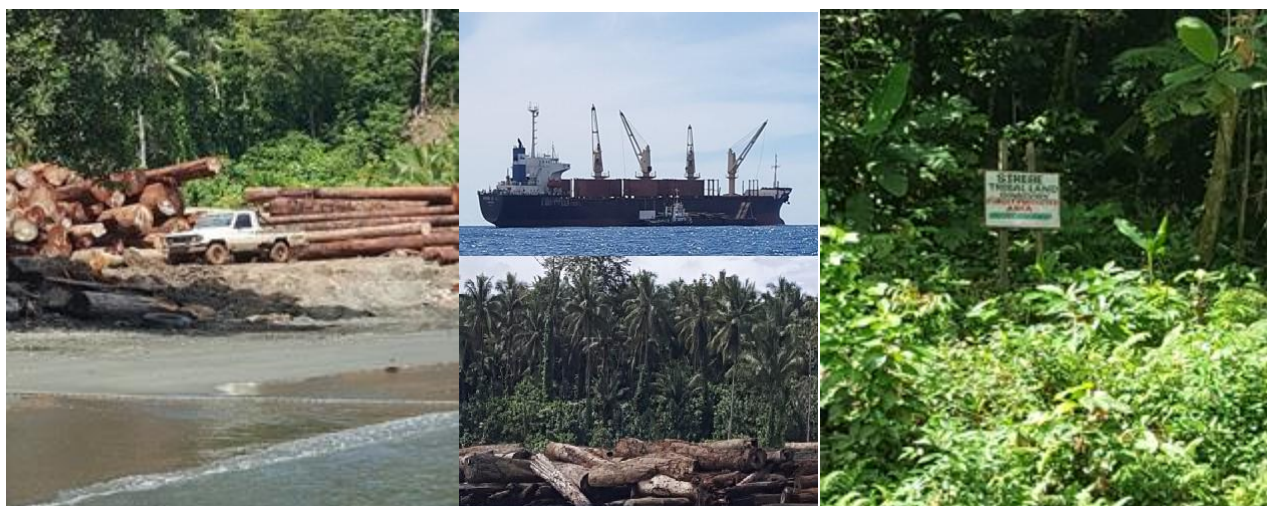**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

**Mid-Term Review of FAO-GEF Project
GCP/SOI/001/GFF
GEF ID – 5122**

Integrated Forest Management (IFM) Project in the Solomon Islands

Photos: Showing harvested logs on the show, their shipping and a photo of a Protected Area established with the support of the project (Photos William Parairato)

Final Report

MTR conducted in June 2021

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
Sub-regional Office for the Pacific islands, October 2021**

Contents

Acknowledgements

Acronyms and abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
AMNH	American Museum of Natural History and partners
ARDS	Agriculture Rural Development Strategy
AusAid	Australian Aid Agency
AWP/B	Annual Work Plan and Budget
APPR	Annual Project Progress Report
BD	Biodiversity
BH	Budget Holder
CBD	Convention on Biodiversity
CBO	Community Based Organization
CC	Climate Change
CCA	Community Conservation Area
CEO	Chief Executing Officer (GEF)
CHICCAP	Choiseul Integrated Climate Change Adaptation Programme
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
ECD	Environment and Conservation Division (MECDM)
EP	Executing Partner
ESSI	Ecological Solutions Solomon Islands
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFA	Forum Fisheries Agency
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FPMIS	Field Project Management Information System
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GEBs	Global Environmental Benefits
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEFSEC	GEF Secretariat

GEFTT	GEF Tracking Tools
GEO	Global Environmental Objective
GIS	Geographical Information System
GIZ	German Agency for International Development
GPIR	GEF Project Implementation Review
IFM	Integrated Forest Management in the Solomon Islands
INRM	Integrated Natural Resources Management
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
KFPL	Kolombangara Forest Products Limited
KGA	Kastom Garden Association
KIBCA	Kolombangara Island Biodiversity Conservation Association
LALSU	Landowners Advocacy and Legal Support Unit
LD	Land Degradation
LLCTC	Lauru Land Conference of Tribal Communities
LTO	Lead Technical Officer
LULUCF	Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (under UNFCCC)
MAL	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MARSH	Mangrove Rehabilitation for Sustainably managed Healthy Forests
MCCF	Makira Community Conservation Foundation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MECDM	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology
MESCAL	Mangrove Ecosystems for Climate Change Adaptation and Livelihoods
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (for Protected Areas)
MFA	Multi Focal Area
MFR	Ministry of Forests and Research
MRV	Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (for REDD+)
MWYCA	Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Welfare
NAMA	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action
NAP	National Action Plan
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

NDS	National Development Strategy
NERRDP	National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NRDF	Natural Resources Development Foundation
NSC	National Steering Committee
NTA	National Technical Advisor
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
OFP	Operational Focal Point for GEF
PAs	Protected Areas
PAAC	Protected Areas Advisory Committee (MECDM)
PDO	Project Development Objective
PGSP	Provincial Government Strengthening Program
PIF	Project Identification Form (GEF)
PIR	Project Implementation Review
POWPA	Plan of Work for Protected Areas
PPG	Project Preparation Grant (GEF)
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PPR	Project Progress Report
PRODOC	Project Document (for GEF)
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PTF	Project Task Force (FAO)
PY	Project Year
QPIR	Quarterly Project Implementation Report
RDP	Rural Development Program
RTC	Rural Training Centres
REDD	Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
R2R	Ridge to Reef Program
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SICCP	Solomon Islands Community Conservation Partnership
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SIs	Solomon Islands

SOPAC	South Pacific Applied Geo-science Commission
SAP, SAPA	FAO Sub Regional Office for the Pacific
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat for Pacific Regional Environment Programme
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (for GEF)
TABU	Traditional Land and Resources Management System
TCI	Investment Centre Division (FAO)
TF	Trust Fund
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TOR	Terms of Reference
TRHDP	Tina River Hydro Power Development Project
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFCCD	United Nations Framework Convention to Combat Desertification
USD	United States Dollar
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Executive summary

INTRODUCTION

1. The MTR conducted between April and August 2021 assessed the status of the project in terms of its achievements and challenges and developed corrective actions to help ensure that the project will be on track in achieving its desired results. The methodology triangulated a literature review of all project documents with a mixture of online and face to face interviews with a wide range of project stakeholders which included the FAO team, representatives of relevant government ministries at national, provincial level, community members at project sites, partnering NGOs, representatives from the national university and other relevant projects operating in the relevant sectors.

2. With COVID 19 restrictions on travel, the international consultant was unable to travel to the Solomon Islands (SIs). Therefore, the international and national consultant divided up work, with the international consultant taking on more of the online interviews and surveys whilst the national consultant conducted face to face interviews, field site visits (to a sample of 3 or the 5 island sites) and focus group discussions with communities.

3. The MTR was guided by both FAO and GEF best practice guidance. This includes the six key GEF criteria, which are aligned with the standard Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria (OECD/DAC, 2002) (a) relevance (b) effectiveness, (c) efficiency, (d) sustainability of project results, (e) factors affecting performance (including project implementation and execution) and (f) cross-cutting issues (including environmental and social safeguards, gender and equity issues). It also adhered to the FAO Guide for planning and conducting Mid-term reviews for FAO-GEF projects, which is aligned with and elaborates on GEF criteria.

4. The main problems addressed by the project include unsustainable commercial logging mainly by foreign companies who export round logs combined with unsustainable forest management and land use practices which all combine to cause environmental degradation. This all undermines the livelihoods and resilience of the mainly rural population who are highly dependent on forest products, small scale agriculture and fishing, the vulnerabilities are compounded by climate change which the SIs is prone to.

5. The project aims to contribute to address these problems through an integrated approach of support to field level pilots of community based Protected Area (PAs) management, Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), Sustainable Land Management, livelihood support and a range of related institutional capacity development initiatives and policy support at provincial and national level which range from supporting intersectoral coordination, developing new university courses and establishing reference levels and capacities for carbon and biodiversity monitoring. A key thrust of the integrated approach is not only combining approaches at field level but contributing to intersectoral cooperation at provincial and national level to provide a more joined-up way of holistically tackling the identified problems.

6.   A notable characteristic of the SIs is that the majority of land and forest resources are under customary tenure, so tribal groups or clans benefit directly from sale of logs and are also key actors and decision makers in land use decisions including the establishment of PAs. Customary land tenure although backed by law is complex, often unwritten with sometimes overlapping claims and there is difficulty in reaching consensus on rights holders.

KEY FINDINGS

Relevance Rating: Highly relevant

7.   **F1. Clear relevance to GEF focal points and FAO strategic objectives including** GEF -BD-1, BD-2, LD-3, CCM-5, SFM/REDD-1, SFM/REDD+-2 and FAO's Strategic Objectives particularly 2 related to increasing the provision of goods and services from forestry in a sustainable manner as well as strategic objective 5 related to increasing resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises. There is clear alignment with a broad range of government commitments, legislation and policies that deal with environment, forestry, agricultural and development, with a particular specific relevance to the Protected Area Act 2010 and Regulations 2012 which the project is effectively pioneering the operationalization of in a terrestrial setting. Although it came much later than the project formulation, the Forestry Policy (2020) lays out a range of priorities that are aligned with project strategies, including the development of community based SFM with fits with activities under Component 2 and some under cross cutting component 5. In addition, project has an explicit focus of feeding lessons and information into national policy processes and frameworks including those related to agriculture, biodiversity and carbon offsetting.

8.   **F2. Clear relevance to addressing the identified problems with a relevant and feasible strategy.** Even though there was quite a time lag between design in 2012 and project implementation**,** during the review there was a widespread articulation by stakeholders, from national level government staff to communities of the relevance of the project's strategy to address problems – it was still addressing the right barriers to change and if anything became more relevant as the pressures had increased. The 'key largely did fit the lock' in terms of strategies fitting problems, and particularly the PA support is a doable strategy for the project. However, PAs along cannot solve the to unsustainable logging problem, in terms of scope, costs and their restrictions on use they cannot be applied across in a widespread way across all the problem areas. That will require a passing of the Forest Act followed by widespread implementation of sustainable forest management principles in a way that fits with the customary land management systems in the SIs and allows for a sustainable balance between use/benefits and management. In terms of this broader forest sector reform being 'doable' by the project, that would be much more questionable for various reasons beyond the control of the project, such as getting the Forest Act passed by government, so its approach of focussing on the 'lower hanging fruit' of supporting PA implementation whilst contributing to broader forest sector reform more indirectly seems more feasible. The project has to strike a balance between relevance and feasibility of impact within its life span, which it seems to have achieved in its strategy, although discussed later is the over ambitiousness of some aspects of its strategy. At present in the absence of the Forest Act, the PA Act offers the only legal protection against unsustainable logging, mining or conversion, and would seem a good priority entry point to broader reform.

9.   Another example of high relevance, included a widespread expression of insufficient qualified professionals in the SIs and how relevant the project's support to establishing new university courses was to addressing this.

10.   The general causal logic still seems to be sound based on findings from the review, particularly of those components that are making good progress, however it must be noted that some elements of certain components are in their preparatory phase, thus it is hard to ascertain actual relevance prior to fuller implementation. This limitation of not being as far on in implementation as planned is discussed further under the Effectiveness section and Factors Affecting Performance section.

11.   **F3. Breaking new ground or building on and from what exists.** The complementarity of the work is clear, it is either breaking new ground, building on and from what exists or working through experienced partners to harness their expertise. Examples of the pioneering elements are testing the Protected Area (2010) Act through establishing the first terrestrial based PAs on the ground, or building from diploma courses at university to upgrade them to full BScs. Regarding work on the ground to establish PAs and develop Sustainable Land Management (SLM) through its LoAs the project is partnering with some very experienced organisations in the field work, so in doing so is harnessing and building on their experiences rather than 'reinventing the wheel'.

Effectiveness. Overall rating: Moderately satisfactory

12.   Note that 'Progress-towards- results matrix showing the degree of achievement of project outcomes and outputs'' is found in Annex 1. Along with other rating tables.

13.   **F4. In general behind on expected progress but for multiple reasons often outside project team control.** In general, with some exceptions it must be noted that the project is behind where it planned to be at this stage in terms of milestones, outputs and progress towards outcomes, with the exception of Outcome 3 which is more on track. This was because of a combination of factors that are explained in more detail in the following, including a delayed start due to difficulties in recruitment, COVID 19 disruptions and an unrealistic set of targets particularly regarding PA coverage which overstretched the small project team.

Component 1: Development of the terrestrial protected area network - Establishing and supporting a Community Based Protected Area network and financing to address unsustainable commercial logging and forest conversion.

Key progress

- Great variation in progress across sites.
- Less than 5,000 ha of the final original target of 143,000 ha of sites designated at the MTR stage.
- Of the original target of 5 large PAs, the situation on the ground is more complex because of the need to work with many different tribal groups and claims. With support of service providers 3 small PAs designated in Choiseul with another around 27 in progress, 13 with management committees and the rest at the consultation stage.
- Numerous disputes, negotiations, court cases and issues around clarifying land rights are ongoing at many sites, some sites would seem completely inappropriate for establishing PAs because of the nature of uncertainty around tenure. Sites were selected mainly for biodiversity reasons, with insufficient attention to whether they are suitable from a perspective of clear tenure.
- Under this output, establishment of an Inter-sectorial Coordinating Committee has been agreed and MECDM is finalizing the committee structure. TOR is prepared by IFM project team and it is under review by MECDM.
- First ranger training held in Choiseul.
- No livelihood activities supported yet, but livelihood assessment work conducted under component 2 could feed into this.
- There has been no concrete progress on the PA trust fund establishment however it was noted that at the time of the MTR the recruitment process was underway to hire international and national consultant to support the setup of the PA Trust fund.

14. **F5. Mismatch between assumptions regarding PA establishment in project document and complex reality.** The outputs and outcomes are very difficult to reflect meaningful progress against as the goal posts have changed, on one hand, there were only assumed to be 5 large PAs, one per project site, however with numerous community groups wishing to have their own PA a much greater number of PA processes are being undertaken. The target of 143,000 ha based on areas identified by government as biodiversity priority areas was unrealistic for the project to achieve, both the scale of coverage for a pilot initiative and the complex land tenure situation. Although the project is falling short especially on the ha target area, as a pioneering – pilot initiative, it is making reasonable progress against complex challenges that were not fully appreciated at design stage and learning valuable process lessons along the way.

15. **F6. Variation in progress across sites due to both varying context and approach of field coordinators.** Considerable amounts of time and energy are being invested in areas that are clearly not suitable for PAs, because of land tenure disputes. Some sites such as Choiseul have fewer disputes and seemingly more consistent support from the have 3 designated PAs now and 4 more in progress, Malaita is next in terms of progress having management committees at its sites,

Guadalcanal and Malaita are still in consultation phases, with tribes identified but numerous disputes as well as complaints about inconsistent project support to the process. In Western Kolombangara there is no progress as there are currently counterclaims over the proposed site from a government forestry company and tribal groups. As well as reducing the target, it is clear that the original list of sites has to be revised based on these experiences, with the project avoiding conflict sites and prioritizing those where PAs are both willingly accepted and where there are no land disputes (See recommendations). One clear message from the communities was that they would require more support to consult with each other and would like to deal with negotiations informally first before going into costly legal disputes. Although contexts are different there are clear variations in the project delivery in different sites, with some communities expressing some frustration with delays in project supported PA establishment process whereas others are more satisfied. It would seem there is variation in project performance from site to site

16. **F7. Not much progress on financing and incentivizing PAs.** At this stage in the project, it is still not clear how the community-based PAs will be financed, the PA Trust Fund is still in its speculative stage, livelihood activities have not been initiated with communities and promises of funding from government to communities have not been forthcoming yet. With the restrictive user rights in PAs, it is clear that not only the responsibilities to protect and manage will be high, but also the opportunity cost of setting aside the forest for conservation. One hopeful development is the establishment of a carbon offset project in one of the PAs that should also spread to others which will channel funds directly to communities. But apart from this there is a high priority for the project to make rapid progress on the Trust Fund development and livelihood support to communities (see recommendations).

Component 2. Integrated Land Management – supporting Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and livelihoods improvement in the productive 'buffer zone' areas around PAs.

Key progress.

- No actual SFM or SLM activities on the ground but a comprehensive assessment of land uses and communities undertaken as a basis for SLM training and support and possibly livelihood support.
- Integrated Land Management committee initiated at ministerial level.
- Contracting process ongoing to hire consultants to undertake policy review related to challenges and recommendations for Land Use policy.

17. **F8. SLM assessment work excellent, details on SFM establishment process more vague, clear need for cooperation between responsible ministries.** As with Outcome 1. the target for this outcome seems to be overambitious (51,650 ha under improved land management, of that 20,660 ha under SFM and 2583 ha under SLM) and in terms of expected outputs and progress towards outcome the project is lagging behind where it should be at this point and progress on outcome 2. is also lagging behind outcome 1. especially on actual implementation. Although this goes against the integrated ethos of the project where both should ideally move in parallel – which was what was envisaged at the design phase, it would seem valid to try to legally secure forest under outcome 1 - PAs as a priority.

18. The community assessment related to SLM by the NGO Live and Learn which was conducted intensively and extensively across the sites is of a very high standard with some very insightful and often gender disaggregated findings (See Cross Cutting Issues for more detail). Live and Learn have extensive local track record and should deliver context relevant SLM interventions and also support development of livelihood initiatives. The emphasis on harnessing and building on local customary practices as highlighted by Live and Learn was very welcome as several people interviewed made it very clear that they felt that projects should aim to prioritise the reviving of the traditionally strong link between clans and their environment rather than to 'impose' outside ideas. This would also be important for Component 1 also. (See recommendations)

19. Although SFM establishment was supposed to be the large part of this outcome with ambitious targets, the process for achieving this target beyond 'training' was not well articulated in the project design and at the time of the review there was no work commenced regarding SFM beyond planning for trainings. It is clear that the process elements of how to achieve the SFM target in a meaningful way needs to be fleshed out and collaborations to draw on others expertise on community SFM will be important (See Recommendations). A notable development in providing a conducive enabling environment for community based SFM since the project was designed is the Forest Policy 2020 which explicitly supports it, although in must be noted that the Forest Act to provide legal backing to the policy has not yet been passed. The combination of concerns about the opportunity cost of PAs, strong customary tenure and policy support for Community Based SFM would appear to the reviewers to be fertile ground to test/pilot a Community Based SFM process to complement the PAs (See Recommendations).

20. The recent establishment of the Integrated Land Management Committee at national level is welcome considering the potential at times for seemingly competing objectives for the ministries responsible for environment, forestry and agriculture (supporting PAs/forest conservation, SFM, SLM and an ambitious programme of agricultural productivity increase). How to effectively integrate the different priorities in policy and practice was a key part of the rationale for the project so the integrated Land Management committee will be potentially a key mechanism to work out how to build synergies and avoid contradictions.

21. Under this component (and others) there are ambitious targets around developing new policies based on policy and land use studies, this work has not yet been started at the time of the MTR and it would seem more realistic and within the control of the project to define aspects of policy processes it can undertake such as developing guidelines, policy briefs or supporting policy workshops rather than undertaking to develop new policies which is too ambitious and too outside the control of the project (See recommendations).

Component 3. Capacity building for the management of forest carbon – Supporting the development and strengthening of the reference levels and monitoring capacity of the government to develop carbon offsetting programmes.

> **Key progress.**
>
> - Forest reference level report published by UNFCCC
> - Training conducted on national Forest Monitoring and Remote sensing.
> - Plans to further support REDD+ unit and strategy development
> - National Forest Monitoring Web Portal development is underway

22. **F9. There has been good progress under the original aims of this component, however carbon offsetting is evolving in new ways in the SIs, which the project is responding to.** The project helped the government develop aspects of the UN REDD+ road map that played to the comparative advantages of FAO. For example, developing the forest reference level by that was published by UNFCC is a huge achievement and lays a solid foundation for a national REDD+ programme. In terms of progress towards outputs and this outcome, the progress has been good in general under this component. However, it would appear that the assumption in the project design was carbon offsetting benefits would be delivered through a national REDD+ programme, however the national REDD+ process is moving slowly and is under resourced and understaffed. On the other hand, 'stand-alone' carbon offset projects are moving fast and delivering funding and benefits directly to PA communities. The NAKAU initiative has delivered carbon offset benefits directly to one of the PAs established with project support, with 60% of funds going directly to communities, and with links to other PAs under investigation. The project should be commended for being responsive to this development and in light of this emerging development in carbon offsetting and the involvement of the project in linking PAs to the NAKAU carbon offset scheme, further promoting, learning and communicating about how to link PAs with standalone carbon offset initiatives would seem a valuable role of the project to help fast-track benefits directly to communities (See Recommendations).

Component 4: Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests – designed to contribute to carbon capture amongst other benefits.

> **Key progress.**
>
> - This is mainly government responsibility and progress has been a fraction of the target although a plan has been developed to further advance this work.
> - Project is supporting the government with 5 centralized nurseries to in the 5 PA zones.

23. **F10. Strategy review for restoration component.** There wasn't much information gleaned during the review about progress towards the outputs and outcomes under this component. This outcome is largely under the responsibility of the Ministry of Forests, in the project document the project had not allocated any funds for this component, but in actuality has provided some support to nursery establishment. However, from discussions with stakeholders, it again it seems that the target was too ambitious at 80,000 ha with some reporting that only a couple of hundred ha is being achieved each year in government planting, because of limited resources. Some during the

review questioned whether expensive government driven reforestation made sense in logged over areas where natural regeneration was prevalent, with suggestions of possibly assisted natural regeneration with some enrichment planting being the way forward for large scale restoration. Some suggested that without private sector and meaningful community engagement the target could never be achieved. The substantive private sector involvement in commercial afforestation was highlighted in the SIs, with some meeting FSC certification requirements was highlighted as an opportunity, for example in developing out-growers' schemes etc.

24. It would seem this component could benefit from a critical rethink involving government, community representatives, NGOs and the private sector in the re-strategizing. The project could provide some support for this re-strategizing in terms of support for a workshop etc. (See recommendations).

Component 5. Knowledge sharing for BD conservation, SLM and SFM - this cross-cutting component – helps strengthen the enabling environment for the other components by focussing on a range of mainly communication, capacity development and policy support initiatives.

Key progress.

- Main achievements related to this component is the project support for upgrading of two university courses to the first BSc level on Forestry Science and Environmental studies in the SIs, both are in their development phase, with advisory board set up, summary curriculum outlines developed and substantive amounts of equipment provided for both courses. The plan is for further course development and running the courses in 2022. There are also discussions on other courses on GIS and a certificate course in forestry to be run in a province as well as upgrading the agricultural course.
- Other activities in progress apart from trainings already mentioned under other components are a biodiversity baseline survey and ambitious plans for a timber legality tracing scheme.
- Biodiversity baseline updating in project area is in progress
- Timber legality standard road map development is in progress as well as training activities on Forest restoration and regeneration, Timber harvesting, processing, grading, preparations and Marketing and Law enforcement for SFM including logging are identified. A workplan preparation is in progress in consultation with MOFR.

25. **F11. University courses could be a major achievement but require much more support.** Although also behind on outputs and progress towards outcomes against plans, there has been significant promising work. Establishing 2, possibly 3 new university courses and a certificate course will contribute massively to addressing the capacity gaps in the environmental and forestry sector in the SIs, a critical potential legacy the project will leave behind. The multi-stakeholder advisory board for the courses, the strong practical orientation (notably the wood processing equipment) and provision of equipment and the careful consideration of the employment prospects for graduates all bode well for the course development. However, several challenges

remain, there has been a request to train lecturers on how to operate and maintain the equipment, and a major challenge to continuity, morale and course development is that the contracts of academic staff up is up for renewal. In general, there remains a lot to do in terms of full course development before the expected launch date in 2022, with concerns about staff capacity to ensure the courses get fully developed and effectively delivered.

26. **F12 Harnessing customary knowledge and knowledge management and communication elements currently weak.** Although it was not emphasised at the design phase what came out clearly during the review was the wealth of customary and traditional land and forest management systems in the SI and that building from those would be more feasible than introducing or imposing new outside ideas when establishing PAs, SFM and SLM. Harnessing and documenting traditional systems would seem to be an area of knowledge generation and communication that the project could play an important role in (See recommendations).

27. Although the project is producing significant amounts of useful data for example the reference level for carbon, biodiversity baseline, potentially guidelines on establishing PA etc. there were concerns expressed during the review that this information might be lost or not accessible after the project ends. A gap was identified where the project needs to strengthen the government's capacity for knowledge management access, aiming to institutionalize the data and make it more user friendly and accessible, for example on online portals so can be accessible after the project ends (See recommendations).

28. **F13. Likelihood of Impact.** As discussed previously under the relevance criteria, the project 'key does still fit the lock' in terms of appropriate strategies for the identified problems so that the chances of meaningful impact are high. Drivers and assumptions have been verified as being valid during the review and the general internal logic is sound. The project is breaking new ground, for example in terms of establishing terrestrial protected areas for the first time and establishing new university courses. All of this has a significant opportunity to add value and contribute to higher level goals related to addressing unsustainable commercial logging and landscape degradation and associated undermining of livelihoods and livelihood resilience which is compounded by climate change. Key areas of concern that could get in the way of contributing to higher level impact are the project simply spreading itself too thin and not consolidating achievements prior to phase out, for example establishing protected areas but not helping develop the mechanisms to sustainably finance them long term. Or at community level not sufficiently developing productive elements such as SFM, SLM and livelihood development, which might as a result undermine community motivation and incentives because of the running and opportunity costs of PAs.

Efficiency - Moderately satisfactory (MS)

29. **F14. Numerous challenges to efficiency – many outside the project team's direct control.** Beyond some exceptions the project would appear 'on paper' to in general be behind where it should be in terms of translating resources into expected milestones at this stage, however before considering this as an indication of inefficiency various factors often beyond the control of the project team have to be highlighted. They include overambitious targets in the project design. In the project document there were intended to be only 5 PA establishment

processes which would result in 144,000 ha coverage, however in reality what has happened is lots of smaller PAs meaning that to reach that target would require around 70 PA processes which of course requires a lot more resources and time than envisaged. In addition, it must be noted that the project is a pioneer when it comes to establishing terrestrial PAs, so figuring things out for the first time often consumes more resources than anticipated, again a discrepancy between assumptions at design stage and the complex realities that unfolded. Beyond discrepancies between design assumptions the realities, other reasons for inefficiencies outside the project team's control include disruption caused by COVID and bureaucratic barriers which include cumbersome financial management caused by there being no national bank account for the project. See factors affecting performance.

30. **F15. Generally efficient, avoiding overlap and building complementarity.** In general, despite the aforementioned 'external' constraints the clearly overstretched small project team has managed resources relatively efficiently by undertaking a broad range of ambitious and often complex tasks despite the constraints. A lot of the project activities are pioneering in their nature so breaking new ground rather than overlapping, others build on and from what exists for example developing the BSc courses on and from the diploma courses. There is a forestry working group where forestry projects and actors meet to discuss and coordinate their work, this is helpful in building synergies, although some actors during the interviews felt this could be strengthened further. By working through three very experienced organisations ESF, NRDF and Live and Learn in implementing components 1 and 2 under LOAs, the project also harnesses and links in with the existing track record and experience of these organisations, building on and from what they know. There are however certainly gaps in terms of efficiency within the project team, for example the core management team is clearly overstretched often doing admin, finance or HR tasks which detract from a focus on more strategic level issues. There is also variable performance in the field sites, with some communities happy with performance, others complaining that the process is taking too long, the need for more rigorous monitoring of progress with communities and more support for both field coordinators and communities directly were highlighted as ways to improve timely delivery at project sites. Various partners during the MTR also felt that although informal communication with the project was good, more systematic review and planning would improve efficiency for example with ministries, others felt the forestry working group could be further strengthened to develop joint review and planning among organisations operating in the sector. See recommendations related to factors affecting performance.

Sustainability Overall – moderately likely to sustain (ML).

31. **F16.** Key **financial risks (ML – moderately likely to sustain)** to the project's activities being sustained are related to whether especially the Protected Areas (both in terms of running costs and opportunity cost of restricted use rights) can be sustained post project, with the PA Trust Fund operational before the project ends and enhanced livelihoods at community level. With neither aspect initiated at the MTR stage, these cannot be assessed, however with US$500,000 seed money planned from the project to the Trust Fund, if a substantive portion gets allocated to the community management committees, this should give some forward momentum, but in the long term sustained income into the Trust Fund is required. Speculative suggestions during the review for where the money for the Trust Fund would come from included a levy on round log exports, mining or agribusiness as well as a contribution from regular government funding, but these are all speculative ideas at this stage. It was noted that there are successful examples of Trust Funds

for PAs in other countries although it was also noted that the community tenure system in the SIs is different from most of these other examples where the land under PAs was government controlled.

32. Beyond PA work, regarding community based SFM it will fundamentally depend on the balance between benefits and burdens that form any management plan and agreement, in other countries (from the personal experience of the reviewer) where there is an attractive balance including the rights to sustainably harvest timber, community based SFM has proven both scale-able and sustainable, where the balance is skewed towards restrictions with benefits – less so. With other aspects such as the university courses, if the courses are up and running prior to the project ending there is a good chance it will be sustained, however without maintenance of equipment and suitably qualified staff, there might be sustainability issues.

33. **F17. Socio-political risks** (ML – moderately likely to sustain) **–** the main hot political issue that the project addresses are commercial logging, restraining logging on a large scale would meet considerable political opposition at the present time because of its financial contribution logging continues to make to customary leaders and the national economy. However, the limited coverage of the project's support TO PAs (even the original ambitious 5% of land area), the degraded nature of many of the selected areas, the process of consensual negotiation of areas would seem to limit this risk. This risk will also be dependent on whether PAs can generate sources of funding that make them attractive alternatives to logging, for example through the PA Trust Fund or carbon finance.

34. **F18. Institutional and governance risks to sustainability (ML – moderately likely).** The PA Act 2010 provides the solid legal foundation for the PA work, with legal provisions that preclude commercial logging and mining in PAs. The main institutional risk will be the lack of resources to sustain them long term, so again this is why the PA trust fund and livelihood support is so important to prioritise in the coming two years. Regarding SLM and SFM work there is as yet not the same 'legal foundation' to underpin the work, although the project is designed to help inform the policy environment and although the Forest Act has not been passed yet, the Forest Policy 2020 provides some governance basis for the proposed community based SFM work of the project. Regarding other aspects such as the university courses and development of data, a lot will depend again on finance and strategies to 'institutionalise' these aspects prior to the project ending. The other area of risk is competing and contradictory agenda among ministries, particularly forestry versus environment versus agriculture. With the planned intersectoral committees and studies, the project could play a pivotal role in helping ensure cross sectoral collaboration and development synergies, rather than competition and contradiction. The strong link the project has to all three ministries provides significant opportunity for institutionalizing approaches and needs to further strengthen intersectoral coordination and institutionalization of approaches in the next two years.

35. **F19. Environmental risks to sustainability (ML).** The SIs are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts, through changes in rainfall, acidity in the soil and sea combined with more extreme weather events. This is compounded by a high vulnerability to natural disasters, volcanic activity, earthquakes and storms. These might increasingly render PAs as a 'luxury' for communities who might have higher order priorities to worry about than the 'soft benefits' and

long-term responsibilities of ecosystem restoration. However, at the same time, without protection and restoration of the forest/landscape the communities will be much more vulnerable to climate change and extreme weather events. During the review the need to protect against landslides and other such events were seen as a strong rationale to support Protected Areas by various stakeholders interviewed.

36. **F20. Catalysis and replication (ML).** Communities that were interviewed during the review clearly value their forests and want to see them protected and recover and supported PA development, but on the other hand the growing need for money was also highlighted as the culture changes to a market-based economy with new costs arising such as school fees etc. Getting this balance right within the integrated approach of the project is seen as key to replication and sustainability, as the livelihood elements of the integrated approach were not developed at the time of the MTR their efficacy could not be assessed. With the PAs the success of the Trust Fund development was seen as key to sustainability and replication. Although intentions and speculative ideas on the Trust Fund seems promising at the MTR stage no actual progress had been made. It was noted by NGOs interviewed that the approaches must be simple and user friendly and based as much as possible on local realities and practices, this seems to be happening. It was also noted that the project must ensure the information it generates is in a secure and accessible repository when it phases out, ideally online, for catalysis and replication to happen, see recommendations. Likewise, the need to fully engage ministries was widely appreciated to ensure institutionalisation at the time of the MTR some of the panned inter-ministerial committees and meetings had taken place. The project has a lot to do in the coming two years to get the building blocks in place to maximise changes of catalysis and replication, based on the will, intentions and plans, felt that although challenging there was still a moderately likely chance of success.

Factors Affecting Performance Overall – (moderately Satisfactory (MS)).

37. **F21. Project design and readiness** (Moderately Unsatisfactory-MU) largely because of the unrealistic and overambitious targets in the design which were neither practical nor feasible – refer to the Effectiveness section for more detail. Regarding readiness, difficulties in timely recruitment of a team with the right capacities also contributed to difficulty in 'hitting the ground running' and adjusting quickly to the complex realities, especially with the project breaking new ground as a pioneer. Regarding the capacities of the team, it has been difficult because of a small pool of talent in the SIs to get the right staff for the right job on the project team, there are certainly capacity gaps, for example variation in staff performance among field coordinators. The small team also does seem to be overstretched and understaffed and as a result the senior management seem to have to take on considerable administrative responsibilities which detract for more strategic and managerial level work.

38. **F22. Logic problems related to design of particularly cross-cutting Component 5.** In the first 4 components of the project, the logic in terms of flow from outputs to outcomes is fairly coherent so progress towards both were grouped under findings in these 4 components. There are some exceptions, for example livelihood support work which is currently under Component 1 would seem to fit better under component 2 which supports the productive buffer zone and under which work in assessing community needs and aspirations for livelihood activities are being conducted, rather than under component 1 which supports the restrictive Protected Areas.

Component 5 is more problematic from a logic/coherence of design viewpoint as it is a cross cutting component which has led to problems with double reporting in both components 1 to 4 and then again under component 5. In addition, there are a few activities in component 5 that would seem better placed within the other components – for example community-based forestry piloting work would seem to fit better under component 2. There are a few outlier activities that seem to have been bundled into this component, for example the work on timber legality tracing, it is related to other components but does not directly feed into delivering the other outcomes in a coherent way.

39.   **F23. Project execution and management** (Moderately Satisfactory - MS) the engagement of the three ministries seems to have been satisfactory in the execution of the project, but according to ministry staff interviewed there is room for improvement with a tightening up of joint review and planning meetings with the ministries on a more regular basis. Likewise, more frequent PSC meetings may be necessary and there has not been a PSC meeting since 2019 partly due to disruption caused by COVID with the CTA out of the country although a PSC meeting was held in August 2021 which included a presentation on the draft MTR findings. Day to day project management seems on the whole satisfactory mainly through workplans and monthly management meetings. Communication with field coordinators is a challenge because of poor communications and difficulty of getting them together. Despite challenges, it was recognized by many in the project team that both more regular field visits to all sites, combined with more face-to-face meetings and skills support for field coordinators was necessary. The service providers interviewed seemed to all have been well suited to the tasks at hand, and seemed to have been engaged in the development of the LoAs and seem to be executing and managing their work well.

40.   However, with no full FAO country office in the SIs, there has been no national bank account which has meant the execution of financial management has been extremely challenging (See financial management section that follows for more details). Likewise for similar reasons there has been criticisms and frustrations expressed by various project partners with procurements procedures for similar reasons.

41.   There already has been a significant extension agreed to the project from July 30, 2021, to July 30, 2023. The MTR fully supports this extension on the basis of delays in recruitment caused by a mixture of a small local talent pool, and FAO recruitment procedures being at sub regional level, interruptions caused by COVID and unexpected challenges caused by the pioneering nature of the project, many activities are only in their preparatory stage even with the project's original end date approaching.

42.   **F24. Financial management and co-financing** (Moderately Unsatisfactory). The project has spent around 45% of its funds at this point, with some variation between components. Although progress in terms of milestones is not where the project planned to be, there has been significant progress across a broad range of activities with many activities proving more resource intensive than anticipated, including PA establishment. For component 1 there is an understandable underspend because nothing has been spent on either livelihood activities or the PA Trust Fund as intended.. Financial management within the control of the project team and regional office seems to have been satisfactory but throughout the review the fact that there is no national bank account for the project because there is no FAO country office was raised again and again by the

project team and partners along with a myriad of delays and extra complications caused by this. This led to the dropping of the score to moderately unsatisfactory. (See recommendations on this issue). With co-financing the PMU provided figures based on the assumption that partners still involved and contributing to related activities, had maintained contributions in line with estimates at design stage. Some partners were simply not engaged as expected and their contribution is zero. Although it is extremely challenging to accurately work out co-financing especially when in kind and especially as it appears in this case that it is challenging to find the original calculations, it is suggested by the MTR consultants, that ideally annually but at least prior to the end of the project, to set a task to partners to again calculate co-finance based on putting a monetary value on the actual contribution by the Final Review. It is noted however that the contribution of communities is not factored into co-finance, which is a significant oversight as with the community-based nature of the PA approach supported by the project – this could be a significant contribution and indicator of success of the community-based approach (See recommendations).

43. **F25. Project oversight – supervision, guidance and technical backstopping** (Satisfactory) The PSC seems to operate fairly well – although with a long delay since the last meeting (2019) it urgently needs to meet and meet more frequently. The representatives of ministries and partners expressed good adhoc communication with the project team, however it was suggested often times during the review that a ramped up - more formal review and planning process with ministries, possibly at a quarterly level would help with the government incorporating the project activities into plans and develop more government buy-in. The LTO changed during the project, the former had an in-depth knowledge of forestry issues and was instrumental in project design and supporting implementation, although it was noted he had a very extensive portfolio of other responsibilities so was sometimes stretched in his commitments. The second LTO who combines the role with Programme Officer for the sub-region was commended for timely and creative backstopping. It is also important to note that the small project team was commended throughout the review for managing so many complex tasks and challenges, especially the CTA and NPC who clearly have worked very hard managing an extremely diverse set of project activities and challenges, many unforeseen at design stage. Some stakeholders commented that it would seem that the team is overstretched and as well suggesting to as reduce some targets (must be agreed with GEF, PSC etc.), increasing the staff team to support in some HR/admin/coordination roles might free up the project management to focus on strategically important tasks (See recommendations).

44. **F26. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement** (Satisfactory) There is no formal stakeholder engagement plan. There does seem to have been broad government input into project design as the project does clearly reflect government priorities. Where there might have been some gaps is in pre-project assessment of suitability of field sites with regards to areas that have a potential for PAs from the perspective of them having clarity of tenure and use rights. More engagement with concerned stakeholders and local communities might have revealed tenure issues more in design phase.

45. The project is implemented in close collaboration with the three main relevant ministries, although as mentioned above tightening up of joint review and planning processes would be helpful (See recommendations). Communication with partners engaged through LoAs is good and

through both a working group that meets three times a year and other encounters there is good informal communication with other projects in the sectors. The project has been active in building collaboration, bringing in other actors and projects that have better comparative advantages to work on specific tasks. It is clear that the project cannot do everything in all 3 sector it supports and will require even stronger linkages with others to be built to make sure the work feeds into large collaborative efforts and is sustained by others post project. At project site level there seems to be variation in engagement with communities and provincial government, which might be down to differences in approach of field coordinators. Whatever the reason, more regular PM&E with community members and provincial government from central project office could help identify and troubleshoot any problems with stakeholder engagement and help replicate good practice.

46. **F27. Communication, awareness-raising and knowledge management.** (Moderately unsatisfactory). This is scored poorly because at present there has not been many knowledge products developed or communicated, even though the project is generating numerous extremely valuable lessons, for example with regards to PA establishment. The project 'team' is currently overstretched 'doing' and there is very little staff capacity for knowledge management and communication. This must be rectified as the project is largely a 'pilot' project, testing out new things and its added value will largely be related to generating and sharing lessons from the new processes it is developing. With the project working at field, policy level and academia, there is considerable opportunity to generate lessons and communicate them to policy makers as well as to pass on to future graduates. A much stronger focus on communication, awareness raising and knowledge management is required within the project to ensure it does justice and fully harnesses, packages and effectively communicates (in different media) the considerable valuable lessons it has and will generate. It will be important to get information onto for example online portals in accessible formats so that the information will be accessible post project (See recommendations).

47. **F28 M&E (Moderately satisfactory).** There is a tracking of project achievements against the log frame and targets, but there are specific gaps related to Participatory M&E, particularly in systematically harnessing regular feedback from communities at all project sites and feeding into re-planning and troubleshooting activities – i.e. helping with adaptive management. Regarding how SMART the indicators are, the main criticism would be regarding them not always being achievable or realistic – as mentioned previously specifically the target for PAs is overambitious (See recommendations). Again, it would seem that insufficient staff resources and time are available at present for a more systematic Participatory M&E system, including a more rigorous gender dimension, that could also be linked to generating lessons and knowledge for dissemination (See recommendations).

Cross-cutting dimensions.

F29. Gender and equity. (Moderately satisfactory). There is no formal gender diagnostic or mainstreaming plan in the project, which meant it was difficult to assess participation of women, beyond looking at workshop and meeting attendance (overwhelmingly male) and anecdotal evidence about participation from interviews of project staff and partners. According to studies, assessment and interviews, there is a strong customary tribal culture that has various norms related

to gender roles, but it is not homogenous throughout the islands, were there are both patriarchal and matrilineal systems, in some areas roles are more acutely different between men and women in others there is less differentiation. It is clear that no one size fits all gender strategy can be applied to all project sites but rather it must be tailored to specificities that must be well understood. The project management has pushed for greater inclusion of women in project activities, but what is generally emerging are community committees are largely dominated by men. This will require investigation with women as to what the barriers are to participation and how to overcome them, it was noted during the review that men rather than women were likely to travel to meetings when they were held far away from their homes so location and timing of meetings would be important to consider (See recommendations), which might be site specific. The excellent assessment undertaken by Live and Learn under component 2 has a strong gender disaggregated analysis – identifying different perceptions on both problems and solutions for example. There does clearly need to be a gender mainstreaming plan to more coherently diagnose, mainstream and monitor gender aspects, not as an add on but as an integral part of the project (See recommendations). This should not only look at participation in project activities but must include an assessment of the cost/benefit to women of PA establishment, because they are particularly reliant on forest use, they may feel the burden of restrictions in use the greatest in the PA as well as benefits of the reviving of the forest.

48.   **F30. Indigenous peoples (Moderately satisfactory).** Protected Area establishment in many countries has notoriously been top down with often insufficient participation of indigenous people and sometimes enabled through evictions (personal experience of international reviewer). However, the situation in the SIs is quite different, the land is largely under customary tenure and use rights with legal recognition, and tribal groups led by chiefs are key decision makers. The PA establishment process as outlined in the PA Act 2010 and the associated toolkit is highly participatory and based on only establishing PAs where there is agreement from local land rights holders and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). However, as the approach currently lacks a Social Safeguard system (see next section), there is currently no systematic way to assess adherence to an FPIC process and to air any grievances.

49.   Another important role the project should play even more strongly according to a range of stakeholders interviewed is in harnessing and documenting indigenous customs and practices that could feed into the PA, SFM and SLM strategies, so that the strategies are built on and from what exists. What became clear in the review is that the indigenous people traditionally have strong bonds with the environment and strong stewardship traditions, but that outside pressures and monetization of society had weakened these bonds. Harnessing, documenting and mainstreaming them into approaches for PA, SFM and SLM would help revitalise the bonds (See recommendations).

50.   **F31. Environment and social safeguards (Moderately unsatisfactory)** The ESS screening checklist and the E&S risk classification form were completed at design stage and were relevant to the problems identified. However, there are so notable gaps in environmental and social safeguards, notably the Protected Area establishment process has no explicit built in social safeguards. There is no avenue beyond court redress within the PA establishment process itself for concerned parties to raise and have grievances addressed.

51. When discussing benefits flowing to communities from logging concessions during the review there were often experiences of elite capture within communities reported. With potential benefits from carbon finance, the PA Trust Fund and livelihood support going to the communities, elite capture might again be a risk. The restricted use rights will affect those who previously used the Protected Area, the livelihood impact and on whom should be assessed. These and other reasons merit the formulation of a practical Social Safeguard assessment and action plan as a component in the PA establishment process (See recommendations).

52. Regarding environmental safeguards one common feature of PAs in other countries is that with use restricted in PAs, use is often displaced to the area outside. This is why productive SFM and SLM combined with livelihood support is so important in the 'buffer' zones to mitigate such 'leakage'.

Cross cutting summary paragraphs:

> **F32. Information on Progress, challenges and outcomes on stakeholder engagement:** There was no stakeholder engagement plan, however the PA establishment process is required to be participatory and consensual. The project lacks a systematic PM&E system to engage stakeholders at all sites regularly and also a social safeguard system that provides among other things avenues for grievance identification and redress.

> **F33. Information on knowledge activities / products:** This aspect was underdeveloped in the project design. However, with the project effectively being a pioneer in many aspects it can and should generate lessons and process guides that will be of national significance as well as linking lessons to both policy makers and into the curriculum of the new university courses it supports. Whereas the scope of coverage of project activities should be downscaled, the focus on quality lesson learning, documentation and communication of quality knowledge products should be ramped up. This includes a cross cutting focus on harnessing indigenous knowledge/customary practices and making sure all information products are in a secure repository – ideally online and in accessible format and with institutional hosting by the end of the project (See recommendations).

> **F34. Information on progress on gender-responsive measures:** The gender dynamics in the project sites is complex and varied, although the message from the project is clear that more women should be involved, as yet women's participation is often limited. There is no gender mainstreaming strategy for the project, however the assessment undertaken by the partner organization Live and Learn generated numerous useful lessons on Gender and highlighted the variance between gender roles and perceptions in different sites. It is clear there will be no one size fits all strategy, but that the project must ramp up its assessment of gender issues and develop tailored strategies for different project sites with specific targets and risk identified as a baseline to monitor against (See recommendations).

KEY CONCLUSIONS

Criteria and *Rating*	Justifications for the conclusions can be found in the appropriate section in the previously described findings.
Relevance *Moderately relevant*	• **The project is highly relevant to GEF, FAO, national, regional and community priorities – particularly with regards to pioneering the new community-based PA establishment process which provides legal protection against commercial logging and conversion to agriculture.** • **However as yet the 'integrated' nature of the project to address problems in a multifaceted approach of interconnected PA/SFM/SLM has not been implemented in full yet so the relevance of the 'integrated' approach at this stage in the project cannot be determined.**
Effectiveness *Moderately satisfactory*	• **Even considering the considerable challenges related to COVID limiting international travel of consultants, recruitment challenges, no national bank account yet etc. there has been progress across a vast array of project activities, many of them complex pioneering approaches which required extensive 'learning by doing'. Most progress has been made on components 1, 3 and 5, for example under component 3 the support to the national reference level for carbon has been achieved and provides a great foundation for national REDD+ development. Some unplanned progress on linking carbon offsetting to the project supported PAs has been undertaken.** • **Overall progress is not what was expected in terms of milestones met at the MTR stage – for example component 2 which was expected to be conducted hand in hand with component 1 is only completing assessment phase. The lag is partly because of the mismatch between the unrealistic targets in the project document and what is realistically achievable in the complex context and with a pioneering approach in Component 1 which diverted attention from component 2. In addition, COVID disruption, challenges with recruitment, in communication with field sites, challenges with logistics and finances and simply the project team being understaffed and overstretched has contributed to limitations in progress.**
Efficiency *Moderately Satisfactory*	• **Resources have generally been used efficiently and there has been good complementarity building on and from what exists and harnessing of existing experiences through partners.** • **Beyond the mismatch between design ambitions and realities, the piloting approach requires more resources as breaking new ground takes more effort, combined with delays, communication and COVID disruption resources have not translated into results as expected at this stage. Also note that the gaps between assumptions and realities**

	have created lots of unexpected work and unexpected expense, the assumption was there would be 5 PA processes, where as in reality there will likely be around 30 and the team should be commended for adapting to handling this heavier load than expected within the resources allocated.
Sustainability *Moderately likely to sustain.*	• The project 's design is an impressive holistic approach which has aspects that will help with sustainability if all implemented, for example not only establishing the PAs but also establishing a Trust Fund to finance them, although as yet work on the Trust Fund has not begun. However, with seed money committed by the project to the Trust Fund, even if other funds are not in place at the end of the project, the seed money could help activities continue at least for a year or two until other funds are secured. The support of 2 and potentially 3 new university courses could even also as a standalone achievement of the project also have a lasting legacy of supporting sustained capacity development in forestry, environment and agricultural sectors. • Key risks are to financial sustainability of PAs both in terms of government support and community support, significant work required on the PA Trust Fund and community support to strengthen likelihood of sustainability, including integrating SFM, SLM and livelihood enhancement at community level. • Regarding knowledge management and communication there needs to be a more concerted strategy to get knowledge into accessible formats in secure repositories for example on online portals before the end of the project so that they are sustained and accessible.
Factors affecting performance *Moderately Satisfactory*	• It is an extremely complex multi-faceted project to execute and manage, covering a vast array of activities over three ministries and covering field activities in diverse locations, national level activities and numerous pioneering activities. The project team must be commended for managing to progress despite the challenges. • Stand out factor affecting performance is the lack of a national project bank account causing significant financial management challenges. • The unrealistic targets have affected performance and relaxing the straight jacket of unfeasible targets will provide space for the project to consolidate its focus. • Project participatory M&E, knowledge management and communication are also not fit for purpose.
Cross cutting issues	• A key strong element with regards to protecting indigenous people's rights is that customary land tenure is enshrined in law. This combined with the community based and consensual requirements in PA establishment mitigate some of the social risks of PA establishment.

No rating required.	**Currently there is an absence of a social safeguard mechanism within the PA establishment process, particularly a grievance redress mechanism within the PA establishment process.** **Women's involvement needs improvement and should be developed on a site-by-site basis because of specificities regarding gender roles.** **The importance of harnessing and revitalising indigenous knowledge and traditional customary management was highlighted during the review and there needs to be a more explicit focus on this in the work with PA, SFM and SLM and in the curriculum development at the university.**

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Table A11.1 Recommendations table

Rec. Number and recommendation	Rationale for recommendation (refer to numbered findings in executive summary)	Responsibility	Timing/dates for actions
Strategic relevance			
R.1 Cross cutting recommendation: General strategic shift to an adjusted niche to maximise relevance, that on one hand consolidates the focus on a more realistic set of targets (details under effectiveness) but at the same time increases the added value of the pioneering nature of the project by enhancing an adaptive action learning approach, documentation and communication of lessons (details under effectiveness and factors affecting performance).	F3-F5, F13	Needs to be approved by the FLO. PMU with oversight from PSC.	Cross cutting throughout rest of project – specific suggested targets, revisions and timeframes added in effectiveness recommendations.
R2. Emphasis on harnessing indigenous knowledge to make approaches more relevant and acceptable to local people across all aspects of project work (e.g. in PA establishment, SFM and SLM and curriculum development and research focus) and in lessons dissemination. Students at SINU could get involved through research projects.	F30	PMU, SINU, Live and Learn, other partners and field coordinators	Within next 3 months be explicitly mentioned in workplans.
Effectiveness			
R3. Under Component 1. reduction in target of PA establishment and also reviewing the sites, removing those that are not suitable (e.g. that have land disputes or where PAs are not willingly accepted). Needs to be discussed with provincial staff, ministry representatives, the PMU, the PTF (including LTO) FAO and GEF with oversight by the	F5-F7	PMU in consultation with ministries at national and provincial level,	New targets with justifications put forward by the PMU for approval from

PSC and the FLO/FAO-GEF Coordination Unit. Based on experiences to date of how long PA establishment takes, a target of around 20-30 PA unevenly distributed among project sites depending on potential might be more feasible. The total area would be difficult to ascertain there should be some flexibility, but again based on experience, possibly an average 1,000 ha per site that is manageable for community groups with limited resources, making a total of around 20'000 to 30'000 ha but with some flexibility required as unpredictable. However, the project would have to ramp up its lesson learning and commit to developing a set of practical guidelines for PA establishment based on its experiences with lessons learned incorporated that should be made available online for ease of access.		involving service providers, the PTF members (BH and LTO) and with oversight from PSC FAO-GEF CU.	the PSC in the next PSC meeting as well as agreement from FAO and GEF. For the guidelines and lessons, they should be developed on an ongoing basis but complete and available online prior to the project end.
R4. Under Component 2. The target could also be reduced – with a suggestion from various stakeholders to have the total target to be roughly around the same size as the PA target, e.g. 30 to 40,000 ha However this must be agreed with all key stakeholders. With the reduction in scope the process must be strengthened, particularly integrating/linking the activities to PA establishment, enhancing the SFM element to go beyond training to include piloting community-based SFM process. Like PA establishment this should include maps to identify boundary, agreement over customary managers, simple management plan, and clear use rights and responsibilities over the forests in the buffer zone. Such an agreement should ideally preclude concessions for commercial logging and mining, but encourage productive and sustainable management and use of the forest in the buffer zone by communities who sign the agreement. This is important as restrictions in use in the PA might put extra pressure on the buffer, which could be relieved through productive but sustainable management and use, this should include promoting selective - sustainable logging in the buffer zone. As this piloting of Community Based SFM will be a substantive undertaking, it is recommended that coalitions are built with other organisations to develop it, and lessons could also be drawn from other projects such	F8	PMU in consultation with ministries at national and provincial level, involving service providers, the PTF members (BH and LTO) and with oversight from PSC FAO-GEF CU. Drawing on expertise of other projects and organisations such as JICA but also on international experiences that are	Should initiate piloting the process as part of the first wave of SFM trainings within next 3 months. Need to work with communities and MoFR to draft agreement within next 6 months.

as the JICA pilot on community based SFM.		relevant, for example those working within FAO on Community Forestry, tenure, SFM etc.	
R5. In addition to ramping up support for Trust Fund development as planned in the coming months, livelihood enhancement at community level must be a priority. It is recommended to also fast-track the exploration of 'low hanging fruit' viable enterprise support ideas. These should be based on value chain analysis to identify bottle necks and opportunities, and could range from improving market access, creating economies of scale to cut out middle men, adding value etc. etc. A process plan for support needs to be urgently drawn up on assessing and screening enterprise development ideas – which should be linked to PAs, SFM and/or SLM and should have a special consideration for women's groups as women already are often engaged in marketing activities. Again, this is a substantive undertaking and collaboration with organisations with expertise in livelihood/enterprise development would be helpful, for example Live and Learn has experience of lucrative organic products markets.	F8.	PMU in consultation with ministries and overseen by PSC. Drawing on expertise of organisations working in the area of enterprise development.	Plan of action for livelihood support should be drawn up within next 3 months and rolled out rapidly in sites that are progressing most along the PA establishment process – with direct livelihood support within 6 months.
R6. Regarding component 3. Although support for national REDD+ programme could continue, the emerging opportunity of discrete carbon offsetting programmes linked to PAs should be further explored and synergies between the PA establishment process and carbon offsetting programme should be strengthened and the valuable lessons from this experience documented and shared.	F9.	PMU in consultation with communities, NAKAU, REDD+ unit and MECDM	Activity for this with appropriate target added in log frame and discussed by PSC in next meeting.
R7. Regarding component 4. Critical review and re-strategizing of restoration work. As well as reducing the target to a realistic amount (at least for government driven reforestation), the project is recommended to support a review and strategizing meeting to explore other options if the current strategy is not working. Based on	F10.	PMU with MoFR, private sector and communities.	Aim to hold this review meeting within next 4 months.

advice during the review, this would best involve community representatives and the private sector as well as government and NGOs, to develop a reforestation strategy that was possibly more private sector and community driven.			
R8. Regarding component 5. Discuss contract ending of staff at SINU and explore ways to strengthen course development and support for implementation, this might include reaching out to other actors in the appropriate sectors to pull resources to provide the support the courses require – especially staff capacity. Also provide direct support on how to operate and maintain equipment provided by the project for the courses.	F11.	SINU, ministries, PMU and other projects	Need to assess support needs with SINU in next two months and provide comprehensive support
R9. Regarding component 5. A cross cutting and more explicit focus should be on revitalising, harnessing and documenting customary beliefs and practices and including them in processes and documentation of work in PAs, SFM and SLM.	F12,	PMU, field coordinators SINU, Live and Learn, new staff working with lesson learning and communication	Should be integrated into work plans within next 3 months.
R10. Regarding component 5. much more emphasise should be put on developing an accessible repository for knowledge products, for example putting the information on an online portal in an accessible format prior to the project phasing out, also related to sustainability. Suggested key knowledge products should include process guidelines for establishing PAs, the carbon reference level, biodiversity survey results, land use policy study and recommendations, and on indigenous knowledge of forests and agricultural land stewardship.	F27	PMU, PSC and ministries, SINU	Should be integrated into work plans within next 3 months.
Efficiency			
Recommendation related to Efficiency are under Factors Affecting Performance.			
Sustainability and catalysis/replication			

R11. Stronger collaborations. It is clear that the project cannot do everything with regards to piloting community-based PA, SFM and SLM or the other aspects like setting up new courses at SINU, but it can play an important part. However, for this part to be sustained there must be strong collaboration with others to play the other parts – playing to the strengths of their organizations. The project has had some success with this but needs to be more explicit in building synergies over the next two years through the forest sector working group and others. It is recommended to use the current Forestry Working Group as a platform to discuss stronger joint work-planning to build synergies.	F20	PMU, Forest sector working group, ministries and all partners and projects active in the sectors.	Within next 3 months. More explicit focus on collaboration in the workplans.
Factors affecting performance			
R13. Several issues to solve which are not only relevant to this project but others in similar circumstances. • **Must as a priority develop action plan and involve key stakeholders Must as a priority find a way to either set up a project or FAO bank account – this could then be relevant to other countries without fully fledged FAO representation.** • **Must as a priority strengthen staff capacity in admin and finance aspects to lower the load on project management.** • **Longer term explore ways of devolving and making both the procurement and recruitment process faster and relevant for remote countries with small numbers and often low capacities of suppliers.** **Also related to finances, with the project extension, the running/management budget left is only US$33, 917, budget adjustments to deal with the extension are clearly required, the rationale for the increase, where the money will come from and the budget for the next two years will need to be put forward and**	F23, F24, F26	PMU/LTO/Sub regional office to develop proposals with justifications and recommendations with support, oversight and approval from finance department, GEF Coordination unit	Suggestions provided by project within next 2 months, via the FAO regional office submitted to the GEF Unit and FAO and FAO finance department. Budget adjustments prepared by PMU to deal with project extension. Within 3 months.

checked by the finance officer against GEF requirements concerning increasing project management costs.			
R14. Update log frame based on new achievable targets and revised outputs. Some specific suggestions for consideration are stipulated in Factors Affecting Performance section- M&E, these must be screened and adapted to what is considered desirable and feasible by the PMU, PSC and must be approved by GEF.	F21, 22.	PMU with oversight from PSC and the FAO-GEF Unit.	Revised logframe outputs and target approved by PSC within 2 months.
R15. Strengthened Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation, skills support and review and planning with field coordinators and ministries. There should be more consistent Participatory Monitoring and Review of activities at all project sites – possibly quarterly with rapid troubleshooting undertaken when problems arise in either process or performance. Need to likewise provide more skills and materials support and more regular face to face review and planning to the field coordinators, where possible bringing some or all together face to face in the review and planning to also do peer review and peer sharing of lessons among field coordinators. Also it would be ideal to conduct quarterly or half yearly review and planning meetings with the ministries to coordinate work better.	F28	PMU and ministries	System for PM&E and review and planning enhanced within 3 months.
R16. Need to strengthen capacities within the team. With the team already overstretched and with a need to enhance PM&E, review/planning and especially lesson learning documentation and communication it is recommended to explore hiring more staff capacity, possibly covering an umbrella of related work on coordination of project activities, PM&E, review and planning, lesson learning, documentation and communication. This role depending on the candidate could also involve gender mainstreaming and development of safeguards – see cross cutting dimensions. There also does seem to be a need for other support staff for example HR/admin assistant that could be combined with finance and procurement, especially in light of the extra financial challenges due to having no national account. However, the finances for this would have to be explored, if reallocations were indeed possible, a proposal would be required by the PMU including the finance officer. Another aspect of strengthening	F21, F22, F27, F28	PMU and finance officer to propose this for approval by PSC, FAO regional office/HR and GEF.	Budget reallocations explored, job advertised and recruitment (full time or consultant) within next 3 months.

staff capacity and performance is to look into ways to address issues related to office space and operational needs especially at province level which although had improved of late was still a source of some complaint. Finally at the time of this report drafting it was reported that dynamic local community members were being recruited to help with the workload PA establishment process, this is a very welcome development and it is recommended to strengthen this approach.			
R17. Recommend to ask partners to conduct another estimate of co-finance ideally annual, but at least by the final review of the project. In addition it is recommended to work out an estimate of the co-finance contribution of community members to the project activities.	F24	PMU, project partners, community organizations	Ideally annually, but essential before end of the project.
Cross-cutting dimensions			
R18. Need for a cross cutting gender strategy/approach which aims to enhance gender mainstreaming, but based on a careful diagnosis with women themselves to understand the best means of engaging them and for what ends, with approaches tailored to context. Rather than being an 'extra', the strategy should be cross cutting and built into ongoing activities, for example specific cross cutting elements of the PA establishment process, or full engagement in management planning for SFM and enterprise support.	F29	PMU	Within next 3 months further assessment with women undertaken and elements to enhance gender equity embedded within project activities.
R19. Social safeguards must be strengthened. A system of social safeguarding must be integrated into the PA establishment process, including a practical and impartial way for communities with a grievance against the process to register their grievance and have it addressed to an appropriate 'neutral' body at provincial level.	F31	PMU, ministries and provincial government	Within next 6 months mechanism developed, then incorporated in PA establishment guidelines

R120. Cross cutting emphasis on harnessing indigenous knowledge on forest and land stewardship. More explicit focus – on harnessing indigenous knowledge and customary practices across all aspects of project work and communicating it – for example in the PA, SFM and SLM work and new SINU courses. Also students could help in documenting indigenous knowledge as part of their research work.	F30	PMU, SINU, Live and Learn, other partners and field coordinators	Within next 3 months be explicitly mentioned in workplans.

For GEF rating table See appendix 1

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope of the MTR

53. As the Project has reached past its halfway point of its implementation period, a Mid-Term Review (MTR) is required, in accordance with GEF guidelines.

54. The main purpose of the MTR is to provide accountability to the donor (GEF) and provide inputs to better orient the IFMP, allowing for adaption in responsiveness to experience and changes, contributing to organizational learning and informed planning, making the IFMP more relevant to the needs of the country and improve the project's implementation and delivery for the remainder of its term.

55. The MTR examines the achievements of the Project both at the community level and at the institutional level, harnesses feedback and advice, providing accountability to the project custodians from key stakeholders. The process involved the main project decision makers, implementers and beneficiaries: specifically government agencies in MECDM, MOFR and MAL at national and provincial level; FAO; members of the Project Steering Committee (PSC); PMU; other co-implementing partners and participating communities at project sites.

1.2. The Objectives of the MTR.

56. The MTR objectives are to: (i) identify the status of the Project in terms of its achievements and challenges; (ii) provide recommendations with regard to the possible need (if any) for adjustments in the strategic approach; and (iii) develop corrective actions to ensure that the Project will be on track in achieving its desired results within the remaining period.

57. The MTR will follow the format of the GEF evaluation criteria guided by six key GEF criteria, which are aligned with the standard Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria (OECD/DAC, 2002) (a) relevance (b) effectiveness, (c) efficiency, (d) sustainability of project results, (e) factors affecting performance (including project implementation and execution) and (f) cross-cutting issues (including environmental and social safeguards, gender and equity issues). Within each of these criteria, there are key elements that will be explored through the evaluation process, with the following questions provided in the MTR TOR to guide the exploration;

Table. Guiding MTR questions

1.Relevance (rating required)	To what extent is the intervention coherently responding to national and community environmental needs and priorities, the national and regional priorities in the Pacific-CPF, and to global sustainable development?
	Has there been any change in the relevance of the project since its design, such as the identified problems to be addressed and the underlying assumptions. What are the effects of any incorrect assumptions to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document?

	Are there any changes that need to be made to the project to make it more relevant?
2. Effectiveness Achievement of project results (rating required)	(Delivery of results) To what extent is the Project on track to achieving its target results? Were there any unintended results?
	(Likelihood of impact) Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards and the eventual achievement of the project's intended longer-term impacts, and what can be done to improve the likely achievement of positive impacts from the project? To what extent may the progress towards long-term impact be attributed to the project?
3. Efficiency (rating required)	To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and management been able to adapt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?
	To what extent has the project built on existing agreements, initiatives, data sources, synergies, complementarities with other projects and partnerships, etc, and avoid duplication of similar activities of other groups?
	Is the project cost-effective?
4. Sustainability (rating required)	(Sustainability) What is the likelihood that the project results will continue to be useful or will remain after the end of the project? What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project results and benefits (consider financial, socio-economic, institutional and governance, and environmental)?
	(Replication and catalysis) What project results, lessons and experiences generated by the project that may or have been replicated (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in different geographic areas) or scaled up (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in the same geographic area but on a much larger scale and funded by other sources), or are likely to be in the near future?
5. Factors affecting progress (rating required)	(Project design) Is the project design, including the indicators and targets of the Results Framework, appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes? Are the project's logic coherent and clear? To what extent are the project's objectives and components, clear, practical and feasible within the timeframe?
	(Project execution and management) To what extent did FAO-SAP effectively discharged its role and responsibilities related to the management and administration of the project? What have been the main challenges in relation to the management and administration of the project? How well have risks been identified and managed? What changes are needed to improve delivery in the second half of the project?

	(Financial management and Co-financing) What have been the challenges related to the financial management of the project? To what extent has the pledged co-financing been delivered, and has there been any additional leveraged co-financing provided since implementation began? How has any short fall in co-financing or materialization of greater than expected co-financing affected project results?
	(Project oversight, implementation role) To what extent has FAO delivered on its project oversight and supervision?
	(Partnerships and stakeholder engagement) To what extent has other actors, such as NGOs and Private Sector, in particular those who were involved in project design, been involved in implementation, and what has been the effect of their involvement/non-involvement on the project results? What are strengths and challenges of the project's partnerships?
	(Communication and knowledge management) How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results to partners, stakeholders and a general audience? How can this be improved?
	(M&E design) Is the M&E plan practical and sufficient?
	(M&E implementation) Does the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan? Has information been gathered in a systematic manner, using appropriate methodologies? To what extent has information generated by the M&E system during project implementation been used to adapt and improve project planning and execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability? How can the M&E system be improved?
6. Cross-cutting dimensions	(Gender and minority groups) To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing and implementing the project? Has the project been designed and implemented in a manner that ensures gender equitable participation and benefits?
	(Environmental and social safeguards) To what extent where environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project?

1.3. Intended users

58. The intended users of the MTR are the main project decision makers, implementers and beneficiaries: GEF, specifically government agencies in MECDM, MOFR and MAL; FAO at regional and national level; members of the Project Steering Committee (PSC); PMU; other co-implementing partners; and representatives of communities in the project sites. The purpose of the MTR for the users is multi-faceted, to provide accountability for the project implementers and provide an opportunity for the insights from all key stakeholders to be harnessed and reviewed by all, and for

recommendations from the MTR to be considered so that any necessary adaptations can be made to project strategy. A key summary of the MTR findings and recommendations should be circulated to local stakeholders involved in the project – a 2-page summary is provided along with this draft. The most immediate use of the MTR results is for the PMU and the PSC to draft a management response and action plan based on the recommendations in the report.

1.4. Methodology

The methodology used is a triangulation between a literature review, a mix of online and offline interviews, focus group discussion especially with community members and surveys. See list of participants engaged in the review and how they were engaged in Annex 3. With field sites 3 of the 5 areas were visited, Choiseul, Guadalcanal and Malaita where a selection of government officials and community representatives at multiple sites in each area were visited.

Literature review: of all project and reference documents

Mainly online. Online interview and questionnaire surveys. Conducted by the International consultant. 23 in-depth interviews with FAO, ministries, partner organisations, and other relevant projects.

Inception report

Debriefing – revision.

Draft report for internal review. – revision.

Draft report for external review – revision.

Face to face. Sample site visits (Choiseul, Guadalcanal, Malaita, interviews with national and provincial officials and focus group discussions (multiple sites and community groups at in each project area).

Figure. MTR Methodology (developed by MTR consultants) adapted for COVID restrictions.

1.5. Composition of the MTR team

59. The MTR team was made up of International Consultant Mr. Peter O'Hara who has 25 years' post graduate experience working with forestry programmes in 30+ countries where SFM and community-based approaches are a key aspect, as well as significant experience conducting programme review and design assignments. The national consultant Dr. William Parairato has decades long experience in a broad range of international development programme management in the SIs, extensive experience in programme evaluation and an in-depth understanding of Solomon Islands context.

1.6. Limitations

60. The main limitations/challenges to the review were COVID 19 restrictions which meant the international consultant was not able to travel to the SIs, as a result of this the international and national consultant developed a dual approach of online and face to face interactions with stakeholders. Communications were at times a challenge with some online interviews, but the national consultant stepped in and conducted telephone or face to face interviews when this happened. The logistics of travelling to all sites was a challenge with irregular flight schedules, however 3 of the 5 project areas were visited.

2. Project background and context

2.1 Context and rationale

61.   The Solomon's Island's land cover is 2.8 million ha, spread over 900 islands, with a population of around half a million in 2009 (national census 2009). 19.8% of people live in the urban areas, so a significant rural population. Forest covers approximately 89.9% of the land area (2020, Forest policy), 51 % natural forests are lowland, 38% hill forests, 10% montaine forests, 1% mangroves, and 0.3 percent freshwater swamp or riverine forest. Nearly 86% of land in Solomon Islands is under customary tenure, which also contains 90% of forestland (Corrin, 2012; GoSI, 2010). 80% of the SIs disproportionately young and growing population of 561,231(2013) live in rural areas heavily reliant on local natural resources and scattered across a large number of rugged islands and coral atolls which makes infrastructural, transportation and communications development challenging. SI's development challenges have been further exacerbated by a series of natural disasters.

62.   The Forest Resources and Timber Utilisation Act [Cap 40] (1969) provides for a process to establish timber rights on customary land. It enables a process that allocates the customary right to control the forest resource to only a few (Corrin, 2012). Those who are identified as timber rights owners, and therefore eligible to sign and transfer rights agreements, are also the ones likely to get paid timber royalties (about 15% of the total log value for local landowners). In rural areas where income opportunities are scarce, timber royalties represent a significant cash income – disproportionate to any other potential sources of income. Unfair distribution of timber benefits, largely blamed on the unequal timber rights process, has been known to cause internal conflict and has led to increased inequality within rural landowner groups (Corrin, 2012; Wairu and Nanau, 2011).

63.   Also, forests provide many wood and non-wood products and are used for shifting cultivation, as well as playing important environmental safeguarding roles related to avoiding landslides, moderating run off/river flow, improving agricultural fertility and avoiding siltation of rivers and reefs (from the project document, 2012), which all impact on safeguarding livelihoods of people.

64.   According to the project document forest cover loss is estimated at 2.2% a year and the loss of SIs' biodiversity is alarming. According to the IUCN Red List, as of 2014, 85 species (higher plants, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish) found in the country are threatened with extinction.

65.   The Ministry of Forests and Research (MoFR) is responsible for the overall management of forestry resources in the Solomon Islands. Protected area management falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM) who is responsible for implementing the Protected Area Act (2010) and the Protected Area Regulations (2012). The PA Act provides legal protection against commercial forestry and mining on any area declared as a PA and has 5 categories of PA roughly from strict protected to a resource management category which provides some limited use rights.

66.   The legal framework for the forestry sector is provided in the Forest Resources and Timber Utilisation Act [Cap 40] (1969) and the Code of Logging Practice (1996 revised in 2002). The latest

Forest Bill (2012) was due to be presented to the Parliament in June 2013 but remains in draft awaiting further amendments. A Forest Policy was passed in 2020 which lays out a number of forestry principles and strategies for the SIs which emphasize the importance of Sustainable Forest Management, Community Forestry and adding value to forest products amongst others. The agricultural priorities stated by MAL include a massive increase in agricultural productivity, intensifying and diversifying production with a range of promising markets identified including for organic products (pers. communication project staff).

67. Most agricultural cash crops are currently grown within small scale traditional agroforestry systems, but with a growing population and limited arable land in the lowland, cultivation including shifting cultivation is moving more into steep hillsides with resultant problems associated with soil erosion etc. At the time of the project design compared to other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, it has less large scale commercial agricultural development, partly because of the largely customary land ownership system. However, there was a growing trend towards commercial plantations (particularly palm oil plantations) which were expected to have a likelihood of expanding through both commercial plantations and out grower schemes with farmers. There were other agri-businesses under development or being trailed including cattle ranching and rice production.

68. In addition another threat is that over 50 non-native species have been noted as being invasive in the Solomon Islands[1]. Of these, at least 22 species are considered to be threatening natural forest biodiversity.

2.2. A description of the project.
General Information

Region:	Pacific
Country (ies):	Solomon Islands
Project Title:	Integrated Forest Management in the Solomon Islands
FAO Project Symbol:	GCP/SOI/001/GFF
GEF ID:	5122
GEF Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity, Land Degradation, Climate Change, SFM/REDD
Project Executing Partners:	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology; Ministry of Forests and Research; Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
Project Duration:	5 years

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[1]   http://www.issg.org/database/species/search.asp?sts=sss&st=sss&fr=1&x=34&y=18&sn=&rn=Solomon+Islands&hci=-1&ei=-1&lang=EN

Project coordinates: (**Ctrl+Click here**)	Pacific

Milestone Dates:

GEF CEO Endorsement Date:	May 4, 2016
Project Implementation Start Date/EOD :	March 13, 2017
Proposed Project Implementation End Date/NTE[2]:	July 30, 2021
Revised project implementation end date (if applicable) [3]	July 30 2023
Actual Implementation End Date[4]:	n/a

Funding

GEF Grant Amount (USD):	5,676,454
Total Co-financing amount as included in GEF CEO Endorsement Request/ProDoc[5]:	30,670,500
Total GEF grant disbursement as of June 30, 2021 (USD m):	2,794,026.32
Total estimated co-financing materialized as of June 30, 2021[6]	13,587,500

Project log frame summary and funding per component.

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[2] As per FPMIS

[3] In case of a project extension.

[4] Actual date at which project implementation ends - only for projects that have ended.

[5] This is the total amount of co-financing as included in the CEO document/Project Document.

[6] Please see last section of this report where you are asked to provide updated co-financing estimates. Use the total from this Section and insert here.

Project Components	GEF Budgeted funding by component (US$)	Actual expenditure at MTR stage (June 2021)	Outcomes	Outputs
Component 1: Development of the terrestrial protected area network	US$ 2,010,080.4	US$ 864,729.23	Outcome 1.1 Terrestrial protected area network expanded to improve ecosystem coverage.	Output 1.1.1 Community agreements to designate new protected areas
			Outcome 1.2 Improved management effectiveness of new and existing terrestrial protected areas.	Output 1.2.1 Effective inter-sectoral coordination for PA management
				Output 1.2.2 Current weaknesses in protected area management identified and rectified through the establishment and implementation of conservation agreements with communities and management plans
			Outcome 1.3 Sustainability of protected area management improved through sustainable financing and local income generating activities.	Output 1.3.1 National Level PA financing strategy
				Output 1.3.2 Sustainable income generating activities in each protected area as part of PA management plans
Component 2: Integrated land management	US$ 929,483.84	US$ 504,952.08	Outcome 2.1 Improved decision-making in management of production landscapes.	Output 2.1.1 Assessment of impacts of current land-use practices on biodiversity, land degradation and the provision of other ecosystem services (ecosystem valuation) and identification of potential areas for improvement.
				Output 2.1.2 Policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for land-use change reviewed and revised as necessary.
				Output 2.1.3 Mechanism for policy coordination between sectors (i.e. government ministries and agencies)

Project Components	GEF Budgeted funding by component (US$)	Actual expenditure at MTR stage (June 2021)	Outcomes	Outputs
			Outcome 2.2 Improved land use practices promoted	Output 2.2.1 Sustainable land and forest management techniques applied in protected area buffer zone
				Output 2.2.2 Training Programme on SLM
Component 3: Capacity building for the management of forest carbon	US$ 1,056,288	US$ 552,325.66	Outcome 3.1National capacities enhanced to monitor carbon stocks in natural forests and plantations	Output 3.1.1 carbon monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) systems for forests in the Solomon Islands
				Output 3.1.2 National capacity to control deforestation, forest degradation and carbon measuring and monitoring
				Output 3.1.3 National forest carbon assessment
Component 4: Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests	0	0 (although other component funding used for this)	Outcome 4.1 Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests	Output 4.1.1 Forest cover increased through agro-forestry, small-scale tree planting and assisted natural regeneration
Component 5: Knowledge sharing for BD conservation, SLM and SFM	US$ 1,411,524	US$ 705,762	Outcome 5.1 Increased local capacity to monitor, evaluate and manage biodiversity, land-use change and sustainable forest management.	Output 5.1.1 baseline surveys of local flora and fauna, invasive species threats, genetic conservation, etc.
			Outcome 5.2 Community-based forest management (including tree planting) strengthened	Output 5.2.1Training on SFM techniques trained in SFM techniques
			Outcome 5.3 Policymakers and the general public are better informed about	Output 5.3.1 Training, awareness and educational materials produced and disseminated through SINU, RTC's and

Project Components	GEF Budgeted funding by component (US$)	Actual expenditure at MTR stage (June 2021)	Outcomes	Outputs
			biodiversity conservation, climate change, SLM and SFM.	relevant Government Ministries and NGO's

Note on co-financing: The GEF-5 funded FAO project is a five-year project with a total estimated budget of USD 36,346,954. The project costs distributed by funding sources are (i) GEF – USD 5.67 million; (ii) National Government – USD 23.5 million, in-kind; (iii) Other co-financiers – USD 5.67 million; and (iv) FAO – USD 1.5 million. Note: Figures for actualized co-financing not provided at the time of this draft report.

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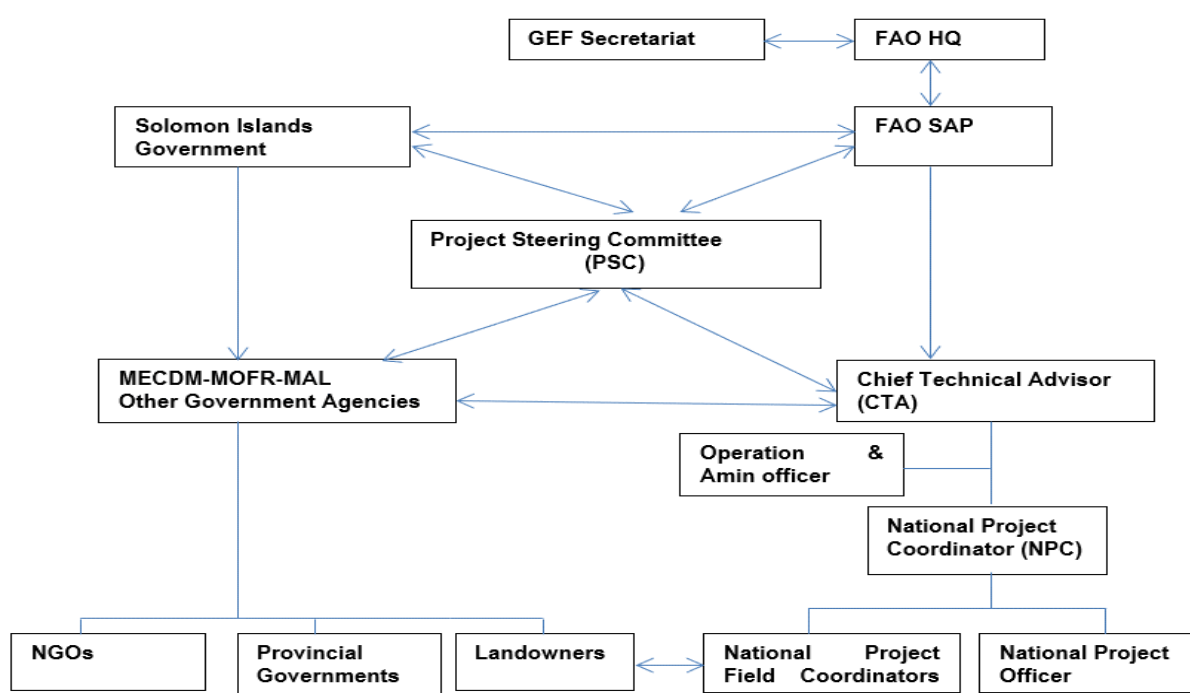
Figure: Project execution set-up
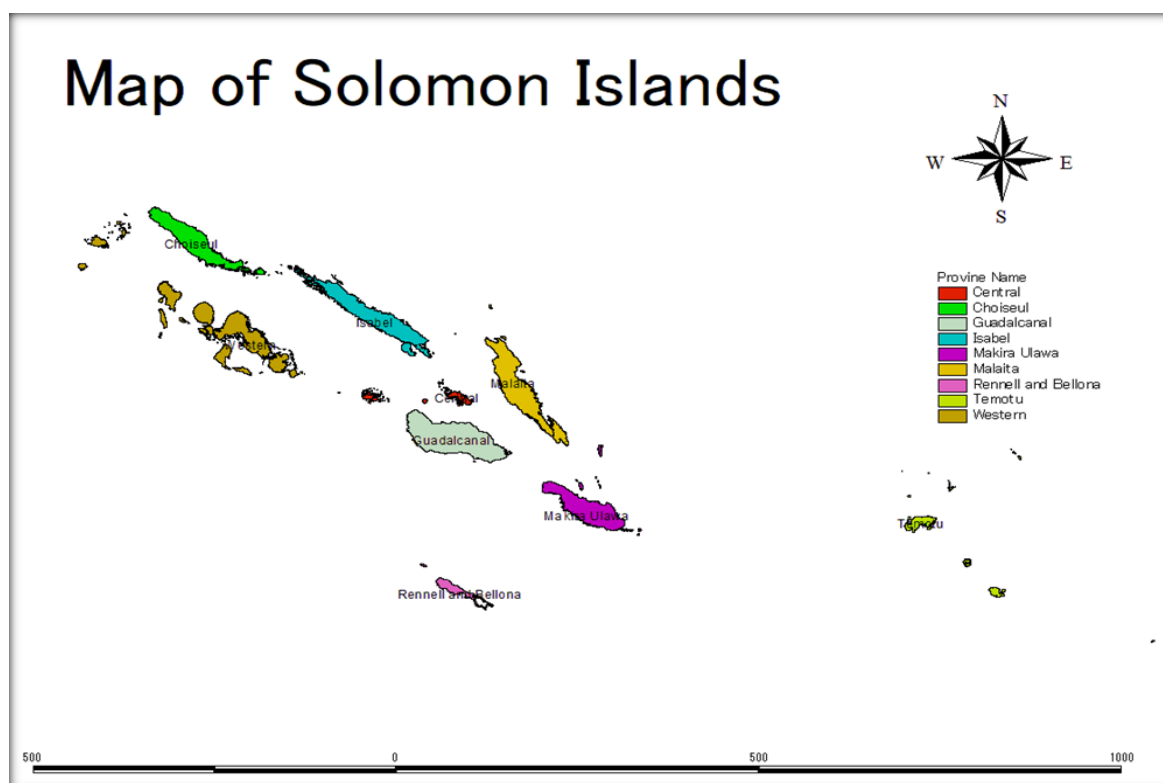
Figure and table. Map of the Solomon Islands (above) with details on target project sites (below). Note that exact projects site determination is still in progress for most sites as is passed on a process of consensus building.

Province	Site	IFM project area			
		A. Protection area (ha)	B. Mixed land-use area (ha)	C. Reforestation (ha)	Total area (ha=A+B)
Western	Kolombangara	20,000	28,800		48,800
Makira	Bauro Highlands	63,000	37,000		100,000
Guadalcanal	Tina-Popomanaseu	22,500	2,500	80,000*	25,000
Malaita	Are'are-Maramasike	15,000	15,000		30,000
Choiseul	Maetambe	22,500	20,000		42,500
	TOTAL	**143,000**	**103,300**	**80,000**	**326,300* (=A+B=C)**

3. Theory of change

69.   There was no theory of change in the project document. The following theory of change was developed after a literature review by the MTR consultants, presented to the project team in the Inception report and aspects of it were discuss during the review and consequently the theory of change was revised. The project seeks to address unsustainable natural resources management in the country- including unsustainable commercial logging practices and identified poor land management practices through an integrated approach at policy and practice level by implementing a multi-facetted and integrated approach through 5 interrelated components.

70.   The first component outlines the PA establishment strategy. The logic is clear, based on provisions in the PA Act 2010, PAs offer legal protection against commercial logging and conversion yet also are based on a highly participatory process so are not top down or imposed but rather based on a process of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) with land owning communities. The target is an ambitious coverage of PAs of 143,000ha, or 5.04% of the land surface, about half of the total target for protected areas in the country. Notably there was an assumption that there would only be 5 large PAs, one in each project area. The PAs are established through supporting MECDM at national and provincial level and communities in testing/applying a 12-step process (outlined under Relevance section) laid out in a previously developed PA toolkit. In doing so the project will effectively be trialling the process, a first on land (there is a marine PA). Recognising the substantive running costs and opportunity cost of the restrictions in PAs the project also aims to support the development of sustainable financing for PAs through a Trust Fund and to support communities in income generating activities.

71.   The implicit assumption under component 1 is that the PA approach which includes both the need for agreement from customary owners as to what land will be allocated and also an assumption that both the MECDM and communities can take on the running costs in the long run. Firstly, this assumption has to be considered in light of the complex, often overlapping and fragmented customary ownership of forests which would make setting up 5 large PAs through collective agreement unrealistic. Whether the high running costs of both PAs for MECDM and the running and opportunity costs for communities can be offset by the Trust Fund and income generating activities is another key assumption to examine under this component.

72. The second component focusses on integrated land management, improving the management of mixed agroforestry/forest/agricultural productive landscapes. As part of this component the project will support the Ministry of Land's (MAL's) ongoing efforts to develop a national land use policy and support its gazetting and implementation. The implicit assumption is that there are poor decisions taken on land management by local communities leading to environmentally destructive practices and with support from the project taking into account identified drivers of destructive practices, that decisions and land management practices can be

improved in ways that are good for the environment and for the livelihoods of the communities. It is assumed that by developing a model of productive yet sustainable forest and agricultural land management in buffer areas around the PAs it will both 'take the pressure off' the PAs by satisfying livelihood needs whilst reducing destructive practices and demonstrating that economic, social and ecological aims can be balanced with a system of effective SFM, SLM and appropriate livelihood enhancement.

73.   The third component is focused on capacity building for the management of forest carbon, contributing to a national forest carbon assessment. The implicit assumption is that significant opportunities for carbon finance exist and that these can be used to offset the opportunity cost of conservation, helping incentivize alternatives to unsustainable commercial logging and conversion. The logic is that the project is well placed to help develop some key requirements for carbon offsetting schemes at a national level, including developing a reference level and building capacity in monitoring. One aspect to examine regarding the logic in this component is whether a national REDD+ programme is the most effective way to deliver carbon offset benefits as carbon offsetting has moved on since project design in 2012.

74.   The fourth component focusses on restoration of degraded forest ecosystems, through agroforestry, small-scale tree planting and assisted natural regeneration with a target of 80,000 ha restored and 10% increase in forest cover which would result is significant carbon sequestration. The assumption here is that resources will be available will undertake the costly enterprise of such an extensive rehabilitation scheme and that the model is appropriate and the approach will be attractive and acceptable to local people. The logic of whether tree planting or natural regeneration is the most feasible and how to incentivize both establishment and management is unclear in the project document, and needs to be examined.

75.   The fifth component is cross cutting, so the logic is that it feeds into an supports the delivery of the other 4 components especially regarding capacity building, knowledge sharing, communication (to policy makers and general public) and monitoring on biodiversity, SFM, SLM etc. However, there are also other elements that would either seem to fit better directly within components in terms of logic or be significant more discrete projects themselves rather than directly feeding into another component. For example, activities around strengthening community-based forest management including small scale timber plantations in a target of 1,600 households would seem better placed logically within component 2 as it is a pilot activity. There is also an activity related to setting up a legal timber tracking system to avoid unsustainable log sales, which although related to other project activities loosely is not directly connected to and supporting elements of the other 4 components. A diagram illustrating an overview of the MTR consultants' interpretation of the project theory of change follows.

Theory of Change illustration. In the absence of a project theory of change the below is a reconstructed theory of change based on documents submitted to the MTR consultants.

Problem environment according to project documents: Unsustainable commercial logging practices combined with unsustainable forest management and land management policies, practices, capacities and insufficient intersectoral synergies result in terrestrial ecosystem degradation and undermine long term livelihood sustainability.

G O A L

Global environment objective: The goal of the project is to assist the Government of the Solomon Islands to implement integrated management of protected and productive forest landscapes for sustainable community development and multiple environmental benefits.

Key assumptions: The key assumptions are that an integrated and intersectoral approach– in policy and practice that combines PAs at the core, livelihood development and SFM and SLM in buffers will address problems such as unsustainable commercial logging and poor land management practices in a socially and economically acceptable way. It is also assumed that strengthening capacities will enable the government to better transform and sustain a more sustainable approach to forest and land conservation and management.

Assumed integrated and interconnected components and related outcomes

O U T C O M E S

Component 1: Development of the terrestrial protected area network. Effectively supporting the operationalizing of the PA Act 2010.

Component 2. Integrated Land Management. Effectively developing productive buffer zone practice and policy in terms of community based SFM, SLM and livelihoods development.

Component 3. Support and capacity building for the management of forest carbon – helping government to eventually realize carbon offset benefits.

Component 4. Restoration and enhancement of forests (largely government implemented - role of project currently mainly nursery establishment support).

Component 5. Cross cutting capacity building knowledge sharing and policy support for BD conservation, SLM and SFM. Whole range of cross cutting strategies to build capacity including university course development, biodiversity assessment and timber legality strategy.

Activities/outputs

50

4. Key findings and MTR questions

The findings are structured around the 6 main MTR questions – elaborated on the MTR TOR, which are based on the GEF criteria.

4.1 Relevance

Rating: Highly satisfactory

1.Relevance (rating required)	To what extent is the intervention coherently responding to the national and community environmental needs and priorities, the national and regional priorities in the Pacific-CPF, and to global sustainable development?
	Has there been any change in the relevance of the project since its design, such as the identified problems to be addressed and the underlying assumptions? What are the effects of any incorrect assumptions to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document? Are there any changes that need to be made to the project to make it more relevant?

The project activities are highly relevant to GEF, FAO and national policy priorities as seen from the following

Relevance to GEF Focal Priority Areas. Table: Relationship between GEF Focal Areas and project components

GEF-5 Focal Area Priority	**Expected Focal Area Outcome**	**Relationship to Project Component.**
BD-1	1.1 Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas. 1.2 Increased revenue for protected area systems to meet total expenditures required for management	*Component 1*: Development of the terrestrial protected areas network.
LD-3	3.1 Enhanced cross-sector enabling environment for integrated landscape management	*Component 2*. Integrated land management.

	3.2 Integrated landscape management practices adopted by local communities.	
CCM-5	5.1 Good management practices in LULUCF adopted both within the forest land and in the wider landscape. 5.2 Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forest and non-forest lands 5.3 GHG emissions avoided and carbon sequestered.	*Component 3*. Capacity building for the management of forest carbon; *Component 4*. Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests *(facilitated through project co-financing activities)*.
SFM/REDD-*1*	1.2 Good management practices applied in existing forests	*Component 5:* Knowledge sharing for biodiversity conservation. (cross-cutting)

76. **Alignment with FAO's Strategic Framework and Objectives.** The project is aligned with the FAO's Strategic Framework and Objectives as described in the new Medium-Term Plan for 2014 – 2017. The project specifically aligns with the Strategic Objective 2: Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner. The project also aligns with the Strategic Objective 3: Reduce rural poverty and the Strategic Objective 4: Enable more inclusive and effective agricultural and food systems at local, national and international levels though sustainable land and forest management. The project is also aligned with priority areas of the FAO's S*Is Country Programming Framework (CPF) 2013 – 2017*. *Priority Area B*: Environmental management and resilience.

77. A key element of the project's strategy under Component 1. Is to operationalize a pre-existing PA tool kit – some relevant extracts are contained in the following text box and figure. As the project is supporting the establishment of the first PAs on land, it is a pioneer in putting the Toolkit to the test in practice. Some key elements of the PA toolkit are shown in the box that follows and it is these elements that have proven to be highly complex to solve in a country where there are often overlapping and informal customary and other tenure claims. The toolkit also lays out the form and function of the PA Trust Fund, that the project is also tasked with establishing.

Requirements to establish a Protected area – from the Protected Area Toolkit.

A person or persons applying for a protected area over customary land must be able to:

1. show that the landowners, and other people who have rights in the area, want the area to be protected;

2. identify the category of protected area that is most suitable to the area;

3. clearly identify the boundaries of the protected area;

4. show that neighbouring tribes agree with the boundary of the protected area;

5. prepare an effective management plan that will be implemented by a Management Committee.

Costs: The cost of applying for a Protected Area will be different for each area. Some of the possible costs include – organising meetings, preparing the map and preparing the management plan. The costs will be lower for a small area with one landowner group. Where there are many landowner groups and a lot of meetings have to be organised the costs will be much higher. The Act creates a Protected Areas Trust Fund. The money from this fund should provide support to communities wanting to create and manage protected areas. However, when this toolkit was written the Ministry was not yet able to provide financial support to communities, so the search for sustainable financing is of critical importance.

STEP 1
Develop the protected area proposal and consult community leaders

STEP 2
Prepare for the protected area landowner consultation meeting

STEP 3
Hold the landowner consultation meeting

STEP 4
Hold the first Management Committee meeting

STEP 8
Prepare the management plan

STEP 7
Meet with Neighbouring Tribes to confirm the Customary Land Boundaries and get support for the proposal

STEP 6
Write to, and meet with, the Ministries and the Provincial Government

STEP 5
Prepare the map

STEP 9
Prepare the budget

STEP 10
Complete the application form

STEP 11
Submit the application

STEP 12
Work with the Ministry of Environment

Figure: 12 steps in the Protected area process – from the Protected Area Toolkit.

78. **Relevance to Forest Policy.** Although the SFM elements of the project are not as well advanced as the PA elements, and the Forest Policy was not developed at the time of project design, the Forest Policy 2020 spells out a number of areas related to SFM that the project could contribute to piloting and sharing lessons on in the same way it is piloting PA establishment. The project is relevant to several key principles in the *Forest Policy (2020),* notably 'shift from unsustainable logging to sustainable forest management, therefore reversing the depletion of forest resources', 'developing local forest industries, commerce and trade for a stable, sustainable and inclusive forest sector', 'good forest governance, based on multi-stakeholder participation, multi-sector cooperation and a respect for culture and human rights'. Of specific relevance to Component 1 and SFM under component 2 it states that there should be (under Goal 12) 'Support to communities to identify and map the tribal/customary land and forest area boundaries', 'Promote the establishment of forest Community Based organizations over the management and utilization of the forest' and under Goal 13, 'encourage tribal/clan/community-based sustainable forest management projects, and developing a guideline for community forest management'. As well as relevance to Component 1 and 2, there is clear relevance and opportunity for the project to contribute to this under component 5. promote the collaboration between the School of Natural Resources and Applied Sciences of SINU and MOFR to build human capacity and develop research

in forestry, silviculture and timber industries which includes a promotion wood technology and processing training programmes in accordance with forest industry needs.

79. Relevance to agricultural policies. Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) is responsible for implementing various policy instruments which includes the *National Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy* (2009-2014). The objective of this policy aims to support sustainable management of natural resources and the environment with outcomes including: (a) shielding farmers from the impacts of natural disasters and climate change through disaster and risk management and climate change mitigation; (b) soil conservation and management; (c) increased land fertility and productivity; (d) effective land use planning; and (e) appropriate regulatory framework in place and enforced. The *Agriculture Policy* (2010-2015), is a simplified version of the above-mentioned National Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy (2009-2014), and was devised for easier monitoring. The MAL is also the authority and the secretariat for administering SIs National Action Plan to Combat Land Degradation. All of these clearly are or relevance to project activities and the project can generate lessons related to them. Also the project is designed to explicitly generate policy impact through studies on the impact of different land use policies to identify recommendations for synergies and improvements. Its SLM piloting work will also have been of benefit in generating lessons that could also help identify ways to achieving agricultural policy aims as well as feeding lessons into policy.

80. **Relevance niche – key added value seems to be as a pioneer.** The project is undertaking a lot of firsts, developing the first terrestrial Protected Areas, the first PA Trust Fund, new university course etc. This added value of the project being a pioneer was not emphasized in the project document, but became clear during the review. The key risk to relevance is simply that the project by aiming to achieve the original targets spreads itself too thin, turning an integrated approach into a piecemeal approach, achieving bits and pieces but not finishing or consolidating what it starts. Pioneering projects require flexibility, not a straightjacket of unrealistic targets which if not adjusted will seriously risk the relevance of the project (See Effectiveness section for more detail).

81. **Enhance harnessing indigenous knowledge and customary practices to strengthen relevance.** It was mentioned numerous times throughout the review that not only is customary land tenure strong, but that the positive link between people and environment stewardship had been strong but had been eroded by external pressures such as monetization, outsiders coming in to offer money for resources etc. However, it was felt that the traditions of stewardship were still there and strong and for the project to maximise its relevance to local people it should build on and from those traditions, revitalizing them. This is also discussed in the Cross Cutting Dimensions 4.6 also.

Supporting statements. Clear relevance to government and communities – although some advice provided on 'how to make the key fit the lock' better…

"The project is relevant as it aims to protect and conserve the forest to sustain rural people's livelihood. We work closely with other Ministries ensure that more PAs are declared in the current locations and maybe in the future expand the program to other areas and provinces as well". Ministry Permanent Secretary.

"Considering the increase in logging activities on the island, it is high time that the provincial government assist landowning groups who are interested and willing to conserve their land and forest, therefore this project is very relevant and timely in providing support". Provincial Secretary.

"Our tribe have been deciding for a long time to go into conservation of some portion of our land and when we heard that there is a group coming to assist tribal groups with such a project we decided to join the rest of the other tribal groups. The need to conserve our forest is important not only to protect our land from logging activities but also to conserve for our future generation". Tribal Chief, Malaita.

The Provincial Government supports this project and encourages people to conserve their forest and environment. However, the final says on land matters like conservation rests with the landowning tribes as they are the landowners of customary land in Malaita Province. Thus, the final say on whether they conserve or allow logging depends on them". Deputy PS at province level.

'To develop approaches that will be accepted by local people, you have to start with what they know and they know a lot. The problem with many projects is that they come only with outside ideas. Here there is a lot of customary knowledge and practices to build on and from that will produce approaches that are much more relevant to local people' NGO partner.

'To make this project relevant the approaches must be strongly built on traditional practices, in the customary system you cannot separate the people from the environment they are one and the same and have many traditions of looking after the land and the forest. Outside pressures, monetization, materialism and things like school fees as well as offers of easy money for logs etc. have changed the link between people and the environment, but to help strengthen the link again, the project should as a priority harness and revitalise customary practices and links to the environment and build from them in everything it does. This will make the approaches more relevant to the people' (Former) LTO to the project.

4.2 Effectiveness

Overall rating: Moderately satisfactory

2. Effectiveness Achievement of project results (rating required)	(Delivery of results) To what extent is the Project on track to achieving its target results? Were there any unintended results?
	(Likelihood of impact) Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards and the eventual achievement of the project's intended longer-term impacts, and what can be done to improve the likely achievement of positive impacts from the project? To what extent may the progress towards long-term impact be attributed to the project?

COMPONENT 1: DEVELOPMENT OF THE TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREA NETWORK

Key planned outcomes and outputs.

Outcome 1.1

Terrestrial protected area network expanded to improve ecosystem coverage.   Area formally brought under the national system of protected areas legally designated with the consent of local landowners.

Output: Terrestrial protected area network expanded to cover an additional area of 143,000 ha; that covers key biodiversity hotspots

Output 1.1.1

Community agreements to designate new protected areas

Five new terrestrial protected areas sites identified are confirmed with local landowners as new PAs

Outcome 1.2

Improved management effectiveness of new and existing terrestrial protected areas.

METT score increased by 25% over baseline for each PA

Output 1.2.1 Effective inter-sectoral coordination for PA management

At least one national mechanism established and meets at least twice a year

Output 1.2.2

Current weaknesses in protected area management identified and rectified through the establishment and implementation of conservation agreements.

Five PA management plans produced and implemented.

Outcome 1.3

Sustainability of protected area management improved through sustainable financing and local income generating activities.

At least USD 600,000 generated from sustainable income generation activities

Output 1.3.1

National Level PA financing strategy

National PA Trust fund established with clear institutional structure, legal mandate and financing plan

Output 1.3.2

Sustainable income generating activities in each protected area as part of PA management plans

At least two at each PA

Key progress under Outcome 1.1 concerning Protected Areas (PA) network establishment:

- Out of 5 identified large protected area zones in five provinces (Malaita, Makira, Western – Kolombangara, Guadalcanal and Choiseul) Choiseul has seen the best progress. Here 3 sites have gone through all the steps to designation stage PAs. This was achieved under a LoA with Natural Resource Development Foundation (NRDF) which supported the project to fulfil this output. The Ecological Solutions Foundation (ESF), have been contracted to undertake PA establishment in the 4 remaining sites in Choiseul and progress appears to be good, partly because of strong field coordination and support by the project, but also partly that the sites are relatively conflict free.
- The next best performing area is In South Malaita where there are now 7 tribes/sites identified with committee already appointed, but sites have not yet been designated.
- On Guadalcanal which is probably the next best performing, there has been lots of changes since the design phase of the project and land has the highest value. As a result there are complicated issues on land to solve and a joint taskforce under the Bahomea House of Chiefs and the Malango House of Chiefs have identified and nominated 7 tribal groups for PA consultations, but still a long way to go to identify sites, work through land claims and then form management committees and designate sites.
- Makira sites are still in consultation phase with 7 tribal groups engaged in consultations and although land disputes are holding the process up, there has been complaints from community leaders during the review that the project has also been slow in terms of process support.
- Unfortunately in Western Kolombangara there has been no progress the land issues, even on the Fixed term Estates held by the government forestry company KFPL have counter claims from tribal groups, leading to disputes. It is very likely work will not progress with KFPL.
- Total across all sites 30 tribes have shown their interest to undergo PA establishment, with only 3 designated PAs at the MTR and 27 in the process.

Table: Tribal groups engaged in the PA establishment process support by the project.

	Choiseul	**Western Kolombangara**	**Guadalcanal**	**Malaita**	**Makira**
1.	Vuri		Kaipalipali	Mamaro'a	Henuaraha
2.	Garasa		ChavuChavu	Awasipo,	Hageta
3.	Siporae		Charana	Wa'anahata	Naoneone
4.	Padezaka		Uluna & Sutahuri	Waraihanua	Nangoni/Mamiripi
5.	Matakale		Halisia	Wa'aririasi	Tarigape
6.	Voba		Koenihao	Haupoto	Birobiro Inaginagi
7.	Kona		Michael and Rex Meki	Paua	Torao
8.					Anomera
9.					Mawawe

Key progress regarding outcome 1.2.

• Under this output, establishment of an Inter-sectorial Coordinating Committee has been agreed following a meeting with ECD, MECDM in March 2021 and this is vetted by the PA Advisory Committee on April 31 2021. Identification and selection of members are in progress with consultation with ECD.

• A ranger training (75 participants) was held on 27 and 28 April at Malangono South Choiseul. The objectives were to support the participants to understand the enforcement laws and regulations under the PA Act including other related environmental laws, roles and responsibilities outlined in their Management Plans; and to ensure participants be equipped with skills and knowledge to monitor, report and enforce protected areas breaches or offences to enforcement authorities.

Key progress regarding Outcome 1.3.

• Recruitment of one international and one national consultant is underway via the formal process.

• The project expects the consultants to be on board soon to undertake tasks to ensure a conservation financing scheme (PATF) is established.

• Although no progress in terms of income generating activities in accordance with options in the project document, Live and Learn have conducted an assessment which will help inform livelihood support activities.

• Also with NRDF support a carbon offset scheme is up and running in one of the protected areas on Choiseul with substantive funds flowing to the community annually.

82. Key findings under component 1 regarding key progress and particularly challenges related to effectiveness of the project in achieving key results and contributing to meaningful impact are listed below. Supporting statements/quotations to support the findings follow.

83. **Target is too ambitious and counterproductive:** In some areas the land earmarked for PAs in the project document was simply not available as was claimed for other uses, in other areas pressure and value of the land has changed so there are other more attractive options for tribal groups, also the initial assumption of only 5 PA processes was flawed because collectively managed areas were not acceptable or practical. Pushing ahead with the current target is counterproductive, and several key steps like negotiation and mapping if rushed will potentially create conflicts. A large part of the challenges boils down to the fact that pre-project on the ground assessments to see what land is available and what is not, was not sufficient, combined with the time delay between project design in 2012 and project implementation which began in March 2017. Dynamics have often changed on the ground in the meantime. Some specific issues, even though Kolombangara was earmarked for PAs, Kolombangara Forest Products Limited owns 80% of the area earmarked

for protected areas and there are also counterclaims from tribal groups for the same area that are currently going through court dispute processes. In Guadalcanal, where land pressure is now much higher than when the project was designed in 2012, 20,000 ha had been allocated, which is simply not available any more for Protected Areas, as other interests, opportunities and competition between tribal chiefs has come into play. In Malaita lots of consultations with 20 communities, only with 7 now identified as potential to move along the process. Also note that even though an estimated 30 sites are identified (See table that follows below below), the certainty of them proceeding to PA status is far from assured. In Western province because of land disputes no potential sites have been identified.

84. **Bottlenecks in the process and variance in project support.** Considerable amounts of time and energy are being invested in areas that are clearly not suitable or challenging for protected areas, with a clear need to be adaptive and pragmatic, not to push PAs where there are conflicts or resistance but rather divert resources to more conducive areas for PAs even if outside the initial project areas. Also stand-alone SFM, SLM or livelihood activities where PA is not possible might be warranted where these are more acceptable and yet still linked to management or protecting the forests. One clear message from the communities was that they would require more support to consult with each other and would like to deal with negotiations informally first before going into costly legal disputes. Although contexts are different there are clear variations in the project performance across sites which might be an issue related to different performances or approaches used by field coordinators, service providers and supporting agencies, it would need to be investigated further and appropriate support/action taken as the delays are causing frustration in some communities.

85. **Trust fund is critical and need to incentivize the approach for communities**. Although many communities couldn't see past PA establishment as a priority, some communities and NGOs were concerned about sustainability of the PA approach and felt time was running out to establish the Trust Fund and get it up and running. The process for Trust Fund development seems good and consultative, but time is running on. Secondly to fast track the more productive elements of the integrated project approach to generate benefits needs urgent prioritization. NGOs and other projects shared experiences of conservation initiatives stopping as soon as the project ended if benefits were not flowing by then to communities. It will be important in this regard to fully explore opportunities for benefits from the Resource Management Area category of PA that would seem the most suitable for communities. See text box that follows.

Quotes related to progress and strengths under Component 1...

"Our tribe is very supportive of the project as we also want to conserve part of our forest. We have seen the negative impact of logging in the surrounding tribal land, thus decided to work with the project team to conserve our land and forest. We will continue to work with the team to realise our dream of having our forest gain PA status in the next year or so". Tribal Chief, Choiseul

"We are happy that our tribal forest was declared a PA status. One major challenge, we went through is it is very important to provide more awareness and information dissemination to enable peoples understanding of the project. The second major challenge is the objections by other tribal groups especially with land boundaries and other land issues. This has a great impact on the delay of the project. However, regardless of these, we have managed to go through and now completed component 1 of the project. We have signed with the Nakau carbon trading and hoping for the first payment this year". Tribal, Choiseul

"Our tribe is happy and interested in the project, is relevant to us to conserve our forest since a portion of our land has already been logged. We have learnt from our mistake to log part of our forest and now decided to protect and conserve our remaining portion of forest. Our main challenge is with finances since we need funds for logistics to bring all tribal members to one place, since some of our tribal members are scattered around the island. We also need support from project team with building capacity since we are the ones who will manage the project once declared PA status". Tribal Chief, Choisuel.

"Our tribal forest is now declared a PA status and we are happy with the project and other stakeholders who have greatly assisted us to achieve this. One of the major challenges is with land disputes and objections, however, we have managed and overcome that. We are working closely with the Nakau project and hope we finalise that arrangement as with the other tribe Sirebe". Tribal Chief, Choiseul.

'The challenges faced in protected areas in some other countries where they are enforced on communities, will not happen here as the process is community based and voluntary. The primary motivation from the communities to engage in protected areas is probably mainly to do with conservation of the resources for present and future generations' Ministry staff.

Quotes related to challenges and recommendations under Component 1.

"The project needs to assist the landowning tribes with finances at the early stage to allow tribal members to meet and consult with other tribal members. The lack of financial support is slowing community members to come together and discuss issues and project activities. We are scattered in different locations and logistics is a concern for all of us". Tribal member, Charana Landowning Tribal Group

"I am of the view that the project is very slow and need to be fast-track since project duration is not very long. We are only at component 1 and I believe the project stakeholders must ensure that project is allowed to move at a faster rate. The continues delay may result in the PA status not achieved during the life of the project. I know the project team knows this, but it is important that we move faster than this current speed if we are to see success". Tribal Chief, Guadalcanal

'The chief said to us, we want to manage the forest, but we want to go for selective logging. Can you guarantee that if we instead go for a Protected Area we will get an income that is the same as the revenue we would lose from selective logging….and this is a key question, a critical question'. IFM Project staff

"In the course of our implementation, we also experience many challenges that slows down the project implementation, especially with the component 1 and is related to customary land disputes and customary land settlement processes which can take years to resolve". Deputy Director.

'In reality we are pioneers, effectively we are the first to test the PA Act on the ground, establishment steps, time, implementation. Everyone is realizing, the first process of the TA, the consent of the land owner, a community, and the boundary demarcation of the PA is super difficult, huge amount of negotiation. It takes a minimum of two years' Project staff

'In the project document it states that only 5 PA establishment process will be required to meet the target, but with us having to get agreement from separate communities for separate PAs, to meet the target we would need to conduct 70 PA processes', Project staff

'Although it has been suggested by some that a levy could be put on logging revenue that goes into the Trust Fund, this might be politically sensitive, logging is a highly sensitive issue. But one other way might be putting a levy on other commercial land user, such a mining sector or developers, that could then be channelled into the Trust Fund. Also, as well as the project the government should show its commitment to PAs by directing a percentage of its own budget into the PA Trust fund to show it is serious in its commitment'. Ministry Staff

'This challenge of the overambitious target is being talked about also in government, the Ministry of environment, Environment conservation division which is the nodal agency responsible for protected areas, spoke about the national target, which is 10%', Project staff

"I fully support the project as I want this portion of land to be protected and conserved for future generations. We support the project and are waiting patiently for the second consultation, as we want to complete the remaining steps and ensure that our forest is declared a PA status. We are just waiting for their second coming, the second consultants which was promised some time ago". Tribal member, Malaita
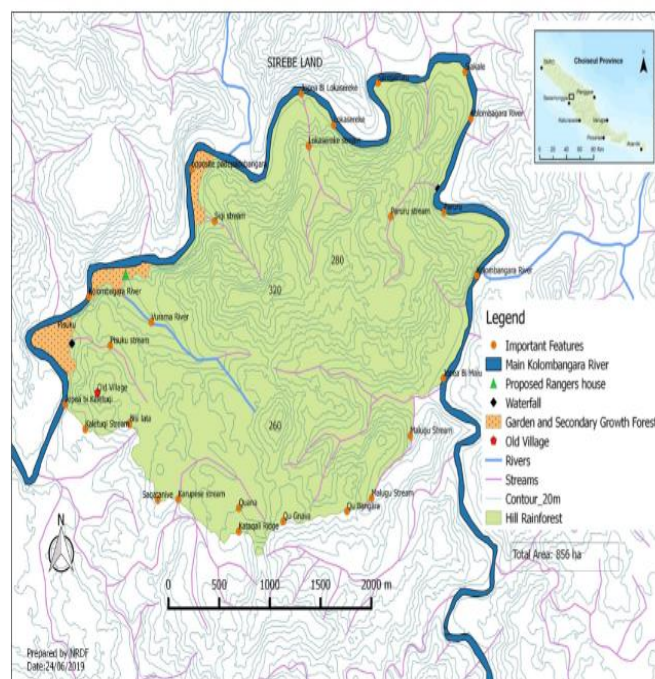
'Yes protected areas do offer protection from mining and destructive commercial logging, but it is going to be very difficult in the long term. How do you think a community protected area will survive, as you effectively cannot do anything in it (for livelihoods)? This will eventually lead to frustration among the community. You see the forest is their resource and source of their livelihood. This is a big problem, a big challenge I see in the long term for community based Protected Areas'. Staff interviewed from another forestry project in the SIs.

'Our concern is that it would be good if the project team can move the project faster as at the moment it is quite slow and thus affect the project in terms of delays". Chairman, Tribal group, Guadalcanal

"I fully support the project as I want this portion of land to be protected and conserved for future generations. I hope the second consultation to happen so that we will continue with the other steps of the project. We support the project and are waiting patiently for the second consultation, as we want to complete the remaining steps and ensure that our forest is declared a PA status. We are just waiting for their second coming". Tribal Chief, Malaita

Figure(above). PA management plan and table (below) of an example PA establishment process verification checklist from a field coordinator Choiseul. This highlights the complexity of the work and why a change from an assumed 5 PA processes in the project design to an estimation of around 70 to meet the original target

#	PA Process steps/Activities	Verification/Proof needed	Progress so far	Tick	Comment
1	Awareness building with Tribe about Protected Areas and the process	Meeting report/minute	Completed	√	
2	Prepare for the PA Landowner Consultation meeting	One Month Notice of Meeting (Template 1) and Agenda (Template 2)	Completed	√	
3	**Optional:** Boundary mapping before the consultation meeting		Completed	√	

4	Hold the landowners Consultation meeting	Minutes of Meeting (Template 3)	Completed	√	
5	Form a Management Committee if not done yet during consultation meeting	List of Committee members (See also template 3)	Completed	√	
6	Hold the first PA Management Committee meeting	Meeting Minutes	Completed	√	
7	Ranger and inspector profiling	Ranger profiles Letters of appointment (Template 14)	Profiling done	√	
8	Draft the PA Management Committee constitution	Draft Constitution	Completed	√	
9	Prepare a boundary map if not yet done in step 3	Map with features of area	Completed	√	
10	Write letters to :				
	Minister of Environment (Template 5)	File copy	Completed	√	
	Director of Environment & Conservation (Template 6)	File copy	Completed	√	
	Premier (Template 7)	File copy	Completed	√	
	Commissioner of Forest (Template 8)	File copy & Official Reply letter	Completed	√	
	Director of Mines (Template 9)	File copy & Official Reply letter	Completed	√	
	Commissioner of Lands (Template 10)	File copy & Official Reply letter	Completed	√	
11	Meeting with neighboring tribes to confirm the customary boundaries and get support for the proposal. Or visit the	Signed map Signed MOU's Minutes (if meeting)	Completed	√	

	tribes at separate occasions.				
1 2	Prepare the Management Plan	Draft PA Management Plan endorsed by Committee	Completed	√	
	Prepare a budget	Draft budget endorsed by Committee	completed	√	
1 3	Meet with tribe to present the PA Management plan, Budget and PA Management Committee Constitution and endorse	Meeting minutes with official endorsement of Management Plan, budget and Constitution	completed	√	
1 4	Complete application and submit to the Ministry	Full submission documentation Keep copy (scan)	completed	√	
1 5	Work with the Ministry of Environment and resource Owner.				
	Feedback from Ministry on submission		Done	√	
	Verification visit area		Done	√	
	Hang Public Notice (1 Month)	Photo's of notice	Done	√	
	Objection / Custom Hearing	No Letter of objection			
	Compile submission for Director	PA submission documents	Done	√	
	Handover to Minister for approval	PA submission documents	Done	√	
	Hand over to AG for approval and draft the gazette order for Minister to sign off	PA submission documents	Done	√	
	Minister to sign certificate of Register to the Site	Certificate	Done	√	
1 6	Declaration ceremony and hand over certificate	Ceremony/Feast	Done	√	

				IFMP continue to support Siporae tribe through trainings, capacity building and involved them in other project's component eg. Component 2

Table: Current actual and potential sites for PA – total area not determined yet as sites under negotiation, but estimate is a total of around 30-40'000 ha.

> **Provisions in PA toolkit related to the Resource Management category of PA:** 'Resource Management Areas should be managed so that food and other important resources needed by local communities are available today and in the future. In a Resource Management Area, the harvesting or removal of natural resources should be carefully controlled. The amount of food and other things used by the community should be regularly assessed. A Resource Management Area should have a strong management regime. It is important to remember that commercial logging and mining are not allowed in any protected area, including Resource Management Areas. This does not prevent landowners from using forest products'

COMPONENT 2. INTEGRATED LAND MANAGEMENT

Outcome 2.1

Improved decision-making in management of production landscapes).

51,650ha.

Output 2.1.1

Assessment of impacts of current land-use practices on biodiversity, land degradation and the provision of other ecosystem services (ecosystem valuation) and identification of potential areas for improvement.

Impacts of current land use practices on biodiversity and land degradation assessed.

Potential areas for enhancement of biodiversity and ecosystem services identified.

Output 2.1.2

Policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for land-use change reviewed and revised as necessary.

Policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for land use change reviewed and revised

Output 2.1.3

Mechanism for policy coordination between sectors (i.e. government ministries and agencies)

Policy coordination mechanism between sectors established and made functional

Outcome 2.2 Improved land use practices promoted

At least 25% of HH living in/around PAs

Output 2.2.1

Sustainable land and forest management techniques applied in protected area buffer zone

5% of total production landscape i.e. 2583 ha under SLM and 20,660 ha under SFM

Output 2.2.2 Training Programme on SLM

Capacity of 200 farmers and agriculture extension workers in SLM increased

> Key progress under component 2.
>
> • Live and Learn Environmental Education is contracted to undertake activities under this output. Good progress is made with a draft report on initial assessment of SLM training requirements already available and being reviewed. Contract agreement is being finalized to engage a suitable contractor to undertake activities relating to policy reviews and development.
> • It is expected that work will start in third quarter of year 2021.
> • Meanwhile a coordination committee (Integrated Land Management Committee) of relevant Ministries to improve collaboration for policy coordination for integrated land management has been established with MAL holding Chairmanship.
> • Initial meeting was conducted on 29 April 2021 with the Terms of Reference being approved with amendments.
> • Trainings on SFM planned by FAO RAP and headquarters.

Key findings on effectiveness – progress towards results of Component 2.

86. **SLM assessment work excellent.** The assessment work conducted by Live and Learn was of a very high standard, very participatory and would bode well for good initiatives related to SLM strategies (See text box that follows).

87.

88. **Need to strengthen the SFM focus and process, not only the SLM.** This component has two elements, the SFM element which is over a relatively large area and the SLM element, which is covering a modest area. SLM interventions like contour ploughing are often quite costly so a modest coverage would be practical. However apart from 'trainings' there was very little detail during the review on SFM, and what process will be outlined, even though this is a critical element of the project, especially with the Solomons 90% covered in forest and with community based SFM being a good fit for customary forest management. The new Forest Policy provides a good policy framework to test out community-based approaches for SFM, which could later inform a new Forest Act or regulations on community based SFM.

89. **Livelihood enhancement – support most viable initiatives, build on what exists.** A clear message from NGOs and other projects was to move fast in terms of livelihood support and go for both 'low hanging fruit' – initiatives that require minimal support, viable business models – those that have an attractive cost/benefit ratio and finally initially build on and from what exists in terms of existing skills, supply and demand etc.

90. **No integration in practice yet.** Although it was valid to prioritize PA establishment first, at the half way point in the project beyond the SLM assessment and the opportunistic carbon

offsetting initiatives, there is no 'integration' of PA, SLM, SFM and livelihood support in a model on the ground yet.

Quotations regarding effectiveness of Component 2.

'We have piloted community based SFM, and value addition including a mobile sawmill. Our pilot on Community Based SFM is maybe something IFMP could look at and learn from' JICA forestry project staff

"To get the people away from only have the concession option where the added value goes out of the country, the provincial government is also looking at promoting value added industry in the timber milling but again we need resources to do that". Provincial Secretary.

"What the communities really need is training on how to do forest management in their forests". Project staff.

'Market access was a key determinant related to income, people growing the same things, but sometimes 4 times the revenue for those with good market access compared to those with poor access' NGO member.

'Its so important to build any livelihoods on what exists, strengthen what exists, understand the local culture, the specific needs and the existing livelihoods and then strengthen them rather than starting first by bringing new ideas in.' NGO member.

'Although Sustainable Land Management techniques are clearly needed some require quite a high investment, such as contour ploughing, so that might be a hindrance to covering a large area quickly. It will take time, but seeing is believing so need to get pilots on the ground under the project, then use farmer to farmer extension. Good extension approaches will be key to scaling up' Partner NGO member

'We found in some places the gender roles were different, for example in some places men harvested the forest products, whereas women were more involved in marketing, however in others the roles were more mixed. It depends on whether the areas are matrilineal or patriarchal. It is important to understand these differences and specificities before developing livelihood activities. Also there were different perceptions on problems and solutions between men and women, so both must always be involved.' Partner NGO member.

'The assumptions about the problems were not always right, we didn't see much evidence of population pressure being the main driver of reduced fallow times in shifting cultivation, rather people had increased expenses so were taking on more loans and as a result had to reduce the fallow period to produce more to pay back the loans. So it is important to develop strategies to address the actual causes rather than the assumed causes and that requires careful site specific assessment of the problems with communities.' NGO partner member.

'A problem with forest use is unclear rights sometimes, so there is report of 'theft' of forest produce, so people won't protect if someone else will just come in and steal the produce. Just as with working out rights in PAs, working out rights for forest use outside the PA is a major issue and precondition for effective SFM' NGO partner member.

Text Box: Some examples of findings from the 'Live and Learn' assessment.

Research on agricultural context identified from the assessment report by Live and Learn under the LoA for the project

• The economic importance of crops and forest resources in supporting survival and livelihoods;

• The increasingly unsustainable nature of land use;

• Widespread problems with soil fertility, loss of top soil and erosion, flood and drought that were difficult for communities to manage;

• Varied degrees of agriculture role division by gender, with a propensity for less role division in matrilineal communities; and

• A propensity for men to understate the extent of agricultural problems, and rate their ability to manage them higher than women rate their ability to manage them.

COMPONENT 3. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF FOREST CARBON

Outcome 3.1. National capacities enhanced to monitor carbon stocks in natural forests and plantations

Output 3.1.1

carbon monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) systems for forests in the Solomon Islands

At least 1 Carbon monitoring reports available a national system strengthened, based on existing system

Output 3.1.2 National capacity to control deforestation, forest degradation and carbon measuring and monitoring

Fifty (50) MFR staff trained in methods Capacity of 50 MOFR staff enhanced to control deforestation, forest degradation and carbon measuring and monitoring

Output 3.1.3

National forest carbon assessment

Key progress under Outcome 3.

3.1 National capacities enhanced to monitor carbon stocks in natural forests and plantations.

•   Forest Reference Level report was produced and published by UNFCCC

•   Further technical refinement will be necessary to improve the Forest Reference Level as provided in the conclusions of the report.

•   National Forest Monitoring System and Remote Sensing Training Organized at the Solomon Islands National University from 14-18 June 2021.

•   Discussion on continued support to REDD Unit on REDD+ Strategy development activity planning.

Key findings under this component related to achieving results and contributing to meaningful impact.

91.   **Good progress on this component, however carbon offsetting has moved on from when the project was designed.** The assumption in the project design was that a national REDD+

programme would be developed that would be the vehicle to generate carbon offset benefits to government and communities, however for various reasons including no Forest Carbon Partnership Facility support and limited capacity (Ministry only employs 3 people for the REDD+ programme) an effective REDD+ strategy is a long way off, instead individual carbon offsetting initiatives like NAKAU are bringing benefits quickly and directly to communities. The emerging activity of potentially creating synergies between discrete carbon finance projects and protected areas establishment seems like a great opportunity that should be fully seized and might help this component better deliver benefits to communities to complement component 1 and 2. See Recommendations.

COMPONENT 4. RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF CARBON STOCKS IN FORESTS.

Outcome 4.1

Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests.

Degraded forests restored and carbon stocks enhanced 3183842tC sequestered in 5 years of project.

Output 4.1.1

Forest cover increased through agro-forestry, small-scale tree planting and assisted natural regeneration

Forest cover in an area of 80,000 ha increased through Agroforestry and small-scale tree planting

Outcome 4: Key progress

4.1 Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests.

• Meeting with Forestry in March 2021 has given direction to enhance effort on the establishment of further nursery facilities.

• All the 5 PA zones are considered and will be reviewed for specific restoration activities.

Key findings regarding effectiveness of component 4.

92. Note that in the project document this component was largely under the responsibility of the Ministry of Forestry with no budget allocated by the project for it.

93. **Target too ambitious but also strategy needs a critical examination.** The Ministry of Forestry does not have resources to undertake such a large reforestation initiative (target of 80,000 ha within the lifetime of the project) on their own, and more fundamentally there are questions about whether such a large reforestation makes sense when natural regeneration happens in logged over areas, as well as looking at ways to make the initiative community driven and attractive. It is clear that a review of this component is required and the project could support this (See recommendations).

Quotations regarding the effectiveness of this component.

'Restoration activities have fallen far far short of the target (if you consider only government supported reforestation) maybe 100s of ha each year at most, the target is simply impossible with the resources the ministry have' Project staff

'This whole activity has to be looked at as the strategy is not working now, the strategy and plans have been revised but I think the only way this will work is if it is community based, maybe enrichment planting over logged over areas, or maybe out-growers' schemes with the private sector. No matter what to get the community involved there must be clear benefits to be interested in it'. Ministry staff.

'There are problems with nurseries, they require resources and follow up, also there have been problems with communal management, the project is trying to support more centralized nurseries, but will have to see if these work'. Project staff

'The fundamental problem with this component is it is too ambitious and that logged over areas regenerate naturally so might not make sense to do a big reforestation scheme. Really this whole component needs looked at to see what strategy makes most sense, maybe assisted natural regeneration with some enrichment planting makes more sense for large areas.' Project staff

'If you include private plantations the target is actually more achievable.' Project staff

COMPONENT 5. KNOWLEDGE SHARING FOR BD CONSERVATION, SLM AND SFM

Increased local capacity to monitor, evaluate and manage biodiversity, land-use change and sustainable forest management.

Output 5.1.1

baseline surveys of local flora and fauna, invasive species threats, genetic conservation, etc.

Base line surveys on local flora and fauna and threats due to invasive species.

Outcome 5.2

Community-based Forest management (including tree planting) strengthened

Community based forest management strengthened and forest areas under effective local community control

Output 5.2.1Training on SFM techniques- trained in SFM techniques

Two hundred (200) people (MFR staff and landowners

Outcome 5.3

Policymakers and the general public are better informed about biodiversity conservation, climate change, SLM and SFM.

100

Output 5.3.1

Training, awareness and educational materials produced and disseminated through SINU, RTC's and relevant Government Ministries and NGO's

Existing curriculum of SINU revised and updated material published and widely disseminated

Component 5. Main progress

5.1 Increased local capacity to monitor, evaluate and manage biodiversity, land-use change and sustainable forest management.

•   Ranger training has been conducted in Choiseul through NRDF under Outcome 1.2. Meanwhile, the Project Management Unit under MECDM takes care of M&E of all ministry projects.

•   Satellite remote sensing and GIS training given to more than 40 participants from government, university, and NGOs to enhance the level of MRV capacity.

 •   Biodiversity survey in all five provinces started in June 2021 to enhance and update the baseline

5.2 Community-based Forest management (including tree planting) strengthened.

 •   With reference to outcome 4.1, nursery facilities will be installed at the PA zones

•   PA Management committee established in 16 tribal areas to for community-based forest management. Further, community based SFM training will be provided during the course of PA establishment in all PA areas.

•   Discussion with MOFR paved the way for SFM training requirement identification and planning underway for organizing such training in all five provinces

•   Timber Legality Standard Road map development is in progress in consultation with forestry stakeholders, MOFR and FAO staffs.

5.3 Policymakers and the general public are better informed about biodiversity conservation, climate change, SLM and SFM.

 •   Under LOA with SINU, two Program Advisory Committee meetings had been conducted. The first was in regards to development of   Bachelors of Forestry Science in April 2021.

•   The second was in May 2021 in relation to development of Degree in Environmental Studies. Further rounds of consultations and meetings are expected to occur in the course of year.

•   These followed the launch of the Computer Laboratory which was installed with 60 PCs under the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries together with the university forestry, herbarium and Science laboratory equipment and instruments.

•   Dialogue and consultations were held to further strengthen the FAFF in Agricultural Studies towards a Masters' program and Diploma program on GIS and Geo-Spatial technology within the faculty, and including the possibility of support to transfer Forestry Certificate program to Poitete on Kolombangara, Western Province.

Key findings regarding the effectiveness of this component.

94. **University courses could be a major achievement but require much more support.** Although also behind on outputs and progress towards outcomes against plans for this stage in the project, there has been significant promising work. Establishing 2, possibly 3 new university courses and a certificate course will contribute massively to addressing the capacity gaps in the environmental and forestry sector in the SIs, a critical potential legacy the project will leave behind. The multi-stakeholder advisory board for the courses, the strong practical orientation (notably the wood processing equipment) and provision of equipment and the careful consideration of the employment prospects for graduates all bode well for the course development. However, several challenges remain, there has been a request to train lecturers on how to operate and maintain the equipment, and a major challenge to continuity, morale and course development is that the contracts of academic staff up is up for renewal. It general there remains a lot to do in terms of full course development before the expected launch date in 2022, with concerns about staff capacity to ensure the courses get fully developed and effectively delivered.

Quotations to support the findings...

'The various projects that the ministries are attracting and want to attract will require staff with the right qualifications and skills, that are currently lacking, so this upgrading of courses which will provide qualified staff will be essential for the effectiveness of these projects and the forestry sector. For the next 5 to 10 years, there is a growth in work in forestry and environment'. University staff.

'There are many private companies coming here to work in forestry, yet they often bring both skilled and unskilled forestry workers with them, its terrible, we need build capacity urgently'. Project staff

'Curriculum development process is really strong with an advisory committee with private sector, government and NGO representation, overseen by an external professor. We also ensured a demand for the course and that there would be jobs for graduates' Former University staff involved in course development

'The strong point about the new courses is that they are fully equipped by the project and very practical, students will learn practical skills, for example in adding value in forest products.'. Project staff

'There is a need to have support to have operate and maintain the equipment, particularly a practical training on value addition equipment as lecturers do not have these skills' University staff.

'Although we are motivated by developing these new courses, we have a major problem with morale and continuity at the moment, as are contracts are all being ended and we are being asked to re-apply for our positions' University staff.

'My worry is staff capacity, especially the first year we run the course, ideally we would need some academic support from elsewhere especially on aspects such as SFM, community-based forest approaches, also we would need to link the course very much to practical activities on the ground, including PA establishment process' University staff.

4.3 Efficiency

Moderately satisfactory (MS)

3.Efficiency (rating required)	To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and management been able to adapt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?
	To what extent has the project built on existing agreements, initiatives, data sources, synergies, complementarities with other projects and partnerships, etc., and avoid duplication of similar activities of other groups?
	Is the project cost-effective?

Key findings related to efficiency. Note that many findings related to efficiency are covered under Factors Affecting Performance and not repeated here.

95. **Aspects within the control of the project team managed efficiently.** There are numerous challenges related to efficiency that are outside the control of the project team, explained in the points below. However, within the control of the project team, based on a review off outputs versus resources used and upon the views of project stakeholders, the project was efficiently managed in terms of resources, activities and time. There was 'value for money'.

96. **Unrealistic targets unexpected complexity key cause of inefficiency.** When progress is measured against the expectations at this point in the project logframe, 'on paper' it would appear that the project is not efficient especially in terms of translating resources into has of coverage of PAs. However, the original project design was to blame for this shortfall. In another way this caused inefficiencies, with the project 'chasing' unrealistic targets in each region as laid out in the project document it often wasted time trying to establish PAs in areas that were clearly not suitable, this also consumed time, resources and energy that could have been spent more efficiently elsewhere in the project.

97. **Largely pioneering so complementing and avoiding overlap.** A lot of the project activities are pioneering in their nature, they are 'firsts' such as the establishment of PAs and the development of the new BSc courses, the former builds on and from the Protected Aera Act and the later upgrades existing diploma courses. There is a forestry working group where forestry projects and actors meet to discuss and coordinate their work, this is helpful in building synergies. By working through three very experienced organisations ESF, NRDF and Live and Learn in implementing component 1 and 2, the project also harnesses and links in with the existing track record and experience of these organisations, building from what they know.

98. **COVID disruption.** The main disruption caused by COVID is that the travel restrictions meant that the CTA had to stay in his home country and work remotely and also international consultant input was put on hold. This has certainly delayed activities in a way that was beyond the control of the project team despite the CTA doing his best to keep progress moving remotely.

Quotations related to efficiency.

'One thing that is affecting project efficiency is that even minor requests to fund activities from the project seem to be very complicated, because they don't have an account here and also some processes seem complicated. We urged FAO to open a project account here, and we don't really understand why this cannot be done. We have seen time wated on simple procurement requests' Ministry staff.

"The slow and bureaucratic processes of FAO also contributed to the slow project implementation" Project staff

'Both the recruitment and procurement process have been slow I think because they have can't be handled at a national level here, I would recommend looking ways to streamline this by delegating the process to the national level more. There are established processes at national level already for other projects. This would help project efficiency' Ministry staff

4.4. Sustainability

4.Sustainability (rating required)	(Sustainability) What is the likelihood that the project results will continue to be useful or will remain after the end of the project? What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project results and benefits (consider financial, socio-economic, institutional and governance, and environmental)?
	(Replication and catalysis) What project results, lessons and experiences generated by the project that may or have been replicated (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in different geographic areas) or scaled up (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in the same geographic area but on a much larger scale and funded by other sources), or are likely to be in the near future?

Overall – moderately likely to sustain (ML).

99. Key findings related to Sustainability are presented under key criteria laid out in the MTR TOR. Note that the 'Risks table' with comments from the MTR consultants is provided under the Sustainability section.

100. **Key financial risks (ML – moderately likely to sustain)** It is moderately likely that the project's activities will be sustained, although with few of the building blocks in place at the time of the MTR it was difficult to assess and predict sustainability. The key concerns about sustainability were focussed on how to run and incentivize the Protected Areas (both in terms of management and opportunity cost of restricted use rights) Although neither the livelihood activities on the PA Trust fund had been developed at MTR stage, there are some aspects within the project control that give confidence to the MTR consultants, for example US$500,000 seed money from the project to the Trust fund. If a substantive portion gets allocated to the community management committees, this should give some forward momentum at least for a year or two. However, in the long term sustained income into the Trust fund is required, for example from a levy on round wood exports, mining or agribusiness. There are successful examples of Trust Funds for PAs in other countries although one size will not fit all especially with the SIs community tenure systems. The project has helped established one example of PA linking it to carbon credit (through NAKAU Programme) in Choiseul province. That created additional income generation to communities that has clearly helped boost the financial viability of the PA as it provides potentially running costs and funding for community development activities.

> "The resource owners (in protected areas) - communities must be supported and given resources by the government to operate and manage their resources for now and into the future". Provincial Secretary

> "The provincial government officers like ourselves need to be supported with resources to continue to assist these landowning groups after gaining PA status". "These landowning groups must be provided with training in areas like rangers, forest management in order to properly manage their PAs and surrounding areas". "The province must take ownership and be part of the PA establishment and continue to assist these rural" Forestry officer, provincial level.

'The key to sustainability is livelihood benefits, no matter how much the communities want conservation, they also need money and to eat, and they won't get that from PAs, so the project must move fast with livelihood development outside the PAs from forests and agriculture'. Project NGO partner

'The need for the government through the Ministry of Environment to be honest and provide their allocated money of $20,000-$25,000 to assist tribes once PA status is completed as agreed. This has not been done as per discussions' Project staff

'The PA trust fund is key to sustainability of the PA sustainability, without it, the PAs will fail'. NGO partner

"Soft benefits – like environmental benefits will not lead to sustainability (of the PAs) for communities, hard (financial benefits) benefits will' Project staff.

101. **Socio-political risks (ML – moderately likely to sustain) –** the main hot political issue that the project addresses is commercial logging, restraining logging on a large scale would meet considerable political opposition at the present time because of its financial contribution to the national economy and communities, however the limited coverage of the project's PA, the process of consensual negotiation of areas combined with the expressed political will to establish PAs, means that overall there will be an acceptable political niche for PAs.

102.

103. **Institutional and governance risks to sustainability (ML).** The PA Act 2010 gives the legal foundation for the PA work, but as yet a Forest Act has not been passed, reportedly, according to a couple of interviewees, partly because it would have a widespread impact in constraining commercial logging, so although SFM work has support in the 2020 Forest Policy, this is no more than a strategy document without legal 'teeth'. However, the relatively modest areas for community based SFM proposed under the project should not threaten the commercial logging industry and as long as they also offer the potential for selective logging also, should also receive support from communities. The other area of risk is competing and contradictory agenda among ministries, particularly forestry versus environment versus agriculture. The project could play a pivotal role in helping ensure cross sectoral collaboration, synergies and compromises, rather than competition and contradiction.

'There is a need for an officer within the provincial government establishment to take responsibility over these projects once declared PA status in terms of sustainability and success'. Provincial government staff.

104. **Environmental risks to sustainability (ML).** As well as vulnerability to impacts of climate change, the SIs are vulnerable to a range of natural disasters, so as well as helping mitigate the impact of these by rehabilitating the ecosystem, there will be risks that changes in climate can affect livelihoods through changes in rainfall, acidity in the soil and sea combined with more extreme weather events and the risk of volcanic activity or earthquakes. These might render PAs as a 'luxury' for communities who might have higher order priorities to worry about than the 'soft benefits; of ecosystem recovery. On the other hand, these problems actually motivate communities and government to support PA establishment etc.

105. **Catalysis and replication (ML).** Communities that were interviewed during the review clearly value their forests and want to see them protected and recover, but on the other hand the growing need for money was also highlighted as the culture changes to a market-based economy with new costs arising such as school fees etc. Getting this balance right within the integrated approach of the project is seen as key to replication and sustainability, as the livelihood elements of the integrated approach were not developed at the time of the MTR their efficacy could not be assessed. With the PAs the success of the Trust Fund development was seen as key to sustainability and replication. Although intentions and speculative ideas on the Trust Fund seems promising at the MTR stage no actual progress had been made. It was noted by NGOs interviewed that the approaches must be simple and user friendly and based as much as possible on local realities and practices, this seems to be happening. It was also noted that the project must ensure the information it generates is in a secure and accessible repository when it phases out, ideally online, for catalysis and replication to happen, see recommendations. Likewise, the need to fully engage ministries was widely appreciated to ensure institutionalisation at the time of the MTR some of the panned inter-ministerial committees and meetings had taken place. The project has a lot to do in the coming two years to get the building blocks in place to maximise changes of catalysis and replication, based on the will, intentions and plans, felt that although challenging there was still a moderately likely chance of success.

 "The government through the Ministry of Environment must also take active role and support the declared PA areas with finances to enable sustainability". Project field coordinator.

'The project really needs to keep key processes and plans simple and built on local realities – rather than being pushed from the outside - so that they are replicable even without a project, otherwise nothing will be scale-able post project'. NGO

Risk assessment to sustainability – validation and comments on risk assessment and mitigation actions from PIR 2020-2021.

The MTR consultants agree with the risk rating in the PIR as long as the comments/recommendations from the MTR consultants are considered.

	Risk	Risk rating[7]	Mitigation Actions	Progress on mitigation actions[8]	Comments/recommendations from the MTR consultants.
1	Natural changes in ecosystems and associated species due to gradual changes in climate and extreme weather events.	M	The monitoring system developed under Component 3 and 5 will be designed to identify changes in ecosystems likely to be linked to climate change (e.g. occurrence of forest fires, pests and diseases, spread of invasive species) so that remedial actions can be taken. If necessary, this will be supported by research activities under the same component.	MRV and NFMS training conducted to build capacity to mitigate this risk. NFMS portal development is underway with Forest Department for data and information dissemination to create awareness and to empower reporting.	**The support that the project provides to SINU with regards to curriculum development could include engaging students in research projects associated with monitoring and assessing natural changes in ecosystems and exploring adaptation/resilience strategies.**

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[7] GEF Risk ratings: Low, Moderate, Substantial or High

[8] If a risk mitigation plan had been presented as part of the Environmental and Social management Plan or in previous PIR please report here on progress or results of its implementation. For moderate and high risk projects, please Include a description of the ESMP monitoring activities undertaken in the relevant period".

	Risk	Risk rating[7]	Mitigation Actions	Progress on mitigation actions[8]	Comments/recommendations from the MTR consultants.
2	Productivity changes in forestry and agriculture.	M	Plant and assist natural regeneration of multiple purpose tree species used for restoration and improvements to agriculture (for SLM and income generation) will be selected in such way that they are resilient to the most likely impacts of climate change (e.g. drought, outbreaks of pests and diseases, etc.) and also provide multiple benefits to the local communities. Climate resilient forest and land management techniques will also be promoted in local communities (e.g. soil and water conservation).	Progress made for establishments of tree nursery at two sites in Guadalcanal and arrangement for SLM training through Live and Learn Environmental Education. SFM training needs identified and plan for conducting training is being prepared.	**The project should also look at ways of using appropriate silviculture in SFM to maximise productivity in regenerating forests in the buffer zones.**

	Risk	Risk rating[7]	Mitigation Actions	Progress on mitigation actions[8]	Comments/recommendations from the MTR consultants.
3	Risks to biodiversity from introduction of new invasive alien species	M	SIs, being a nation of small islands is vulnerable to accidental introduction of invasive alien species. The project will ensure that PA management and landscape management also consider monitoring any presence or increase of such species.	PA management plans are prepared for all 30 identified PAs

Biodiversity survey to improve baseline information is in progress

Trainings are being given to herbarium department of MOFR

Herbarium established in SINU

Sample specimen collected during biodiversity field survey will kept in SINU herbarium for teaching purpose. | **Again a potential topic to engage SINU students in.** |

	Risk	Risk rating[7]	Mitigation Actions	Progress on mitigation actions[8]	Comments/recommendations from the MTR consultants.
4	Inadequate funding for protected area management.	M	The financing strategy will assess all possible sources of funding and focus on those most easily secured. Trust fund for PA management will be established. Protected area management activities will also be prioritised in case funding is limited.	Discussion with relevant ministries on PATF has been started to establish a national PATF. International and National consultants identified and recruitment is underway. PATF establishment is expected to be completed by Q2 of 2022.	**The development of the strategy for the PA Trust fund development must be conducted in a very inclusive way from communities' right up to ministerial level to build ownership and commitment over the strategy. For example, if the strategy developed involves a levy on round log exports, this would require high level political buy-in, will and commitment.**

	Risk	Risk rating[7]	Mitigation Actions	Progress on mitigation actions[8]	Comments/recommendations from the MTR consultants.
5	Incentives are too low to persuade landowners to change their behavior.	H	The project will focus on PA management, CC, SLM and SFM activities that are both good for the environment and economically viable. The project will also devote time and resources to explain why and how improved forest and land management techniques can benefit the land owners economically. The project will minimise and try to avoid monetary incentives wherever possible, unless these can be sustained. Instead it will focus more on income generating activities. When these are proposed, they will be based on a detailed and realistic analysis of costs and benefits, learning from experiences on other similar projects. The project will also ensure that the benefits are distributed in a way that is reasonable, fair and equitable.	There has been some progress in one project site in Choiseul province where one PA declared as NAKAU site resulting in extra income for community member. That has generated interest among other members to go for PA establishment. PATF will also add value and generate interest in landowner groups and change their behaviour Positive support from MECDM and MOFR about capitalizing PATF is also a welcoming move	**Although the link with the NAKAU carbon offsetting benefits is a welcome development and should be explored for other sites, it is important not to 'put all the eggs in the carbon offset basket' and in addition focus on ways of maximising returns from the buffer zone, for example through more productive SFM, SLM and appropriate enterprise support and improved market access.**

	Risk	Risk rating[7]	Mitigation Actions	Progress on mitigation actions[8]	Comments/recommendations from the MTR consultants.
6	Lack of experience in fund management	M	The project will establish the PA Trust fund as per the provisions of the Protected Area Act with community involvement for sustainable management of PAs. The project will put a special emphasis on training the key stakeholders in fund management and operation, including those MECDM staff that will have an ongoing role in supporting the functions of the Fund. This is also a potential risk at local level. The project aims to ensure that local PA management committees have the capacity, and are aware of their obligations and responsibilities, to manage any funds received for management of individual protected areas.	Discussion with relevant ministries on PATF has been started to establish a national PATF. PATF establishment will laydown the foundation and provide training on fund management	**Again this will require substantive engagement and capacity building of all stakeholders by the consultants hired to develop the PA Trust Fund.**

	Risk	Risk rating[7]	Mitigation Actions	Progress on mitigation actions[8]	Comments/recommendations from the MTR consultants.
7	Logging pressure	H	In 2014, 2.1 million m3 of logs were harvested, against an estimated sustainable annual cut of about 300,000 m3. The project aims to set aside some of the last remaining intact lowland forest areas, which may come under pressure from logging interests. This risk will be mitigated through constant dialogue with the policy makers in relevant government ministries (MOFR, MECDM, Finance and Treasury) and through awareness-raising activities with the general public.	From June 2020, Government of Solomon Islands has passed Forest Resource and Timber Utilization (Felling Licences) (Amendment) Regulation 2020 which makes felling above 400 m above sea level illegal. This will boost our implementation efforts on ground.	**During the review it was mentioned many times that you cannot 'ban logging' but that a transition to sustainable logging was a more feasible goal considering the economic importance of logging to communities and the government. The project could assist in this transition by spearheading community based SFM and selective logging approaches in the buffer zones.**

	Risk	Risk rating[7]	Mitigation Actions	Progress on mitigation actions[8]	Comments/recommendations from the MTR consultants.
8	Limited support and implementation capacity in government.	H	The capacity of government agencies in the Solomon Islands is weak. The project will emphasise working in collaboration across agencies and with local communities to reduce the demands placed on government staff. Capacity building will also target key weaknesses in government and develop strategies to overcome these for the long-term sustainability of project outcomes. Broader support for the project will be generated by awareness raising targeted at influential decision makers at local, provincial and national levels. These mitigation measures will also be supported by regular monitoring of project progress, so that corrective actions can be taken if necessary.	Government continues to face human and institutional capacity shortage. A capacity gap assessment workshop was organized in Q4 of 2019 which outlined various needs under the project objectives. IFM Project is working on broad institutional and human resource capacity development under the umbrella of GEF focal areas and IFMP. Institutional capacity building in SINU, MECDM, MOFR and MAL is in progress under various outcomes	**The project is playing an important role in strengthening capacity at a national level, especially the support to the development of 3 new university courses. A cross cutting theme that emerged throughout the review regarding capacity building was the need to keep it practical and skills based rather than too much 'teaching' or it being too abstract.**

	Risk	Risk rating[7]	Mitigation Actions	Progress on mitigation actions[8]	Comments/recommendations from the MTR consultants.
9	Dissatisfaction or disengagement of communities in project areas.	M	Communication between local people and donor projects can be difficult and could lead to confusion and misunderstanding of the work of the project and it' capacity to deliver on community expectations. Significant time will be spent during the early stages of the project in establishing a framework for ongoing community consultation, as well as ensuring a sound understanding of community and project objectives and the approach to delivering on these. To facilitate in this process, specific project personnel will be tasked to co-ordinate communications with communities in the individual project areas.	No specific project personnel has yet been identified to deal with the issue. However, community engagements and consultations is proving to be on going and somewhat is in this direction to lower such risk.	**At times the communities had high expectations for benefits especially carbon offset benefits. It will be important that expectations are managed and nothing is promised that cannot be guaranteed to deliver.** **To assess dissatisfaction and to troubleshoot effectively it is important that the project improves Participatory M&E and establishes a grievance redress mechanism (See recommendations)**

	Risk	Risk rating[7]	Mitigation Actions	Progress on mitigation actions[8]	Comments/recommendations from the MTR consultants.
10	Disagreement between different landowner groups on establishment of protected areas and other key project interventions.	M	The presence of several landowner groups in or near a given project area, such as is the case near the proposed PA of Mount Maetambe, has the potential to lead to complexities during project implementation. Collaboration and involvement of landowning communities will be crucial for the long-term success of this project. Therefore, communities will be active participants from the very beginning in the design, implementation and management of project activities. The project design will also be guided and learn from the ongoing work on customary land reform and from the stakeholders involved in that process. The main strategy proposed to overcome reluctance will be the provision of incentives (i.e. development benefits) for communities to engage in conservation (see above). However, the project will also build upon the existing interest in conservation and explain how conservation and improved forest and land management techniques can benefit them in other ways.	IFMP has started discussion with tribal leader / land owner groups to discuss the alternate livelihood support activities for PA buffer areas. This risk has resulted changing the project implementation modalities for PA establishment landowner groups don't agree with each other and this has resulted in identification of 30 PAs against indicated 5 PAs in project document. This has resulted in increasing the cost of PA establishment	**In addition, enhanced PM&E and the development of better social safeguard system including a grievance redress mechanism will help to mitigate this risk. (See recommendations)**

	Risk	Risk rating[7]	Mitigation Actions	Progress on mitigation actions[8]	Comments/recommendations from the MTR consultants.
11	Linkages with other institutions	M	As per the situation assessment made during the project preparation phase field visits, the project will develop linkages with private and public institutions operating in the project sites for effective and unhindered implementation of project activities. However, in the case of the Tina River Hydro Project (TRHDP), while recognizing that these linkages are essential, the project should maintain its independence from TRHDP while engaging with landowners and other stakeholders. At the same time it is important that the project maintain ongoing communication and collaboration with the TRHDP office.

This approach should ensure that the relationship between communities and the project is determined separately from relationships between these same communities and TRHDP. | IFMP has established linkage with other ongoing projects like REDD+ and other forest department ongoing projects to build upon and deliver more effective measures for broader visibilities in capacity development. | **Possibly playing a role in strengthening the Working Group of forestry actors set up by JICA could help with coordination.** |

4.5. Factors affecting performance

Overall – moderately Satisfactory (MS).

5.Factors affecting progress (rating required)	(Project design) Is the project design, including the indicators and targets of the Results Framework, appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes? Are the project's logic coherent and clear? To what extent are the project's objectives and components, clear, practical and feasible within the timeframe?
	(Project execution and management) To what extent did FAO-SAP effectively discharged its role and responsibilities related to the management and administration of the project? What have been the main challenges in relation to the management and administration of the project? How well have risks been identified and managed? What changes are needed to improve delivery in the second half of the project?
	(Financial management and Co-financing) What have been the challenges related to the financial management of the project? To what extent has the pledged co-financing been delivered, and has there been any additional leveraged co-financing provided since implementation began? How has any short fall in co-financing or materialization of greater than expected co-financing affected project results?
	(Project oversight, implementation role) To what extent has FAO delivered on its project oversight and supervision?
	(Partnerships and stakeholder engagement) To what extent has other actors, such as NGOs and Private Sector, in particular those who were involved in project design, been involved in implementation, and what has been the effect of their involvement/non-involvement on the project results? What are strengths and challenges of the project's partnerships?
	(Communication and knowledge management) How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results to partners, stakeholders and a general audience? How can this be improved?
	(M&E design) Is the M&E plan practical and sufficient?
	(M&E implementation) Does the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan? Has information been gathered in a systematic manner, using appropriate methodologies? To what extent has information generated by the M&E system during project implementation been used to adapt and improve project planning and execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability? How can the M&E system be improved?

106. **(Project design) Is the project design, including the indicators and targets of the Results Framework, appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes? Are the project's logic coherent and clear? To what extent are the project's objectives and components, clear, practical and feasible within the timeframe**?

107. **(Moderately Unsatisfactory MU)** largely because of the unrealistic overambitious targets in the design which were neither practical or feasible. Regarding readiness, difficulties in timely recruiting of a team with the right capacities also contributed to difficulty in 'hitting the ground running' and adjusting quickly to the complex realities, especially with the project breaking new ground as a pioneer. Regarding the capacities of the team, it has been difficult because of a small pool of talent in the SIs to get the right staff for the right job on the project team, there are certainly capacity gaps, for example variation in staff performance among field coordinators. The small team also does seem to be overstretched and understaffed and as a result the senior management seem to have to take on considerable administrative and finance responsibilities and show remarkable flexibility in being 'masters of all trades' across this diverse project, which is commendable but does detract for more strategic and managerial level work. The PMU did its best to address weaknesses in design, for example by focussing on more suitable sites and preparing to withdraw support more from less suitable sites, however the team felt it was with a straightjacket of the log frame targets until the MTR could formally recommend revisions.

108. **(Project execution and management) To what extent did FAO-SAP effectively discharged its role and responsibilities related to the management and administration of the project? What have been the main challenges in relation to the management and administration of the project? How well have risks been identified and managed? What changes are needed to improve delivery in the second half of the project?**

(Moderately Satisfactory MS)

109. **Logistical and staff challenges.** Lack of proper office space and equipment for the PMU impacted efficiency and productivity also for field coordinators. This continued until June 2020 when the lead Ministry for the project (MECDM) moved to a new office complex and offered enough space for the project staff. Isolation of admin and operations unit from project operations and the project field sites has impacted staff performances and outputs delivery.

110. **Staff gaps.** It was pointed out numerous times during the review that although the project team was doing its best, it simply had too much on its plate and was overstretched. Areas where the project could do with some support included finance, HR, admin, coordination and communication with partners, Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation, lesson learning, documentation and communication. Also there was some suggestions that a dedicated PA coordinator was required to handle oversight and backstopping of this complex task. See recommendations.

111.**Negative impact of Covid-19.** COVID 19 considerably disrupted project execution and management, particularly regarding support from outside the country, notably the CTA was based overseas for a considerable amount of day supporting the project remotely, international consultants and FAO international support were disrupted. Communication was downgraded to only online which had clear disadvantages.

112. **Desire to strengthen engagement by ministries in review and planning.** Project planning, monitoring and evaluation happens through the approved work plan by the PSC and half yearly assessment during steering committee as well as CPF review. On the other hand, at PMU level,

CTA organizes monthly meeting with all project staffs to update and receive feedbacks and to resolve the issues. Note that because of COVID and the CTA having to relocate to India and work remotely that there was significant disruption. Note that a PSC has not happened since 2019, but another is planned shortly after this review. The engagement of the three ministries seems to have been satisfactory in the execution of the project, but there is room for improvement with a tightening up of joint review and planning meetings with the ministries on a more regular basis. Likewise, more frequent PSC meetings may be necessary. Day to day project management seems on the whole satisfactory through mainly through workplans and monthly management meetings.

113. **Challenges in maintaining performance consistently in field sites.** Communication with field coordinators is a challenge because of remoteness, there also is variation in the perceived performance of the coordinators and other service providers from site to site. With only 2 years left the performance of the field coordinators, service providers and provincial government will be essential to the success of the project. A more regular and systematic participatory monitoring and evaluation, combined with rapid troubleshooting and support to deal with bottlenecks as well as more face to face (where possible) meetings with field coordinators, upgrading of skills, peer sharing, learn and team building might all be helpful (See recommendations). Note that online trainings were viewed as having mixed results and practical 'on the job trainings' were seen as more valuable. Also with work evolving to focus on sites where there is less conflict and more potential there might also have to be a reorganization of staff and support across the sites (See recommendations).

114. **High standard of service providers.** The service providers and LoAs have both been of good standard and appropriate to the task at hand and have high levels of expertise and existing experience that the project can build on and from. As with the ministries, enhancement of these experienced partners in project review and planning could be beneficial to both the project and the partners (See recommendations).

115. **Key problem in both execution and management is that there is no national FAO office or national project bank account.** A key problem that was raised numerous times throughout the reviews was that with no full FAO country office in the SIs, there has been no national bank account which has meant the execution of financial management has been extremely challenging (See financial management for more details). Likewise for similar reasons there has been criticisms and frustrations expressed with procurement procedures and to a lesser extent hiring processes for consultants.

116. **Project extension justified and fully necessary.** There already has been a significant extension agreed (prior to the MTR) to the project from July 30, 2021, to July 30, 2023. The MTR fully supports this extension on the basis of delays in recruitment, interruptions caused by COVID and unexpected challenges caused by the pioneering nature of the project, many activities are only in their preparatory stage even with the project's original end date approaching.

'In terms of communication between the project and government ministries, yes informally the project coordinators do keep in touch with the ministries but, maybe quarterly review and planning meetings with ministry staff would be good, so that the ministries can then incorporate this into our plans, so we can support the project well, it makes planning better for us and gives us more ownership over project activities'. Ministry staff.

'Both the recruitment and procurement process have been slow I think because they have can't be handled at a national level here, I would recommend looking ways to streamline this by delegating the process to the national level more. There are established processes at national level already for other projects. This would help project execution' Ministry staff

C. (Financial management and Co-financing) What have been the challenges related to the financial management of the project? To what extent has the pledged co-financing been delivered, and has there been any additional leveraged co-financing provided since implementation began? How has any short fall in co-financing or materialization of greater than expected co-financing affected project results?

(Moderately Unsatisfactory (for finance within control of Regional office and project satisfactory however – however not having a national project bank account caused considerable difficulties – hence the moderately unsatisfactory))

Table: Project expenditure by outcome at the mid-term stage (this is the direct project expenditure not including co-financing)

Component/outcome	Estimated total cost at design stage (USD)	Estimated cost at mid-term review stage (USD) – note that as estimates half the total amount was calculated – as project roughly half way through many activities at this stage	Actual cost/ expenditure mid- term review stage (June 2021) (USD)	Expenditure ratio – actual/planned at mid-term point	Balance remaining
Component. 1: Development of the	2,010,080.4	1,005,040.2	864729.23	86%	1145351.17

terrestrial protected area network					
Component 2: Integrated land management	929,484	464,742	504952.08	109%	424531.76
Component 3: Capacity building for the management of forest carbon	1,056,288	528,144	552325.66	105%	503962.34
Component 4: Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests	0	0	Expenses for here coming from other components.		
Component 5: Capacity building for BD conservation, SLM and SFM	1,411,524	705,762	636858.06	90%	774665.94
Project management	269,078	134,539	235161.29	174%	33,916.71
Overall project total (GEF)	5,676,454	2,838,227	2,794,026.32	98%	2,882,427.92

Budget versus expenditure review. With the MTR actually happening towards the end of the original project period and with many activities delayed, rather than look at actual spend versus estimated spend at the mid-term point, the table above looks at actual spend against 50% of the budgeted amount. This is because, roughly speaking, the project is maybe around half way through some of its activities at this stage. The major underspend was on Component 1, this is partly explained by the seed funding for the Trust Fund and the financial support for livelihoods not being initiated yet. Actual expenditure and budget are fairly aligned under Component 2. Funding might seem to be high for component 2 and 5 considering the lag behind expected progress, but it must be noted that funds have sometimes already been disbursed to project partners who are yet due to deliver more outputs. An issue of concern is the actual running/management costs of the project have been almost completing used up, the remaining amount for the next 2 years is only US$33, 917, the finance officer should inform GEF of this as there are stipulations regarding increases in management costs. See recommendations.

Challenges in calculating co-finance figures, changes in co-financing and community contribution not factored in (See table that follows). Co-financing figures were provided by the PMU to the MTR consultants and cover the source, type and amount and these figures were based

on some estimations and assumptions by the PMU and some challenges in finding information concerning the original calculations. With all co-finance contributions being in kind (except FAO) and not in cash, it is understood that the calculations might be rough estimates of giving a monetary value to staff time and resources used in work somehow related to complementary to the project activities. The PMU has assumed for partners that are still involved and contributing to related activities, that the original estimates are still valid. For partners that were assumed to be involved at design stage but have not been involved in any way, the figures are zero. These partners simply stopped being a active in the sectors or did not engage as assumed. Although it is extremely challenging to accurately work out co-financing especially when in kind, it is suggested by the MTR consultants, that ideally annually but at least prior to the end of the project, to set a task to partners to again calculate co-finance based on putting a monetary value on the actual contribution by the end of the project. Also what is absent from the co-financing table and very important to consider in a project that is supporting community based initiatives, is an estimate of community contribution, for example in establishing and managing PAs. (See recommendations for both of these issues).

Sources of Co-financing[1]	Name of Co-financer	Type of Co-financing	Amount Confirmed at CEO endorsement / approval	Actual Amount Materialized at 30 June 2021(When MTR conducted)	Expected total disbursement by the end of the project
Government	Ministry of Forestry and Research	In-kind	13,000,000	6,500,000	13,000,000
Government	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock	In-kind	8,000,000	4,000,000	8,000,000
Government	Ministry of Environment, Conservation, Disaster Management and Meteorology	In-kind	2,500,000	1,250,000	2,500,000
	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)	In-kind	2,030,000	0	0
	Kolombangara Forest Products Limited (KFPL)	In-kind	500,000	250,000	500,000
	Secretariat for Pacific Community (SPC)	In-kind	500,000	0	500,000
	Natural Resources Development Foundation (NRDF)	In-kind	750,000	375,000	750,000
	Solomon Islands Community Conservation Partnership (SICCP)	In-kind	15,500	0	15,500
	Live and Learn	In-kind	200,000	100,000	200,000
	Tina River Hydro Power Development Project (TRHDP)	In-kind	1,325,000	662,500	1,325,000

	American Museum of Natural History (AMNH)	In-kind	350,000	0	350,000
	FAO	Cash	1,000,000	200,000	1,000,000
	FAO	In-kind	500,000	250,000	500,000
		TOTAL	30,670,500	13,587,500	28,640,500

No national bank account for the project caused considerable problems. Financial management within the control of the project team and regional office, seems to have been satisfactory but throughout the review the fact that there is no national bank account for the project because there is no FAO country office, was raised again and again along with a myriad of delays and extra complications this raises with regards to project implementation. This led to the dropping of the score to moderately unsatisfactory. The regional office seems to have been very creative in developing often parallel systems to manage the financial management constraints of not having a national account. This is to be commended but involves considerable extra work. A range of project stakeholders requested special attention to addressing this issue. See quotations that follow.

> 'The slowness and bureaucratic processes from FAO and especially with payment processes is a concern and that has also contributed in some ways to the slow pace of the project implementation' Ministry staff.

> 'The problem of no project bank account at national level is a problem not only in the Solomons, but also in Fiji and Tonga, we had someone visit from the FAO finance office two years ago, at least these countries we have assisted FAO rep. There is not a full- fledged representation in SIs. It is an ongoing problem, the headquarters are supposed to come back to us with solutions' Project staff

> '**There is a need for improvement maybe a finance officer located at Honiara office' Ministry staff

> 'One key way of improving project execution is to solve the problem related to a national project bank account, there must be a way to solve this, my recommendation for FAO is to urgently look into this. Other projects/funders like JICA do this, FAO should be able to'. Ministry staff.

D. (Project oversight, implementation role) To what extent has FAO delivered on its project oversight and supervision?

(Satisfactory)

117. **Good oversight but problems in effective support and communication with field coordinators.** The project oversight seems to have been satisfactory, especially considering the many challenges related to communication between the project team (notably the field

coordinators) and disruption caused by COVID when for a time the CTA worked remotely. Although insufficient face to face contact with field coordinators and irregular and varying field visits from the main office has contributed to some problems in some sites.

118. **Desires expressed for more regular engagement of ministries in project review and planning.** The PSC seems to operate fairly well – although with a long delay since the last meeting (2019) it urgently needs to meet and meet more frequently. The representatives of ministries and partners expressed good adhoc communication with the project team around specific activities, however it was suggested several times during the review that a ramped up, more formal review and planning process with ministries, possibly at a quarterly level would help with the government incorporating the project activities into plans develop more government buy-in.

119. **Good support from FAO team, but project team overstretched.** The LTO changed during the project, the first one was noted for providing quality technical inputs especially on forestry, although it was noted he had a broad range of other responsibilities. The second LTO was commended for timely and dedicated support, also as the PO he has been responsible for management numerous administrative and financial challenges effectively. It is also important to note that the small project team was commended throughout the review for managing so many complex tasks and challenges, especially the CTA and NPC who clearly have worked very hard managing an extremely diverse set of project activities and challenges, many unforeseen at design stage. Some stakeholders commented that it would seem that the team is overstretched and as well as reducing some targets, increasing the staff team might help to carry the load better (See recommendations).

E. (Partnerships and stakeholder engagement) To what extent has other actors, such as NGOs and Private Sector, in particular those who were involved in project design, been involved in implementation, and what has been the effect of their involvement/non-involvement on the project results? What are strengths and challenges of the project's partnerships?

(Satisfactory)

120. **Seemingly at times insufficient local stakeholder engagement in project design.** There is no stakeholder engagement plan. There does seem to have been broad government input into project design as the project does clearly reflect government priorities. Where there might have been some gaps is in pre-project assessment of suitability of field sites with local stakeholders as the magnitude of challenges around competing land claims was unforeseen at design stage.

121. **Variance in quality of engagement between across project sites.** The project is implemented in close collaboration with the three main relevant ministries, although as mentioned above tightening up of joint review and planning processes would be helpful. At provincial level coordination seems to vary between the field coordinators, service providers and provincial government. This might require as proposed at national level more coordinated joint review and planning (See Recommendations).

122. **Good collaboration with LoA partners and others in forest sector but could be strengthened.** Communication with partners engaged through LoAs is good but it was suggested

they could be more engaged in project review and planning exercises to be in a position to help. Also a working group with JICA as the secretariat brings a range of forestry related organizations together three times a year to informally share progress and try to build collaboration and avoid overall. However, during the review several participants suggested that although this working group was good, it could go further developing a joint review and planning mechanism for all projects to more formally coordinate. Some also suggested IFMP or FAO could take over chairing this group after JICA stops this role but with the project team already stretched this might be too much extra work.

123. Other aspects of the project related to stakeholder engagement are included in the next section on Cross Cutting Factors.

F. (Communication and knowledge management) How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results to partners, stakeholders and a general audience? How can this be improved?

(Moderately satisfactory)

124. **Knowledge generation and communication on lessons currently weak.** Although it was not emphasised at the design phase what came out clearly during the review was the wealth of customary and traditional land and forest management systems in the SI and that building from those would be more feasible than introducing or imposing new outside ideas when establishing PAs, SFM and SLM. Harnessing and documenting traditional systems would seem to be an area of knowledge generation and communication that the project could play an important role in (See recommendations). Although the project is producing significant amounts of useful data for example the reference level for carbon, biodiversity baseline, potentially guidelines on establishing PA etc. there were concerns expressed during the review that this information might either not be managed well long term or made accessible widely. A gap was identified where the project needs to strengthen its knowledge management and accessibility systems, aiming to institutionalize the data and make it more user friendly and accessible for example on online portals so can be accessible after the project ends (See recommendations).

G. (M&E design) Is the M&E plan practical and sufficient? And H. (M&E implementation) Does the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan? Has information been gathered in a systematic manner, using appropriate methodologies? To what extent has information generated by the M&E system during project implementation been used to adapt and improve project planning and execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability? How can the M&E system be improved?

(Moderately Satisfactory)

125. **Requires enhancement in systematic Participatory M&E to aid adaptive management and lesson learning.** There is a tracking of project achievements against the log frame and targets, but there are specific gaps related to Participatory M&E, particularly in systematically harnessing regular feedback from communities at all project sites and feeding into replanning and

troubleshooting activities – i.e. helping with adaptive management. There was also reported to be a big gap since any M&E site visits were conducted at all. Regarding how SMART the indicators are, the main criticism would be regarding them not always being achievable or realistic – as mentioned previously specifically the target for PAs is overambitious (See recommendations). Again it would seem that insufficient staff resources and time are available at present for a more systematic participatory M&E system, including a more rigorous gender dimension and safeguard assessment (See cross cutting issues). For some suggested modifications in the log frame see suggestions in red in the below summary log frame.

Table. Summarized logframe with some suggested revisions/modifications to consider.

Project Components	Outcomes	Outputs (suggested revisions in red)
Component 1: Development of the terrestrial protected area network	Outcome 1.1 Terrestrial protected area network expanded to improve ecosystem coverage.	Output 1.1.1 Community agreements to designate new protected areas
	Outcome 1.2 Improved management effectiveness of new and existing terrestrial protected areas.	Output 1.2.1 Effective inter-sectoral coordination for PA management
		Output 1.2.2 Current weaknesses in protected area management identified and rectified through the establishment and implementation of conservation agreements with communities and management plans
	Outcome 1.3 Sustainability of protected area management improved through sustainable financing and local income generating activities.	Output 1.3.1 National Level PA financing strategy established and functioning
		Output 1.3.2 Sustainable income generating activities **in each protected area** or buffer area **as part of PA management plans**. (Suggest to modify this so that this would broaden the possibilities beyond the restrictive PA management area to SLM and SFM areas also.)
Component 2: Integrated land management	Outcome 2.1 Improved decision-making in management of production landscapes.	Output 2.1.1 Assessment of impacts of current land-use practices on biodiversity, land degradation and the provision of other ecosystem services (ecosystem valuation) and identification of potential areas for improvement.
		Output 2.1.2 Policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for land-use change reviewed **and**

Project Components	Outcomes	Outputs **(suggested revisions in red)**
		revised as necessary. Suggest to change to and 'recommendations for revision identified as necessary and guidance developed on community based SFM and SLM' to be more realistic – rather than actual regulatory reform which is too ambitious.
		Output 2.1.3 Mechanism for policy coordination between sectors (i.e. government ministries and agencies)
	Outcome 2.2 Improved land use practices promoted	Output 2.2.1 Sustainable land and forest management techniques applied in protected area buffer zone
		Output 2.2.2 Training Programme on SLM
		Output 2.2.3 Area of forest for community based SFM demarcated, simple management plans developed and agreements signed. (Target ha could be identified but must be realistic – not that at present it assumes trainings along will result in area under SFM which will not necessarily happen. This might not be achievable under the project only but through collaborations with others with expertise in SFM and community-based approaches.
		Output 2.2.4. Area for SLM agreed and management objectives and activities identified
		Output 2.2.5 Pilot sites with an integrated set of PA, SFM, SLM areas with combined livelihood activities (A realistic target could be set).
Component 3: Capacity building for the management of forest carbon	Outcome 3.1National capacities enhanced to monitor carbon stocks in natural forests and plantations	Output 3.1.1 carbon monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) systems for forests in the Solomon Islands
		Output 3.1.2 National capacity to control deforestation, forest degradation and carbon measuring and monitoring
		Output 3.1.3 National forest carbon assessment

Project Components	Outcomes	Outputs (suggested revisions in red)
		Output 3.1.4. Expansion of Nakau programme to link with up to PAs (realistic target set)
		Output 3.1.5. Guidance developed on how to best align PAs with carbon offsetting (this should draw on lessons from link ups with Nakau programme).
Component 4: Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests	Outcome 4.1 Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests	Output 4.1.1 Forest cover increased through agro-forestry, small-scale tree planting and assisted natural regeneration
		Output 4.1.2 Strategy for restoration reviewed and enhanced strategy and plan developed.
Component 5: Knowledge sharing for BD conservation, SLM and SFM	Outcome 5.1 Increased local capacity to monitor, evaluate and manage biodiversity, land-use change and sustainable forest management.	Output 5.1.1 baseline surveys of local flora and fauna, invasive species threats, genetic conservation, etc.
	Outcome 5.2 Community-based forest management (including tree planting) strengthened	Output 5.2.1Training on community- based process steps (mapping, community-based management plans etc.), and trained in SFM techniques. (We suggest this is added in recognition that to establish community based SFM areas will require a process, not only trainings on SFM techniques)
	Outcome 5.3 Policymakers and the general public are better informed about biodiversity conservation, climate change, SLM and SFM.	Output 5.3.1 Training, awareness and educational materials produced and disseminated through SINU, RTC's and relevant Government Ministries and NGO's

| 6. Cross-cutting dimensions | (Gender and minority groups) To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing and implementing the project? Has the project been designed and implemented in a manner that ensures gender equitable participation and benefits?

(Environmental and social safeguards) To what extent where environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project? |
|---|---|

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	With a specific focus on implementation of PAs, what are the livelihood impacts on community members and particularly the most vulnerable and how are these being mitigated?

4.6. Cross-cutting dimensions

Gender and equity. (Moderately satisfactory). There is no formal gender mainstreaming plan in the project. According to studies, assessment and interviews, there is a strong customary tribal culture that has various norms related to gender roles, but it is not homogenous throughout the islands, were there are both patriarchal and matrilineal systems, in some areas roles are more acutely different between men and women in others there is less differentiation. It is clear that no one size fits all gender strategy can be applied to all project sites but rather it must be tailored to specificities that must be well understood. The project management has pushed for greater inclusion of women in project activities, but what is generally emerging are community committees largely dominated by men. This will require investigation with women as to what the barriers are to participation and how to overcome them, it was noted during the review that men rather than women were likely to travel to meetings when they were held far away from their homes so location and timing of meetings would be important to consider (See recommendations), which might be site specific. The excellent assessment undertaken by Live and Learn under component 2 has a strong gender disaggregated analysis – identifying different perceptions on both problems and solutions for example, this analysis should be expanded to look at impact of PAs and in current forest management use and future SFM as well as monitoring how access, control, benefits etc. as project supported activities proceed (See recommendations).

"I believe that this project is relevant and timely and as a woman, I fully support its aim. I will work closely with other tribal members to ensure that it is established and operates in a way that is beneficial to all community members (men and women)". Moddie Mareka,Tribal member.
'Men are more likely to be less concerned about agricultural problems, and have more belief
"This is an important project for us women and I fully support and I am looking forward to the second consultations". Rose Waiao. Tribal member, Malaita.

"As a woman, I support this project as it helps to conserve the forest and the environment". I am looking forward for the time when our portion of land identified will be declared a PA status". Evelyn Susuta, Tribal member, Malaita

126. **Indigenous peoples (Moderately satisfactory).** Protected Area establishment in many countries has notoriously been top down with often insufficient participation of indigenous people and sometimes enabled through evictions. However, the situation in the SIs is quite different, the

land is largely under customary tenure and use rights with legal recognition, and tribal groups led by chiefs are key decision makers. The PA establishment process as outlined in the PA Act 2010 and the associated toolkit is highly participatory and based on only establishing PAs where there is agreement from local land rights holders and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). However, as the approach currently lacks a Social Safeguard system (see next section), there is currently no systematic way to assess adherence to an FPIC process and to air any grievances.

127. Another important role the project should play even more strongly according to a range of stakeholders interviewed is in harnessing and documenting indigenous customs and practices that could feed into the PA, SFM and SLM strategies, so that the strategies are built on and from what exists. What became clear in the review is that the indigenous people traditionally have strong bonds with the environment and strong stewardship traditions, but that outside pressures and monetization of society had weakened these bonds. Harnessing, documenting and mainstreaming them into approaches for PA, SFM and SLM would help revitalise the bonds (See recommendations).

128. **Environment and social safeguards (Moderately unsatisfactory)** The ESS screening checklist and the E&S risk classification form were completed at design stage and were relevant to the problems identified. There is however a need for strengthening of social safeguards especially a social safeguard mechanism in the Protected Area establishment process. The project with its pioneering activities in developing the process could be instrumental in adding this element in. There is no avenue beyond court redress within the PA establishment process itself for concerned parties to raise and have grievances addressed.

129. When discussing benefits flowing to communities from logging concessions during the review there were often experiences of elite capture within communities reported. With potential benefits from carbon finance, the PA Trust Fund and livelihood support going to the communities, elite capture might again be a risk. Also the restricted use rights will affect those who previously used the Protected Area, the livelihood impact and on whom should be assessed. These and other reasons merit the formulation of a practical Social Safeguard assessment and action plan as a component in the PA establishment process (See recommendations).

130. Regarding environmental safeguards one common feature of PAs in other countries is that with use restricted in PAs, use is often displaced to the area outside. This is why productive SFM and SLM combined with livelihood support is so important in the 'buffer' zones to mitigate such 'leakage'.

5. Conclusions and recommendations
Conclusions

Criteria and *Rating*	Justifications for the conclusions can be found in the appropriate section in the previously described findings.

Relevance *Moderately relevant*	• **The project is highly relevant to GEF, FAO, national, regional and community priorities – particularly with regards to pioneering the new community-based PA establishment process which provides legal protection against commercial logging and conversion to agriculture.** • **However as yet the 'integrated' nature of the project to address problems in a multifaceted approach of interconnected PA/SFM/SLM has not been implemented in full yet so the relevance of the 'integrated' approach at this stage in the project cannot be determined.**
Effectiveness *Moderately satisfactory*	• **Even considering the considerable challenges related to COVID limiting international travel of consultants, recruitment challenges, no national bank account etc. there has been progress across a vast array of project activities, many of them complex pioneering approaches which required extensive 'learning by doing'. Most progress has been made on components 1, 3 and 5, for example under component 3 the support to the national reference level for carbon has been achieved and provides a great foundation for national REDD+ development. Some unplanned progress on linking carbon offsetting to the project supported PAs has been undertaken.** • **Progress is not what was expected at this stage – for example component 2 which was expected to be conducted hand in hand with component 1 is only completing assessment phase. The lag is partly because of the mismatch between the unrealistic targets in the project document and what is realistically achievable in the complex context and with a pioneering approach. However, COVID disruption, challenges with recruitment, in communication with field sites, challenges with logistics and finances and simply the project team being understaffed and overstretched has contributed to limitations in progress.**
Efficiency *Moderately Satisfactory*	• **Resources have generally been used efficiently and there has been good complementarity building on and from what exists and harnessing of existing experiences through partners.** • **Beyond the mismatch between design ambitions and realities, the piloting approach requires more resources as breaking new ground takes more effort, combined with delays, communication and COVID disruption resources have not translated into results as expected at this stage. Also note that the gaps between assumptions and realities have created lots of unexpected work,**

	the assumption was there would be 5 PA processes, where as in reality there will likely be around 30.
Sustainability *Moderately likely to sustain.*	• **The project has developed an impressive holistic approach which has aspects that will help with sustainability if all implemented, for example not only establishing the PAs but also establishing a Trust Fund to finance them, although as yet work on the Trust Fund has not begun. The support of 2 and potentially 3 new university courses could have a lasting legacy of supporting sustained capacity development in forestry, environment and agricultural sectors.** • **Key risks are to financial sustainability of PAs both in terms of government support and community support, significant work required on the PA Trust Fund and community support to strengthen likelihood of sustainability, including integrating SFM, SLM and livelihood enhancement at community level.** • **Regarding knowledge management and communication there needs to be a more concerted strategy to get knowledge into accessible formats in secure repositories for example on online portals before the end of the project so that they are sustained and accessible.**
Factors affecting performance *Moderately Satisfactory*	• **It is an extremely complex multi-faceted project to execute and manage, covering a vast array of activities over three ministries and covering field activities in diverse locations, national level activities and numerous pioneering activities. The project team must be commended for managing to progress despite the challenges.** • **Stand out factor affecting performance is the lack of a national project bank account causing significant financial management challenges.** • **The unrealistic targets have affected performance and relaxing the straight jacket of unfeasible targets will provide space for the project to consolidate its focus.** • **Project participatory M&E, knowledge management and communication are also not fit for purpose.**
Cross cutting issues *No rating required.*	• **A key strong element with regards to protecting indigenous people's rights is that customary land tenure is enshrined in law. This combined with the community based and consensual requirements in PA establishment mitigate some of the social risks of PA establishment.** • **Currently there is an absence of a social safeguard mechanism within the PA establishment process, particularly a grievance redress mechanism within the PA establishment process.**

	• **Women's involvement needs improvement and should be developed on a site-by-site basis because of specificities regarding gender roles.** • **The importance of harnessing and revitalising indigenous knowledge and traditional customary management was highlighted during the review and there needs to be a more explicit focus on this in the work with PA, SFM and SLM and in the curriculum development at the university.**

Table: General overall assessment of project

(a) progress towards achievement of the project's development objective(s)	**Moderately satisfactory:** Although falling short on progress if the project stops spreading itself too thin and focusses on consolidating achievements it will likely contribute to the development objective in a significant way. However, it must prioritise livelihood improvement in the remainder of the project to do so.
(b) overall progress on implementation;	**Moderately satisfactory:** The project undoubtedly is well behind where it should be at this stage, but it must be noted that many of the aspects holding back implementation are beyond the project team's control, unrealistic targets, COVID disruption, challenges in recruitment, communication and financial management caused by having no national bank account.
(c) an overall risk rating for the project;	**Moderate risks:** The main risk is actually that the project spreads itself too thin and is unable to consolidate its achievements, for example establishing PAs without succeeding in setting up a system to finance/incentivize them. If it continues on its current trajectory without adaptation at this point, there is a real risk by the end of the project it will have started many activities in a piecemeal way but without consolidation of achievements. Even if the project does not achieve a truly integrated approach as envisaged at the design stage, many of the activities can be 'free standing' and achieve transformational impact on their own – e.g. the university courses, so as long as the project consolidates its focus on completing what it has started, the risks are moderate only.
(d) a statement on the MTR's overall assessment of the project.	**Moderately satisfactory.** This is a highly relevant project to the problem environment, with several pioneering and potentially transformative elements. However, it is simply overambitious and unrealistic in its scope and requires a reduction in scope, and strengthened consolidation of its core elements to ensure a lasting and transformative legacy.

Recommendations

Rec. Number and recommendation	Responsibility	Timing/dates for actions
R.1 Cross cutting recommendation: General strategic shift to an adjusted niche to maximise relevance, that on one hand consolidates the focus on a more realistic set of targets (details under effectiveness) but at the same time increases the added value of the pioneering nature of the project by enhancing an adaptive action learning approach, documentation and communication of lessons (details under effectiveness and factors affecting performance).	Is approved by the FLO. PMU with oversight from PSC.	Cross cutting throughout rest of project – specific suggested targets, revisions and timeframes added in effectiveness recommendations.
R2. Emphasis on harnessing indigenous knowledge to make approaches more relevant and acceptable to local people across all aspects of project work (e.g. in PA establishment, SFM and SLM and curriculum development and research focus) and in lessons dissemination. Students at SINU could get involved through research projects.	PMU, SINU, Live and Learn, other partners and field coordinators	Within next 3 months be explicitly mentioned in workplans.
R3. Under Component 1. reduction in target of PA establishment. Needs to be discussed with provincial staff, ministry representatives, the PMU, the PTF (including LTO) FAO and GEF with oversight by the PSC and the FLO/FAO-GEF Coordination Unit. Based on experiences to date of how long PA establishment takes, a target of around 20-30 PA unevenly distributed among project sites depending on potential might be more feasible. Remove sites where there are intractable conflicts (such as Western Kolombangara) and prioritise most suitable sites. The total area would be difficult to ascertain there should be some flexibility, but again based on experience, possibly an average 1,000 ha per site that is manageable for community groups with limited resources, making a total of around 20'000 to 30'000 ha but with some flexibility required as unpredictable. However, the project would have to ramp up its lesson learning and commit to developing a set of practical guidelines for PA establishment based on its experiences with lessons learned incorporated that should be made available online for ease of access.	PMU in consultation with ministries at national and provincial level, involving service providers, the PTF members (BH and LTO) and with oversight from PSC FAO-GEF CU.	New targets with justifications put forward by the PMU for approval from the PSC in the next PSC meeting as well as agreement from FAO and GEF. For the guidelines and lessons, they should be developed on an ongoing basis but complete and available online prior to the project end.
R4. Under Component 2. The target could also be reduced – with a suggestion from various stakeholders to have the total target to be roughly around the same size as the PA target, e.g. 30 to 40,000 ha However this must be agreed with all key stakeholders. With the reduction in scope the process must be strengthened, particularly integrating/linking the activities to PA establishment, enhancing the SFM element to go beyond training to include piloting community-based SFM process. Like PA establishment this should include maps to identify boundary, agreement over customary	PMU in consultation with ministries at national and provincial level, involving service providers, the PTF members (BH and LTO) and with oversight from PSC FAO-GEF CU.	Should initiate piloting the process as part of the first wave of SFM trainings within next 3 months. Need to work with communities and MoFR to draft agreement within next 6 months.

managers, simple management plan, and clear use rights and responsibilities over the forests in the buffer zone. Such an agreement should ideally preclude concessions for commercial logging and mining, but encourage productive and sustainable management and use of the forest in the buffer zone by communities who sign the agreement. This is important as restrictions in use in the PA might put extra pressure on the buffer, which could be relieved through productive but sustainable management and use, this should include promoting selective - sustainable logging in the buffer zone. As this piloting of Community Based SFM will be a substantive undertaking, it is recommended that coalitions are built with other organisations to develop it, and lessons could also be drawn from other projects such as the JICA pilot on community based SFM.	Drawing on expertise of other projects and organisations such as JICA but also on international experiences that are relevant, for example those working within FAO on Community Forestry, tenure, SFM etc.	
R5. In addition to ramping up support for Trust Fund development as planned in the coming months, livelihood enhancement at community level must be a priority. It is recommended to also fast-track the exploration of 'low hanging fruit' viable enterprise support ideas. These should be based on value chain analysis to identify bottle necks and opportunities, and could range from improving market access, creating economies of scale to cut out middle men, adding value etc. etc. A process plan for support needs to be urgently drawn up on assessing and screening enterprise development ideas – which should be linked to PAs, SFM and/or SLM and should have a special consideration for women's groups as women already are often engaged in marketing activities. Again, this is a substantive undertaking and collaboration with organisations with expertise in livelihood/enterprise development would be helpful, for example Live and Learn has experience of lucrative organic products markets.	PMU in consultation with ministries and overseen by PSC. Drawing on expertise of organisations working in the area of enterprise development.	Plan of action for livelihood support should be drawn up within next 3 months and rolled out rapidly in sites that are progressing most along the PA establishment process – with direct livelihood support within 6 months.
R6. Regarding component 3. Although support for national REDD+ programme could continue, the emerging opportunity of discrete carbon offsetting programmes linked to PAs should be further explored and synergies between the PA establishment process and carbon offsetting programme should be strengthened and the valuable lessons from this experience documented and shared.	PMU in consultation with communities, NAKAU, REDD+ unit and MECDM	Activity for this with appropriate target added in log frame and discussed by PSC in next meeting.
R7. Regarding component 4. Critical review and re-strategizing of restoration work. As well as reducing the target to a realistic amount (at least for government driven reforestation), the project is recommended to support a review and strategizing meeting to explore other options if the current strategy is not working. Based on advice during the review, this would best involve community representatives and the private sector as well as government and NGOs, to develop a reforestation	PMU with MoFR, private sector and communities.	Aim to hold this review meeting within next 4 months.

strategy that was possibly more private sector and community driven.		
R8. Regarding component 5. Discuss contract ending of staff at SINU and explore ways to strengthen course development and support for implementation, this might include reaching out to other actors in the appropriate sectors to pull resources to provide the support the courses require – especially staff capacity. Also provide direct support on how to operate and maintain equipment provided by the project for the courses.	SINU, ministries, PMU and other projects	Need to assess support needs with SINU in next two months and provide comprehensive support
R9. Regarding component 5. A cross cutting and more explicit focus should be on revitalising, harnessing and documenting customary beliefs and practices and including them in processes and documentation of work in PAs, SFM and SLM.	PMU, field coordinators SINU, Live and Learn, new staff working with lesson learning and communication	Should be integrated into work plans within next 3 months.
R10. Regarding component 5. much more emphasise should be put on developing an accessible repository for knowledge products, for example putting the information on an online portal in an accessible format prior to the project phasing out, also related to sustainability. Suggested key knowledge products should include process guidelines for establishing PAs, the carbon reference level, biodiversity survey results, land use policy study and recommendations, and on indigenous knowledge of forests and agricultural land stewardship.	PMU, PSC and ministries, SINU	Should be integrated into work plans within next 3 months.
Recommendations related to Efficiency are under Factors Affecting Performance.		
R11. Stronger collaborations. It is clear that the project cannot do everything with regards to piloting community-based PA, SFM and SLM or the other aspects like setting up new courses at SINU, but it can play an important part. However, for this part to be sustained there must be strong collaboration with others to play the other parts – playing to the strengths of their organizations. The project has had some success with this but needs to be more explicit in building synergies over the next two years through the forest sector working group and others. It is recommended to use the current Forestry Working Group as a platform to discuss stronger joint work-planning to build synergies.	PMU, Forest sector working group, ministries and all partners and projects active in the sectors.	Within next 3 months. More explicit focus on collaboration in the workplans.
R13. Several issues to solve which are not only relevant to this project but others in similar circumstances.	PMU/LTO/Sub regional office to develop proposals with	Suggestions provided by project within next 2 months, via the FAO

• **Must as a priority develop action plan and involve key stakeholders Must as a priority find a way to either set up a project or FAO bank account – this could then be relevant to other countries without fully fledged FAO representation.** • **Must as a priority strengthen staff capacity in admin and finance aspects to lower the load on project management.** • **Longer term, explore ways of devolving and making both the procurement and recruitment process faster and relevant for remote countries with small numbers and often low capacities of suppliers.** **Also related to finances, with the project extension, the running/management budget left is only US$33, 917, budget adjustments to deal with the extension are clearly required, the rationale for the increase, where the money will come from and the budget for the next two years will need to be put forward and checked by the finance officer against GEF requirements concerning increasing project management costs.**	justifications and recommendations with support, oversight and approval from finance department, GEF Coordination unit	regional office submitted to the GEF Unit and FAO and FAO finance department. Budget adjustments prepared by PMU to deal with project extension. Within 3 months.
R14. Update log frame based on new achievable targets and revised outputs. Some specific suggestions for consideration are stipulated in Factors Affecting Performance section- M&E, these must be screened and adapted to what is considered desirable and feasible by the PMU, PSC and must be approved by GEF.	PMU with oversight from PSC and the FAO-GEF Unit.	Revised logframe outputs and target approved by PSC within 2 months.
R15. Strengthened Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation, skills support and review and planning with field coordinators and ministries. There should be more consistent Participatory Monitoring and Review of activities at all project sites – possibly quarterly with rapid troubleshooting undertaken when problems arise in either process or performance. Need to likewise provide more skills and materials support and more regular face to face review and planning to the field coordinators, where possible bringing some or all together face to face in the review and planning to also do peer review and peer sharing of lessons among field coordinators. Also it would be ideal to conduct quarterly or half yearly review and planning meetings with the ministries to coordinate work better.	PMU and ministries	System for PM&E and review and planning enhanced within 3 months.
R16. Need to strengthen capacities within the team. With the team already overstretched and with a need to enhance PM&E, review/planning and especially lesson learning documentation and communication it is recommended to explore hiring more staff capacity, possibly covering an umbrella of related work on coordination of project activities, PM&E, review and planning, lesson learning, documentation and communication. This role	PMU and finance officer to propose this for approval by PSC, FAO regional office/HR and GEF.	Budget reallocations explored, job advertised and recruitment (full time or consultant) within next 3 months.

depending on the candidate could also involve gender mainstreaming and development of safeguards – see cross cutting dimensions. There also does seem to be a need for other support staff for example HR/admin assistant that could be combined with finance and procurement, especially in light of the extra financial challenges due to having no national account. However, the finances for this would have to be explored, if reallocations were indeed possible, a proposal would be required by the PMU including the finance officer. Another aspect of strengthening staff capacity and performance is to look into ways to address issues related to office space and operational needs especially at province level which although had improved of late was still a source of some complaint. Finally at the time of this report drafting it was reported that dynamic local community members were being recruited to help with the workload PA establishment process, this is a very welcome development and it is recommended to strengthen this approach.		
R17. Recommend to ask partners to conduct another estimate of co-finance ideally annual, but at least by the final review of the project. In addition it is recommended to work out an estimate of the co-finance contribution of community members to the project activities.	PMU, project partners, community organizations	Ideally annually, but essential before end of the project.
R18. Need for a cross cutting gender strategy/approach which aims to enhance gender mainstreaming, but based on a careful diagnosis with women themselves to understand the best means of engaging them and for what ends, with approaches tailored to context. Rather than being an 'extra', the strategy should be cross cutting and built into ongoing activities, for example specific cross cutting elements of the PA establishment process, or full engagement in management planning for SFM and enterprise support.	PMU	Within next 3 months further assessment with women undertaken and elements to enhance gender equity embedded within project activities.
R19. Social safeguards must be strengthened. A system of social safeguarding must be integrated into the PA establishment process, including a practical and impartial way for communities with a grievance against the process to register their grievance and have it addressed to an appropriate 'neutral' body at provincial level.	PMU, ministries and provincial government	Within next 6 months mechanism developed, then incorporated in PA establishment guidelines
R20. Cross cutting emphasis on harnessing indigenous knowledge on forest and land stewardship. More explicit focus – on harnessing indigenous knowledge and customary practices across all aspects of project work and communicating it – for example in the PA, SFM and SLM work and new SINU courses. Also students could help in documenting indigenous knowledge as part of their research work.	PMU, SINU, Live and Learn, other partners and field coordinators	Within next 3 months be explicitly mentioned in workplans.

6. Lessons learned

At this stage in the project with many activities only in the assessment or establishment phase, not many lessons have been documented, beyond perhaps the analysis conducted by Live and Learn under Component 2 which highlights some of the complex gender dynamics.

However from the perspective of the MTR consultants some interesting lessons and areas for further analysis emerged due the review – these are also reflected in the recommendations but elaborated here. These include the following…

- **Lessons on PA establishment.** Although it is currently not being fully documented, the project team and partners are generating a wealth of lessons in community-based PA establishment, as they figure out the process in a 'learning by doing' way. These lessons could be incorporated into a PA establishment guide which could provide a very valuable resource for others wanting to establish PAs.

- **Lessons on linking utilisation with management/protection.** A key lesson is that although communities want to rehabilitate the forest and protect it against outsider driven commercial logging and mining, they would value an approach that balances use and protection. It could be explored if PAs that although more utilization are management better or worse than those that are more restrictive. This could have implications for the kind of PA approach to adopt. Also community based SFM and community based PA could be compared and contrasted in terms of impact on the forest and on the livelihoods of the communities to draw out lessons on what approach to scale up.

- **Lessons on documenting indigenous knowledge as a basis for revitalization.** It became clear during the review that customary/indigenous stewardship practices towards the forest were strong in the past among the tribal communities and that documenting these would be a good starting point to explore ways to revitalise them within approaches such as PA establishment, SFM and SLM.

- **Lessons on gender.** The Live and Learn assessment pointed to complex and regional variation in gender dynamics and the project could generate many useful lessons on gender roles and on how to tailor approaches to meaningfully engage women based on gender specific dynamics.

Appendices Appendix 1. Assessment-ratings tables.

The following GEF rating table is designed to summarize/provide an overview of assessed progress/effectiveness of the project in reaching Objectives, Outcomes and Outputs against Mid-Term Targets. The colour rating is in accordance with the following scale:

Green = Achieved	Yellow = On target to be achieved	Red = Not on target to be achieved

GEF rating table. Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	End of project target (no mid- term milestones provided)	Actual achievement at MTR?	MTR assessment	MTR Achievement rating	Explanation/justification for any deviation
Component 1: Protected Area establishment							
Outcome 1: 1.1 Terrestrial protected area network expanded to improve ecosystem coverage.	Area formally brought under the national system of protected areas legally designated with the consent of local landowners.	0 ha terrestrial PA formally recognized	Terrestrial protected area network expanded to cover an additional area of 143,000 ha; that covers key biodiversity hotspots	3 tribal regions in one PA Site (Choiseul) have already have their PA areas designated – less than 10,000 ha in total. Another around 27 communities are in process – mainly at consultation phase. Work has including managing numerous complex land disputes and overlapping claims.	(yellow)	Mod satisfactory	Against the original target the progress has not been satisfactory, but this is largely because the original targets were unreaslictic for a pioneering project. However in general as a pioneer piloting prohect - testing out a new process the progress has been moderately satisfactory

GEF rating table. Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	End of project target (no mid- term milestones provided)	Actual achievement at MTR?	MTR assessment	MTR Achievement rating	Explanation/justification for any deviation
1.2. Improved management effectiveness of new and existing terrestrial protected areas.	Protected area management effectiveness score as recorded by METT	Baseline METT scores Kolombangara – 65, Bauro Highlands – 30, Tina-Popomanaseu – 28, Are'areMaramasike – 32, Mount Maetambe–33	METT score increased by 25% over baseline for each PA	• No assessment against METT score provided in time for this draft. • PA management committees and protected area management plans in 16 sites. • Inter-sectorial Coordinating Committee has been agreed following a meeting with ECD, MECDM in March 2021. • Ranger training (75 participants) was held on 27 and 28 April at Malangono South Choiseul.		Moderately satisfactory	As with output 1.1 the progress is way behind where it should be at this stage, even with a reduced target for protected areas rapid progress will be required to get progress towards this output back on track.

GEF rating table. Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	End of project target (no mid- term milestones provided)	Actual achievement at MTR?	MTR assessment	MTR Achievement rating	Explanation/justification for any deviation
1.3 Sustainability of protected area management improved through sustainable financing and local income generating activities.	PA finance scorecard	No formal PAs system and financing system in existent	Target for the scorecard to be established	• Recruitment of one international and one national consultant is underway to undertaken the development of the Trust Fund.		MU	With no actual progress on this output the MTR consultants could not assess the function or form of the Trust Fund, however there was a wealth of discussions on possibilities already generated and strong support for its establishment evident.
	Funds generated from local level income generating activities	0	At least USD 600,000 generated from sustainable income generation activities	No achievement, only some aspects of assessment under component 2 that may help identify livelihood activities			The project prioritised on identifying, agreeing on and establishing the PAs, it did not start livelihood support as intended, however in one PA site it helped connect the PA with a carbon offset project.

GEF rating table. Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	End of project target (no mid- term milestones provided)	Actual achievement at MTR?	MTR assessment	MTR Achievement rating	Explanation/justification for any deviation
Component 2: Integrated land Management							
Outcome 2.1 Improved decision-making in management of production landscapes	Ha under SLM. Intersectoral body established. National policy and/or plan for land-use issued by government.	0	51,650ha with improved land management. Policy coordination mechanism between sectors established and made functional	• Contracting ongoing of consultant to conduct policy review. • Integrated Land Management Committee being developed with initial preparatory meeting held.		MU	The target under this component both in terms of coverage on the ground and in terms of the aspiration to developed a new policy are unreaslistic. Even with unrealitic targets, progress has been slower under this component than component 1.

GEF rating table. Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	End of project target (no mid- term milestones provided)	Actual achievement at MTR?	MTR assessment	MTR Achievement rating	Explanation/justification for any deviation
Outcome 2.2 Improved land use practices promoted	Number of HH adopting SLM practices such as conservation agriculture, integrated soil fertility management and agroforestry (including women headed households) Area of ha under SLM and SFM area in the buffer zones	0	At least 25% of HH living in/around PAs 5% of total production landscape i.e. 2583 ha under SLM and 20,660 ha under SFM	• Live and Learn conducted an excellent assessment as a basis for work under SLM, various trainings and potentially livelihood support activities.		MS	Good start with the SLM assessment but also urgently needs to make progress on SFM work which would require process support not only the trainings and might require partnerships to implement.
Component 3: Capacity building for the management of forest carbon							
3.1 National capacities enhanced to monitor carbon stocks in natural forests and plantations	Number of peer reviewed national Carbon monitoring reports	0	At least 1	• Forest Reference Level report published by UNFCCC • National Forest Monitoring System and Remote Sensing Training Organized at the Solomon Islands National University from 14-18 June 2021.		S	This element of the project is progressing well, great achievement with the UNFCCC published reference level,an important foundation for the national REDD+ programme and key element of the national REDD+ road map, however there are other

GEF rating table. Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	End of project target (no mid- term milestones provided)	Actual achievement at MTR?	MTR assessment	MTR Achievement rating	Explanation/justification for any deviation
							emerging opportunities to gain carbon finance emerging – the NAKAU project links to PAs and this should be harnessed and explored firther in addition to the national support.
Component 4. Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests							
4.1 Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests	tCO2 sequestered in forests through degraded forest restoration	Unsustainable logging operations affecting carbon stocks	80,000ha Degraded forests restored and carbon stocks enhanced 3183842tC sequestered in 5 years of project.	• Meeting with Forestry in March 2021 has given direction to enhance effort on the establishment of further nursery facilities. • A work plan is being developed by the Forest Development and Restoration Division for implementation.		MU	It was difficult for the MTR consultants to assess progress under this component as there was not much information provided and the sites were not visited. However this component seems to suffer from an overambitious target if the

GEF rating table. Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	End of project target (no mid- term milestones provided)	Actual achievement at MTR?	MTR assessment	MTR Achievement rating	Explanation/justification for any deviation
				• It was difficult during the review to ascertain an exact figure for this. With regards to Minsitry of Forest only reforestations figures of around 200ha per year were given as estimates, but if the planting of the private sector was included then 1000s of ha may indeed be planted duing the project period but would not be driven by the project or the Ministry of Forests.			assumption is that the 80,000 ha will be achieved by the Ministry of Forests alone. It would appear that a review of this strategy is required, the project could help support the review.
Component 5. Knowledge sharing for BD conservation, SLM and SFM							
5.1 Increased local capacity to monitor, evaluate and manage biodiversity, land-use change and sustainable forest management.	M+E system operational and producing regular reports for use in national projects, policies and plans as well as reporting to international organizations	Low levels of capacity to monitor, evaluate and manage biodiversity land use	Local capacity increased to monitor, evaluate and manage biodiversity land use	• Some achievements under this component have already been reported under previous components such as the ranger training.		MS	Although some activities are late starting progress is now being made. Note that the SFM elements should be strengthened.

GEF rating table. Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	End of project target (no mid- term milestones provided)	Actual achievement at MTR?	MTR assessment	MTR Achievement rating	Explanation/justification for any deviation
		change and SFM	change and SFM. An operational M+E system in place producing national	• Satellite remote sensing and GIS training given to more than 40 participants from government, university, and NGOs to enhance the level of MRV capacity. • Biodiversity survey in all five provinces started in June 2021 to enhance and update the baseline			
5.2 Community-based Forest management (including tree planting) strengthened	Number of communities involved in effective forest management	No formal community-based forest management	Community based forest management strengthened and forest areas under effective local community control	• Some achievements under this component reported under other components for example PA management committees and nursery establishment.		Moderately satisfactory	The SFM element needs to be strengthened and with the Forest Policy of 2020 there is an opportunity to pilot community based SFM.

GEF rating table. Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	End of project target (no mid- term milestones provided)	Actual achievement at MTR?	MTR assessment	MTR Achievement rating	Explanation/justification for any deviation
5.3 Policymakers and the general public are better informed about biodiversity conservation, climate change, SLM and SFM.	Number of policymakers and general public aware about issues on BD conservation, CC, SLM and SFM through training and workshops	NA	100	• Under LOA with SINU, two Program Advisory Committee meetings have been conducted regarding 2 new BSc programmes • Equipment installed for courses. • Further courses under development.		MS	The support of the project to develop new degree courses would be a significant achievement for the project but will require a consolidated focus and probably coalitions with others to get the courses up and running with full staff resources to sustain them etc.

GEF rating table.

GEF rating table *GEF criteria/sub-criteria*	Rating[9]	Summary comments
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE		
A1. Overall strategic relevance	HS	Very relevant but would require a more explicit focus on advancing community- based reforestation and SFM.
A1.1. Alignment with GEF and FAO strategic priorities	HS	Well aligned.
A1.2. Relevance to national, regional and global priorities and beneficiary needs	S	Clear relevance to protecting forests against unsustainable commercial logging although requires implementation of integrated approach and livelihood strategies to fully incentivize approach to address beneficiary needs.
A1.3. Complementarity with existing interventions	HS	Pioneering activities that build on and from relevant legislation and policy.
B. EFFECTIVENESS		
B1. Overall assessment of project results	MS	Challenging start with delays, COVID disruption and chasing unrealistic targets has meant the project is behind where it was planned to be, but good foundations in place now if targets more realistic and a more consolidated focus quick progress can be made.
B1.1 Delivery of project outputs	MS	As above
B1.2 Progress towards outcomes[10] and project objectives	MS	As above

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[9] Highly satisfactory (HS),Satisfactory (S),Moderately satisfactory (MS), Moderately unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly unsatisfactory (HU), Unable to assess (UA) . The '→' indicates a comparison between the rating at the beginning of the project and the at the time of the MTR.

[10] Assessment and ratings by individual outcomes may be undertaken if there is added value.

GEF rating table *GEF criteria/sub-criteria*	Rating[9]	Summary comments
- Outcome 1 PA establishment	MS	The initial target was overambitious, but valuable process lessons have been generated which should provide a good basis to make progress towards establishing protected areas in realistic target number of sites. The livelihood support and PA Trust Fund development processes have not started yet and this is worrying with only 2 years left, accelerated progress will need to be made to ensure these essential elements are up and running before project ends.
- Outcome 2 Integrated Land Management	MS	Only at assessment stage, although a high quality assessment related to livelihoods and SLM, other aspects only at planning phase.
- Outcome 3. Carbon capacity building	S	Good progress particularly in developing UNFCCC reference level.
-Outcome 4. Restoration	UA	Not enough information on this aspect to be able to do an accurate assessment.
-Outcome 5. Knowledge and capacity building	S	Good progress on some aspects such as the initial steps in development of the university courses, some aspects are also part of activities under other components. A long way to go on many activities and a very broad spread of activities from timber legality mapping to biodiversity surveys to running university courses make this component challenging to manage,
C. EFFICIENCY		
C1. Efficiency[11]	MS	On paper it would appear that the resources have not translated into expected results efficiently but the targets were unrealistic and it seems that despite the challenges of delays in recruitment, no national bank account, COVID disruption, the resources were employed fairly efficiently.
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES		
D1. Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability	ML	Key factor will be whether a financing and management system for PA can be set up at community, regional and national level within the remainder of the project.
D1.1. Financial risks	ML	Again the key risks are whether the finances will be in place to sustain PA management.
D1.2. Socio-political risks	ML	The PA establishment area is of a modest size so will not be a serious challenge to the politically sensitive issue of commercial logging. One area of project work that might trigger some sensitivity is if a levy is proposed on log exports to

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[11] Includes cost efficiency and timeliness.

GEF rating table *GEF criteria/sub-criteria*	Rating[9]	Summary comments
		fund the PA Trust fund. There does however seem to be political will for PA establishment and a consensual establishment process which ensures that the PAs will not be imposed on communities.
D1.3. Institutional and governance risks	ML	Areas of potential disagreement between ministries will have to be handled carefully, for example balancing the objectives of increasing agricultural production with SFM and PA objectives. The obvious other risks are to do with capacity and resource constraints in the ministries.
D1.4. Environmental risks	ML	The SIs are very prone to natural disasters and climate change which are exacerbated by environmental degradation caused by unsustainable logging etc. but rather than this being only a risk to the project, it also provides a clear incentive for communities and government to engage in project activities.
D2. Catalysis and replication	ML	It really again depends if a viable system is set up to finance/incentivize the PA at national, regional and community level and if the processes are kept simple and straight forward so they can be scaled up without project support in the long run. It was difficult for the MTR consultants to assess this aspect as the Trust Fund is not designed yet.
E. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE		
E1. Project design and readiness[12]	MU	Overambitious targets for PAs based on an assessment that was based on biodiversity priority areas rather than a full assessment of the complexity of customary and other claims over the land.
E2. Quality of project implementation	MS	Considering the many challenges and the project being spread too thin with the project team overstretched, the quality if project implementation is good, but simply too much is being done under challenging circumstances by too few people.
E2.1 Quality of project implementation by FAO (BH, LTO, PTF, etc.)	MS	Again moderately satisfactory with the main complaint and constraint being the extra problems associated with having no national bank account.
E2.1 Project oversight (PSC, project working group, etc.)	MS	PSC especially of late has not met enough, also a more consistent regular review and planning system with ministry engagement is required.

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[12] This refers to factors affecting the project's ability to start as expected, such as the presence of sufficient capacity among executing partners at project launch.

GEF rating table *GEF criteria/sub-criteria*	Rating[9]	Summary comments
E3. Quality of project execution	MS	The institutional set up seems fine and includes all 3 ministries, and it was essential to have field coordinators, but it does seem that at both national and regional level there needs to be closer integration of project plans into government plans
E3.1 Project execution and management (PMU and executing partner performance, administration, staffing, etc.)	MS	PMU seems to be managing well, project partnerships through the LoAs seem to be in general good. There does seem to be variation in project performance across the project sites. The lack of national bank account seems to have burdened the PMU with extra challenges. Staffing does seem to be overstretched, and could be strengthened particularly regarding finance/HR/coordination/PM&E and potentially expertise in less learning/communication and SFM.
E4. Financial management and co-financing	MU	The key problem here is the lack of a national bank account causing a range of challenges in terms of financial management.
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	S	Generally OK, LoAs were negotiated well and there is informal cooperation between all forestry actors through a national working group. Stakeholder engagement at local level seems variable from site to site.
E6. Communication, knowledge management and knowledge products	MU	At the present time the project is weak in generating lessons, yet as a pioneer pilot project this will be an essential added value. There is the need for a much more explicit learning and communication plan that ensures all key knowledge products are prioritized, placed in an accessible online repository etc. and communicated widely.
E7. Overall quality of M&E	MS	Need to strengthen Participatory M&E, particularly at field level with more regular systematic visits and trouble shooting.
E7.1 M&E design	MU	As above
E7.2 M&E plan implementation (including financial and human resources)	MU	As above.
E8. Overall assessment of factors affecting performance	MS	In general the project needs to strengthen and refocus some systems and approaches, particularly related to Participatory M&E, lesson learning, documentation and communication.
F. CROSS-CUTTING CONCERNS		

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GEF rating table *GEF criteria/sub-criteria*	Rating[9]	Summary comments
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	MU	Beyond a training of 2 staff, project recommendations to be more inclusive and a good gender analysis in the Live and Learn assessment there is still lots of room for improvement in gender mainstreaming in the project which should start with asking women themselves what their aspirations and barriers to taking part in project activities are.
F2. Human rights issues	MS	Building PAs on customary tenure and with full consensual negotiations limits the potential of PAs to be imposed on communities but there still requires to be a social safeguard system particularly regarding grievance redress (see below).
F2. Environmental and social safeguards	MU	Need to strengthen social safeguarding with the PA establishment process, particularly an appropriate mechanism for grievance redress
Overall project rating	**MS**	

Key aspect	MTR assessment (Green = achieved, Yellow on target to be achieved, Red = not on target to be achieved)	MTR rating	Justification for rating
Progress towards achieving the project's development objective(s)		MS	The emphasis early on in the project was understandably securing the forest through especially PA establishment. With a reduced target for PA establishment the project can to ramp up its activities regarding livelihood development in the second half. It has good partners and should utilize and build on and from their expertise in livelihood development.
Overall progress on implementation		MS	Variation among components, with arguably 1 and 3 ahead of 2, 3 and 4. The unrealistic targets especially for PA establishment forced the project to spread itself too thin. With the PA establishment process now worked out and hopefully with a more realistic target for PA the project can speed up progress and focus on catching up on all the areas where progress is falling behind.
An overall risk rating		Moderate	The key risks for the project include; • Establishing PAs without the systems in place at community, national and regional level to incentivize/finance and manage them.

Rating	Description
Likely (L)	There is little or no risk to sustainability.
Moderately likely (ML)	There are moderate risks to sustainability.
Moderately unlikely (MU)	There are significant risks to sustainability.
Unlikely (U)	There are severe risks to sustainability.

Unable to assess (UA)	Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.

Type of risk	Rating (see above)	Justification
D1.1. Financial risks	ML	• Key financial risks to the project's activities being sustained are related to whether especially the costly Protected Areas (both in terms of management and opportunity cost of restricted use rights) can be sustained post project, with the Trust Fund and locally by enhanced livelihood activities for communities. With neither aspects developed at the MTR stage, these cannot be fully assessed.
D1.2. Socio-political risks	ML	• The PA establishment area is of a modest size so will not be a serious challenge to the politically sensitive issue of commercial logging. One area of project work that might trigger some sensitivity is if a levy is proposed on log exports to fund the PA Trust fund. There does however seem to be political will for PA establishment and a consensual establishment process which ensures that the PAs will not be imposed on communities.
D1.3. Institutional and governance risks	ML	• Areas of potential disagreement between ministries will have to be handled carefully, for example balancing the objectives of increasing agricultural production with SFM and PA objectives. The obvious other risks are to do with capacity and resource constraints in the ministries.
Environmental risks	ML	• The SIs are very prone to natural disasters and climate change which are exacerbated by environmental degradation caused by unsustainable logging etc. but rather than this being only a risk to the project, it also provides a clear incentive for communities and government to engage in project activities.
Catalysis and replication	ML	• It really again depends if a viable system is set up to finance/incentivize the PA system at national, regional and community level and if the processes are kept simple and straight forward so they can be scaled up without project support in the long run. It was difficult for the MTR consultants to assess this aspect as the Trust Fund is not designed yet.
Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability	ML	Overall the key factor will be whether a financing and management system for PA can be set up at community, regional and national level within the remainder of the project. Another key factor is if the project can reduce targets, consolidate its focus on completing aspects that it has started, otherwise if it spreads itself too thin it will overstretch itself and leave

Type of risk	Rating (see above)	Justification
		uncompleted and unsustainable activities. Bringing more staff onto the project team might also help mitigate this risk.

Appendix 2. Terms of reference for the MTR

Roles and responsibilities under the TOR

FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific islands (FAO-SAP)

Being the budget holder for the Project, the FAO Subregional Coordinator for the Pacific islands is responsible for the initiation, management and finalization of the MTR process. Depending on availability and commitments. The FAO Subregional Coordinator has assigned a MTR manager from the FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific islands (SAP) to manage the MTR with the assistance of the project's **LTO** and the **FAO GEF CU (FLO and MTR focal point).** The BH/RM is responsible for the drafting and finalizing the terms of reference and is also responsible for identifying and recruiting the MTR team members, in consultation with the FAO GEF CU and the LTO. In coordination with the FAO GEF CU, the MTR manager also briefs the MTR team on the MTR methodology and process and leads the organization of MTR missions. The MTR manager and the FAO GEF CU review the draft and final MTR reports to assure their quality in terms of presentation, compliance with the terms of reference, timely delivery, quality, clarity and soundness of evidence and analysis supporting the conclusions and recommendations. The MTR manager is also responsible for leading and coordinating the preparation of the FAO Management Response and the associated follow-up report, supported by the LTO and other members of the PTF. Further details on the Management Response can be found in the FAO-GEF MTR Guide

FAO headquarters-based units

The **FAO GEF CU** has appointed a focal point to provide technical backstopping throughout the MTR process, including guidance and punctual support to the MTR manager and MTR team on technical issues related to the GEF and the MTR. This includes support in identifying potential MTR team members, [13] reviewing candidate qualifications and participating in the selection of consultants, as well as briefing the MTR team on the MTR process, relevant methodology and tools. The FAO GEF CU also follows up with the BH to ensure the timely preparation of the Management Response. **PTF** members, including the BH, the LTO and the FLO, are required to participate in meetings with the MTR team, make all necessary information and documentation available and comment on the terms of reference and MTR report. The **National Project Director** (NPD) facilitates the participation of government partners in the MTR process and supports the PMU in ensuring good communication across government. The **Project Steering Committee** (PSC) facilitates government and other partner and stakeholder participation in the MTR process.

The **MTR team** is responsible for developing and applying the MTR methodology, producing a brief MTR inception report, conducting the MTR and producing the MTR report as well as a summary of 2-3 pages. All team members will participate in briefing and debriefing meetings, discussions and field visits. They will contribute written inputs to the draft and final versions of the

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[13] The BH/RM should be responsible for the administrative procedures associated with the recruitment of the MTR consultants.

MTR report, which may not reflect the views of the government or of FAO. The MTR team leader will guide and coordinate the MTR team members in their specific tasks and lead the preparation of the draft and final reports. The team leader will consolidate team inputs with his/her own and will have overall responsibility for delivering the MTR report. The MTR team will agree with the FAO GEF CU MTR focal point on the outline of the report early in the MTR process, based on the template provided in Annex 12 of the MTR Guide. The MTR team is free to expand the scope, criteria, questions and issues listed above, and develop its own MTR tools and framework, within the timeframe and resources available and based on discussions with the BH/RM and PTF. Although an MTR report is not subject to technical clearance by FAO, the BH/RM and FAO GEF CU do provide quality assurance checks of all MTR reports.

The relevant **GEF Operational Focal Point** (OFP) must be involved in any GEF project MTR process, in accordance with the GEF Evaluation Policy (2019). The BH will inform the OFP of the MTR process and the MTR team is encouraged to consult with him/her during the review process. The team should also keep the OFP informed of progress and send him/her a copy of the draft and final MTR reports.

The Project Steering Committee (PSC) will be the stakeholder representative body for the MTR. Comprised of the national counterpart agencies, the MTR manager will make arrangements for the successful conduct of the country mission by MTR team, by making the key informants from their agencies available during the scheduled interviews and/or workshops, endorsing survey/s that may be launched, and providing the necessary information requested by the Evaluator. The PSC shall also provide feedback on the findings and the evaluation report, by participating in the debriefing and presentation sessions that may be organized for such purposes and by commenting on the draft report that will be submitted by the Evaluator.

The Project Management Unit (PMU) shall support the MTR process by providing the necessary information and groundwork for the sound planning of the evaluation. Current and former members of the PMU are also expected to provide critical information to the Evaluator regarding the Project processes and context, in addition to personal knowledge about the Project facts. Together with FAO-SAP, the PMU shall also be responsible for the timely formulation and adoption of a Management Response to the evaluation report.

MTR team composition and profile

The lead international MTR consultant will have the following minimum technical requirements:

- an advanced university degree in evaluation, agriculture, natural-resource management, social and economic development, or a related field (to be adapted to each MTR);
- five years of relevant experience in supporting, designing, planning and/or conducting development evaluations;
- More than seven years of experience in integrated natural resource management (incorporating sustainable forest management, PA management, coastal management and agriculture)
- knowledge of FAO and GEF work/procedures, or other UN agencies, would be an asset as would appropriate language skills.

The national consultant should have the following experience:

- a university degree in evaluation, agriculture, social and economic development, or a related field (to be adapted to each MTR);
- three years of experience in a relevant technical area (forestry, PA management, agriculture, agroforestry, etc) and a good understanding of the national and/or local context, as appropriate;
- ideally, experience in supporting, designing, planning and/or conducting development evaluations; and
- knowledge of FAO and GEF work/procedures, or other UN agencies, would be an asset as would appropriate language skills.

Both consultants are expected to demonstrate the following competencies:

- results focus
- teamwork
- excellent communication skills (both written and oral) in English
- building effective relationships
- knowledge sharing and continuous improvement

MTR products (deliverables)

The MTR inception report. The MTR team will prepare an inception report before beginning data collection. This should detail the MTR team's understanding of what is being assessed and why, and their understanding of the project and its aims (set out in a theory of change). It serves as a map and reference for planning and conducting an MTR and as a useful tool for summarizing and visually presenting the MTR design and methodology in discussions with stakeholders. The inception report details the stakeholders analysis and selection of interviewees, GEF evaluation criteria, the questions the MTR seeks to answer (in the form of an MTR matrix), the data sources and data collection methods, analysis tools or methods appropriate for each data source and data collection method, and the standard or measure by which each question will be evaluated. The inception report should include a proposed schedule of tasks, activities and deliverables, designating a team member with lead responsibility for each task or product (as appropriate). It is necessary to have the FAO GEF CU approval of the MTR inception report before continuing the next steps.

The draft MTR report(s). The project team, BH/RM, FAO GEF CU and key stakeholders in the MTR should review the draft MTR report to ensure its accuracy and quality in two review rounds: (a) a first review, taking around 10 working days, by the project team and FAO (BH, LTO, FLO and FAO GEF CU MTR focal point), then a second review, also taking around 10 working days, by the government counterpart(s), key external partners and stakeholders. A debriefing session to analyse the preliminary results should be organize before the delivery of the MTR Report.

The final MTR report. This should include an executive summary and be written in an official language of the country where the project is taking place (English is preferred if there is a choice and if the project involves more than one country with no common official language). It is important that the executive summary is presented in both the official national language and in English. Supporting data and analysis should be annexed to the report, if deemed important, to complement the main report. Translations into other official UN languages, if required, will be FAO's responsibility. The executive summary should include the following paragraphs in order to update the GEF Portal: (1) information on progress, challenges and outcomes on stakeholder engagement; (2) information on progress on gender-responsive measures; and (3) information on knowledge activities and products. The template for the MTR report can be found in Annex 11 and guidance on writing the report in Annex 12 of the MTR Guide.

A two-page summary of key findings, lessons, recommendations and messages from the MTR report, produced by the RM and PMU, in consultation with the MTR team, that can be disseminated to the wider public for general information on the project's results and performance to date. This can be posted as a briefing paper on the project's website but more creative and innovative multimedia approaches, such as video, photos, sound recordings, social media, short stories (for suitable cases or country studies), infographics or even comic or cartoon format, may be more effective depending on the circumstances.

Participation in knowledge-sharing events, such as stakeholder debriefings, as needed.

Appendix 3. Stakeholders engaged during the MTR and itinerary of field work

Note that a much bigger list of stakeholders were contacted but not all engaged in the review. In addition to the following, draft findings were presented to the PSC for feedback on the 05/08/2021 and also report drafts were circulated internally within FAO and are to be circulated externally to stakeholders for comment. Interviews in the field sites are listed in the tables that follow.

No	Name	Position/Organisation	Contact	Date	Comment
1. Active stakeholders with direct responsibility for the project, e.g. FAO, executing partners					
1.	Mr Barnabas Bago	PMU - MECDM	BBago@mecdm.gov.sb	Conducted June 9th.	Interview conducted on zoom on June 9th. .
2.	Ms Agnetha Vave Karamui	CCO - MECDM	agnetha.vavekaramui@gmail.com	N/A	Survey filled.
3.	Ms Nicola Kaua	Dir. Econ and Prod Sector, MNPDC	nnamo@mnpdc.gov.sb/Phone: 38336/38255	May 24-28	Submitted survey
4.	Wilko Bosma	Managing Director, Natural Resource Development Foundation:	Wilco-7491738	28th of May	Interview online
5.	Steven Suti	Program Officer, Natural Resource Development Foundation:	Steve Suti- 7813955	28th of May	Interview online
6.	David Boseto (Co-Director),	Co-Director, Ecological Solution Foundation	dboseto@gmail.com	27th of May	Phone interview

7.	Hensllyn Boseto (Program Manager)	Program Manager, Ecological Solution Foundation	hboseto@gmail.com	27th of May	Phone interview.
8.	Lina Dorovolomo	Prog Coordinator, Ecological Solution Foundation:	ldorovolomo@gmail.com	27th of May	Phone interview
9.	Lovelyn Otoiasi	HOD Environment/Dean (Supervising), Department of Environment, Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Solomons Islands National University	Lovely.otoiasi@sinu.edu.sb.	Interviewed 18th of June	Online interview
10.	Dr. Prem Prakash Rai	Former Dean; Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry, Solomon Islands National University. He was in charge when the project partnership to develop two degree courses was developed.	Pprai.prem@gmail.com Tel 64-224303954	Interviewed 18th of June	Online interview
11.	Dr. Chris Jacobson	Consultant - Live and Learn (NGO that have LoA with the project to implement Component 2.	Chris.jacobson@livelearn.org	June 15	Online interview
2. FAO team members					
1	Jimi Saelea	Oversight	Jimi.Saelea@fao.org		Survey filled.
2	Aru Mathias	LTO	Aru.Mathias@fao.org	2nd August, 2021	Online interview
3	Raushan Kumar	CTA	Raushan.Kumar@fao.org	7th of June, 29th of June	Online interviews and survey.
4	Douglas Yee	NPC	Douglas.Yee@fao.org	7th of June, 29th of June	Online interviews and survey

5	Madan Kumar	Programme Officer	Madankumar.Janakiraman@fao.org	28th of May	Online interview
6	Martha	Makira Ulawa Field Coordinator	jelsyzoyo@gmail.com		Submitted a survey.
7	Alexander Wateouou	Malaita Field Coordinator	alexanderwateouou@gmail.com	29th May to 4th of June	Face to face interview
8	Alick Hou	Guadalcanal Field Coordinator	alick.hou@gmail.com	10th- 11th June	Face to face interview
9	Fred Tabeputa	Choiseul Field Coordinator	ftabepuda@gmail.com	17th to 22nd June	Face to face interview
3. Active stakeholders with authority to make decisions on the project, e.g. members of the PSC					
1	Dr. Melchior Mataki			5th of August	PSC meeting presentation
2	Mr Chanel Iroi			5th of August	PSC meeting presentation
3	Dr Vaeno Vigulu			5th of August	PSC meeting presentation
4	Ms Ethel Frances Tebenge			5th of August	PSC meeting presentation
4. Choiseul Provincial stakeholders					
1	Mr Geoffrey Pakipota	PS –Choiseul Provincial Gov't	Email:geoffreypakipota@gmail.com Phone or mobile number: 7570091	17-22nd June	Face to face Interview
2	Mrs Iulah Pitamama	Acting CHICCHAP & Environmental officer	Email:pittzvesu@gmail.com Phone or mobile number: 7794987/7850063	17-22nd June	Face to face interview
3	Mr Ezekiel Sekana	Reforestation officer	Phone or mobile number: 63151/7585726	17-22nd June	Face to face interview
4	Joy Vunagi	Reforestation officer (leader)	Phone or mobile number 63151/7436454	17-22nd June	Face to face interview

			jvunagi@mofr.gov.sb		
5	Obed Maneara	Agriculture Chief Officer (acting)	Email: maneobe@gmail.com Phone or mobile number: 63182/7555879	17-22nd June	Face to face interview
6	Kuria Qaqara	Forest Ranger		17th -22nd June	Face to face interview
7.	Jeremy Puisasa	Assistant field officer		17th – 22nd June	Face to face interview
8.	Carter Polosoboe, Markward Zaue, Robertson Tavata, Luke Laaboe, James Loika and Cotin Kukuti	Kona Landowning Tribal Group		17th -22nd June	Focus group discussion
9	Philip Iapo	Nanaboe Tribal Landowning Group		17th -22nd June	Focus group discussion
10.	Zakia Boe	Matakale Landowning Tribal Group		17th -22nd June	Focus group discussion
11.	Robert Dilasaru	Voba Landowning Tribal Group		17th -22nd June	Focus group discussion
12.	Manold Tia, Boaz Sisiki	Vuri Landowning Tribal Group		17th -22nd June	Focus group discussion
13.	Linford Pitatamae	Sirebe Landowning Tribal Group		17th -22nd June	Focus group discussion
14.	Pateson Taniveke	Padezaka Landowning Tribal Group		17th -22nd June	Focus group discussion
15.	Wesley Pinco, Joy Tase, Betty Zulu and Isaia Melejana	Garasa Landowning Tribal Group		17th -22nd June	Focus group discussion
16.	Atkin Vilaka	Siporae Landowning Tribal Group		17th -22nd June	Focus group discussion

5. Guadalcanal Provincial stakeholders					
1	Timothy Ngelle	PS, Guadalcanal Provincial gov't	Ph: 22051/7107662	10-11th June	Face to face interview
2	Mesach Isuia	DPS, Guadalcanal Provincial gov't	Ph: 28129	10-11th June	Face to face interview
3	Joseph Watoto	Agriculture Chief Officer		10-11th June	Face to face interview
4	Justus Deni	Uluna Landowning Tribal Group		10-11th June	Face to face interview
5	Wilson Suhara	Koenihau Landowning Tribal Group		10-11th June	Face to face interview
6	Sipriano Masi	Halisia Landowning Tribal Group		10-11th June	Face to face interview
7	Rex Meki,	Kaipalipali Landowning Tribal Group		10-11th June	Face to face interview
8	Zimri Launi, Wilfred Maneisu, Alfred Ilala	Charana Landowning Tribal Group		10-11th June.	Face to face interview
	Densley Kesi	Chavuchavu Landowning Tribal Group		10th -11th June	Face to face interview
	Genesis Ota	Kohana Landowning Tribal Group		10th- 11th June	Face to face interview
6. Malaita Provincial stakeholders					
1	David Tuita	DPS, Malaita Provincial gov't	Ph: 40247	29th May to 4th of June	Face to face interview
2	Ms. Gloria Siwainao	Environmental Officer	Ph:	29th May to 4th of June	Face to face interview
3	Ronnie Aewewe	Reforestation Officer	Ph: 60037	29th May to 4th of June	Face to face interview

4	Mr. Willie Wate	Principal Agriculture officer – Southern Region, Malaita Province	Ph: 7812782	29th May to 4th of June	Face to face interview
5	Bernard Haisisini, Mike Mariri, Peter Channel Raike, Christina Raike	Mamarao Landowning Tribal Group		29th May to 4th of June	Focus group discussion
6	Vincent Nakumora, Philip Harui William Puhuto Evelyn Susuta Marisepo Kenihuraitahu, Cons Porasi, Francis Maetorea, Luke Susuta, Lino Nakumora, John Rouha, Paul Araiasi, Mathew Horahanua, Peter Takina, John Houma, George Ta'asi, Andrew Teaitara, Alphino Ninipua, Dominic Narai, Lasarus Kawai, Stanley Rausu'u, Jayson Tee, Christina Ha'apu, George Hioau, Pius Koko, Francis Manenikera, Ronal Tarihao, Ricky Porasi, Palasita Tatakeni, Joles Taraihei	Wa'aririasi Landowning Tribal Group		29th May to 4th of June	Focus group discussion
7	Alphonse Waitara Agnes Kaupani	Haupoto Landowning Tribal Group		29th May to 4th of June	Focus group discussion

	Augustine Hanahaisuu Susan Taohakeni Donald Kamai Lucy Kuraua Jenny Hasimae, Janenly Sikiri, Agnes Karaini, Concilia Tee, Kesy Kuruia, Cabreila Arumisi, Robson Rarao, Dorothy Purari, Agustine Hauahaisu, Donald Kamai, Lucy Kuraua, Liliana Puhuto, Saveria Uraura, Philip To'oniau, Evaresta Berekai, John O'omaea, Tiuti Tarihao, Clera Huranimae, Bere Raputai, Lina Peraanate, John Balouai, Eric Nukua				
8	Seth Hunahoa, Anthony Houanioha, Ana Kenikumu, Jackie Oiana, Sirak Wakiopara, Kasiano Hou. John Karahu, Martin Maua,	Waraihanua Landowning Tribal Group		29th May to 4th of June	Focus group discussion

	Francina Maua, Marisepo Taraori, Isabius Wahei, Tito Raumae, Chris Ramo, Donation Hataiwapu, Maureen Oi, John Mark Ouou, John Wakio, Andrew Wate, Lucy Mamu, Joan Oika, Peter Wakio, Siriako Haruperia, Lawrence Manu, Luke Tasi, Ana Kauna				
9	Moses Masike, Benjamin Kenitou, Mary Riakeni, Rose Waiao, Regina Paai, Peter Hoaau,	Awasipoo Landowning Tribal Group		29th May to 4th of June	Focus group discussion

	Polyn Isaia, Chris Tahipao, Agartha Haitareia, Luke Poiohia, Margarett Toimora, James Kaihou, Ana Oirii, Hudson Harukari, Dominic Manemaea, Regina Riopisi				
10	Andrew Tahimanikeni Timothy Araiasi Peter Karinihona Asumpta Rioitohi Albertina Tatapa Regina Sukamamu, Joe Wauki, Lawrence Wauki, Peter Ninipua, Ana Koreia, Ana Norohoasi, John Noro, Peter Toto, John Kuata,	Wa'anahata Landowning Tribal Group		29th May to 4th of June	Focus group discussion

	Joan Oinarii				
11	Jackson Makaeramo Andrew Rehomora Moddie Mareka Ben Sukaria Jacinta Poea Aphonse Mana, John Wate, Peter Kaua, Ana Musu, Justin Koeana, Chris Watepuru	Paua Landowning Tribal Group		29th May to 4th of June	Focus group discussion
7. Other interest groups that are not participating directly in the intervention, e.g. development agencies working in the area, civil socieity					
1	Dr. Nishikawa Tatsuji	JICA SFRM Project Development Agency	nishikawa@niji.net	Monday the 21st	Online interview.
2.	Manuel Haas	Technical Adviser, SPC/GIZ REDD+ II	Manuel.haas@giz.de +677 786 9273	Wed 16th of June	Online interview

Malaita field trip itinerary

Date	Programme Activity
29 May 2021	Departing from Honiara. Reaching AUKI. Meeting with MP Staff started at 10 AM till 3.30 PM. Discussion on Project activities, relevance, challenges and issues, recommendations, sustainability and gender involvement etc.
1 June 2021	Meeting with Mamarao TG at 5.00 pm to 6.30pm. Finding out about the status of the project and way forward for the project.
2 June 2021	Meeting with Wa'aririasi and Haupoto TG at 10.00 am to 12 pm and 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm respectively. Finding out about the status of the project and way forward. Meeting with Paua TG at 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm. Finding out about the status of the project and way forward.
3 June 2021	Meeting with Waraihanua and Wa'anahata TG at 10.00 am to 12:00 pm and 1:00 to 2:00 pm respectively. Finding out about the status of the project and way forward. Meeting with Awasipo TG at 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Finding out about the status of the project and way forward.
4 June 2021	Meeting with Principal Agriculture Officer, Southern Region at 10.00 am to 12 pm. Finding out about the status of the project and way forward. Departure from Parasi, reaching Honiara.

Guadalcanal field trip itinerary

Date	Programme Activity
10 June 2021	Meeting with MP Staff started at 10 AM till 1.30 PM. Discussion on Project activities, relevance, challenges and issues, recommendations, sustainability and gender involvement etc.
11 June 2021	Meeting with Uluna, Koenihao, Halisia TG at 10.00 pm to 1.30pm. Finding out about the status of the project and way forward for the project. Meeting with Kaipalipai, Chavuchavu, Charana and Kohana TG at 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm.
11 June 2021	Meeting with Kaipalipai, Chavuchavu, Charana and Kohana TG at 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm. Finding out about the status of the project and way forward.

Choiseul field trip itinerary

Date	Programme Activity
17 June 2021	Departing from Honiara. Reaching ChOISEUL (TARO). Meeting with MP Staff started at 10 AM till 2.30 PM. Discussion on Project activities, relevance, challenges and issues, recommendations, sustainability and gender involvement etc.
18 June 2021	Meeting with Kona and Voba TG at 10.00 pm to 12.00pm and 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm respectively (North Choiseul). Finding out about the status of the project and way forward for the project.
18 June 2021	Meeting with Nanaboe and Matakale TG at 3.00 pm to 4.00 pm and 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm respectively. Finding out about the status of the project and way forward.
19 June 2021	Visit Sirebe Conservation site – up Kolobangara river – depart 9.00 am reach site at 12:00 pm and depart site at 1.00 pm and arrive back at 5.00 pm
20 June 2021	Meeting with Vuri TG at 3.00 pm to 4.00 pm. Finding out about the status of the project and way forward.
21 June 2021	Meeting with Sirebe and Padezaka TG at 10.00 am to 12:00 pm and 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm respectively. Finding out about the status of the project and way forward.
22 June 2021	Meeting with Garasa and Siporae TG at 10.00 am to 12:00 pm and 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm respectively. Finding out about the status of the project and way forward.
22 June 2021	Meeting with Field Coordinator at 9.00 am to 11.00 am.

Appendix 4. MTR matrix (review questions and sub-questions – modified from the standard list to this project context)

1.Relevance (rating required)	To what extent is the intervention coherently responding to the TSDF 2015-2025 national and community environmental needs and priorities, the national and regional priorities in the Pacific-CPF, and to global sustainable development?
	Has there been any change in the relevance of the project since its design, such as the identified problems to be addressed and the underlying assumptions. What are the effects of any incorrect assumptions to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document? Are there any changes that need to be made to the project to make it more relevant?
2. Effectiveness Achievement of project results (rating required)	(Delivery of results) To what extent is the Project on track to achieving its target results? Were there any unintended results?
	(Likelihood of impact) Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards and the eventual achievement of the project's intended longer-term impacts, and what can be done to improve the likely achievement of positive impacts from the project? To what extent may the progress towards long-term impact be attributed to the project?
3.Efficiency (rating required)	To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and management been able to adapt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?
	To what extent has the project built on existing agreements, initiatives, data sources, synergies, complementarities with other projects and partnerships, etc, and avoid duplication of similar activities of other groups?
	Is the project cost-effective?
4.Sustainability (rating required)	(Sustainability) What is the likelihood that the project results will continue to be useful or will remain after the end of the project? What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project results and benefits (consider financial, socio-economic, institutional and governance, and environmental)?
	(Replication and catalysis) What project results, lessons and experiences generated by the project that may or have been replicated (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in different geographic areas) or scaled up (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in the same geographic area but on a much larger scale and funded by other sources), or are likely to be in the near future?
5.Factors affecting progress (rating required)	(Project design) Is the project design, including the indicators and targets of the Results Framework, appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes? Are the project's logic coherent and clear? To what extent are the project's objectives and components, clear, practical and feasible within the timeframe?
	(Project execution and management) To what extent did FAO-SAP effectively discharged its role and responsibilities related to the management and administration of the project? What have been the main challenges in relation to the management

	and administration of the project? How well have risks been identified and managed? What changes are needed to improve delivery in the second half of the project? (Financial management and Co-financing) What have been the challenges related to the financial management of the project? To what extent has the pledged co-financing been delivered, and has there been any additional leveraged co-financing provided since implementation began? How has any short fall in co-financing or materialization of greater than expected co-financing affected project results? (Project oversight, implementation role) To what extent has FAO delivered on its project oversight and supervision? (Partnerships and stakeholder engagement) To what extent has other actors, such as NGOs and Private Sector, in particular those who were involved in project design, been involved in implementation, and what has been the effect of their involvement/non-involvement on the project results? What are strengths and challenges of the project's partnerships? (Communication and knowledge management) How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results to partners, stakeholders and a general audience? How can this be improved? (M&E design) Is the M&E plan practical and sufficient? (M&E implementation) Does the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan? Has information been gathered in a systematic manner, using appropriate methodologies? To what extent has information generated by the M&E system during project implementation been used to adapt and improve project planning and execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability? How can the M&E system be improved?
6. Cross-cutting dimensions	(Gender and minority groups**)** To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing and implementing the project? Has the project been designed and implemented in a manner that ensures gender equitable participation and benefits? (Environmental and social safeguards) To what extent where environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project?

Appendix 5. List of documents consulted ("Reference list")

1. Project concept note.

2. FAOGEF PRODOC SI IFM.

3. FAO/Government cooperation agreement.

4. GEF Endorsement.

5. GEF secretariat Review

6. GEF Secretariat Review

7. Operational clearance.

8. PIR 1st July 2017 to 30th of June 2018

9. PIR 1st July 2018 to 30th June 2019

10. PIR 1st July 2019 to 30th of June 2020

11 PIR 1st of July 2020 to 30th of June 2021

12 Risk classification certification.

13. Short project proposal.

14. Strategic Framework

15. TOR for the MTR

16. Forest Policy 2020

17. Solomon Islands Environmental Act 1998

18. Solomon Islands Protected Areas Regulations 2012

19. IFM Project Progress Presentation by the CTA

20. Protected Area Act 2010 and Protected Area Toolkit 2013, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology

21. Enhancing Sustainable Land Management: A rapid assessment of extension services for sustainable land management in the Solomon Islands, Live & Learn Environmental Education, Australia and Solomon Islands, 2021

22. Protected Area Act 2012. Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology

23. Protected Area Toolkit 2013. Landowners' Advocacy and Legal Support Unit (LALSU) of the Public Solicitor's Office (PSO)

24. Forest Policy Booklet, 2020, Ministry of Forestry.