Public Works Department. They are working with several villages to collect information on water usage through metering, collecting data from bores and measuring rainfall. The information needed to complete the SLM activity should be available in about a year’s time.

Recommendation

- 4. Consider dropping activity 2.5.1 and developing guidelines for 2.5.2 and 2.5.3 and seek advice from SPC on this.⁸**

5.5.2 Outcome 3 - Resources are mobilized for the implementation of Niue’s completed NAP

Responsibility for this outcome was assigned to the Economic Planning Development & Statistics Unit (EPDSU). There has been very little activity to date but many of the outputs were scheduled for Year 3. The Unit has been short-staffed and it was noted earlier that significant assistance expected from the Global Support Unit never happened.

⁸ Discussions have been held with SPC on this and it may largely require the documentation of current research practices.

The Coordinator and Deputy Director DAFF received some training on financial mechanisms at the recent workshop in Fiji. The key message from that workshop was that to implement the NAP under UNCCD you can integrate and use existing projects. This rather undermines some of the activities in this section such as the ‘development of a strategic investment programme.

During the recent work planning exercise it was considered that all the activities under this output could be perhaps wrapped up into a single project supported by an international consultant. This would revisit the NAP, re-prioritise, and develop a concept paper identifying funding to be targeted and draft proposals. GEF-5 is one possible funding source that could be approached.

Recommendation

- 5. The Coordinator and Deputy Director DAFF should meet with the Head of EPDSU to review the activities in this outcome in light of the recent workshop. The development of a single project as outlines should be investigated and initiated urgently if supported.**

5.5.3 Outcome 4 - SLM principles are mainstreamed into national policies, plans and legislation

Responsibility for this outcome was assigned to the Department of Environment (DOE).

Reviewing the outputs:

4.1 Undertake assessment of capacity gaps and barriers in existing policies and regulations to support integration of SLM principles and practices at the national level

This output scheduled for Year 3 has yet to be addressed. At recent work planning discussions it was suggested that a review could be conducted and reported on but that holding stakeholder workshops was unnecessary. It is also apparent that many people exhibit ‘workshop fatigue’ in Niue.

4.2 Protocols/guidelines for the integration of SLM into national policy and planning frameworks are developed

There are several specifics in this output. Forestry Legislation has been drafted and is currently with the Crown law office. The DOE propose awareness raising and training for enforcement staff once the legislation is completed and passed. Some work has been done on an Organic Farming Policy though this was identified as a Year 1 activity and the Head of the DOE is expecting to take on the completion of this. A Code of Practice for

Land Clearance has yet to be developed (also proposed as a Year 1 activity) but the information to do this largely exists. It could be taken on by the PMU or a consultant.

4.3 SLM principles reflected and incorporated into current and future National Integrated Strategic Plans

This activity has apparently taken place and the current Niue National Strategic Plan (NNSP) 2009-13 has an emphasis on sustainability.

5.6 Role of Co-financers

This section reviews the contributions of the Co-financers who specifically provided letters attached to the Prodoc.

5.6.1 NZAID

The New Zealand International Aid & Development Agency (NZAID) was supporting three potentially related projects when the SLM Prodoc was developed: Vanilla and Nonu Farming, Young Farmers and an Organic Development Programme. An exchange of letters confirmed that NZAID was happy for these projects to be used as ‘collateral’ (co-financing) for the SLM project, provided there was ‘no impact on the NZAID projects as a result.’ As will be seen later difficulties did emerge over the use of NZAID-funded teams working at the Mutalau Farm which was not part of their agreed programme.

A detailed review of the three projects was carried out by Manhire (2007) who visited Niue in October 2006.

Recommendation

- 1. Letters to secure co-financing should more precisely identify the expectations of both parties.**

NZAID Vanilla

The original programme ran from 2003 to June 2007 with the aim of increasing the production of vanilla to a sizeable volume for export. Its future is currently under discussion following a series of reviews. It also expanded into Nonu as this crop developed.

Manhire’s report makes several specific references to involvement of the vanilla programme with the Mutalau farm as follows:

‘There has been a recent shift in focus ... The larger of the work teams, and perhaps in future the other team, will be used for the development of a 180acre (70 acres effective area) ex-cattle farm near Mutalau. Joint venture between GON and Mutalau VC. Profits

from venture will go back to the village business and its associated stakeholders. The project - Sustainable Land Management (SLM) is Niue's contribution to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The vanilla project was used as a co-financier of the SLM, approved by NZAID. It is proposed that this will be a 'pilot' area, where lessons learnt can be applied to other areas on Niue.

Justifications for this shift in the programme resources include the potential to establish a large production area that can achieve economies of scale in relation to management, processing and marketing. At issue however is whether this development is consistent with the overall objectives of the programme and whether by the way it is structured it will be seen as placing one group and village over others – as such it could lead to the development of tensions over the allocation of resources from the programme. It is recognised however that it is linked to other government strategies however clarification on the implications to the Vanilla/Nonu project need to be clarified.'

Manhire (op. cit.) recommended a change in the programme's focus. DAFF indicated that the initial objective was to expand farms (using the work teams) and providing training once plants were starting to produce (c 3 years after planting). The limited supply of planting material meant that the previous rate of planting cannot be continued so Manhire recommended:

- No new areas of vanilla are established under the programme and that planting material produced for the next two years is used to plant beside the established support trees.
- Options for enhancing crop yields are identified and distributed to growers – this could involve bringing in an overseas vanilla production expert, reflection on previous DAFF and grower trials or some new trials to identify best management practices including the identification of improved nutrient inputs e.g. composted fish waste.
- Place emphasis on market development.

If these were adopted there would be less need for field teams and staff. Manhire indicated that the potentially extra staff could possibly be re-deployed to assist with the Mutalau Village development however this would need to be carefully considered.

A further study Bianchessi (2007) identified the challenges faced by reduced prices and an increased supply coming on stream. Among his conclusions was that there was no urgent need for workshops on agriculture techniques, but organisation of curing and associated training was a priority.

Training focused on curing was provided by Tetiarahi of Land Resources Division in February 2009. His report (Tetiarahi 2009) included several recommendations aimed at marketing, labour and identified that a private company is to be set up by four vanilla curers, presumably to purchase beans, cure and market and sell the product. Organic certification through NIOFA should be used further as a marketing tool.

NZAid Young Farmers (Manhire)

This programme began in 2003 aiming to provide school leavers with training in agriculture coordinated by DAFF. Manhire (2007) identified that in 2004/05 for example the programme involved days of practical learning at Vaiea, Vaipapahi and with vanilla/nonu teams plus some classroom-based learning. His review concluded that most of the students had developed a core competency in practical farming skills and most seemed to be positive about farming. There had been ten young people participating in the programme and by 2007 only two had left the programme and gone to New Zealand. However by the time of the 2nd SLM SC meeting only four remained (and now only one apparently remains farming as he has a job at DAFF) and the programme had no guarantee of funding beyond 2007. Three of the original participants were from Mutalau providing a strong link to the SLM project but none remain there working in the farming sector.

NZAid Organic Development Programme

NZHC funded this programme with \$30K during 2002-5 and \$36K for 2005/07. Manhire (2007)'s review noted that there had been a good increase in land area and growers seeking certification and being certified. NIOFA, through the programme co-ordinator, was providing a good level of support to those certified growers in relation to certification issues however the level of support provided in relation to production management appears to be limited.

He identified a need for training to provide the information and skills to ensure growers can achieve optimal levels of production and identify best management practices. These could be identified by:

- Observations made by experienced growers on management techniques that enhance production and address management challenges, for example, pests, disease.
- Field trials – DAFF in consultation with NIOFA could assist in the design and management of simple field trials to assess various management options. A key issue for some crops is fertiliser with doubts that the existing low/nil input options are appropriate for more intensive production, for example, vegetable production. An investigation into alternative fertiliser input options, for example fish waste that could be composted, is required.
- Involvement of overseas experts, e.g. from FAO and SPC.
- Extension activity to share best practice. It is recommended that a programme of workshops organised by NIOFA, DAFF and Vanilla, be established to share with new and established growers information on production, post-production and marketing

Another area for potential focus was to screen possible weed management strategies to identify effective options for organic production. Opportunities for the Mutalau farm to contribute to these training needs were discussed in section 5.4.1.

An update has been requested from NZAID setting out what decisions have been made about these three programmes, or when such decisions will occur. However this was not received before the completion of this report.

Recommendation

- 2. Discussion should be held with NZAID over any plans for further support to these projects and how this can link to the SLM project and the farm in particular.**

5.6.2 SOPAC

The Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) delivered training workshops on GIS in Year 1.

5.6.3 SPC

The Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC) has contributed co-financing through the European Union (EU)-funded Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific (DSAP) project. DAFF staff working within this project have identified/surveyed a plot at the Mutalau Farm and undertaken work there subsequent to my visit. Plans for this plot include the demonstration of drip irrigation and cover crops. This work was planned for last year but not undertaken due to SLM project difficulties.

The DSAP project has recently ended though a further related project may be provided out of the next European Development Fund of the EU.

SPC experts have also assisted the project with specific advice and participation in regional workshops.

5.6.4 FAO

I was unable to obtain clarity from the team on FAO contributions to the project and the initial letter included with the Prodoc has little detail.

A major FAO-funded agriculture project is due to start in 2010 and linkages with SLM will be explored.

5.6.5 UNESCO

UNESCO agreed to its groundwater assessment project being considered as co-financing and this is contributing directly to Activity 2.5.4. (Prodoc).

5.6 Financial Management & reporting

Assessment of financial management has largely been left to the auditor as the most recent audit was also conducted in July.

However the managing and reporting on project finances has been problematical and, as usual in my experience, there were problems within all three agencies involved: the Department implementing the project (DAFF), the arm of Government responsible for managing the finances (Treasury Department), and the UNDP.

On the UNDP side there was apparently a 6-months delay from signing the Prodoc to the disbursement of funds which appears far too long. A balance of funds left over from the PDF-A could be used to pay salaries of project staff but there was no money for implementation. UNDP also made an initial error in dispersing too many funds due to a change in accounting systems and it took a lot of work to reconcile this and pay back the difference. UNDP like many other donors has limits on how much funds it will disperse initially which can also cause problems and did so for this project and others I am aware of. This arbitrary rule seems based on historic distrust and should be reviewed. If a project's work plan identifies that 90% of the funding is needed on day 1 then 90% should be provided on day 1. If this rule is to remain than Prodoc's need to be formulated to ensure the issue does not arise.

Exchange rates seem to always cause problems with UNDP projects. My understanding is that UNDP is one of the few agencies that insist on its funding being managed in US dollars but clarification is needed on this point.⁹ There was comment in the audits that the rate used to convert local currency expenditure to USD for UNDP reporting should be the rate that advance of funds were received and converted to local currency.

Shortcomings within DAFF and Treasury were detailed in the audit reports. Some of the problems at DAFF identified in the recent audit probably stem from the change of coordinator and the absence of the new coordinator during the audit. Some of these were addressed during the recent meeting in UNDP Samoa. Treasury are spending significant funds improving their systems. However holding all donor funds in a single account is clearly one source of problems.

The coordinators have identified that they spend a large amount of time on reporting each quarter to the detriment of other work, particularly the farm. Three months is a very short time at a country level in my experience and limited activities are likely to occur between the compilation and acceptance of one report and the end of that quarter. Six months has been suggested by some as a more appropriate period but there is a risk with this that problems may emerge but not be advised till the next reporting period by which time

⁹ My understanding of the issue is: If the planned expenditure for a quarter is identified as NZ\$50000 and the cross rate is 1.4 so this equates to US\$35714, most donors provide NZ\$50000 by asking the bank to deliver this by taking US\$35714 from their budget. However what UNDP does is deliver US\$35,714. This means that when the exchange rate changes during the quarter, Niue inevitably ends up with expenditure of more or less than \$50,000 creating problems of reconciliation.

their implications could be major. I would recommend consideration of reporting every four months and the trialling of this in some new projects.

Recommendation

- 1. UNDP should take the lead in moving to requiring reports each third rather than each quarter and persuade other donors to follow. (If I was asked for the one recommendation that would make the most contribution to the management of the environment in the Pacific this would be it!)**¹⁰

5.7 Project Risks/assumptions

The Prodoc identified five assumptions (clause 96) all of which were considered of **low risk**. These largely relate to commitments continuing beyond the end of the project so are not considered in detail in this evaluation. It also included the statement:

‘Understandably, the success of this project depends largely on the collaboration and commitment of key government institutions and CROP agencies that will play a vital role in expediting important activities of this project.’

The Inception Report notes that the five assumptions were still considered to hold, though there was some discussion about the availability of labour.

With hindsight one can see that the project has suffered a series of setbacks that could perhaps have been identified as risks at its inception. Had this happened, mitigation measures might have been identified then that could have been applied to minimise impacts. Obvious risks that applied to this project, some of which are more generally applicable to projects in a small country like Niue are:

- Shortage of individuals with sufficient skills and experience to fully take on project coordination role(s)
- Shortage of labour
- Inconsistent support from local communities
- Difficulties in obtaining land for demonstration farm
- Changes of Government leading to changes of approach
- Inadequate project oversight and support personnel due to other work commitments
- Other projects diverting community attention – e.g. the proposed hotel development at Mutalau that subsequently fell through
- Reduced community focus – whereas in the past people were willing and able to commit time to village projects this has reduced as the population has declined and individuals taken on more commitments.
- This was a large project so could be seen as an opportunity for individuals to gain personally.

¹⁰ This recommendation was also made in an earlier review for the Cook Islands of its NCSA project.

Recommendation

- 1. Greater attention should be paid to identifying risks that might affect implementation during project formulation and suggesting mitigation measures. There are a series of risks that appear common to many projects on Niue.**

5.8 Monitoring and Evaluation

Projects were expected to develop their own Monitoring and Evaluation framework and the GSU produced guidelines in 2006 to assist with this. The key document is the Annual Project Review (APR) form which was prepared during project planning and filled in annually.

I only received one completed, undated APF form which makes it hard to assess the value of this framework. The Samoan tsunami and subsequent UN and Government relief effort meant that UNDP staff were unable to provide further information before report completion

Acknowledgements

I appreciate being given the opportunity by UNDP to conduct this interesting evaluation and would like to thank Meapelo Maiai and his colleagues for arranging this. Brendon Pasisi, Poi Okosene and the DAFF team made me very welcome in Niue and I thank them for their hospitality and for the work they put in. Brendon, Poi and Sauni Tongatule contributed to a very enjoyable and productive few days in Apia recently, hosted diligently by Meapelo. I am grateful to everyone who I approached in Niue for giving willingly of their time to be interviewed.

ANNEX 1: Meeting Schedule in Niue

30th June

8.30 Richard Hipa , Secretary to Government (SOG)
9.00 Justin Kamupala, Secretary for Justice & Richard Siataga, Technical Officer,
Department of Justice, Lands & Survey
13.30 Bill Motufoou, former Minister of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries and initial
Chair of Steering Committee
14.00 Frank Sioneholo, Economic Planning Development & Statistics Unit

1 July

9.00 Hiva Levi, former Coordinator, NIOFA
13.00 Tauaasa Taafaki, NZAID Manager, NZHC
14.00 Taufakavalu Tukuiha, NIOFA
18.00 Mutalau Village (2 hours)

2 July

10.0 Brendon Pasisi
14.30 Crossley Tatui

3 July

11.30 Brandon Tauasi, Head of Forestry

7 July

AM Visit Mutalau farm with Poi
13.00 Niuhepe Togakilo at Mutalau
14.00 Visit Vaipapahi farm

9 July

9.00 Judy Nemaia, Environment Officer, Department of Environment
10.00 Sifa Ioane, Chairperson Mutalau Village Council
12.00 Hon Pokotoa Sipeli, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries
13.00 Inangaro Vakaafi, former Project Coordinator
15.00 Gaylene Tasmania, Deputy Director, DAFF

10 July

9.00 John Canny, Treasury Secretary (cancelled)

ANNEX 2: Documents reviewed

Project Document - signed end February 2007.

Project Inception Report – May 2007

‘Combating Land Degradation’ – Niue’s National Report on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. (NAPA) – 2002.

Minutes of Steering Committee meetings: 9/5/07, 6/6/07, 1/8/07, 8/9/07, 4/10/07, 22/1/08, 17/4/08, 7/1/09, 29/4/09, 7/06/09

Annual Report July 2007-June 2008

Quarterly Progress Reports: PDF-phase April-June 06, July-Sep 06; Project Jan-Mar 07, April-Jun 07, July-Sep 07, Oct-Dec 07, Jan-Mar 08, Apr-Jun 08, July-Sept 08, Oct-Dec 08, Jan-Mar 09,

Manhire, Jon (2007) A review of NZAID Funded Agricultural Development Programmes in Niue. Agribusiness Group, NZ.

SPC & EU. 2008. Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific (DSAP). Annual Report 1 January-31 December 2007.

TOR Mutalau Business Management Unit

TOR Mutalau Lands Committee

Regional – DSAP Annual Report 2007.

UNDP Prodoc GEF Project title: LDC and SIDS Targeted Portfolio Approach for Capacity Development and Mainstreaming of Sustainable Land Management

UNDP GEF. 2008. 3rd Annual and Final Report of the Global Support Unit, Pretoria, South Africa.

UNDP GEF GSU. 2006. Resource Kit: Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting for Sustainable Land Management in LDC & SIDS Countries.

ANNEX 3: Schedule of meetings at UNDP MCO Office, Apia

11/9

Meapelo Maiiai, UNDP Environment Programme Officer.

14-15/9

All day workshops with Brendon Pasisi, SLM Project Manager, Sauni Tongatule, GEF Operational Focal Point, Poi Okesene, SLM Project Coordinator, Meapelo Maiiai, Easter Galuvao (in part). Review and identification of revised outputs.

Meeting with Regional Representative Ms Nileema Noble, workshops attendees and other UNDP staff. Update on project, draft results of mid-term evaluation and proposals for project completion.

16/9

All day workshop with Meapelo, Sauni and Poi to develop revised detailed work plan.

ANNEX 4: INITIAL TOR

UNDP/GEF Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management in Niue

Applications are invited for the following consultancy at the UNDP Multi-Country Office at Matautu-uta, Samoa.

Terms of Reference for Mid-Term Evaluation

Title: Consultancy for a UNDP/GEF Mid-Term Project Evaluation

Duration of Contract: 16 working days (spread over three weeks)

Contract starting date: 23rd March 2009

Duty station: Samoa

Mode of Application: All candidates must apply through the UNDP Multi-Country Office in Samoa. Applications may be sent via email to registry.ws@undp.org. All applications should include an updated curriculum vitae or resume and a proposed fees assessment.

For all enquiries, please contact Mr. Meapelo Maiai at email meapelo.maiiai@undp.org or Ms. Iokapeta Eteuati at iokapeta.eteuati@undp.org.

Application deadline: 6th March 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

Standard UNDP/GEF M&E requirements

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy at the project level in UNDP/GEF has four objectives: i) to monitor and evaluate results and impacts; ii) to provide a basis for decision making on necessary amendments and improvements; iii) to promote accountability for resource use; and iv) to document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned. A mix of tools is used to ensure effective project M&E. These might be applied continuously throughout the lifetime of the project – e.g. periodic monitoring of indicators - or as specific time-bound exercises such as mid-term reviews, audit reports and independent evaluations.

Mid-term evaluations are intended to identify potential project design problems, assess progress towards the achievement of objectives, identify and document lessons learned (including lessons that might improve design and implementation of other UNDP/GEF projects in Niue), and to make recommendations regarding specific actions that might be taken to improve the project. It is expected to serve as a means of validating or filling the gaps in the initial assessment of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency obtained from monitoring. The mid-term evaluation provides the opportunity to assess early signs of project success or failure and prompt necessary adjustments.

Background

Land degradation is a major environmental issue in Niue. A comparison of two SPOT satellite imagery maps by Landcare Research, one in 1994 and one six years later through the comparative analysis of land cover maps have indicated that from the period of 1994 to 2001, the area of mature forest increased from 26% to 35.5% coverage. This data suggests that deforestation in Niue prior to 1994 was serious and that the success of the National Forest Policy in 1994 thereof resulted in the conservation of mature trees. Nevertheless the pressing issue faced now is more likely to be the over-cropping of land already cleared for agriculture, with shorter rotation periods thus affecting the fertility status of these areas.

Over time there has been a cumulative effect on the land and its degradation through a number of agricultural practices, namely disc ploughing, shifting nature of agriculture combined with significantly reduced fallow periods, large scale land clearance for export cropping of taro, and the increased reliance on synthetic fertilizers/herbicides.

The inception of the Moui Faka Niue (MFN) Scheme has been criticized for exacerbating land clearance for agricultural purposes. The MFN Scheme sought to reduce unemployment and increase the value of exports. Overall the scheme was effective in increasing taro exports to New Zealand through the village agriculture assistance, with growers receiving assistance in forms of, subsidized bulldozer clearing of land parcels, coordination of taro export logistics and loans for seeds, pesticides, fertilizers and equipment.

Due to the fragmented nature of the land parcels, the access roads/bush tracks constitute a greater land area clearance than the actual plantation plot itself. The plantation plot may range in size from 0.5 ha to 2ha, with the average size being 1 ha.

Up until recently agriculture has been practiced at very much a subsistence level, with minimal “best guess” inputs into the soil. A practical participatory approach targeted at the resource users need to be undertaken with the economic and environmental benefits of sustainable agricultural practices clearly outweighing any preconceived disadvantages. With this in mind, the core of the project proposal aims to build the capacity of resource users and institutions through the establishment of a community demonstration site encompassing sustainable agricultural methods/alternatives which serves to maintain and enhance the integrity of Niue’s unique ecosystem.

Historically soil programmes have been limited to small-scale extension projects, fertilizer and fodder experiments. The UNCCD national action plan consultative process identified the need to increase the small-scale attempt at sustainable agriculture into a large scale coordinated nationwide project with particular emphasis on soil fertility/rehabilitation and the restocking of organic matter and organisms enabling higher plant establishment and growth. This is feasible given Niue’s size and population and is in line with Niue’s strategic plan.

Project objectives

The objective of this project is to build capacities for sustainable land management (SLM) in appropriate government and civil society institutions/user groups in Niue, and ensure that SLM is mainstreamed into government planning and strategy development. It will benefit a land surface area estimated at 259 sq km and will contribute towards the achievement of the following long-term goal: To build capacity for sustainable land management in Niue via a targeted practical participatory “bottom up” approach. The project objective is as follows: *Capacities for sustainable land management are built in appropriate governmental departments, civil society groups, resource users and mainstreamed into government planning and strategy development.*

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MID-TERM EVALUATION

This Mid-term Evaluation will be coordinated by the UNDP Multi-Country Office in Samoa, the Project Management Unit with the support of the GEF Regional Coordination Unit in Bangkok. The Mid-Term Evaluation will determine progress being made towards the achievement of outcomes and will identify course correction if needed. It will focus on the effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of project implementation; will highlight issues requiring decisions and actions; and will present initial lessons learned about project design, implementation and management. Findings of this review will be incorporated as recommendations for enhanced implementation during the final half of the project’s term.

The Mid-term Evaluation serves to document lessons learnt and plays a critical role in supporting accountability. Its main objectives are:

1. To monitor and, particularly, evaluate results and impacts as per the logical framework reflected in the project document;
2. To promote accountability for resources use as per approved workplan budget(s);
3. To document, provide feedback on and disseminate lessons learned; and
4. To provide a basis for decision making on necessary amendments and improvements.

3. SCOPE OF THE MID-TERM EVALUATION

Mid-term evaluations are intended to identify potential project design problems, assess progress towards the achievement of objectives, identify and document lessons learned (including lessons that might improve design and implementation of other projects), and to make recommendations regarding specific actions that might be taken to improve the project. It is expected to serve as a means of validating or filling the gaps in the initial assessment of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency obtained from monitoring.

The scope of the evaluation will:

- Assess relevance and effectiveness of the project’s strategy and approaches for the achievement of the project objectives;
- Assess performance of the project in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of producing the expected outputs;
- Assess the quality and timeliness of inputs, the reporting and monitoring system and extent to which these have been effective;
- Assess relevance of project management arrangements; identify advantages, bottlenecks and lessons learned with regard to the management arrangements; and

- Provide recommendations to key project stakeholders for follow-up activities.

The Mid-term Evaluation will cover the entire project: this includes GEF and other co-financing funds to the SLM Medium Size Project.

The following aspects will need to be addressed by the Consultant:

Progress towards Results

- *Changes in development conditions.* Assess the progress towards the following, with a focus on the perception of change amongst stakeholders:
 - cost effective and timely delivery of GEF resources to the target country;
 - enhancement of individual and institutional capacities for SLM;
 - systemic capacity building and mainstreaming of SLM principles into development planning;
 - the provision of enhanced technical support via the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and other relevant Government and Non-Government agencies.
- *Measurement of change:* Progress towards results should be based on a comparison of indicators before, during and after (so far) the project intervention. Progress can also be assessed by comparing conditions in the project area prior to the start of the project design process.
- *Project strategy:* How and why outcomes and strategies contribute to the achievement of the expected results:
 - Examine their relevance and whether they provide the most effective route towards results.
 - Will the outcomes really meet the project objective and is the strategy currently followed the best approach for achieving the project objective? Consider alternatives.
 - Assess adequacy of the log frame and indicators in responding to the GEF strategic priorities and achieving project objective
- *Sustainability:* Based on project progress so far, the current prospects for longer-term impacts and using a combination of quantitative and qualitative feedback on project results to date, assess the extent to which the benefits of the project will continue, within or outside the project domain, after it has come to an end. Relevant factors include for example the prospects for: development of a sustainability strategy, establishment of/access to financial and economic instruments and mechanisms, mainstreaming project objectives into the economy or community production activities, adequate follow-up support at the (sub-) regional level, etc. Provide tangible measures that can be undertaken to improve prospects of sustainability.
- *Gender perspective:* Extent to which the project accounts for gender differences when developing and applying project interventions. How are gender considerations mainstreamed into project interventions? Suggest measures to strengthen the project's gender approach.

Project's Adaptive Management Framework

(a) Monitoring Systems

- Assess if the monitoring tools currently being used generate adequate information for project evaluation:
 - Do they provide the necessary relevant information?
 - Do they involve key partners?
 - Are they efficient?
 - Are additional tools required?
- Assess the adequacy/relevance of baseline data. If reconstruction is required this should follow a participatory process.
- Ensure that the monitoring system, including performance indicators, at least meets GEF minimum requirements.
- Apply the GEF Tracking Tool (all elements) and provide a description of comparison with initial application of the tool. If the Tracking Tool has not been previously applied, provide a comparison against the estimated baseline.

(b) Risk Management

- Validate whether the risks identified in the project document and PIRs are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate. If not, explain why. Describe any additional risks identified and suggest risk ratings and possible risk management strategies to be adopted
- Assess the project's risk identification and management systems:
 - Is the UNDP-GEF Risk Management System appropriately applied?
 - How can the UNDP-GEF Risk Management System be used to strengthen project management?

(c) Work Planning

- Assess the use of the logical framework as a management tool during implementation and suggest any changes required
 - Ensure the logical framework meets UNDP-GEF requirements in terms of format and content
 - What impact will the possible retro-fitting of impact indicators have on project management?
- Assess the use of routinely updated workplans.
- Assess the use of electronic information technologies to support implementation, participation and monitoring, as well as other project activities
- Are work planning processes result-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning.
- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions. Any irregularities must be noted.

(d) Reporting

- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Underlying Factors

- Assess the underlying factors beyond the project's immediate control that influence outcomes and results. Consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of the project's management strategies for these factors.
- Re-test the assumptions made by the project management and identify new assumptions that should be made
- Assess the effect of any incorrect assumptions made by the project

UNDP Contribution

- Assess the role of UNDP against the requirements set out in the UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results. Consider:
 - Field visits
 - Project Executive Committee
 - Global Advisory Committee (TOR, follow-up and analysis)
 - PIR preparation and follow-up
 - GEF guidance
- Consider the new UNDP requirements outlined in the UNDP User Guide, especially the Project Assurance role, and ensure they are incorporated into the project's adaptive management framework.
- Assess the contribution to the project from UNDP "soft" assistance (i.e. policy advice & dialogue, advocacy, and coordination). Suggest measures to strengthen UNDP's soft assistance to the project management.

Partnership Strategy

- Assess how partners are involved in the project's adaptive management framework:
 - Involving partners and stakeholders in the selection of indicators and other measures of performance
 - Using already existing data and statistics
 - Analysing progress towards results and determining project strategies.
- Identify opportunities for stronger substantive partnerships between UNDP and other counterparts, with particular reference to:
 - Contracts and/or MoUs with relevant regional institutions
 - The development of partnerships with any other organizations
- Assess how stakeholders participate in project management and decision-making. Include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach adopted by the project and suggestions for improvement if necessary.
- Consider the dissemination of project information to partners and stakeholders and if necessary suggest more appropriate mechanisms.

4. PRODUCTS EXPECTED FROM THE EVALUATION AND DELIVERABLES

The Consultant should review and assess the issues identified in the previous section. The Mid-Term evaluation report should include findings, assessment of performance, lessons learned, recommendations, description of best practices, and an "action list" in a certain area of particular importance for the project.

The following list is indicative of the products required, not an exhaustive list. The final outputs will be agreed between the Project Management Unit and the selected consultant during the first few days of the mission.

1. Undertake an in depth review of baseline information, inception report and all technical reports providing a technical evaluation on the relevance of these documents, highlighting their pertinent aspects and gaps in knowledge, and providing technical improvements to achieve objectives.
2. Review of Quarterly Progress Reports (QPRs), Project Financial Reports (QFRs) and elaborate project activity status and present improvements needed for the working plan and reporting scheme.
3. Review the monitoring process and all project indicators appraising the relevance and applicability of each one.
4. Using the most appropriate indicators, measure the relevance and cost efficiency of each project activity providing clear analysis of the project progress toward set objectives, and if necessary provide the most effective route and activities towards results.
5. Update risk management table and provide risk management responses for the rest of the project implementation.
6. Assess project sustainability and how benefits will arise after it has come to an end.
7. Interview Project Steering Committee members, and other stakeholders and Technical Advisory Committee, to assess the partnership strategy and review the co-financing process giving recommendations that will help facilitating the implementation of the project.

5. DELIVERABLES

All deliverables of the mission will be produced in English and will be presented as follows:

1. A mission plan two days after the start of the mission
2. A draft mission report and a power-point presentation the last day of the mission
3. A final mission report with Executive Summary (after UNDP comments) 7 days following the end of the mission.

The structure and content of the report (see Annexe 1) should meet the requirements of the UNDP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. The length of the Report should not exceed 30 pages in total (excluding the annexes).

6. METHODOLOGY OR EVALUATION APPROACH

An outline of an evaluation approach is provided below; however it should be made clear that the evaluation team is responsible for revising the approach as necessary. Any changes should be in-line with international criteria and professional norms and standards. They must be also cleared by UNDP before being applied by the evaluation team.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. It must be easily understood by project partners and applicable to the remaining period of project duration.

The evaluation should provide as much gender disaggregated data as possible.

The Evaluation will be carried out by the team through:

- (i) **Documentation review** (desk study); the list of documentation to be reviewed is included as an Annex to the TORs. All documents will be provided in advance by the UNDP and Project Management Unit.
- (ii) **Interviews** will be held with project representative (Steering Committee members, Technical Working Committee) from the following organizations and persons as a minimum:
- **Department of Treasury and Economic Planning** (Funding and Financial control body);
 - **Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries** (National Project Management Unit);
 - **Department of Environment:** GEF Operational Focal Point;
 - **Department of Justice, Lands and Survey;**
 - **UNDP Multi-Country Office in Samoa; and**
 - **Others**

Additional interviews should be carried out with other project beneficiaries and stakeholders (a list of the project stakeholders is included in the Project Document).

- (iii) **Field visits** must be made in Niue.

7. EVALUATOR

One international evaluator has been budgeted for this evaluation. The evaluator is required to combine international calibre evaluation expertise, the latest thinking in sustainable land management and Regional experience.

Evaluator Qualities should include:

- Recent experience with Result-Based Management evaluation methodologies;
- Experience applying participatory monitoring approaches;
- Experience applying objectively verifiable indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Recent knowledge of the UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy;
- Recent knowledge of UNDP's results-based evaluation policies and procedures;
- Competence in Adaptive Management, as applied to natural resource management projects;
- Recognized and demonstrated expertise in SLM;
- Demonstrable analytical skills;
- Experience with multilateral or bilateral supported land management projects; and
- Excellent English communication skills (oral, written and presentation).

The evaluator must be independent from both the policy-making process and the delivery and management of assistance. Therefore applications will not be considered from evaluator who has had any direct involvement with the design or implementation of the project. This may apply equally to an evaluator who is associated with organizations, universities or entities that are, or have been, involved in policy-making process and/or delivery of the project. Any previous

association with the project or other partners/stakeholders must be disclosed in the application. This applies equally to firms as it does to individual evaluator.

If selected, failure to make the above disclosures will be considered just grounds for immediate contract termination, without recompense. In such circumstances, all notes, reports and other documentation produced by the evaluator will be retained by UNDP.

The evaluator will have overall responsibility for the delivery and quality of the evaluation products. If a proposal is accepted from a consulting firm, the firm will be held responsible for the delivery and quality of the evaluation products and therefore has responsibility for team management arrangements.

8. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Management arrangements

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation lies with the contracted individual or consultancy agency. The consultant in collaboration with UNDP is the main operational point for the evaluation responsible for liaising with the project team to set up the stakeholder interviews, arranges the field visits and co-ordinate with other counterparts. UNDP will contract the evaluator and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements for the evaluation team.

Although the final report must be cleared and accepted by UNDP before being made public, the UNDP/GEF Evaluation Policy is clear: the evaluation function should be structurally independent from operational management and decision-making functions in the organization. The evaluation team will be free from undue influence and has full authority to submit reports directly to appropriate levels of decision-making. UNDP management will not impose restrictions on the scope, content, comments and recommendations of evaluation reports. In the case of unresolved difference of opinions between any of the parties, UNDP may request the evaluation team to set out the differences in an annex to the final report.

Time frame

The total duration of this assignment is 16 working days between the period of 1st February and 23rd February 2009. The time of the evaluation will spread over a period of 3 weeks. The evaluator is expected to work five days a week. The draft report is to be made available for comments 5 days after the completion of the field visits. A schedule of activities is set out below.

Resources, logistical support and deadlines

- **Home based (2 days):** the evaluator will need to (1) review documents, (i.e. Project document, Project Implementation Report (PIRs), progress reports, financial reports, Global Support Unit links), obtain necessary non-project background or supporting documents, (2) Design a detailed mission plan (including the methods for data collection and analysis).
Deliverable: *Evaluation methodology and mission plan (deadline 4th February 2009)*
- **Mission in Niue (9 days):** Will consist of (but not limited to): (1) arrange transportation and meetings/interviews in collaboration with UNDP MCO in Samoa and the Project Management Unit, (2) meeting and carrying out the required interviews with the various project stakeholders, (3) Visit project site in Niue.

- **UNDP Office based (2 days):** (1) prepare a summary and analysis of collected data including recommendations to achieve project objectives more efficiently, (2) elaborate draft mid-term evaluation report and presentation on mission findings.
Deliverable: A draft mission report and a power-point presentation (deadline 18th February 2009)
- **UNDP Office based: (3 days):** (1) Draft mid-term evaluation review by the Project Manager/ UNDP, (2) discuss and integrate Project Manager/UNDP comments into the MTE report, (3) finalise mid-term evaluation report
Deliverable: hard and soft copy of the final mid-term evaluation report