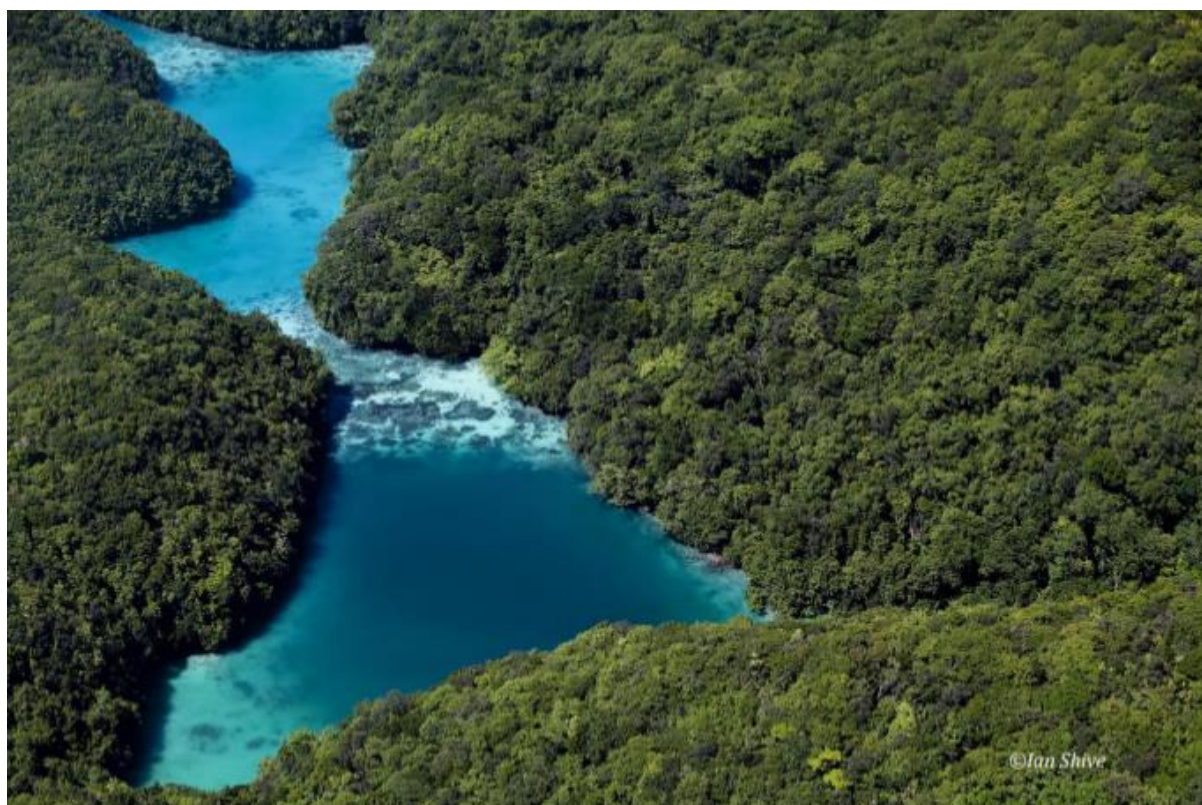


**Mid-term Review of the UNEP/GEF Project
“Advancing sustainable resource management
to improve livelihoods and protect biodiversity
in Palau” GEF Project ID: 5208
(2016-2022)**



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**United Nations Environment Programme
March 2022**



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(Advancing sustainable resource management to improve livelihoods and protect biodiversity in Palau)

(GEF ID# 5208)

(Date March/22)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Mid-term Review was prepared for UNEP by Anouska Kinahan.

The reviewer would like to express her gratitude to all persons met and who contributed to this review, as listed in Annex II.

The reviewer would like to thank the project team and in particular Mr. Sang Jin Lee UNEP DEPI Task Manager, Mr. Peerayot Sidonrusmee UNEP programme assistant, Mr. Michael Atogoh UNEP Fund Management Officer, and Ms. Gwendalyn Sisor Project Manager for their contribution and collaboration throughout the evaluation process. The evaluator would also like to thank the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment, the PAN office, PAN Fund, Palau Conservation Society and all individuals who made themselves available for this review.

The review consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to the successful finalization of the current project, formulation of a next phase, and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in other countries and regions.

BRIEF CONSULTANT BIOGRAPHY

Anouska Kinahan holds a PhD, 16 years' practical experience in protected areas, biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management, business and sustainable financing, and community conservation, across four continents. Prior to working as an independent consultant, she spent 12 years as a technical advisor for an international NGO, residing for extended periods in developing countries providing technical guidance to biodiversity-related governments across Africa, and South America/Caribbean. She is highly experienced in all aspects of project cycle management including results-based monitoring and evaluation methods. She has developed and implemented monitoring and evaluation frameworks for PA's and associated projects using SMART indicators and has conducted evaluations of PA management plans and PA management effectiveness as well as GEF projects. She guided the strategic direction and the day-to-day management of a newly established Planning, Projects and Monitoring and Evaluation Department for a protected areas government agency. She is an experienced reviewer of policies, programs, projects, plans, publications, institutional systems and processes, and grant applications. Adopting an integrated approach to conservation by ensuring communities and land use management surrounding protected areas are integrated into biodiversity governance and management, has been a central focus of her work.

Review team

Anouska Kinahan – Principal Evaluator

ABOUT THE REVIEW

Joint Review: No

Report Language(s): English.

Review Type: Mid-term Review

Brief Description: This report is a Mid-term Review of a UNEP/GEF-5 Full-sized project implemented between 2016 and 2022. The project's overall development objective was to *"effectively and sustainably use biodiversity and maintain ecosystem goods and services in Palau by building institutional capacity to integrate the Palau Protected Area Network (PAN) with the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) initiative, and fostering a ridge-to-reef approach across and within these initiatives"*. The review sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, the GEF and the relevant agencies of the project participating countries.

Key words: Protected areas; protected areas network, sustainable land management; METT; biodiversity mainstreaming; co-ordination committee; multi-stakeholder; capacity building; mid-term review; Palau

Primary data collection period: November 2021 -February 2022

Field mission dates: Due to the Covid pandemic no field mission was undertaken.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

| Acronym | Full name |
|---------|---|
| DEPI | Division of Environment Policy Implementation (GEF administration for UNEP) |
| EA | Executing Agency |
| FMO | Fund Management Officer |
| GEF | Global Environment Fund |
| IA | Implementing Agency |
| METT | Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools |
| MoAFE | Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment |
| MPA | Marine Protected Area |
| MTR | Mid-term Review |
| NCE | No Cost Extension |
| PA | Protected Area |
| PAN | Protected Areas Network |
| PIR | Project Implementation Report |
| PMU | Project Management Unit |
| QER | Quarterly Expenditure Report |
| R2R | Ridge to Reef |
| SFM | Sustainable Forest Management |
| SLM | Sustainable Land Management |
| SOP | Standard Operation Procedure |
| TM | Task Manager |
| ToC | Theory of Change |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| UNDAF | United Nations Development Assistance Framework |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Program |

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1. Project Summary

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| UNEP Sub-programme: | Ecosystems Management | UNEP Division/Branch: | Ecosystems Division / Biodiversity and Land Branch / GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit |
| Expected Accomplishment(s): | <p>PoW 2014-2015 EA(a): Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased Indicator: (i) Increase in the number of countries integrating the ecosystem approach with traditional sector-based natural resource management.</p> <p>PoW 2016-2017 EA(a): Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased Indicators: (i) Increased percentage of countries integrating the ecosystem approach into sector-based natural resource management, with the assistance of UNEP (iv) Increased percentage of area managed using an ecosystem approach out of the total area covered by countries, with the assistance of UNEP</p> | Programme of Work Output(s): | PoW 2014-2015 SP3 Ecosystem Management PoW 2016-2017 SP3 Ecosystem Management |
| SDG(s) and indicator(s) | This project was developed prior to the SDG development and as such did not specifically note the SDGs. Nevertheless, the project will contribute mainly to SDG1, SDG 2; SDG 3, SDG 8; SDG 12, SDG13 and SDG15. | | |
| GEF Core Indicator Targets (identify these for projects approved prior to GEF-7) | N/A – This is a GEF phase 5 project | | |
| Dates of previous project phases: | N/A | Status of future project phases: | N/A |

FROM THE PROJECT'S PIR REPORT:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Project Title: | Advancing sustainable resource management to improve livelihoods and protect biodiversity in Palau |
|-----------------------|--|

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Executing Agency: | Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment |
|--------------------------|--|

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Project partners: | Belau National Museum, Bureau of Agriculture, Bureau of Tourism, Environmental Quality Protection Board, Protected Areas Network Fund, Protected Areas Network Office, Palau Conservation Society, Palau International Coral Reef Center |
|--------------------------|--|

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| Geographical Scope: | Asia Pacific |
|----------------------------|--------------|

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Participating Countries: | Republic of Palau |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| GEF project ID: | 5208 | IMIS number*: | Umoja no.: GFL-11207-14AC0003-SB-006480 |
| Focal Area(s): | Biodiversity; Land degradation, sustainable forest management and REDD+, Integrated water | GEF OP #: | |
| GEF Strategic Priority/Objective: | BD-1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems BD-2: Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors LD-3: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape SFM/REDD-1: Reduce pressures on forest resources and generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services IW-1: | GEF approval date*: | 28/04/2016 |
| UNEP approval date: | 15 September 2016 | Date of first disbursement*: | 25/10/2016 |
| Actual start date: | 15 September 2016 | Planned duration: | 48 months |
| Intended completion date*: | 30-August 2020 (revised August 2021) | Actual or Expected completion date: | March 2022 |
| Project Type: | Full Size Project | GEF Allocation*: | USD 3,747,706 |

| | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|----------------|
| PPG GEF cost*: | USD 110,100 | PPG co-financing*: | 0 |
| Expected MSP/FSP Co-financing*: | USD 15,800,000 | Total Cost*: | USD 19,547,706 |
| Mid-term Review/eval. (planned date): | November 2019 | Terminal Evaluation (planned date): | TBD |
| Mid-term Review/eval. (actual date): | November- March 2022 | No. of revisions*: | 1 |
| Date of last Steering Committee meeting: | February 2019 | Date of last Revision*: | 28 April 2021 |
| Disbursement as of 30 June [2021]*: | \$2,906,533 | Date of planned financial closure*: | 31 August 2022 |
| Date of planned completion*: | 31 March 2022 | Actual expenditures reported as of 30 December [2020]: | \$2,916,152 |
| Total co-financing realized as of 31 December [2021] | \$14,604,207 | Actual expenditures entered in IMIS as of 31 December [year]*: | |
| Leveraged financing: | | | |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project background

1. The Republic of Palau is among one of the most biodiverse countries in Micronesia. Palauan culture is closely linked with the environment and many citizens rely heavily on its natural resources for both subsistence and commercial livelihoods. Although much of the country's environment remains intact, its terrestrial and marine environment are under increasing pressure. Natural habitats are being degraded as result of urbanization and unsustainable land use, overexploitation and illegal use of resources, and invasive alien species displacing native species. These pressures are further exasperated by the impacts of climate change and it is estimated that all of Palau's atoll, beach, and strand vegetation is at risk of being lost within the next century as a result of climate change impacts. It is critical therefore that existing healthy terrestrial and marine ecosystems are effectively managed and that pressures are reduced to protect Palau's important biological diversity, and to secure and ensure economic and food security for local communities.
2. Palau has made significant progress in its efforts to preserve its important natural resources. It has established a Protected Areas Network (PAN) and has endorsed a Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Policy. Despite this, there remains several gaps and barriers to effectively protecting and managing Palau's natural resources. For example, the country still lacks many important master plans, such as land use and tourism plans; there are large gaps in knowledge related to the country's biodiversity; and despite the existence of policies and initiatives, sufficient coordination, streamlining, capacity, resources, systems, and processes for their effective implementation are lacking across institutions, and across sectors. It is clear that a coordinated, ecosystem-based approach for the protection and management of Palau's natural resources is critical to address these barriers and to reduce threats to the country's ecosystems and biodiversity. In response to this, the project "*Advancing sustainable resource management to improve livelihoods and protect biodiversity in Palau*" aims to adopt a coordinated approach that combines the PAN with the broader reach of SLM. By strengthening the PAN and SLM approaches, and establishing a single umbrella approach that includes fully developed, effective, and linked PAN and SLM systems that enhance cross-sectoral cooperation, the project will increase the effective management of the county's natural resources while contributing to local, national, and global biodiversity and stakeholder benefits.
3. The project was approved in April 2016 and officially commenced in October 2016 for a period of 48 months, with the original expected end date in August 2020. The project has received a no cost extension due to slow progress exacerbated by COVID, until March 2022 and the project intends to submit a second extension request until March 2023. A total budget of USD 19,547,706 (USD 3,747,706-GEF grant; USD 15,800,000 co-financing) is available to carry out this project.

This review

4. This report presents the findings of a mid-term review as required by GEF and UNEP, carried out between December 2021 and February 2022. This review aimed to assess the project's progress against the seven criteria as per UNEP evaluation guidelines. As a formative assessment, the review also focused on understanding the underlying factors for the project's successes and failures. An additional purpose of this review is to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing and, since this review is being conducted beyond the projects mid-point, lessons learnt and recommendations that may be useful for future UNEP projects and for the country, are also provided. As such this report is targeted at UNEP staff and in-country partners. Due to the pandemic, this review was carried out remotely.

Key findings

5. The project has shown excellent alignment with UNEP, donor and country priorities, and this is reflected in the level of ownership and country driven-ness apparent in the government stakeholders consulted. Many of the project's interventions build on previous projects and have many complementary activities with other ongoing projects, including a GEF 6 project. Almost all stakeholders consulted reported that a key benefit of this project was providing the momentum

- to initiate and institutionalize many of the initiatives, and that it is the country's first attempt at a more coordinated approach to conservation.
6. A theory of change was developed during the inception phase of this review. Overall, the Theory of change verifies that the project's overarching logic, interventions and assumptions (with some gaps) remain true and there are clear causal links between outputs, outcomes and impact. Less clear are the links at times between, output and outcome indicators, targets and activities.
 7. An inception workshop occurred well into the project's implementation (~1.5 years) and highlighted progress and challenges thus far. A major challenge at project commencement was insufficient in-country and implementation agency project management support systems, leaving implementation falling on a single project manager that was inexperienced in the policies and procedures of UNEP and GEF large projects. This meant that although activities began on the ground, at a project management level there were several administrative shortcomings and some lack of clarity in procedures. Hence, although there was timely disbursement of funds following project approval, the management structure was not ideal to commence the coordination of activities with multiple project implementors, resulting in some delays in progress and reporting by implementing partners.
 8. There has been some progress towards project outputs and outcomes, with several mid-term targets met, a number of successes and a likely contribution to the project's overall objective. In particular there has been significant progress in strengthening the protected areas network. The network has increased its coverage from 21 sites across 13 states to 39 sites across 16 states. Management planning guidelines have been developed to support the integration of sustainable land management priorities, and several management plans have been revised accordingly. An Investment Partnership programme is already implemented in one State, with several others hoping to follow suit and already developing the relevant legislation. The adoption of this programme means that States can diversify their financing portfolio and not depend solely on tourism income. The development of four different types of METTs, piloted and implemented in varying stages, allows for the effectiveness of the protected area network management, and progress toward its outcomes, to be better monitored and evaluated, essential activities for the adaptive management process. And lastly, through the development of various sustainable resource use guidelines, a better understanding of sustainable land management coordination needs, and the development of several sustainable tourism regulations, an enabling environment for more sustainable land use practices has been created.
 9. In addition to these evident successes, it is likely that the project has made even more progress towards outputs and outcomes than indicated in this report. However, given the limited information available for this review and the fact that several indicators and targets are missing from the results framework, a complete picture was not able to be ascertained. That said, it is clear that those outcomes that are achieved, will likely be sustained at least with regard to socio-political and institutional stability. Given the high dependency of the country on income from tourism, especially for protected areas network financing, and the recent budget cuts across all Ministries, financial sustainability remains challenging despite the significant progress achieved under this project and the 27% increase, compared to the baseline at the beginning of the project, in the protected areas network financial sustainability scorecard.
 10. Key stakeholders were involved in the design of this project and there are nine implementing partners (all key stakeholders), with significant engagement and involvement of States. Although a gender analysis was not carried out for the Project Document, several gender mainstreaming activities were highlighted in the inception meeting report and the project design was deemed "Gender Aware" on the GEF rating scale. While there is limited information available on the implementation status of the gender mainstreaming activities presented, some activities, for example management planning, included a combination of traditional male and female groups, as well as different resource knowledge groups that represented different interest groups. The development of some sustainable resource use guidelines also had good stakeholder representation from field work to development. As for a gender analysis, no environmental and social safeguards plan was submitted with the project document, however a member of the project management unit is acting as the gender and social safeguards "watchdog". The project did show some gaps in the overall coordination of stakeholders however, with many planned

committees failing to transpire, and little formal coordination occurring between project management and project implementation partners since 2018.

11. There was significant turnover of staff at all levels in the Implementing Agency throughout the project's duration. As a consequence, significant shortcomings in the level and consistency of project oversight, monitoring and communication occurred. This has resulted in the project being behind in its financial reporting, some issues and gaps in progress reporting being identified, and an overall sense of disorganization of the project.

Conclusion

12. In conclusion, significant implementation has occurred on the ground, however shortcomings in project oversight, and therefore shortcomings in the overall project administration, monitoring, coordination and the availability of deliverables, has meant that the full suite of successes of the project has not yet been fully realized or assessed. This has resulted in the project been rated "moderately satisfactory" overall, with a wide range of ratings (unsatisfactory – highly satisfactory) observed for the different criteria assessed.

Lessons Learned

13. Lesson 1: Consistent project oversight by implementing agencies is critical where projects are externally executed.
14. Lesson 2: Mid Term Reviews conducted near project-end have limited corrective ability and every effort should be made to conduct MTRs at the project's mid-point, ensuring appropriate stakeholder engagement and availability of project deliverables.
15. Lesson 3: Alignment with national priorities, engaging stakeholders from the beginning, and maximizing opportunities for their involvement in project implementation, can greatly facilitate buy-in and support, and thus enhance the overall sustainability of project outcomes.
16. Lesson 4: In projects where multiple implementing partners are subcontracted by the executing agency to conduct project activities, formal and regular coordination meetings between project management and implementing partners are critical.
17. Lesson 5: The secondment of project managers from government executing agencies can risk a lack of focus and engagement on the project, due to a possible overburden of responsibilities, for example on other external projects or within their own agency, beyond the control of the implementing agency.

Recommendations

Project specific

18. Recommendation 1: Enhanced coordination between the Implementing and Executing Agencies to ensure the effective implementation of remaining project activities and MTR recommendations.
19. Recommendation 2: All project outputs and deliverables should be gathered by the project so they are readily available to project partners, reviewers, UNEP and other interested parties. Any gaps, particularly as they relate to enhancing project outcomes, should be identified and completed by project end.
20. Recommendation 3: If a second no cost extension is granted, the remaining project time should focus on organizing, finishing and maximizing the effectiveness of project outputs and outcomes already near completion rather than starting new activities.
21. Recommendation 4: Formal coordination meetings between project management and project implementers should be reinstated and a thorough review of activities' progress and status carried out and a joint workplan with timelines and deliverables for remaining activities developed.
22. Recommendation 5: Consider training community members and PAN staff in forest monitoring protocols to assist forestry teams in their implementation and to minimize the time required to complete assessments.

Future projects

23. Recommendation 6: Externally executed projects should consider independent project managers or should seek to engage NGOs for overall project coordination.
24. Recommendation 7: A review of project management capacity should be carried out prior to project implementation to ensure a full understanding of project implementation policies and procedures. Significant oversight and backstopping should be provided particularly in the beginning of project implementation.

I. PROJECT OVERVIEW

25. The project “Advancing sustainable resource management to improve livelihoods and protect biodiversity in Palau” was approved in April 2016 and officially commenced in September 2016 for a period of 48 months, with the original expected end date in August 2020. This MTR was intended to be conducted in November 2019. On top of already some slow progress of the project in the early years, the lack of suitable national consultants available, and COVID-19, the MTR and some project activities were further delayed, resulting in a no cost extension being granted until March 2022. As a result of the prolonged pandemic, a delay in some reports, audits, and in receiving project funds, the project anticipates requesting a second no cost extension until March 2023.
26. This document presents findings from the mid-term review of the project that took place between December and February 2022. The document is specifically targeted at institutions, organizations and individuals with implementation and oversight roles in the project, in particular UNEP and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Environment (MoAFE) and other government agencies of Palau, but may also be of interest to other organizations working in the environmental sector in the country.
27. The project is working across the whole of Palau and its 16 States. A total budget of USD 19,547,706 comprising a GEF allocated amount of USD 3,747,706 and a co-financing amount of USD 15,800,000 (cash and in-kind) is available for this project. With the exception of a no cost extension and realignment of project activity time frames and budget revisions, there have been no major changes in the project since its inception.

Project context and objectives

28. The Project’s objective is *to effectively and sustainably use biodiversity and maintain ecosystem goods and services in Palau by building institutional capacity to integrate the Palau Protected Area Network (PAN) with the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) initiative, and fostering a ridge-to-reef approach across and within these initiatives.* To achieve this, the project’s logical framework has identified three main components, each with an outcome or outcomes, and a number of corresponding outputs (Table 2).

Table 2: Project’s Logical Framework

| Outcomes | Outputs |
|--|---|
| Component 1: Improving Palau's Protected Area Network (PAN) | |
| <p>1.1 Improved Design, Evaluation, and Implementation of the PAN leads to increased engagement by states, improved coverage of sites, species, and ecosystem functions, and increased conservation effectiveness.</p> | <p>1.1.1. IMPROVED DESIGN: A National PAN Management Strategy and Action Plan is developed and endorsed by 2017; and the National and associated State Plans 1) align with SLM in the 4 core areas and with regional projects such as R2R, 2) engage all 16 states, and 3) cover gaps and ensure representative coverage of sites, species, and ecosystem functions, and 4) address the applicability of national, regional, and global goals and benefit-sharing</p> <p>1.1.2 IMPROVED EVALUATION: Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (METT): Agree on a set of 3 harmonized national and state level PAN site monitoring and evaluation tools and protocols (1 marine, 1 terrestrial, 1 socio-economic) which are aligned with METT, with full trial and evaluation of Palau's METT tool in at least 9 PAN sites by the end of the Project</p> <p>1.1.3. IMPROVED IMPLEMENTATION: At least 4 PAN sites meet a minimum METT score, and at least 5 other sites show improving trends toward effective conservation (e.g. reduction in over/illegal harvesting) by the end of the Project and total area protected.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>1.2 PAN management capacity (engagement, training, and financial) and coordination improved across sectors and across governance levels and results in benefits across genders and for marginalized populations in outlying states.</p> | <p>1.2.1 IMPROVED ENGAGEMENT: An outreach program reaching at least 80% of stakeholders in 8 states results in communities that are measurably more aware and supportive of PAN and increasing active participation in management of PAN Sites.</p> <p>1.2.2 IMPROVED TRAINING: The number of trained, certified PAN Staff increases by at least 15 and benefits some marginalized populations in outlying states.</p> <p>1.2.3 IMPROVED FINANCING: PAN revenue generation assessment from local and non-local sources at project inception (baseline) and project end show diversified financial support at the national and state levels and alignment with regional programs such as the Micronesia Challenge, and benefits are shared widely with gender and environmental safeguards in place.</p> |
| <p>Component 2: Effective Implementation of Palau's Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Policy</p> | |
| <p>2.1 Improved and effective planning, alignment, and coordination of the Palau SLM Policy</p> | <p>2.1.1. IMPROVED COORDINATION: A national coordinating mechanism and body for SLM with representatives from at least 6 sectors and levels of government is operational and includes associated capacity building and resourcing to ensure its function.</p> <p>2.1.2 IMPROVED COORDINATION: A national coordinating mechanism and body for SLM with representatives from at least 6 sectors and levels of government is operational and includes associated capacity building and resourcing to ensure its function.</p> |
| <p>2.2 Increased implementation of the SLM Policy in the key sectors of land use planning, land uses, and tourism development.</p> | <p>2.2.1 INCREASED LAND USE PLANNING: State SLM Plans for at least 4 states are developed, tested, and implemented</p> <p>2.2.2 IMPROVED LAND USE: Best Practices for multiple land uses are identified, tested, promoted; and capacity to implement them is built, particularly among vulnerable populations such as women and foreign farmers.</p> <p>2.2.3. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: Improved national level tourism planning and state level implementation of tourism leads to benefits realized across genders and socioeconomic levels.</p> |
| <p>Component 3: Integrated Coordination, Mainstreaming and Project Management</p> | |
| <p>3.1 Effective coordination role by the MoAFE for this Project and environmental actions in Palau, including through facilitating information-sharing and two-way learning and thereby ensuring benefit sharing among a wide population.</p> | <p>3.1.1. Improved capacity of MoAFE to act as the National coordinating body for Palau's environmental sector.</p> <p>3.1.2. MoAFE effectively implementing, reporting, and evaluating Project.</p> <p>3.1.3. Two-way peer learning approach fostered through participation in regional initiatives (Micronesia Challenge, Ridge to Reef, Integrated Water Resource Management, etc.) and uses multiple forms of communication and media to share lessons from the project.</p> |
| <p>3.2 Effective national and state coordination of PAN, SLM and associated cross-sector issues</p> | <p>3.2.1 Enable effective cross-sectoral coordination of PAN and SLM policies</p> <p>3.2.2 Streamline forest management across sectors, government levels, and within watersheds with at least 1/3 of native forest under protection and sustainable management (2100 ha in PAN sites and an additional 6000 ha in SFM catchments)</p> <p>A national biosecurity policy agreed upon with legislation drafted and with at least 2 invasive alien species (IAS) risk reduction or eradications achieved that demonstrates a harmonized approach by PAN and SLM</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | 3.2.3 At least 4 states have SLM and PAN plans aligned with climate change adaptation plans, with at least one modelling a gender-inclusive approach to climate change adaptation |
|--|---|

29. UNEP's Division of Environmental Policy Implementation Division (UNEP/ DEPI) is the Implementing Agency (IA) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and is responsible for providing project oversight and ensuring the GEF and UNEP guidelines and standards are adhered to. Its UNEP Pacific sub-regional office provides the overall supervision and guidance for the Project together with project partners. The Executing Agency (EA) for this project is the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment (MoAFE). A project manager from the MoAFE is responsible for the day-to-day management and coordination of the project with project activities being carried out by a number of implementing partners.
30. A Steering Committee has been established but has met only once in February 2019, however, the steering committee comprises the same individuals as implementing heads (see below) and thus there is ongoing daily informal communication during project implementation. Project implementation was also intended to be guided by a PAN committee and SLM committee, neither of which are functional presently. As an alternative, the project collaborates with the Governors association which is active and has all 16 states represented. A project management unit has been established with a manager assigned for each component. Project activities are then carried out through project implementing partners or consultants. Figure 1 presents a diagram of the current implementation structure of the project.

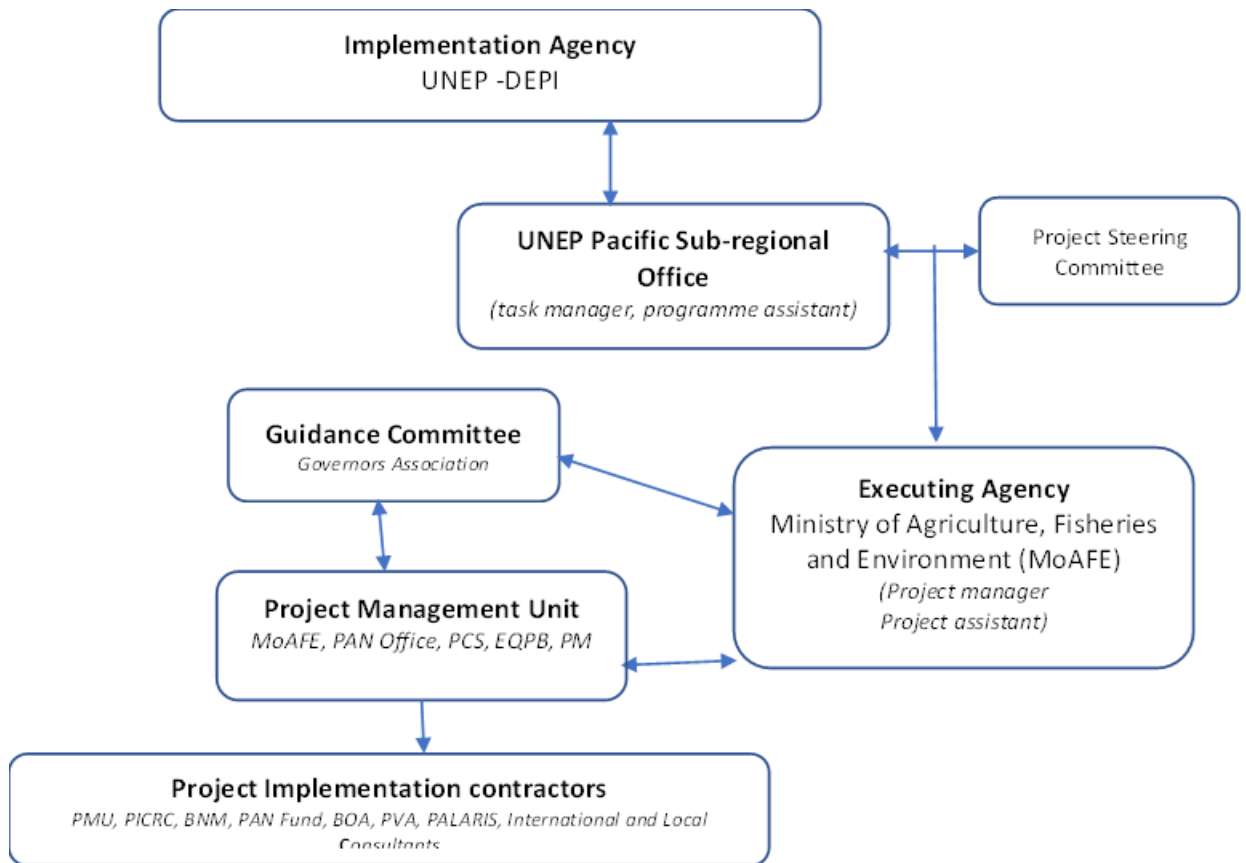


Figure 1: Project implementation structure

Project Challenges and Changes

31. The project has faced a number of challenges which has affected its implementation and administration. The major challenge for this project has been a high turnover of UNEP staff at all levels relevant to the project but in particular task managers, with significant periods of the project implementation time frame with interim TMs or without any designated task manager. This has been challenging for a project manager who is implementing a GEF project for the first

time and navigating all the required procedures which has delayed processes during the project’s lifetime and has affected the consistency and timeliness of information communicated and overall guidance provided to the project. These supervision challenges are reflected in the overall organization, administration and management of the project. The projects financial audits in particular have not been completed for 2018 onwards and although submitted quarterly, “approved” financial status and reports of the project are far behind resulting in no funds being disbursed to the project since March 2020, and limited project outputs were made available for this review. The project manager, together with the current TM, FMO and programme assistant, are currently trying to rectify this matter. Lastly, the pandemic has added an extra burden on the implementation of project activities by delaying and altering the way in which some activities can be conducted, meetings for example. A combination of all of these challenges led the project to apply for a no cost extension until March 2022 and an intention to apply for a second no cost extension until March 2023.

Stakeholders

32. Section 2.5, Table 4 and Annex 12 of the project document clearly identifies the key stakeholders for the project as well as providing a justification for their inclusion and their expected role on the project. The MoAFE is the executing agency for the project with nine main implementing partners. Many stakeholders have multiple roles on the project and are part of the project management unit, are implementing partners, and also beneficiaries. Table 3, provides a list of stakeholders, their role in the project, and were analysed according to their interest and influence on the project. PM = project management, PI=project implementation, PS= project support, PE= engagement/consultation, GI= general interest, B=beneficiary

Table 3: Stakeholder Analysis

| Stakeholder group | Primary role in project activities | | | | | | Analysis | |
|--|------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|---|-----------|----------|
| | PM | PI | PS | PE | GI | B | Influence | Interest |
| Government Organizations | | | | | | | | |
| Bureau of Agriculture (BoA) | | X | | | | X | High | High |
| Bureau of Land and Survey (BLS) | | | X | | | | Med-Low | High-Med |
| Bureau of Tourism (BOT) | | X | | | | X | High | High |
| Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment (MoAFE) | X | X | | | | X | High | High |
| Ministry of Education | | | X | | | | High | Med-Low |
| Ngardok Nature Reserve | | X | | | | X | Med-Low | High-Med |
| Office of the Palau Automated Land and Resources Information Systems (PALARIS) | | X | | | | | Med-Low | High-Med |
| Office of the President | | | X | | | | High | Med-Low |
| Palau Public Lands Authority (PPLA) | | | X | | | | High | Med-Low |
| State Governments | | | X | | | X | High | Med-Low |
| National Environmental Protection Council | X | | | | | | High | High |
| Semi-Government Organizations | | | | | | | | |
| Environmental Quality Protection Board (EQPB) | X | X | | | | X | High | High |
| Palau Community College (PCC) | | | | X | | X | Med-Low | High-Med |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------|----------|
| Palau Council of Chiefs | | | | X | | | High | High |
| Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) | | X | | | | | Med-Low | High-Med |
| Palau Visitors Authority (PVA) | | | | X | | | Med-Low | High-Med |
| Protected Areas Network Fund (PAN Fund) | | X | | | | X | High | High |
| Protected Areas Network Office (PAN Office) | X | X | | | | X | High | High |
| Non-Government Organizations | | | | | | | | |
| Belau National Museum (BNM) | | X | | | | | Med-Low | High-Med |
| Belau Tourism Association | | | | X | | X | Med-Low | High-Med |
| Belau Watershed Alliance (BWA) | | | X | | | X | Med-Low | High-Med |
| Community-based Organizations | | | X | | | X | Med-Low | High-Med |
| Palau Chamber of Commerce | | | X | | | | Low | Low |
| Palau Conservation Society (PCS) | X | | X | | | | Med-Low | High-Med |
| The Nature Conservancy (TNC) | | | X | | X | | Med-Low | High-Med |
| Tri-Org | | | X | | X | | Low | Low |
| Other | | | | | | | | |
| Local communities | | | | X | | X | High | High |
| General public | | | | | X | X | Low | Low |

Financials

33. The financials presented in Table 4 and 5 present the most up-to-date (December 2020) approved (by UNEP finance unit) expenditure and yet unapproved co-financing. The estimated cost at design uses the amended no cost extension revised GEF budget rather than those presented in the project document.

Table 4: Planned versus actual expenditure by component as of December 2020

| Component/sub-component/output <i>All figures as USD</i> | Estimated cost at design | Actual Cost/ expenditure | Expenditure ratio (actual/planned) |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 10 PROJECT PERSONNEL | 262,437 | 220,200 | 84% |
| 20 SUB-CONTRACT | 3,332,000 | 2,651,340 | 80% |
| 30 TRAINING | 16,509 | 16,107 | 98% |
| 40 EQUIPMENT & PREMISES | 20,113 | 19,096 | 95% |
| 50 MISCELLANEOUS | 116,647 | 9,409 | 9% |
| Total | 3,747,706 | 2,916,152 | 79% |

Table 5: Planned versus actual co-financing as of December 2021

| Co-financing (Type/Source) | UN Environment own Financing (US\$1,000) | | Government (US\$1,000) | | Other* (All co-financing sources to be identified) (US\$1,000) | | Total (US\$1,000) | | Total Disbursed (US\$1,000) |
|-------------------------------|--|----------|---------------------------|---------------|--|--------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | |
| - Grants | | | | | | | | | |
| - Loans | | | | | | | | | |
| - Credits | | | | | | | | | |
| - Equity investments | | | | | | | | | |
| - In-kind support | 200 | 0 | 8,000 | 5,156 | 3,600 | 3,009 | 11,800 | 8,164 | 8,164 |
| - Other (*) -Cash | | | 4,000 | 6,440 | | | 4,000 | 6,440 | 6,440 |
| Totals | 200 | 0 | 12,000 | 11,596 | 3,600 | 3,009 | 15,800 | 6,440 | 14,604 |

II. REVIEW METHODS

34. This review was carried out in accordance with the UNEP Evaluation Policy and GEF requirements. The review aimed to carry out an assessment of the project's performance and results, and to identify challenges and any required corrective actions to be made for the remaining project lifespan. Since the MTR was carried out well beyond the project's mid-point, in addition to assessing the above, a strong focus was also placed on the sustainability of project outcomes, and, in order to optimize the conclusion of activities by project-end, and improve follow-up or related projects that may be developed, on recommendations and lessons learnt. An additional purpose of this MTR is therefore to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing by UNEP staff, executing agencies and key project stakeholders.
35. The Evaluation Team consisted of one international consultant reviewer under the guidance of the Implementing Agency - UNEP Pacific sub-regional office, and did not include a travel mission to Palau. The Evaluation and the methodological tools and formats provided by the UNEP Evaluation Office provided a comprehensive framework for the review and the structure of this report. Accordingly, the project was reviewed against seven key criteria: Strategic Relevance, Effectiveness, Financial Management, Efficiency, Monitoring and Reporting, Sustainability, Factors Affecting Project Performance, and Cross-Cutting Issues Factors, and rated on a six-point scale ranging from Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) to Highly Satisfactory (HS).
36. The Inception phase of the Review provided a review of project design quality ("moderately satisfactory"), constructed a Theory of Change, and identified several key questions and indicators for reviewing each of the seven criteria. Since no field travel was possible it was limited to a desk-based review.
37. **Limitations:** Reviewing projects remotely comes with its own limitations, with access to stakeholders for consultation and the availability of project deliverables and outputs, even more critical. Overall, the reviewer found this project somewhat challenging to review for a number of reasons. The review was significantly biased as only some project implementing partners were consulted on activities they conducted, (although these were also project beneficiaries) and a relatively low response rate to requests for meetings meant that some activities/components were not able to be investigated in detail. Coupled with the fact that only limited project deliverables were provided to the reviewer, and that at times conflicting information was provided, it made knowledge, information and verification of project progress challenging to ascertain for some areas. The limited deliverables and low stakeholder engagement meant that it was challenging to verify findings and to obtain information on the ground. As such this review assesses an overview of project progress based on information available, highlights any issues found and focuses on lessons learnt and recommendations for moving forward. Furthermore, due to these limitations, the reviewer acknowledges that there may be instances where project progress reported in this report may not reflect the true or complete picture of what has occurred on the ground, and acknowledges that it is likely that more activities are ongoing, or have been completed on the ground, than are reflected in this report.
38. **Documents:** A thorough desk-review of all available project documentation was carried out. This included the CEO Endorsement Request and amendments, PIRs, work plans, project budget and financial reports (available but not necessarily accurate or approved), other reports (UNEP or project implementing partner reports, 2017 audit report), email threads, and baseline GEF METTs. Although some deliverables were provided, several of these appear to be prior to the onset of the project, refer to being funded under a different grant, or make no reference to any project support. Further outputs were able to be sourced by the reviewer through internet searches and from the partners consulted as a result of a direct request by the reviewer. A full list of documents reviewed is provided in Appendix III.
39. **Interviews:** A list of stakeholders and an indication of those that would like to be consulted (16 individuals/institutions) was provided to the project manager for review and input during the inception phase. Out of 16 proposed stakeholders, details were provided for nine. Out of the nine, four responded and were met. One of the four consulted provided contacts for an additional two individuals who were implementors of two key activities in the project. The reviewer managed to meet with both of these individuals. Interviews were held remotely via the Zoom platform and typically lasted approximately 1 – 1 ½ hours. A list of stakeholders identified for consultation and

those met, is provided in Appendix II. With the exception of one stakeholder, all stakeholders consulted were female.

40. In addition to the project partners above, several meetings and email exchanges were held with the task manager and programme assistant throughout the process. As part of the review, one meeting was held with the project manager prior to any stakeholder consultations and again after consultations, to provide clarifications on any queries that arose. A meeting was also held with the project's FMO.
41. **Analysis:** The most updated PIR was used primarily as a basis for this review, both the activity progress and the results framework. Where possible, the reviewer tried to source project outputs online or requested specific documents from stakeholders. The status of activities and outputs identified in the PIRs for the stakeholders/implementors consulted were verified along with more general questions guided by the review framework presented in the inception report. Where possible, based on compiled information from deliverables, reports, and interviews, data were assessed against project indicators and mid-term targets. Any outstanding queries were then addressed via email communication with the project team where possible. Lessons learnt and recommendations were based on a qualitative analyses of interview responses and an assessment of the projects progress, successes and shortcomings.
42. **Ethics and human rights:** At the beginning of each interview individuals were informed that discussions would be reflected in the report, but would be confidential and not relatable to any particular individual.

III. THEORY OF CHANGE

Theory of Change at Review

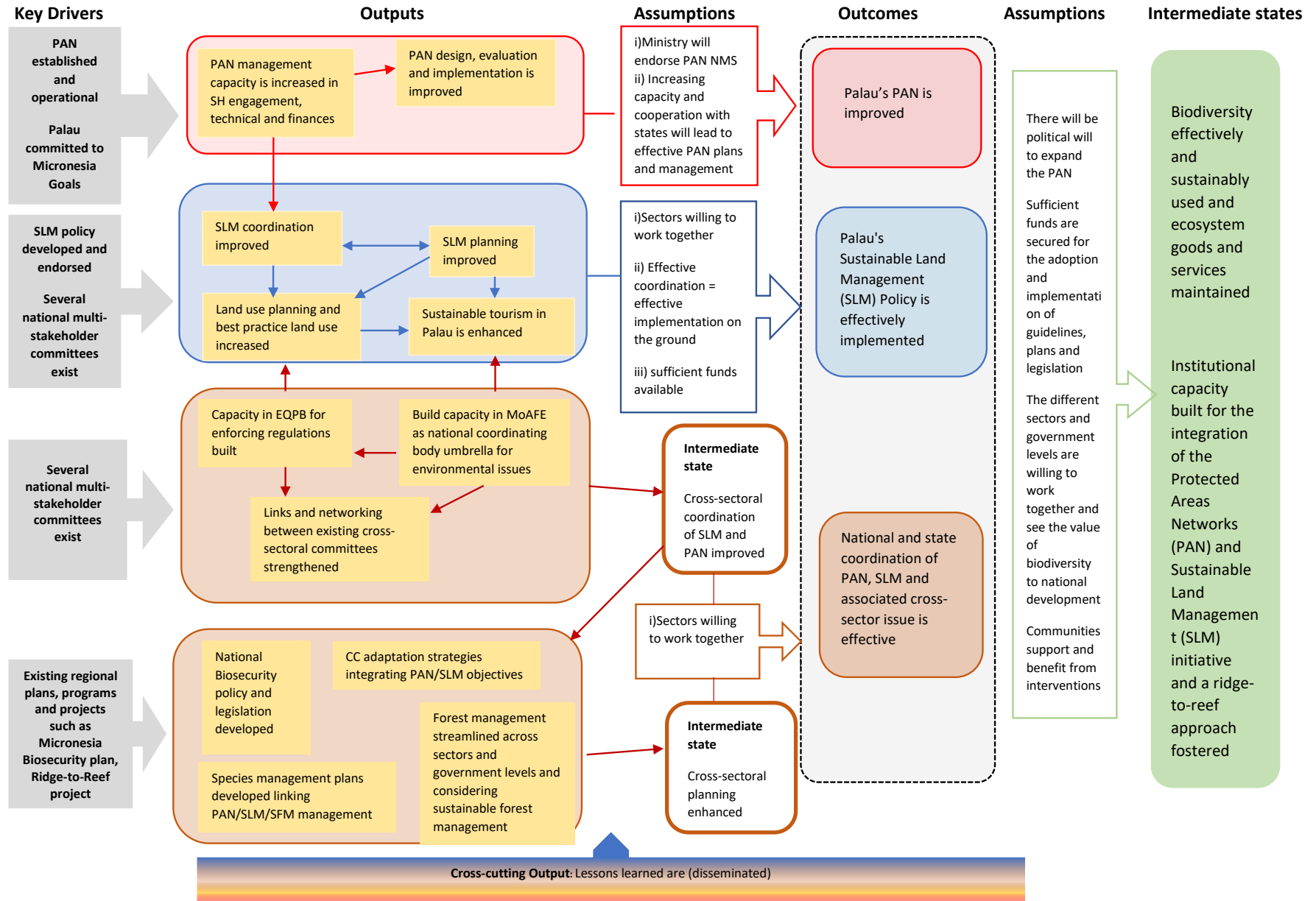
43. As a GEF 5 project, a Theory of Change (ToC) was not required for the project document and therefore one was constructed during the inception phase in line with the project's results framework in the ProDoc. The project aims to ensure the effective and sustainable use of biodiversity, the maintenance of ecosystem goods and services and to enhance capacity for effective cooperation across sectors for sustainable land management. The project will achieve this through three causal pathways. Overall, the ToC verifies that the project's overarching logic, interventions and assumptions (with some gaps) remain true.
44. **Causal Pathway 1: Improving the protected area network.** Palau's PAN has been operational for over 10 years and includes much of the county's forest and near shore marine areas. The current structure of the PAN directs the majority of its funds to PAN sites which are typically state owned, however much of the technical expertise is still reliant at the national level. Under this pathway, PAN establishment will be completed, an overarching, scientifically-based National PAN Management plan will be developed and management effectiveness monitoring protocols and adaptive management will be strengthened. Piloting sustainable finance mechanisms, and building the capacity of PAN staff will further help ensure the long-term sustainability of the PAN. Through the effective management and appropriate participation of communities and cross-sectors across the PAN, important habitats and species will be protected and threats mitigated thereby enhancing livelihoods of those that depend on the protected areas resources. Socio-economic benefits will arise from improved management of protected areas, including direct benefits such as increased revenues from tourism, fees, and fines, and indirect benefits such as improved sustainable harvesting. A critical assumption here is that increasing capacity and measuring management effectiveness will result in effective implementation and adaptive management, and that the Ministry will endorse the relevant plans.
45. **Causal Pathway 2: Effectively implementing Palau's sustainable land management policy.** Although Palau has been active with its PAN some time ago, more recently, the country has begun to look beyond the boundaries of protected areas to the indirect impacts of development on the environment and the country's biodiversity. A Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Policy exists (2012) which provides for the sustainable, integrated land use and management of natural and cultural resources of the country, but has had limited implementation due to low in-country capacity. This project will invest in key "kickstarter" actions aligned with the SLM Policy priorities, that aim to mobilize its effective and collective implementation. A national coordinating body and the development of a SLM action plan along with a revision of the existing Sustainable Financing Plan, are essential interventions for guiding stakeholders and ensuring sufficient funds and a cooperation for policy implementation. Supporting the development of best practice guidelines for incorporation into land use and other master plans with a focus on state and watersheds adopting a ridge to reef management approach, and piloting sustainable tourism initiatives will be key areas of project actions will ensure better and more sustainable land management outside protected areas which will provide direct and indirect benefits to users, downstream beneficiaries and adjacent lands, and will contributing to the nation's food security. Further, focusing on ecotourism will prove direct socio-economic benefits to the country, its citizens and in particular women and marginalized groups. The success of this pathway towards achieving its intended impact assumes that actors will work together, and that sufficient funds and good coordination will result in effective actions on the ground.
46. **Causal Pathway 3: Effective national and state coordination of PAN, SLM and cross-sector issues.** Despite investments in the environment sector, poor coordination across environmental and conservation actors (whether government or civil society) at all levels from state to national and across sectors, remains one of the most important barriers to achieving conservation outcomes in Palau. Integrating PAN and SLM will significantly strengthen the country's capacity for the sustainable and effective management of its natural resources. Adopting an umbrella unified approach, and ensuring cross-sectoral strategies incorporate PAN and SLM principals will bring Palau from a fragmented approach to environmental management to a more streamlined cooperative approach. Similar to pathway 2, it assumes that actors are willing to work together and the relevant agencies will approve the plans.

47. **Outcomes to impact:** By expanding and supporting a representative PAN and building capacity for its sustainable financing and monitoring the effectiveness of its management, ensuring appropriate and best practice implementation of a SLM policy that provides for benefiting stakeholders without harming the environment, and brining a more coordinated approach to land management inside and outside protected areas, will result in improved livelihoods while also protecting biodiversity.

Theory of Change Diagram

48. A corresponding theory of change diagram is presented on the following page.

IMPACT: Livelihoods are improved and biodiversity is protected in Palau



IV. REVIEW FINDINGS

A. Strategic Relevance

Alignment to UNEP's MTS and POW

49. This project contributes to the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) MTS 2014-2017, the Expected Accomplishments (a) for the 2014-2015 and 2016-2017 Programme of Work for UNEP under Ecosystem Management. Specifically, 2014-2015 PoW EA(a): *Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services* and PoW 2016-2017, EA(a): *Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased*. All three components contribute to these subprogrammes by: enhancing in-country capacity for the integration of SLM policies into the PAN, and the effective design of management of the PAN (component 1); ensuring SLM actions are based on the sustainable use of resources, and building capacity for their implementation (component 2); and seeking to integrate the two components for more effective cooperation and collaborating for land use inside and outside protected areas (component 3).

Alignment to Donor Strategic Priorities

50. Project activities are aligned with four GEF 5 focal areas. Specifically, Biodiversity: BD 1 - Improved biodiversity conservation and sustainability of protected area systems, and BD 2 - Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors; The International Waters Strategic Action Programme for Pacific Island Countries: Component 2 - Implementation of the SLM Policy, and Component 3 - National coordination and cross-sector linkages; The Land Degradation Strategy: SO 3 - Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape; and Sustainable Forest Management/REDD plus: SO 1 - Reduce pressures on forest resources and generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services, and SO 2 - Strengthen the enabling environment to reduce GHG emissions from deforestation.

Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities

51. This project implements activities aligned with the endorsed SLM Policy and PAN objectives, which are national priorities. The project will directly address six of the seven strategic themes of the Palau NBSAP (2015-2025). Themes addressed are: 1) Protected/Managed Areas, 2) Species Protection, 3) Biosecurity/Invasive Species and Bio-safety, 4) Integrating Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services into Development Policies, 5) Reducing Direct Pressures on Biodiversity Through Sustainable Use, and strategic area 7) Mainstreaming Conservation of Protected Areas. The project is also aligned with several national policies and plans such as National Invasive Species Policy and is aligned with and supports the Micronesia challenge 2030 goals.

Complementarity with Existing Interventions

52. This project was developed building on a number of previous interventions, such as the GEF 4 project, by expanding and further strengthening the existing PAN and the Palau National International Waters (IW) R2R Project outcomes. The project is working closely with the UNDP GEF 6 project, with MoAFE as an implementing partner, which addresses the mainstreaming of global environmental priorities into national policies and programmes. This project specifically addresses improvements to the availability of datasets and their use by decision-makers. The two projects are cooperating on coordination efforts and dissemination of project outputs, however, at times it can be difficult to follow which activities belong to which project and this project appears to be somewhat dependent on the GEF 6 project in order to move forward some activities.

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Highly Satisfactory

B. Effectiveness

53. Due to limited engagement and availability of project deliverables, progress towards some outputs and outcomes could not be fully and accurately assessed. That said, it is evident that the project does have successes, particularly around component 1 and its PAN activities. Appendix IV shows progress against output and outcome mid-term targets. From these tables it can be seen that 30% of the intended mid-term targets for outputs have been achieved or partially achieved, with 14% not achieved (2% not started), 44% unable to be verified or status unknown and 12% unable to be assessed as no targets or indicators were identified. Similarly, for outcomes, 35% were achieved or partially achieved, 11% not achieved (11% not started), 26% unable to be verified or status unknown, and 17% not assessed due to lack of identified targets or indicators. In summary, from those able to be verified, approximately a third of output and outcome mid-term targets have been achieved. It is likely that greater progress has been achieved, however a large percentage were unknown or unverified for this review. If additional information was provided and could be verified, it is highly likely that effectiveness would have reached a rating of “satisfactory” instead of the current rating “moderately satisfactory”.

Availability of Outputs

54. Outputs 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 PAN Design, effectiveness and implementation

The PAN strategic plan was developed in the time between project development (2015) and the commencement of its implementation. This plan however does not align with SLM priorities nor provide any indication of PAN expansion plans or priorities for management, but rather is an institutional strategy for the PAN office. Currently this strategy is being reviewed and will be updated in March 2022. A national PAN management strategy, aligned with SLM policy, is being discussed currently, however no firm decision related to its development has yet been made. That said, the PAN office has regardless identified the four core SLM areas and provided guidance on these that has formed the basis for the four management plans revised under this project, and for the additional four (and the four more planned), that were developed with separate funding but supported by the project. The development of these management plans included good stakeholder engagement. The planning teams were identified by the governors and included a combination of traditional male and female groups, resource knowledge groups, and others that represented additional interest groups.

55. A number of baselines assessments have been carried out across the PAN providing detailed social, economic and ecological information. However, these reports have not yet been compiled to provide an overview of the gaps in ecosystem and biodiversity coverage. These reports, once compiled, will be highly valuable to the PAN to help identify priorities for further expansion (recommendation #3). The quality of these reports, the extent of engagement, the methods used, and the states that were assessed, have not been verified as no reports or relevant implementing partners were available to be consulted. Socio-economic reports however were available on the PICRC website, and all showed a relatively high level of support, knowledge and awareness of the PAN, with some showing an increase from their baseline in 2014.
56. Four METT templates have been developed under the project. Marine and terrestrial ecological, socio-economic and protected area management effectiveness protocols have been developed. So far, 280 forest monitoring plots have been assessed across 8 PAN sites (49 outside PAs), with a further 30 remaining to be completed. Data entry has already commenced and analysis will start once all plots are finalised. The establishment of a forest monitoring protocol has meant that the country need not rely on external technical support, which previously occurred only every 10 years. Prior to the development of this protocol, there was no unified approach to monitoring the forests and the focus was more on inventories, invasives and reforestation. The forestry division is highly supportive of the forest monitoring protocol and will adopt it, however the low number of staff and low budget means that it is likely that in order to be able to continue implementing this protocol on a regular basis, external funds and additional manpower will be required. Currently a team of four would take three years to complete 300 plots (recommendation #5). The other three METTs have been developed and baselines obtained for some sites. Which sites, how many, and the results, are unknown. Training manuals should be developed for these protocols to enhance their sustainability (recommendation #3).
57. **Output 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3: Engagement, training and financing**

One of the key successes of this project has been the development of an Investment Partnership Programme for PAN states. The Investment Partnership Program Agreement sees the State provide a minimum initial contribution of \$25,000, which is matched by the PAN Fund, and an additional annual capital contribution of at least \$5,000 thereafter. To qualify, the state needs to establish a State Investment Act. Melekeok is the first state to establish investment and has put in their first \$5,000 annual investment. The investment will mature in 10 years however the initial investment has already increased by 28%. A number of states are in the process of developing their Investment Act, some have already completed it, and two States are expressing an interest in joining the programme. However, as a result of the pandemic and the lack of Green Fees available to the PAN, this initiative has relied on the project to provide the state contribution. With the current funding situation of the project (no funds), this programme is on hold and the interested states cannot participate due to the inability of PAN to match their investment. Such an initiative will help States secure additional and sustainable finances, not reliant on tourism, that can be spent on PAN sites. An assessment at mid-term shows that PAN's financial scorecard score has increased by 27% since its 2015 baseline, with significant increases in scores observed for component 1 and 2, legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks and tools for business planning and cost-effective management, and a smaller increase in component 3, tools for revenue generation (Appendix V)

58. A number of training initiatives have occurred under the project, the PAN fund has provided training in financial administration and management to PAN staff and PAN officers have mentored PAN staff in management planning and reporting, which are mandatory requirements to be able to access PAN funds. Further training has also been provided to carry out marine and fire assessments. A rangers academy curriculum has been developed and is currently being integrated into the police academy.
59. A two-day conference with 300 stakeholders was held to help identify gaps in the PAN programme. The training provided focuses on key aspects necessary to help further strengthen the PAN, for example enhancing capacity for financial administration, PAN administration, and effectiveness monitoring. Further, a communication officer has been hired and a draft communication strategy, to fill the communication gaps and to identify how information can be shared more effectively among stakeholders externally and internally, has been developed.
60. **Outputs 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 SLM, Land Use and Tourism**

Various SLM action plan meetings have been held to assess what has already been done, what other relevant policies exist, and what would be the scope given there already exists an SLM policy, an SFM plan, that states already have master plans, and that several other strategic action plans at state and national levels already exist, with a lot of overlaps. Therefore, rather than an SLM action plan it was decided that an SLM coordination plan would be more appropriate and that existing plans need to be examined to assess where coordination efforts can be aligned, their current implementation status, and how they can be integrated and monitored. With the recent establishment of the Bureau of Environment this presents an opportunity to have an overall coordination arm for these existing plans.
61. As the States already have master plans, at the request of the States, instead of a single land use plan, requests for resource use plans that can be integrated into their State master plans were made. In response to this, resource use plans have been developed or are in the process of being finalised. An agro-ecological plan has been developed and already incorporated into 10 state plans, and significant training has been provided to farmers on this. Other plans include: a sustainable subdivision plan, sustainable road maintenance and development plan, and a storm water management plan. A presentation on SLM initiatives has been provided to the private sector. For those already completed, eg. storm water management plan, a good representation of stakeholders was involved in the field work and development phases (61: 14 females; 44 males)
62. A review of the SFM plan highlighted that the document provided strategies and actions for the Division of Forestry. However, national government does not own any forest, all forests are owned by State government and as such there has been some push back on the national government draft SFM plans developed.

63. Brochures have been developed and some outreach work done on water conservation best practices.
64. **Output 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.13**
- A capacity assessment has been conducted for MoAFE, however the majority of these outputs speak mostly to project management. Its clear there are several issues related to project management with some reports not being up-to-date (UNEP progress reports, financial reports (see section C and E), reports of little formal engagement with project implementors, and the allocation of milestones and regular review of progress not occurring. There has been little, if any, project evaluation, as well as a lack of communication in sharing lessons learnt from the project. However, there is work currently ongoing with the GEF 6 project to develop a project to disseminate and share project outputs. Firstly however, all project outputs need to be identified and compiled by the project (recommendation #2).

Achievement of Project Outcomes

65. **Outcomes 1.1 and 1.2**
- All 16 states are now engaged in the PAN and the PAN has increased from 21 sites to 39 sites, and has increased its coverage by 46,340ha. Eight (8) management plans aligned with SLM priorities have been developed, with a further four in progress. Revising management plans is critical as these are essential in order for PAN to access funds from the PAN fund. The establishment of METT protocols and baselines will ensure a more harmonized approach to monitoring management effectiveness. These are clearly supported by and adopted by the relevant agencies, however their ability to contribute in the long-term without external support may be challenging. There have been several assessments on the socio-economic and ecological attributes in some PAN sites but these need to be collated to assess PAN gaps and to identify criteria and priorities for PAN expansion, and to provide a more holistic overview of the PAN.
66. **Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2:**
- While there has been much progress towards improving the PAN (outcomes 1.1.and 1.2), progress towards outcomes 2.1. and 2.2. (coordination and implementation of SLM policy and tourism development) is not as advanced and is less clear. It is evident that a number of reviews of the different policies have occurred, and the need for improved coordination reiterated, however it is not clear how much the project has advanced with this agenda and has contributed to more effective coordination. While some committees exist, these seem to function on a more informal level. In addition, many individuals are on many committees, and this can result in committee member fatigue. This is perhaps a missed opportunity for the project to have advanced a more formal mechanism for cooperation that could bring all the SLM related issues under one umbrella, as originally intended. That said, the project has certainly made it clearer and has pin-pointed where policy and plan alignment and coordination is needed.
67. The project has shown great flexibility in adapting to the needs and priorities of State government, thereby maximizing the likelihood of uptake, as already demonstrated by the move from a single land use plan to a more relevant resource use plans, some of which have already been adopted and integrated into State plans.
68. A number of important tourism regulations have been developed (boat owners, tour operators, reef toxic sunscreen) as well as the Responsible Tourism Act, 2018, and a tourism strategic plan. While these all provide the foundation and an enabling environment to move forward with sustainable tourism initiatives, it is less clear how these were developed, or if they are being implemented and regulated on the ground.
69. **Outcome 3.1**
- The MoAFE is coordinating this project and many successes are evident, however, there are significant shortcomings which are highlighted throughout this document.

Achievement of Likelihood of Impact

70. It is clear that already the project has contributed to strengthening the PAN, through improved planning and monitoring effectiveness in particular. Further, the project has shown that States are willing to adopt sustainable resource plans and support PAN initiatives if they are aligned with their priorities. The project has created more of an enabling environment for the implementation of SLM activities across the country. Assuming that the unverified activities and those whose status is unknown for this review, are ongoing and will be completed as intended, the project will contribute to its intended impact of improved livelihoods and biodiversity protection. However, it is also likely that in order to maintain many of the initiatives some institutions may still require external support in the short to medium term.

Rating for Effectiveness: Moderately Satisfactory

C. Financial Management

71. Generally, there are a number of issues identified with the financial administration of this project and until recently it appears there have been many shortcomings in the overall financial reporting oversight of the project. It is worth noting however that with the recent engagement of a new TM and FMO, in 2021, these issues are currently being dealt with and are in the process of being rectified. Given the current situation, the ratings for these criteria are reflective of prior financial management (< mid 2021) and does not reflect the current efforts being employed to rectify any issues.

Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

72. The most recent UMOJA approved financial reports are up to September 2019 with Q4 2018 QER absent. These were however reportedly submitted by the project. Upon review in mid-2021, it was noted that there were discrepancies in some of the figures reported across the different years (paragraph 73). Recently, the 2020 reports have been cleared with 2021 financials and co-finance reports still requiring revision. The project is required to undergo an audit every year however the project is yet to receive its 2018 audit (outwith projects control). A letter explaining that only one audit firm exists in Palau, and that it is also auditing the government's finances, with the project still waiting for them to complete their audit, has been recently submitted to the IA. Given that there were some reports missing (QER 4 2018 and QER 4 2019, and no audits other than 2017 were provided, nor official letters explaining why, it appears that the correct policies and procedures were not adhered to when funds were approved to be provided to the project in March 2020. In addition to the finances, no UNEP progress reports have been provided for 2021. The process of review/comments/edit/update/resubmit and approval has often taken significant time due to poor communication and significant change in FMOs (4 different FMOs reviewing project in 2021 for example) and at times slow responses from the project.

Completeness of Financial Information

73. Between April 2021 and July 2021 it appears that (from reviewing emails) there was significant communication on project finances between the PM, programme management assistant, and UNEP financial division, with a new TM and FMO coming on board in 2021. A number of issues were raised, that suggest that prior communication and monitoring of financial reports was not satisfactory. For example, during this period (April-July 2021) all 2019 and 2020 signed financial reports were submitted, however the project manager refers (July 2021) to not being sure if the project budget and workplan revisions were approved for the no cost extension (3 months into extension), and a review of the project finances (following submission of the signed reports above) informed the project manager that all was in order. Following another change in staff however, another review of finances immediately afterwards found "*there are material differences between the amounts used in the budget revision and the actual expenditures for the different years*", and that "*The cumulative expenditures at the close of YR 2018 is USD 1,333,541 whereas the amount used as cumulative expenditures from prior years in the 2019 Q3 and Q4 reports is USD 1,324.605*". Conflicting and perhaps confusing messages for the project manager. A meeting between the EA and financial unit was held in October 2021 requesting the updated financial documents, these however were only received by the finance unit in February 2022 and there remain some revisions before the 2021 financial and co-finance reports are approved.

74. It is evident that up to now there are many gaps in the completeness and accuracy of financial reports, even in those that were approved. There have been many shortcomings in the oversight of financial reports.
75. It is the opinion of the reviewer that as a result of the very high turnover of UNEP staff (financial, programme assistant, task manager, with periods where no task manager was allocated) since the onset of the project, the lack of experience of the in-country manager in managing large GEF projects, and the inconsistent supervision and guidance provided, along with the delay in auditing, has resulted in this lack of availability of updated and approved financial reports, as well as a clear and full understanding of the financial status and management of this project.

Table 6: Financial Management Table

| Financial management components: | | Rating | Evidence/ Comments |
|--|---|-----------|--|
| 1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures: | | MS | |
| Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules | | Yes | Some progress reports absent, financial reports submitted with some gaps and inconsistencies, no co-finance reports submitted until Feb 2022. Only one audit of project since 2017 (outside project control) |
| 2. Completeness of project financial information: | | | |
| Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below) | | MU | No UNEP approved financial reports for 2021. 2020 report only approved in February 2022 |
| A. | Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines) | YES | Budgets received from project by BL, co-financing costs from pro Doc |
| B. | Revisions to the budget | YES | No cost extension revision |
| C. | All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA) | YES | PCA |
| D. | Proof of fund transfers | NO | Not requested by reviewer |
| E. | Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind) | YES | Reports provided during review but not approved or verified by UNEP at the time |
| F. | A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level) | YES/NO | Older reports were not correct, current reports were difficult to get and are not audited or approved, various versions received |
| G. | Copies of any completed audits and management responses (where applicable) | Yes | Yes, 2017 audit |
| H. | Any other financial information that was required for this project (list): | Yes | NCE budget revisions, co-finance reports |
| 3. Communication between finance and project management staff | | MU | |
| Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status. | | S | As a new Task Manager facing a project which had already been flagged as having issues with finances, was also waiting for updated project budgets, so aware of status but not of current expenditure or co-finance as that information was not available. Once received by TM these were shared with the reviewer. PM needed earlier intervention and guidance. |

| | | |
|--|-----------|--|
| Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done. | MS | Current FMO only started mid 2021 and is trying to get the finances updated. However, given the issues found with funds dispersed until March 2020, suggests there was not full knowledge of status prior to the secondment of new FMO |
| Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager. | U | From documents provided, it appears that no funds were provided since March 2020, however, email exchange suggest that the inconsistencies in financial reports observed in 2018 + reports were only identified and commenced being addressed in the second/third quarter of 2021. (see comment below) |
| Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports. | MU | There has been significant turnover of project and financial management staff at the UNEP level, likely leading to these gaps and subsequent reporting issues |
| Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the review process | MS | Current Task Manager and Programme management assistant provided all relevant documents in their possession in a timely fashion, the PM provided documents in possession but was unable to provide updated approved reports as there were none from 2019. Eventually draft updated reports were provided |
| Overall rating | MU | |

Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff

76. The level of communication that occurred prior to April 2021 is not clear, however there has been significant communication between the TM and FMO since then. The current financial situation of the project suggests that prior to the recent engagement, communication may have been limited. This may be attributed to the high turnover of UNEP staff, with periods of key supervision absence. It is difficult to consider that communication was sufficient and adequate when accurate expenditure, and issues highlighted from the 2018 and 2019 reports, were still being raised mid-2021 (a few months after the no-cost extension was approved), and which has resulted in the project only now in the process of submitting draft 2020 and 2021 expenditure reports. The reviewer acknowledges however, that due to the current situation and the inability to consult previous financial staff, programme assistants and task managers, she is unable to accurately reflect the level or nature of communication prior to 2021. Whether attempts to communicate were made by the IA with poor response from the project, or whether there was limited communication from the IA in the first instance, is unclear, however consultations and a review of email threads suggest it was slow in both directions. Irrespective, the current situation clearly demonstrates a significant breakdown in communication and oversight somewhere along the line and over the years. The high turnover of FMOs and task managers resulted in multiple handovers and likely led to inconsistent information, communication, supervision and a series of continuous catch ups. This emphasizes the need for enhanced direct communication between project managers and FMOs especially during periods of absent TMs (lesson learned #1).

Rating for Financial Management: Moderately Unsatisfactory

D. Efficiency

77. The project has done well in securing co-financing and the joint implementation of several activities with complementary projects, particularly with the GEF 6 and IW projects. The project contemplated a no-cost extension prior to the onset of COVID due to slow progress, and with the onset of COVID, the no-cost extension became critical. The project remains behind schedule on some activities due to a mixture of the pandemic, lack of updated finances and gaps in project coordination. As a result, the project intends to apply for a second no-cost extension.
78. Currently the project is nearing completion and has achieved approximately one third of its outputs and outcomes. In reality progress is likely to be greater than this, however cannot be determined at this time (paragraph 53). A significant proportion of the budget (89%) is spent on subcontracts, however the breakdown of these subcontracts are not reported, and therefore it is difficult to ascertain the cost-effectiveness of activities under subcontractors. However, through ensuring project activities were aligned with implementing agencies' workplans and priorities, and that several activities are co-financed and that several interventions have been jointly implemented (or are ongoing) with GEF 6 and the IWR2R project, some cost saving activities of the project are evident.
79. The project has not received funds since 2020, and as such some project implementing partners have carried on with their work regardless, using their own funds as the work is aligned with their institutional workplan. Currently expenditure exceeds disbursement.

Rating for Efficiency: Moderately Satisfactory

E. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring design and budget

80. A number of issues were identified in the MTR inception report with regard to the project's results framework. At times there is a disconnect between indicators, targets and /or activities and outputs, and the framework is generally a little cumbersome, for example there are a total of 81 indicators identified to measure the project. There is one outcome with 10 indicators, of which several are somewhat disconnected from the activities identified under the outcome/outputs, six of these have no baselines, and four have no mid-term targets identified. Of the total 31 indicators identified for the six outcomes, approximately one third have no baseline data (35%) or mid-term targets (30%). A monitoring and evaluation plan was developed in the Project Document along with annexes (6 & 8) that identified key deliverables and reporting requirements, with the executing agency monitoring the day-to-day progress, and the Task Manager responsible for oversight and project output quality control, through a supervision plan that includes site visits, submitted reports and annual audits. The project's inception report 2018 highlighted that there was little budget for monitoring indicators but rather was focused on project management and includes auditing and both mid and terminal evaluations. This current evaluation budget however is not the original budget in the Project Document which does include costs for monitoring indicators (when these were revised from the original is not clear). Roles and responsibilities for monitoring specific indicators and a revised supervision plan was developed in the inception report.
81. Issues with the results framework were identified by the project review committee and modifications were made, however as discussed in paragraph 53, issues remain. The lack of baselines for many indicators was identified in the inception meeting (2018) and was supposed to be revised. Indicators were developed in-country at project design with no external support, and these were not amended throughout the project's lifetime (now officially only 2 months to project end).

Monitoring of Project Implementation

82. Progress towards outcome indicators is attempted in the PIRs through qualitative description, however little, if any, quantitative information is provided and there is no monitoring of indicators for outputs. The fact that neither the project nor UNEP could provide many of the hard deliverables identified in annex 6 of the Project Document, suggests little ongoing monitoring of progress towards deliverables or milestones took place. A number of deliverables were reported

as completed, however there appears to have been no verification of these, and as such no quality control. This is further supported by some inconsistencies observed in the reports (paragraphs 86-88). The revised supervision plan in the inception report was not implemented (eg. weekly emails, skype calls every two weeks). The most recent updated expenditure (Dec 2020) shows that zero expenditure has been allocated to the evaluation budget, (the 2017 audit was allocated to different budget line) since it only includes mid-terminal evaluations and audits.

83. All subcontractors were required to submit a quarterly progress report to the project manager which was then adapted to the formal reporting requirements.
84. Many indicators require that the GEF METT is conducted during the MTR to identify some indicators and to monitor progress of others. However, the baseline GEF METTs are based on four PA sites, and that given the review was desk-based with limited engagement and access to deliverables/outputs, and that neither sites nor states were able to be consulted, the consultant was not able to carry out a mid-term assessment of the GEF biodiversity tracking tool. It is urgent that this is carried out soonest (recommendation #3). Although not required for GEF 5 projects, it is worth noting that the project contributes to GEF 7 core indicator 2.1 by expanding its marine protected areas by 46,555 ha since the project's baseline.

Project Reporting

85. Project reporting has been carried out, although the number of reports made available to the reviewer suggests that there may be some gaps, for some time periods. The PIRs present progress against activities however some inconsistencies were found, and a significant amount were unable to be verified (refer to section on effectiveness). A lot of inconsistencies arise from the fact that some activities required slight modification due to changes in circumstances but these amendments were not reflected or reported clearly in the reports. Below provides some examples where the reviewer felt confused or felt there were inconsistencies:
86. Example 1. Activity 1.1.1a: *Develop a National PAN Management Strategy that is supportive of national SLM policies, uses existing and proposed systems for criteria and ranking of existing and upcoming PAN Sites with specific consideration of the 4 cross-sector issues (SFM, IAS, Climate Change, and R2R.....)* This is reported as 100% complete (90% completed in 2019) with the following explanation: "The PAN National Strategy has been developed and State governments have started revising their PAN management plans to align with the strategy. A review and potential revision of the PAN strategy is planned". This plan was developed prior to the project (stated in the inception report). The PAN strategy 2016-2020 is an institutional strategy not a management strategy - verified as the document is available online. It does not include the management aspects identified in the activity. It is currently being reviewed in its current form (as an institutional strategy), and it is not yet decided if the PAN office will develop a PAN management strategy as identified in the activity (according to consultations). As such, in the reviewer's opinion, this activity has not been done and progress remains at 0%, correct explanation and description of the activity in the report would have clarified why this has not been done. There are several instances where the progress reports state 100% complete for documents developed - but were completed prior to the project and have no reference to the project in their content. This is due to the fact that these were developed during the period between project development and implementation and the project manager acknowledges there is some uncertainty if they should be reported as complete in the reports, however early reports of progress e.g. above 90% in 2019 lead to further confusion. Such cases were identified in the inception meeting, and activity changes suggested, but appear to not to have been adopted nor reported on correctly. It is evident that activities have occurred, but issues with clarity should have been picked up sooner and guidance provided to improve reporting of activities, which would likely have easily and quickly resolved these inconsistencies.
87. Example 2. Activity 1.2.1c: *Building on the success of eBird, identify other online databases to enable citizen science crowdsourcing as a means to participate in biodiversity and ecosystem monitoring.* This is also reported as 100% completed in the latest PIR (75% 2019), however its progress is reported as "eBird monitoring program continues, with the project continuing its support of printing the State of Palau's Birds". It is clear work is ongoing on the ground, but again not necessarily reflective of the activity cited as complete, as there is no reference to other potential databases identified. After consulting with the project manager, it is clear that there

was a need to carry on with the eBird support, but it needs to be explained clearly in the reports if there are modifications in activities on the ground from those in the workplan rather than reporting them inaccurately as 100% complete.

88. Example 3. Activity 1.2.1d: *Work with MOE to integrate Palau-specific biodiversity and island ecosystem topics into national curriculum standards*. Reported as 100% completed (75% 2019) MOE curriculum was launched in 2019. However, this was one of the activities that was cited as likely not to be achieved by project end, but had conflicting information from a stakeholder, that it was currently being implemented in grade 6,7 and 8. Upon further investigation, it is still not clear the status of this activity. It should be further noted, all three examples above were rated satisfactory or highly satisfactory in the PIRs submitted.
89. These cases provide further examples of the general confusion, inconsistency and apparent gaps in guidance, oversight and communication at all levels of the project.
90. In conclusion, project progress has been and is reported although with some gaps in time periods. There appears some confusion as to what can be reported and therefore at times the progress reported can be misleading and leads to confusion, even though activities on the ground are progressing, and are valid within the project design. It therefore leads to a conclusion that some shortcomings have occurred in the effective monitoring of project progress and reporting throughout the project's duration.

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Moderately Unsatisfactory

F. Sustainability

Socio-political Sustainability

91. Palau has clearly demonstrated its commitment to protecting biodiversity. The establishment of a PAN office, PAN fund and the endorsement of SLM policy (some more than a decade ago), demonstrates that biodiversity protection priorities have continued, even under different administrations. The commitment of the country towards project outcomes is further evident in so far as, even in the absence of GEF 5 funding (no funds since 2020), where possible, government agencies have used their own funds to advance and continue some activities. The project's general alignment with a number of national and regional policies and plans suggests that there is a good enabling environment for socio-political sustainability of project outcomes. However, for highly political focus areas such as tourism, political shifts could, and are likely to, lead to shifts in priorities.

Financial Sustainability

92. Palau established an independent PAN fund in 2010. This fund currently receives Green Fees which is an added fee on top of airline tickets (and provided by the airlines) from which a percentage goes towards PA financing. Most revenue from the PAs at site level comes from tourist related activities (e.g. entrance fees). Tourism dependent PA financing has been severely affected by the pandemic, underlining a diversified portfolio as critical for sustainable financing. The establishment of an endowment fund, the implementation of the investment partnership programme, and the development of a revised sustainable financing plan for the PAN, along with training in financial management and revenue mechanisms, has created an enabling environment for sustainable financing and the country should be congratulated for such achievements. That said, a country so dependent on tourism to help finance conservation/environment activities and the fact that a 10% budget cut has recently been applied to all ministries, suggests that despite efforts it is likely that for activities beyond basic operating costs (salaries, fuel, etc.) external funds will still be relied upon for some time yet. For example, forest monitoring protocols cannot continue with the current number of staff available and without external funds.

Institutional Sustainability

93. A common complaint by governments all over the world is the lack of staff related to the amount of work. There were several instances where this was cited as a problem that

resulted in delaying activities as government implementing partners had other priorities that placed project activities on hold. As a small country, with limited technical expertise, many stakeholders find themselves on multiple boards and people can get fatigued by all the different projects and committees that they are involved in, on top of their normal day-to-day work. This, together with the fact that many committee members are political appointees, often resulting in high turnover, means that efforts and capacity can be relatively inconsistent.

94. Many positions at national and state levels are political, or by contract, and currently the PAN office is revising HR structures at national level to allow for permanent non-political appointees and is encouraging states to do same. HR standard operating procedures have been revised recently and the HR policy is in the process of being revised. In addition, the recent restructuring of the MoAFE to include a Bureau of Environment, which will be a coordinating arm for the ministry, will significantly help improve institutional sustainability.
95. The project has carried out several capacity building activities, but project activities and outputs should be better documented so that there are tools, manuals and guidelines available as staffing changes over the years, if project outcomes are to be maintained.

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|--|
| Rating for Sustainability: Moderately Likely |
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G. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

Preparation and Readiness

96. At the onset of the project there was no permanent TM in place, the planned steering committee, as well as the SLM and PAN committees, to support and guide project implementation, were not functional. The project manager was new to managing GEF projects and had little guidance on UNEP policy and procedures. An inception meeting was held prior to 2018, but with the secondment of a new permanent TM this was found not to have met UNEP criteria for an inception meeting, resulting in a second inception meeting held in 2018. At this inception meeting (March 2018), the issue of project management was raised and was in the same situation as at the project's onset. Once the project started, the originally intended project management structure was not implemented, and management largely fell on the Project Manager alone. As a result, implementors continued to implement activities in a more individual rather than holistic (project-wise) manner, which led to a lack of any coordinated project management unit. Thus, although there was timely disbursement of funds between project approval and first disbursement, appropriate management structures supporting an inexperienced lone project manager were lacking. That said, implementing partners were able to commence project activities on the ground.

Quality of Project Management and Supervision

97. While implementation is happening on the ground, and there are many successes of the project (see effectiveness), the project itself comes across as in slight disarray. There is a disconnect between project activities and implementing partners at times, it was very difficult to get a handle on the finances (although this has been somewhat resolved), reporting led to some confusion, there are no documents centrally available, if they are available at all, there are inconsistencies and confusions as to the level of engagement and response rate between the different levels of the project, and lastly, different and conflicting guidance has been provided to the project manager by different supervisors. Only one steering meeting was held in 2019, however meeting minutes were not available for the review. Since 2018, no formal meetings were held with the project implementing partners, and any that were held were ad hoc, part of daily interactions, or only in the event of issues needing to be raised. This has led to one main implementor stating that they had zero interaction with project coordination from the onset and throughout the project, and zero formal interaction with other project implementors, especially those that are not within the MoAFE. While other members of the implementing agency may have interacted with the project coordinator, it is necessary that the individuals responsible for implementing project activities for an agency are also engaged. Lack of regular and formal meetings with a steering committee, project implementors or multistakeholder forums has likely contributed

- significantly to a visible disconnect between activities of the project (i.e. not knowing what are activities are being implemented under what project), inconsistencies in reporting, and overall a reduced coordinated approach to project implementation (recommendation #4).
98. It is clear that attempts were made to manage and coordinate this project effectively, however, at a project management level, the lack of consistent, or at times any, supervision, and the conflicting nature of the supervision, has meant that it has been challenging for some administrative procedures, resulting in a somewhat disorganized project state. For example, two inception meetings had to be held, the project manager didn't know until year 3 that she could hire an administration assistant, she was unclear of the approved budget and workplan three months into the NCE, and there remains confusion with regard to reporting on those items completed between project approval and implementation. On top of this, with an additional project (GEF 6) to coordinate for a large part of the GEF 5 project life-time, and with normal Ministry duties, it may have proved too much work for such a large project, with several implementing partners and only one project manager for staff, especially given it was the first large GEF project managed. That said, there are aspects that are basic project management actions, such as compiling project outputs, recording meeting minutes, holding coordination meetings, and timely submission of responses and requests that could be improved at a project management level.
 99. As mentioned, the project has had a very high turnover of supervisory staff, with four FMOs in 2021 alone, at least two programme assistants and four TMs, with some periods lacking any. This inconsistent supervision has meant that there are gaps in the guidance and backstopping provided and an overarching lack of sufficient communication between, among, and across all levels, IA to EA to implementing partners.
 100. It is believed that the weak and inconsistent oversight provided by the IA in the first four to five years of the project, is a major contributing factor to the shortcomings observed in the project. It is felt that if appropriate supervision and communication between IA, EA and implementing partners had occurred, issues with financial reports, progress reports, and project deliverables identified in this review would have been caught, and actions to resolve them dealt with earlier. It is unfortunate as it is likely that many of the project's successes on the ground are therefore masked by the disorganized state of the project, low response rates and poor information availability.
 101. The reviewer acknowledges however that for a large part, these challenges arose due to circumstances beyond any one person's control, and these occurrences can provide some lessons. Further, it should be acknowledged, that it does appear that appropriate supervision and guidance is currently being provided and the whole team are already working together to try and resolve some of the issues raised during this review.

Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

102. By design, the project has multistakeholder participation and cooperation within the project. Nine different stakeholders, government and non-government, (some beneficiaries) were sub contracted to implement aspects of the project, and stakeholders were well represented in the inception meeting. The formation of several proposed committees, such as steering committee, PAN committee, and SLM committee, have not transpired and as such there has been little formal communication between the project and stakeholders, and among the stakeholders. However, given that many stakeholders work under the same ministry, informal meetings and communication took place regularly, at least for those under the Ministry. All stakeholders are highly supportive of the project and acknowledge its usefulness, but there have been mixed views on the level of communication with the project and across other implementing stakeholders, with one implementing partner stating they had none, some stating it could have benefited from more, and others stating it was frequent and sufficient. It is likely that the perceived disconnect in some implementing stakeholders between activities they carried out and the project, may have resulted from gaps in formal forums for stakeholder engagement. The lack of formal coordination meetings between the project and, at least, implementing partners (and among implementing partners), seems like a missed opportunity for the project. Despite COVID, sustainable cooperation mechanisms could have been established across the different sectors, particularly

as the majority of partners work in the same building, and the number of persons representing implementing partners at meetings fell within COVID protocols (i.e. < 15 pers).

103. Management planning processes and the development of SLM resource use plans have shown wide and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Further, in documents reviewed there appears to have been good stakeholder participation.
104. There has been some training of farmers, States have been very engaged and have participated in numerous key activities, such as management planning and adopting legislation for the Investment Partnership programme, and socio-economic surveys were carried out for communities across several states. Since only some implementing partners were consulted during this review, and there is a lack of meeting minutes and training reports, a thorough understanding of the level, extent, numbers, and types of other stakeholder groups engaged or involved in the project is limited.

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity

105. The Project Document did not include a Gender Analysis, but did include several gender mainstreaming activities which were highlighted in the inception meeting report, and the project design was deemed "Gender Aware" on the GEF rating scale. The implementation of these gender mainstreaming activities was unable to be verified during the review and in the absence of meeting minutes or training/workshop reports, it cannot be assessed how equitable the participation was across genders. That said, there is certainly no evidence to imply that the project was unresponsive or violated any human or gender rights during the implementation of this project. Palau is generally a matriarchal society reflected in the overwhelming bias of females consulted during this review, however despite this they are still underrepresented in higher level positions.

Environmental and Social Safeguards

106. An environmental and social safeguard plan was not developed during the project development stage, although section 3.11 of the project document presented a narrative. In this it is acknowledged that safeguards will be necessary for PAN expansion. The project document clearly includes activities that will include and benefit women, marginalized groups and the wider society and the project intended to adopt a consultative and participatory approach to decision-making at all stages of project planning and implementation, by being highly inclusive with regard to workshops, trainings, awareness and outreach activities, and will ensure that prior to any legislation is introduced key groups will be consulted. With the exception of management planning, where good representation occurred, the execution of these plans could not be verified during this review. A socio-economic study that was carried out will further help to identify stakeholder needs in particular for women and other marginalized groups.
107. The Environmental Quality Protection Board (EQPB) served as part of the project management unit as the Gender and Social Safeguards "Watchdog". Specific actions taken to ensure safeguards are in place could not be determined. The project is unlikely to result in any negative environmental impacts, and there is no evidence to suggest that project activities have had any negative social effects.

Country Ownership and Driven-ness

108. It is highly evident that the project is aligned with national and State priorities and has been adaptive and responsive to changing needs and government priorities within the existing project framework. For example, instead of State land use plans, individual plans, such as the agro-ecological plan, were developed at the request of the government. The project is well received by the different stakeholders interviewed, and the fact that many of the implementing partners are indeed project beneficiaries, and have therefore been part of the design, implementation and the likely continuation of project activities, suggests a high level of country ownership and driven-ness. Further, several activities have already been adopted by stakeholders, such as management plan revision guidelines, and many States have already revised legislation to allow them to participate in the Investment Partnership programme.

Communication and Public Awareness

109. There are clear gaps in the communication of project results and deliverables given the absence of project deliverables being available, and it is not clear what outreach activities have occurred during the project thus far. Some outreach has occurred with regard to water management and brochures have been developed. The project is currently working with the GEF 6 project to develop a website for the dissemination of project results, and with the hiring of a communication officer and plans for a communication plan, its likely that this may improve prior to the project end date.

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross Cutting Issues: Satisfactory

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

110. The overall rating for this project is “**Moderately Satisfactory**” with a wide range of ratings across the seven criteria from Highly Satisfactory to Unsatisfactory. For example, country ownership and alignment to UNEP, donor and country’s priorities were rated highly satisfactory, financial management and monitoring and evaluation were rated moderately unsatisfactory, with quality of project management and supervision rated as unsatisfactory. Generally, as a result of limited information available to the reviewer (paragraph 37), the reviewer acknowledges that the full extent of the project’s successes may not be fully realized during this review period. That said, there are several successes and highlights that were evident during this mid-term review.
111. The project is highly relevant and is welcomed and applauded by the stakeholders for its contribution to advancing Palau’s biodiversity protection and sustainable land management initiatives. It actively engaged multiple stakeholders who were directly involved in implementing activities aligned with their institutions workplan, and the reviewer acknowledges the hard work of the project management team and all implementing partners under this project.
112. As a result of this project, all 16 states are now engaged with PAN, and eight, with a further four planned, States have revised their management plans to align with the four core areas of the SLM policy. The number and area coverage of PAN sites has increased and a more streamlined and harmonized approach to monitoring management effectiveness, and in understanding the PAN’s ecological and socio-economic attributes, has been achieved. For example, the development of a forest monitoring protocol means that the country no longer relies on external technical support to carry out forest monitoring, which in the past has been done every 10 years. This can now be done internally and as a result, more frequently. The commencement of an Investment Partnership programme and the support and willingness of States to take part in the programme is commendable, and will help the States to be more financially resilient in the face of unforeseen events, such as the pandemic which has significantly impacted their income generation potential from tourism. The project has been designed and executed to support and align with existing government priorities and needs, resulting in the PAN progress observed, and in the adoption of resource use plans (paragraphs 51, 108).
113. The fact that the majority of implementing partners are also beneficiaries (Table 3), provides an additional likelihood of project outcomes being adopted and sustained in the long-term. The project provided an opportunity for multi-stakeholders to be involved in the project design and implementation, moving away from the more ineffective *modus operandi* of engagement at project design level and minimum consultation at implementation stage. Many stakeholders that were consulted highlighted that a significant benefit of the project was that the project helped them focus and institutionalize their activities, and that it was the first attempt for the country to undertake a more coordinated approach.
114. Although many successes are taking place on the ground, the overall weak and inconsistent project oversight and management (paragraphs 97-101) has resulted in a somewhat chaotic sense of project administration, and this in turn has affected aspects of project implementation and has potentially masked additional successes of the project.
115. In the first instance, understanding the financial status of the project proved challenging, this was resolved towards the end of the review and the current status is now reflected in the report. There were generally low response rates for much of this review, for example, there were repeated requests for project outputs, which were never received, contacts provided for only some of the requested stakeholders, and less than 50% response rate to requests for meetings. For some stakeholders consulted there was a sense of confusion and disconnect between activities carried out and their link to the project, which was even more evident when trying to understand the bigger picture and the status of activities beyond those they were directly responsible for implementing. Although, stakeholders within the ministry communicated frequently with each other and the project management, this was largely informal since 2018. This lack of formal engagement with and among project implementers and project management, and the lack of project milestones (for project implementors) being allocated and assessed, has resulted in a generally poor, inconsistent and confused understanding of the overall project and

- individual activity status among project implementors and management. This is further evident by the submission of some project deliverables for review that were developed before the project or clearly were developed under different projects/funds.
116. There is an urgent need for the project to be brought into a more organized manner and its administrative requirements updated accordingly, in order for the successes of the project and the hard work of all those on the ground to be fully realized. Several recommendations are provided in this report to assist with this.
 117. In spite of these shortcomings, it was evident that all involved in the project are fully engaged on the ground, highly supportive and are working tirelessly to enhance and contribute to the improvement of livelihoods and protection of biodiversity in Palau.
 118. **COVID Impacts on the Project:** The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted project implementation causing delays in some project activities and limiting some stakeholder engagement.
 119. Under the ToR's a number of questions required by GEF were identified. Review findings related to these questions are presented in table 7. A summary of the evaluation criteria ratings is presented in table 8.

Table 7: UNEP and GEF review questions

| GEF Questions |
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| <p>What is the performance at the project's mid-point against Core Indicator Targets?</p> <p>As a GEF 5 project the GEF focal tracking tool for conducting a PA METT for four project sites was applied at the beginning of this project. Due to the review being desk-based and information availability limitations, changes from the baselines were not able to be assessed during the mid-term review. However, a significant increase (27%) in the financial sustainability score card was observed between the projects baseline and during the MTR. In addition, although not required for a GEF 5 project, the project contributes to the GEF Core indicator target - protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (hectares) by increasing Palau's marine protected area coverage by 46,555 hectares</p> |
| <p>What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program?</p> <p>The project has demonstrated good engagement of key stakeholders from project design to implementation. Several activities have shown engagement and wide representation of interested groups including traditional male and female groups as well as resource use groups. However, many of the planned committees have not been formalized and depend largely on informal day-to-day interaction between individuals. Those that were established have at times been impacted by high turnover in representation as a result of changes in political administration. In addition, Palau is a small country and often people are placed on several committees, which can result in fatigue. Irrespective of these challenges, the project would have benefited from a more formal approach to multi-stakeholder cooperation to enhance the overall awareness of the projects progress and intended outcomes.</p> |
| <p>What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding gender-responsive measures and any intermediate gender result areas?</p> <p>Palau is largely a matriarchal society. At inception the project was rated as "Gender aware" on the GEF scale. The project design included gender mainstreaming activities, there implementation however was not able to be fully assessed and gender disaggregated indicators are not identified in the results framework. That said, there has been no indication that there have been any challenges in implementing gender responsive measures for the project.</p> |
| <p>What has been the experience at the project's mid-point against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval? The risk classifications reported in the latest PIR report should be verified and any measures taken to address identified risks assessed</p> <p>Although environmental and social safeguards were discussed in the project document, no safeguards plan was submitted at CEO approval. The project is not thought to have any negative environmental consequences although any expansion of a protected areas system will come with a need for social safeguards. A gender and social safeguard expert is a member of the project management unit and provides advice and ensures safeguards are implemented.</p> <p>The PIR identifies the timely delivery of activities, staff turnover after elections, non-tourism dependent financing and COVID as the main project risks. A no cost extension is currently underway and a second one in the process of being applied for. This will enable the completion of several activities that were impacted by delays in activities and administrative aspects of the project, and the pandemic. HR policies are currently being reviewed to allow for more technical rather than political representation on coordination committees, which would reduce the risk of</p> |

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| turnover after elections, and the development of a financing mechanism not dependent on tourism has been developed and implemented under this project. |
| What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding the implementation of the project's Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables? |
| The overall knowledge management approach of the project thus far has major shortcomings. A recommendation has been provided in this report and the project is currently working on a communication plan with a newly hired communication officer and with the GEF 6 project to develop a platform for deliverables. As such, this aspect is expected to improve significantly by the project end. |

Table 8: Summary evaluation table

| Criterion | Summary Assessment | Rating |
|---|---|-----------|
| A. Strategic Relevance | | HS |
| <i>1. Alignment to UNEP's MTS, POW and strategic priorities</i> | The project's logical framework clearly identifies the alignment of its outcomes and outputs with UNEP's MTS 2014-2017, subprogramme 3 Ecosystem Management and its Expected Accomplishments (a) for the Programmes of Work 2014-2015 and 2016-2017. | HS |
| <i>2. Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partner strategic priorities</i> | This project was developed under GEF 5. As such this project is aligned with the GEF 5 biodiversity objectives (BD), specifically BD-1 and BD-2. The International Waters Strategic Action Programme for Pacific Island Countries. The Land Degradation Strategy, SO 3 and Sustainable Forest Management/REDD plus, SO 1 and SO 2. | HS |
| <i>3. Relevance to regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities</i> | The project is aligned with SLM and PAN priorities, the NBSAP (2012-2025), several national policies and plans and the Micronesia challenge | HS |
| <i>4. Complementarity with existing interventions</i> | The project has built on a number of previous GEF initiatives and has is working closely with the current UNDP GEF project. | S |
| B. Effectiveness | | MS |
| <i>1. Availability of outputs</i> | Only, approximately 50% of project outputs assessed. The project has made significant progress towards PAN outputs, some progress for component 2 with much of the current status unknown, and there is much improvement need around component 3. | MS |
| <i>2. Achievement of project outcomes</i> | As for outputs | MS |
| <i>3. Likelihood of impact</i> | The strengthening of the PAN network, and the willingness of states to adopt resource use plans into State plans suggest that if the project does meet its intend outputs and outcomes it will likely contribute to its intended impact | L |
| C. Financial Management | | MU |
| <i>1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures</i> | Gaps in reports. Inconsistencies in past reports. The project has not been audited since 2017 (outside projects control). Funds provided to project without updated financials and audits. | MU |
| <i>2. Completeness of project financial information</i> | Current and accurate expenditure was not available at the beginning of the review but were later provided although unaudited and unapproved at the time of the review by UNEP. Financial information was confusing and difficult to obtain, issues from 2018 only highlighted in 2021, there are currently no approved financial reports for 2021, no 2021 progress reports or approved co-financing reports. | MU |
| <i>3. Communication between finance and project management staff</i> | There has been a high turnover of UNEP staff (FMO and TM) from the onset of this project which left many periods without a TM. This is likely the reason why, the project is not in a good financial administration stage despite being in its final 3 months i.e. limited and inconsistent supervision and | MU |

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| | backstopping due to gaps and inconsistencies in management. The current TM and FMO engagement frequently and are currently trying to resolve all outstanding issues with the EA | |
| D. Efficiency | The project has done well in securing co-financing and joint implementation of several activities with complementary projects particularly with GEF 6 and IW projects. The has had one NCE and intends to apply for a second one. | MS |
| E. Monitoring and Reporting | | MU |
| <i>1. Monitoring Design and Budget</i> | A cumbersome results framework with several indicators and targets missing. Planned budget (ProDoc) and current budget different with current only allowing for audits, mid and terminal evaluations. However, although not implemented effectively, the planned monitoring of progress and supervision plan was adequate. | MS |
| <i>2. Monitoring of project implementation</i> | There are several indicators that still do not have baselines or midterm targets (approx. 1/3 of outcome indicators). There has been no collection of monitoring data against indicators and 0% of evaluation budget spent by December 2021. No gender disaggregated data. No apparent verification of project deliverable or milestones, poor implementation of supervision plan. | MU |
| <i>3. Project reporting</i> | PIRs and UNEP half year reports provided (some gaps). Progress reported, much unable to be verified, some inconsistencies reported. | MS |
| F. Sustainability | | L |
| <i>1. Socio-political sustainability</i> | Government stakeholders showed significant support and buy-in and appear to be committed to advancing conservation outcomes. | L |
| <i>2. Financial sustainability</i> | The dependency of Palau in receiving funds from tourism for financing and due to the fact that Ministry budgets have been recently cut by 10% with MoAFE receiving one of the lowest funds across Ministries suggest that the country will still remain fairly highly dependent on external funding for conservation activities beyond basic operational costs. However, significant work has gone across the PAN in financial management training, revising the sustainable financing plan and the implementation of an Investment Partner Programme all help create a more enabling environment for financial sustainability. | ML |
| <i>3. Institutional sustainability</i> | Biodiversity-related institutions are understaffed, underfunded and require even further capacity to uptake many of the outputs from the project Often committee seats are linked to political appointments and therefore can face high turnover. However national and state HR policies are being reviewed to allow for more permanent and technical staff on boards and committees. In addition, with the newly established bureau of environment acting as a coordinating arm, institutional sustainability should be enhanced moving forward | L |
| G. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues | | MS |
| <i>1. Preparation and readiness</i> | Project management was challenging at the beginning with committees not yet functional. However, there was timely disbursement of funds once the project was approved. | MS |
| <i>2. Quality of project management and supervision</i> | There have been several issues with management and supervision at all levels of this project, which has lead to much confusion, inconsistency and chaos surrounding the project. While a significant part of this is beyond any individuals control (eg turnover from sick staff), elements | U |

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| | were and are still within the project management to improve certain aspects | |
| 3. Stakeholder's participation and cooperation | By design there is good participation and cooperation of stakeholders. Its execution for enhanced cooperation could have been improved. | MS |
| 4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity | Little specific evidence to show that proposed measures were taken. However, there is no indication that there were any issues for the project in this regard | MS |
| 5. Environmental and social safeguards | Little specific evidence to show that proposed measures were taken. However, there is no indication that there were any issues for the project in this regard and a gender and social watchdog was part of the project management unit | MS |
| 6. Country ownership and driven-ness | There is extremely strong country ownership and driven-ness of project outputs and outcomes. | HS |
| 7. Communication and public awareness | Significant improvements could be made to share project progress, outputs and results with stakeholders. Efforts are underway to improve this | MU |
| Overall Project Rating | | MS |

B. Lessons learned

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| Lesson Learned #1: | Consistent project oversight by Implementing Agencies is critical where projects are externally executed. |
| Context/comment: | There are many instances where current shortcomings could have been prevented with more timely intervention. For example, financial and progress reporting. It is clear that the project manager, with current workload and lack of experience in managing a large GEF project, could have benefited from more regular guidance and this was not helped with several instances where there was inconsistent feedback from different supervisors. In order to ensure the project is implemented effectively and progresses smoothly, it is important that, irrespective of staff turnover, systems are in place for consistent advice on policies and procedures, regular supervision of progress to identify areas that need support takes place, capacity is built, and frequent and regular communication, with site visits (where possible), occurs. For example, direct communication between the FMP and project manager in projects where high UNEP staff turnover is evident, or where project management may need more support than usual, budget permitting, an external consultant/advisor, experienced in GEF projects, could be seconded to support the project manager. This could be through a retainer with limited days per year for consistency, which could be increased as required. |
| Lesson Learned #2: | Mid Term Reviews near project-end have limited corrective ability and every effort should be made to have MTRs at the projects mid-point, ensuring appropriate stakeholder engagement and availability of project deliverables. |
| Context/comment: | MTRs provide an opportunity to investigate project progress and challenges, enabling corrective actions to enhance project outcomes if the need arises. When MTRs occur a few months before the end of the project, little time remains to implement recommendations and therefore, while still useful, have limited corrective ability. It is essential, particularly during this pandemic, when most reviews are desk-based and therefore limited, that projects are ready for their MTR, both by ensuring that there is adequate stakeholder engagement, and all project |

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| | <p>deliverables are compiled and ready for the review in order to carry out a thorough assessment of project progress.</p> |
| <p>Lesson Learned #3:</p> | <p>Alignment with national priorities, engaging stakeholders from the beginning, and maximizing opportunities for their involvement in project implementation can greatly facilitate buy-in and support and thus enhance the overall sustainability of project outcomes.</p> |
| <p>Context/comment:</p> | <p>The achievement of project outputs and outcomes is highly dependent on government and stakeholder buy-in and support. Several stakeholders that were consulted commended the fact that this project was in line with their agencies' priorities, and that there was significant engagement of key stakeholders in all phases of the project. Many of the government beneficiaries in particular were involved in both design and implementation, which meant that the adoption of project outputs and outcomes was strongly supported (eg. PAN related activities and forestry monitoring protocols). The project also demonstrated flexibility in responding to State priorities as seen by the development of specific resource use guidelines as per requested. In doing so, 10 states have already adopted these guidelines into their master plans. This relatively seamless transition from design and implementation to adoption for many activities has meant that some outcomes are already institutionalized - essential for the sustainability of project outcomes.</p> |
| <p>Lesson Learned #4:</p> | <p>In projects where multiple implementing partners are subcontracted by the executing agency to conduct project activities, formal and regular coordination meetings between project management and implementing partners are critical.</p> |
| <p>Context/comment:</p> | <p>More often than not projects require multiple stakeholder coordination and the integration of multiple activities. Typically, organizations that are subcontracted will also have other projects they are involved in and/or 'regular' duties (often aligned with the project). The absence of formal coordination meetings between the project and the implementing partners can lead to a disconnect between activities implemented on the ground and the project itself. In this project it was clear that there was often confusion related to which activities were being carried out for which projects. It can result in milestones not be collectively determined and agreed, or progress not being suitably monitored. This can lead to delays in activities, with essential building block activities implemented by one agency, and necessary for another to complete their activities, being put on hold or delayed. In addition, if progress, deliverables and activity plans are not shared, this can result in a duplication of efforts, such as having to research information that is already available, lack of coordination of efforts such as stakeholder engagement which could lead to stakeholder fatigue and reduced efficiency, and a lack of understanding of the bigger project beyond specific focus areas. It can also lead to a missed opportunity for establishing and supporting good cooperation between implementing partners who will need to work together after the project to sustain project outcomes.</p> |
| <p>Lesson Learned #5:</p> | <p>The secondment of project managers from government executing agencies can result in a lack of focus and engagement on the project,</p> |

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| | due to additional responsibilities on other external projects or within their agency. |
| Context/comment: | It is critical that government agencies have a sense of ownership on all projects. However, government agencies are usually under staffed and over worked and typically would have several overlapping projects on at the same time. Further, in the event that political, national or agency priorities suddenly require significant manpower and time, on top of day-to-day work responsibilities, project activities are usually the first to be placed on hold. As such, the secondment of an external project manager should be considered in order to ensure that the level of focus and effort required to manage large GEF projects can remain consistent irrespective of internal issues that arise (see recommendation #6). |

C. Recommendations

C.1. Recommendations for project

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| Recommendation #1: | Enhanced coordination between the Implementing and Executing Agencies to ensure the effective implementation of remaining project activities and MTR recommendations. |
| Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation: | <p>A major challenge for this project has been the high turnover of UNEP staff at all levels relevant to the project but in particular task managers, with significant periods of the project implementation time frame with interim TMs or without any designated task manager. This has been challenging for a project manager who is implementing a GEF project for the first time and navigating all the required procedures. This inconsistent oversight provided by the IA in the first four to five years of the project, is likely a major contributing factor to the shortcomings observed in the project. It is highly probable that if appropriate supervision and communication between IA, EA and implementing partners had occurred, issues with financial reports, progress reports, and project deliverables identified in this review would have been caught, and actions to resolve them dealt with earlier.</p> <p>It is necessary therefore that cooperation between the IA and EA is enhanced to bring the project to an organized closure that ensures work carried out on the ground is reflected in the project's successes, and strengthens the project's intended outcomes.</p> <p>It is recommended that bi-weekly remote meetings take place between the TM, project manager and in country assistant for the first few months following this review, reduced to monthly once the project is back on track. It can be helpful to agree on a particular day and time for regular meetings, so that all parties are aware well in advance that they should keep their schedules clear, thus avoiding situations where it can be weeks before a suitable agreed time can be found. These meetings should focus on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identifying key administrative areas that need urgent attention and where support is needed for the project manager. 2) Going through the recommendations and identifying key areas where support will be needed and determine how the support will be provided. 3) Developing a revised work plan (different to the workplan that will be submitted for project activities for NCE) with priorities and responsibilities clearly identified. 4) Identifying agreed weekly tasks with expected deliverables for all parties with progress assessed and new task lists developed |

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| | <p>each week. Anything that is not clear or requires clarification should be raised in this meeting.</p> <p>In addition to these meetings, it is recommended that a google drive shared task template, that all three parties have access to, is established. This shared document should be updated at each weekly meeting adding new tasks and reviewing and documenting progress on those completed and ongoing. This will ensure that all parties fully understand their responsibilities removing any confusion as to what needs to be done, how it needs to be done and when it needs to be done. It will also allow parties to monitor progress in-between meetings. It is also suggested that a tool such as google teams, where instant chats and messages can be shared immediately, to respond to any urgent queries from either side, be used.</p> <p>In doing this, a clear, consistent and agreed way forward with clear responsibilities, the necessary support and measurable deliverables will be achieved, thereby removing all the barriers which until now have appeared to impact the coordination and management of this project. Further, as soon as possible (pandemic permitting) a field visit to Palau should be made by the Task Manager or another relevant UNEP representative.</p> |
| Priority Level ¹: | Critical recommendation |
| Responsibility: | Implementing Agency and Executing Agency |
| Proposed implementation time-frame: | Immediately |

120. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section **G. Factors affecting Performance** Quality of supervision and project management

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| Recommendation #2: | All project outputs and deliverables should be gathered by the project so they are available to project partners, reviewers, UNEP and other interested parties, any gaps particularly as they relate to enhancing project outcomes should be identified and completed by project end. |
| Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation: | Limited project outputs/deliverables were available for this review. Lack of outputs can have several consequences. For example, it can jeopardize project sustainability as activities, outcomes or guidelines are not properly documented or shared with the relevant institutions; it results in low visibility for the project, with no tangible evidence to help assess project progress; and it can result in duplication of efforts as results are not disseminated. The project is working with the GEF 6 project to develop a website to disseminate project outputs and this is seen as a critical activity to complete before the project ends. In the meantime every effort should be made to ensure all outputs reported are available in a central location and that they are all relevant to actual deliverables of the project. |
| Priority Level: | Critical Recommendation |
| Responsibility: | MoAFE, Project Manager |

¹ Select priority level from these three categories:

Critical recommendation: address significant and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or internal control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided regarding the achievement of programme objectives.

Important recommendation: address reportable deficiencies or weaknesses in governance, risk management or internal control processes, such that reasonable assurance might be at risk regarding the achievement of programme objectives. Important recommendations are followed up on an annual basis.

Opportunity for improvement: comprise suggestions that do not meet the criteria of either critical or important recommendations, and are only followed up as appropriate during subsequent oversight activities.

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| Proposed implementation time-frame: | Immediate |
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121. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section **B. Effectiveness**: Achievement of outputs and outcomes
- Section **G. Factors affecting performance**: Communication and public awareness

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| Recommendation #3: | If a second no cost extension is granted, the remaining project time should focus on organizing, finishing and maximizing the effectiveness of project outputs and outcomes already near completion rather than starting new activities. |
| Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation: | <p>The review has identified several priority project activities that should be completed by project end in order to enhance project outcomes, in addition to the compilation of existing deliverables in recommendation 2.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The GEF 5 METT should be completed and assessed against the 2015 baselines. 2. All four METTs (socio-economic, forest ecology, marine ecology, PAME) developed during this project should be completed, baseline results should be entered into a database, analyzed and consolidated into one report (per METT focus area)- as an output of the project. 3. Guidelines and manuals should be developed for the implementation of all four METTs so that these can be repeated in a consistent manner, even if the current staff are no longer around for the next phase of conducting METTs. 4. All the biological surveys and socio-economic surveys need to be consolidated into one report each. A gap analysis of priority ecosystems and biodiversity covered in the PAN needs to be developed. 5. Complete all land/resource use best practices that are in process. 6. All meetings held from herein should have meeting minutes drafted and available to the TM 7. Revise the results framework to identify indicators aligned with project activities and for which there are baselines. It should be simplified significantly. The IA needs to provide support to MoAFE for this activity. |
| Priority Level: | Important priority |
| Responsibility: | MoAFE and implementing partners |
| Proposed implementation time-frame: | As soon as possible until project end |

122. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section **B. Effectiveness**: Availability of outputs

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| Recommendation #4: | Formal coordination meetings between project management and project implementers should be reinstated and a thorough review of activities progress and status carried out and a joint workplan with timelines and deliverables for remaining activities developed. |
| Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation: | <p>The last formal meeting occurred in 2018 and no milestones of integrated works plans were ever established. This has led to a disconnect between implementors and the project, limited cooperation between implementors within the MoAFE and those that do not belong to MoAFE. It is recommended that one long meeting- at least half a day or full day is required to kick start these formal coordination meetings. During this workshop a focus should be on the results framework and on fully understanding what has been done, progress towards indicators and activities still required. A further focus should be on quantitative data availability, a full list of deliverables already completed or in process (linked to project outputs and outcomes), identifying joint or cooperating activities between implementors, maximizing effectiveness and efficiency for the remaining activities, and a plan with clearly identified responsibilities and required actions for each implementing agency, that includes deliverables and milestones. For example, all project deliverables to be provided to the project manager by a certain date, or a certain joint meeting to be held by a certain date etc.</p> <p>Once completed, the project manager and all project implementors should hold monthly meetings where the workplan, deliverables, progress towards outputs and outcomes and milestones are assessed, reviewed and revised at each meeting. Given the number of implementors is less than 15 (COVID restrictions) and all have access to remote tools, these meetings can occur remotely or in person and are therefore not affected by the pandemic situation.</p> |
| Priority Level: | Important priority |
| Responsibility: | MoAFE and implementing partners |
| Proposed implementation time-frame: | As soon as possible project end |

123. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section **G. Factors affecting Performance**: Quality of project management & Stakeholder Engagement

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| Recommendation #5: | Consider training community members and PAN staff in forest monitoring protocols to assist forestry teams in their implementation and to minimize the time required to complete assessments. |
| Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation: | <p>The current forestry monitoring protocol (300 plots) is estimated to take 3 years with a team of four. The forestry division currently has nine staff members, if the protocol is to be implemented every 3-5 years as planned, this would mean that nearly half the division is consistently out of action, making it, in effect, unfeasible and unlikely to be sustainable. If site PAN staff and/or local communities were trained in the protocols, instead of the four forestry experts working as one team, four teams (or two teams) each with a forestry division staff expert and monitoring assistants (PAN/community) could be established. This would mean that the</p> |

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| | protocol could be completed in a much shorter time period, i.e. in approximately 1- 1 ½ years instead of three. Although this would result in the need for greater financing in the monitoring year, in the long run it could be more efficient in terms of staff, would involve more stakeholders, therefore increasing its chance for support and would be more sustainable in the event of forestry staff turnover. If there are equipment issues preventing the establishment of more than one team, opportunities for additional grant funds could be sought to meet equipment needs. |
| Priority Level: | Opportunity for improvement |
| Responsibility: | Division of Forestry |
| Proposed implementation time-frame: | 2-3 years |

124. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

Section **B. Effectiveness**: Availability of outputs & outcomes

Recommendations for follow up projects

125. Since the project is near completion, there are few recommendations that could be useful beyond the project's life-time. Further projects are in the process of being developed and the conservation agenda has gained significant momentum in the country. The review therefore presents further recommendations that could be applied at either the country or project level, based on the lessons learnt from this project.

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| Recommendation #6: | External executed projects should consider independent project managers or should seek to engage experienced NGOs for execution. |
| Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation: | When externally executed projects allocate government institutions as executing agencies and they allocate an internal project manager, it comes with some associated risks (see lesson learnt #5). External project managers present an opportunity to mitigate these risks while at the same time still ensuring government ownership, buy in and even remaining as the executing agency. There are two potential ways this could be achieved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) A national or international experienced NGO that the government approves of could sign an MoU with the EA as the project managers of the GEF grant. This would enable them to focus fully on project implementation, partnering with the EA and the EA providing a supervisory role. ii) Governments remain as EA but built into the project design and budget is an agreed secondment of an experienced external GEF project manager who would be based in the EA offices and supervised by both UNEP and the EA, but whose sole responsibility would be for the GEF project implementation and coordination. These or other potential options should be discussed and agreed between the IA and EA at the PPG phase. |
| Priority Level: | Opportunity for improvement |
| Responsibility: | Implementing agency |
| Proposed implementation time-frame: | For consideration by future projects or country activities |

126. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section **B. Effectiveness -G Factors affecting performance**

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| Recommendation #7: | A review of project management capacity should be carried out prior to project implementation to ensure a full understanding of project implementation policies and procedures. Significant oversight and backstopping should be provided particularly in the beginning of project implementation. |
| Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation: | Particularly where executing agencies task internal staff as project management, the capacity and experience of the designated individual should be assessed prior to project commencement. It is often assumed that an excellent technical expert is the most suited for managing a bilateral project, however project management requires a very different skill set. During the project design stage, consideration is given to implementing partner capacity, but little consideration is given to the capacity of the project coordinator/manager. In situations where a project manager is assigned and is not based on a competitive process it is critical to assess the capacity of the individual in terms of project management capabilities as well as knowledge of UNEP and GEF policies and procedures. Where gaps exist, every effort should be made to provide the necessary support and the level of backstopping and guidance should reflect those needs. In doing so, this will anticipate areas where the individual may struggle and require more support and will ensure the timely intervention and/or prevention of coordination issues or project management issues. The project has seen many instances where due to lack of knowledge of procedures or capacity the project has suffered, for example doubled effort (holding two inception meetings), resulted in inconsistencies in reporting, a disorganized and lack of current state of deliverables and financials. Much of which could have been prevented if consideration was given to the inexperience of the project manager in managing large projects, and if capacity was built earlier on in the project to overcome the lack of knowledge of procedures and policies. |
| Priority Level: | Opportunity for improvement |
| Responsibility: | IA and EA |
| Proposed implementation time-frame: | For consideration by future projects |

127. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section **B. Effectiveness -G Factors affecting performance**

ANNEX I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Table 1: Response to stakeholder comments received and reflected in the report by the reviewers, where appropriate

| Page Ref | Stakeholder comment | Response from reviewer |
|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | No comments received | |
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ANNEX II. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Table 2: People consulted during the Review

| Organization | Name | Position | Gender |
|---|----------------------|---|---------------|
| UNEP -Subregional office Pacific | Sangjin Lee | Task Manager | male |
| UNEP -Subregional office Pacific | Peerayot Sidonrusmee | Programme Assistant | male |
| UNEP-DEPI | Michael Atogoh | Fund Management Officer | male |
| MoAFE | Gwen Sisor | Project Manager | female |
| MoAFE | Leena Mesebaluu | International waters projects R2R – project manager | female |
| PAN Office | Joyce Beouch | Head of Office | female |
| PAN Office | Lukes Isechal | PAN officer (currently Bureau Fisheries) | female |
| PAN Fund | Regis Emesiochel | Programme Manager | male |
| Palau Conservation Society | Umai Basilius | Head of Department for Nature | female |
| Student | River Thomas | Field assistant (currently division of forestry) | female |
| Requested but not held | | | |
| Belau National Museum | | | |
| Bureau of Agriculture | | | |
| Environmental Quality Protection Board | | | |
| Palau International Coral Reef Center | | | |
| Palau Automated Land and Resource Information System Office | | | |
| Contact details requested | | | |
| 2 state governments | | | |
| 2 MPAs | | | |
| Ministry of Education | | | |
| Palau Community College | | | |

ANNEX III. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project planning and reporting documents

- GEF Project Identification Form (PIF)
- Project Document
- CEO endorsement package plus Annexes
- Financial, progress and project implementation reports
- Budget & workplan revisions
- Inception meeting Report 2018
- GEF tracking tools

Project deliverables

PAN

- Kerradel Conservation Network, Ngaraard, Five Year Protected Areas Management Plan, 2020 – 2025
- Medal Ngeduill Conservation Area community-based protected area management plan 2020-2025.
- Socio-economic surveys: Ngardman, Ngarchelong, Angaur, Koror, Melekeok, Ngatpang, Airai Sates.
- Marino LL, Koshiba S, Jonathan R, Olsudong D. Human well-being and the perceptions of stakeholders of 13 states in the Palau Protected Areas Network (PAN). PICRC Technical Report 20-15. Palau International Coral Reef Center. Koror, Palau.
- Draft Communication Plan 2020, Protected areas Network

SLM

- Tourism Strategic Plan: To ensure a pristine paradise destination 2019-2023
- National tourism regulations: Boat owners; Tour operators; Reef toxic sunscreen;
- Responsible tourism Act 2018
- SLM Action Plan meeting agenda
- SLM Action Plan project notes
- SLM presentation to private sector
- SLM_SFM meeting notes, Feb 23, 2018

Reference Documents

- UNEP Medium Term Strategy, 2014-2017
- UNEP Biennial Programme of Work (PoW), 2016-2017
- The Republic of Palau Revised National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan:2015-2025: Promoting Wise Development to Achieve Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
- Republic of Palau Sustainable Land Management Policy, 2012
- Sustainable Forest Management Policy 2018
- National Invasive Species and Biosecurity Strategic Action Plan 2018 to 2022
- Palau Responsible Tourism Policy Framework: Ensuring a Pristine Paradise. Palau for everyone 2017–2021
- Palau Protected Areas Network System wide strategic plan 2016-2020

ANNEX IV. PROGRESS TOWARDS TARGETS

Progress towards outputs

Summary Total indicators assessed 50; N/A =not applicable (6); NA =not achieved (7); Achieved = A (7) PA=partially achieved (8); NS=not started (1); NV=reported in PIR-not verified through consultations and/or documentation (4); UK= status and progress unknown by reviewer (17)

| Desired result | Indicator | Mid-Term Project Target | End of Project Target | Reviewers comments | Status at mid-term targets |
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| 1.1.1 IMPROVED DESIGN: A National PAN Management Strategy and Action Plan is developed and endorsed by 2017; and the National and associated State Plans 1) align with SLM in the 4 core areas and with regional projects such as R2R, 2) engage all 16 states, and 3) cover gaps and ensure representative coverage of sites, species, and ecosystem functions, and 4) address the applicability of national, regional, and global goals and benefit-sharing. | 1. Status of National PAN Management Strategy & Action Plan; Communication Plan | National PAN Strategy is created. PAN Communications Plan created and includes SOPs and guidelines for state plans. Feedback loops established to indicate adaptive nature of PAN strategy and to gauge utility and level of engagement ; 1 state plan aligned with national plan. | National PAN Management Strategy is endorsed; Strategy addresses key issues identified in Outcomes 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5; 5 state plans aligned with national plan. | Strategy does not include SLM management issues; BUT state plans have included SLM considerations see below | NA |
| | 2. State plans with headers aligned with national plan * | | | 8 plans developed and a further 4 planed | A |
| | 3. Status of PAN gap analysis report and data; Number of taxonomic assessments | Gap analysis complete. Priority areas identified. | Gap analysis complete and incorporated into PAN Strategy and other cross-sector plans. PAN Criteria and Ranking System developed. Number of taxonomic assessments increased. | studies reported but unverified (except some socio-economic surveys), no consolidation of reports, no gap analysis or priority areas identified | NA |
| | 4. Number of PAN/SLM coordination documents* | At least 2 documented instances showing resolution of a PAN/SLM conflict | At least 4 policy statements produced showing coordinated action between SLM and PAN coordinators on 4 cross-cutting issues. | Not reflected in activities under this outcome, status unknown | UK |

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| <p>1.1.2 IMPROVED EVALUATION: Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (METT): Agree on a set of 3 harmonized national and state level PAN site monitoring and evaluation tools and protocols (1 marine, 1 terrestrial, 1 socio-economic) which are aligned with METT, with full trial and evaluation of Palau's METT tool in at least 9 PAN sites by the end of the Project.</p> | <p>1. Number and types of data produced by METT</p> | <p>Standard METT identified and tested with a view to upscaling to be applied to entire PAN system</p> | <p>METT applied and utilized for adaptive management. Results shared widely.</p> | <p>METT activities carried out but unverified and progress and status of there implementation (forest monitoring exception) and baseline data availability unknown</p> | <p>PA; UK</p> |
| <p>1.1.3 IMPROVED IMPLEMENTATION: At least 4 PAN sites meet a minimum METT score, and at least 5 other sites show improving trends toward effective conservation (e.g. reduction in over/illegal harvesting) by the end of the Project and total area protected.</p> | <p>1. METT used for PAME; 2. PAME Score 3. Percentages of marine and terrestrial areas meeting Micronesia Challenge goals</p> | <p>At least 4 PAN sites meet a minimum PAME score using METT and at least 5 sites show improving trends in management effectiveness. METT is developed and implemented and PAME scores determined in at least 9 sites.</p> | <p>METT is implemented in at least 9 pilot sites; METT is used to improve management in pilot sites Total PAN Site coverage expands to 138,000 hectares marine and 10,500 hectares terrestrial. 9 sites meet minimum PAME</p> | <p>The current status is 39 sites, 6955 ha marine and 3985 ha terrestrial. It is not known if the terrestrial Pas have been reduced since project baseline or the initial baseline coverage was incorrect</p> | <p>UK PA PA</p> |

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| <p>1.2.1 IMPROVED ENGAGEMENT: An outreach program reaching at least 80% of stakeholders in 8 states results in communities that are measurably more aware and supportive of PAN and increasing active participation in management of PAN Sites.</p> | <p>1. % of stakeholders exposed to PAN information</p> | <p>4 communities reached. Increasing number of community members active in Northern Reefs.</p> | <p>Outreach program reached at least 80% of stakeholder groups (traditional leaders, men's and women's cheldebechel, fishers, conservation officers, youth groups, hunters, farmers association, PAQua, commercial buyers) in 8 states</p> | | <p>UK</p> |
| | <p>2. Number and type of crowdsourcing opportunities for biodiversity and ecosystem monitoring,</p> | <p>Crowdsourcing platforms established</p> | <p>Number of entries to crowd sourced data increases yearly. Community participation in PAN monitoring and management is improved; Resources are developed to enable community participation (UK)</p> | | <p>NA</p> |
| <p>1.2.2 IMPROVED TRAINING: The number of trained, certified PAN Staff increases by at least 15 and benefits some marginalized populations in outlying states.</p> | <p>1. Number of conservation staff;</p> | <p>At least 1 organization fully staffed (MoAfe); Number of staff increased. Gaps in laws Training programs streamlined.</p> | <p>Number of trained PAN Managers increased by at least 24; Stakeholder assessments show increasing capacity</p> | <p>Training has been provide, and restructuring MoAFE, not known how many staff trained</p> | <p>PA</p> |
| | <p>2. Number of staff receiving training;</p> | | | | <p>UK</p> |

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| <p>1.2.3 IMPROVED FINANCING: PAN revenue generation assessment from local and non-local sources at project inception (baseline) and project end show diversified financial support at the national and state levels and alignment with regional programs such as the Micronesia Challenge, and benefits are shared widely with gender and environmental safeguards in place.</p> | <p>1. PAN revenue generation from local and non-local sources (# sources)</p> <p>2. Number of management plans with a diversified portfolio in budget.</p> | <p>Opportunities for improving PAN sustainable financing identified</p> <p>Communication plan implemented in 1 state</p> <p>1 state with updated management plan</p> | <p>Sustainable Financing plan updated and endorsed. Additional funding streams identified and implemented across more locations</p> <p>Communication plan for the PAN Sustainable Financing Plan completed and endorsed and being implemented. Number of states reached increases yearly.</p> <p>Resiliency to economic fluctuations is institutionalized by increasing the number of states with diversified income (PA).</p> | <p>Investment Partnership programme developed and implemented in one state</p> | <p>A</p> <p>NA</p> <p>A</p> |
| <p>2.1.1: IMPROVED PLANNING: A National SLM Action Plan that incorporates ecosystem-based management (such as R2R), includes updated sustainable financing information and goals, addresses cross-sector issues such as SFM and Climate Change, considers benefits across genders and marginalized communities, and aligns with the PAN is designed and agreed.</p> | <p>1. Number of policy statements</p> <p>2. Number of assessments on SLM/PAN completed;</p> <p>3. Number of documents with joint PAN/SLM Policy statements.</p> | <p>PAN and SLM Policy Statements drafted</p> <p>Assessment completed.</p> | <p>PAN and SLM Policy Statements agreed and under implementation</p> <p>Policy statements on 4 cross-sector areas developed and incorporated into PAN and SLM documents. Number of documents with joint PAN/SLM policies increases yearly.</p> | <p>SLM Action plan not developed</p> | <p>NA</p> <p>UK</p> <p>UK</p> |

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| <p>2.1.2 IMPROVED COORDINATION: A national coordinating mechanism and body for SLM with representatives from at least 6 sectors and levels of government is operational and includes associated capacity building and resourcing to ensure its function.</p> | <p>1. Number of coordinating mechanisms for SLM;</p> <p>2. Number and types of members on coordinating body;</p> <p>3. Adherence to SLM Sustainable Finance Plan</p> | <p>SLM Coordinating Body established and authorized. Sustainable Finance Plan updated.</p> | <p>Coordinating body includes representatives from 6 sectors; Coordinating body meets at least biannually; Number of training opportunities for members of body; Financial resources to SLM increases yearly; Alignment with Sustainable Financing Plan increases yearly.</p> | <p>There have been meetings and BwA identified as head but no SLM committee established</p> <p>Not known if SFP updated</p> | <p>PA</p> <p>UK</p> |
| <p>2.2.1 INCREASED LAND USE PLANNING: State SLM Plans for at least 4 states are developed, tested, and implemented</p> | <p>1. Number of states with full land use plans</p> | <p>Participatory land use planning underway in 4 states</p> | <p>4 states with full land use plans</p> | <p>4 sustainable resource use plan completed/in progress for adoption into state plans</p> | <p>PA</p> |
| <p>2.2.2 IMPROVED LAND USE: Best Practices for multiple land uses are identified, tested, promoted; and capacity to implement them is built, particularly among vulnerable populations such as women and foreign farmers.</p> | <p>2. Number of Ridge to Reef Best Practices incorporated into SLM documents*</p> | <p>Best Practice guidebook established and under joint SLM/PAN coordination</p> | <p>Best practices developed and address: a) Local food production; b) protection of water resources; c) safe wastewater and solid waste systems; d) maintenance of historical cultural sites and biodiversity; e) fair and realistic access to resources and services; f) mitigating the threat from invasive alien species; g) improving climate change adaptation and resilience; h) improving sustainable forest management</p> | | <p>UK</p> |

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| | <p>3. Number of Demonstration Catchments established*</p> <p>4. Number of conservation policies implemented;</p> <p>5. Number of farmers trained in sustainable practices.</p> | <p>Demonstration Catchment identified and coordinated activities underway. Policies identified and developed. Training programs for farmers developed.</p> | <p>At least 1 Demonstration Catchment under active, coordinated, comprehensive management; Number of Best Practices/ Conservation policies implemented/adopted increases yearly; Biochemical and Socioeconomic METT scores improve from start to finish of project (water quality, food security); Lessons learned drafted. Number of farmers trained increased from start to end of project (at least 16); Area of reforestation and forest rehabilitation increased from start to finish of project.</p> | <p>F Agro-ecology best practices; Sustainable subdivision plan incorporated into state plans, tow other best practice in progress. Farmers trained in Agro-ecology</p> <p>No targets identified</p> <p>No targets identified</p> | <p>PA</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p> |
| <p>2.2.3 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: Improved national level tourism planning and state level implementation of tourism leads to benefits realized across genders and socioeconomic levels.</p> | <p>1. Amount of information enabling sustainable tourism;</p> | <p>National Sustainable Tourism Management Plan created. Information increased (Sustainable Harvesting rates, SFM revenue generation, tourism capacity)*</p> | <p>4 new states include sustainable tourism in State SLM Plans. Legislation drafted. Information increases yearly (legislation gaps).</p> | <p>A responsible tourism policy framework produced in 2016 (developed prior to GEF 5 commencement-so not applicable to GEF being part in anyway finance or technical. A sustainable tourism strategy has been developed</p> | <p>A</p> |

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| | <p>2. Status of National Tourism Plan;</p> <p>3. Number of laws supporting sustainable tourism;</p> <p>4. Number of state plans incorporating tourism.</p> | | | 4 regulations developed-boat owners, sunscreen tour operators and a responsible tourism act | A |
| 3.1.1 Improved capacity of MOAFW to act as the National coordinating body for Palau's environmental sector. | <p>1. Number of Partnerships/ MOUs in place;</p> <p>2. Number and types of OERC staff capacity developments</p> | MoAFE needs assessment completed; Number of staff increased to minimum necessary according to assessment.* | MoAFE fully staffed according to government organizational chart; Every staff receives at least 1 training opportunity; MOUs in place covering PAN, SLM, and cross-sector partnerships. | reported as completed | NV UK |
| 3.1.2 MoAFE effectively implementing, reporting, and evaluating Project. | <p>1. Number of reports completed;</p> <p>2. On-time performance;</p> | <p>Reporting process and partners in place. Responsible PMU Component Manager and organizational partner designated for each MOV*.</p> <p>Evaluation report of local capacity and needs for the Project is completed.</p> | <p>Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports of Project completed; By end of project all reports are on-time and complete at 1st submission; 100% of MOVs provided by partners.</p> <p>Number of conservation professionals trained increases. Number of training topics meets minimum need as stated by Needs Assessment. Indicators of capacity show improving trends.</p> | | A UK |

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| | <p>3. Number of partners providing requested MOVs</p> <p>4. Number of conservation professionals trained; *</p> <p>Exact indicators of capacity to be addressed during Inception Phase and/or METT.</p> | | | <p>No targets identified</p> | <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p> |
| <p>3.1.3 Two-way peer learning approach fostered through participation in regional initiatives (Micronesia Challenge, Ridge to Reef, Integrated Water Resource Management, etc.) and uses multiple forms of communication and media to share lessons from the project.</p> | <p>1. Number of webpages developed; Number of hits and downloads.</p> <p>2. Number of journal articles,</p> <p>3. Number of conference presentations,</p> <p>4. Number of Best Practices included in Best Practice Guidance Manual</p> | <p>Suitable webpage created with information sharing portal; At least 1 Lessons Learned document available on portal.</p> <p>At least 1 conference presentation</p> <p>Documentation of practices in Demonstration Catchment underway. Best Practices guidebook started and baseline information included.</p> | <p>At least 80% of data, reports, and other materials related to the Project published electronically. Number of downloads increases yearly.</p> <p>At least 2 journal articles or conference presentations</p> <p>Catchment Synthesis report complete. Best Practices document complete, with at minimum: Agriculture, Climate Change Adaptation, EBM/Ridge-to-Reef, Fire prevention, Forest rehabilitation and reforestation, Tourism, Water Protection, Gender Mainstreaming</p> | <p>Working with INFORM for national website and GEF to showcase outputs but no outputs shared</p> <p>Reported but not known what conferences attended</p> | <p>NA</p> <p>UK</p> <p>NV</p> <p>UK</p> |

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| | 5. Number of Demonstration Catchment reports published | | | | UK |
| 3.2.1 Enable effective cross-sectoral coordination of PAN and SLM policies | <p>1. Number of agencies with capacity to implement cross-sectoral coordination;</p> <p>2. Number of individuals with capacity to enforce cross-sector regulations;</p> <p>3. Number of local PAN site managers trained in cross-sector issues.</p> | At least 1 agency (EQPB) with improved capacity to implement cross-sector issues, including revised and approved mandate. Training programs for PAN site managers completed. | Stakeholders meet at least quarterly to review PAN, SLM, and Cross-sector issues and to identify areas of alignment and coordination; Document sharing process established to move documents through a hierarchy of review (OERC, Project Management Unit, Component coordination bodies, full GEF 5 Steering Committees); Number of days for EQPB to respond to earthmoving violations decreased from start to mid-term and finish; At least 6 individuals certified to enforce Earth Moving regulations; At least 2 species management plans demonstrate full consideration of PAN, SLM, and Cross-sector issues (including cross-border management) | PAN managers trained in various management procedures | UK A |
| 3.2.2 Streamline forest management across sectors, government levels, and within watersheds with at least 1/3 of native forest under protection and sustainable management (2100 ha in PAN sites and an additional 6000 ha in SFM catchments) | 1. Number and extent of threats from habitat degradation in forest; | Baseline for forest health and threats to forests established. Sustainable harvesting rates established*. | Number and extent of threats in forests declines from start to finish; Size of protected forest or forest actively managed under SLM for SFM is at least 2100 ha in PAN sites and 6000 ha non-PAN. Number and extent of fires decreased from start to finish of project. | Forest monitoring programme developed and implementation ongoing. No baselines determined yet | PA |

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| | <p>2. Number and extent of threats from over and illegal harvesting;</p> <p>3. Size and location of protected forest;</p> <p>4. Number of fires</p> <p>5. GEF METT (Objective 2, Part III), Area with Management Practices Applied</p> | | <p>GEF METT Area with SFM Management Practices applied = 8,000 hectares.</p> | <p>no sustainable harvesting rates reported</p> | <p>NA</p> <p>NS</p> |
| <p>A national biosecurity policy agreed upon with legislation drafted and with at least 2 invasive alien species (IAS) risk reduction or eradications achieved that demonstrates a harmonized approach by PAN and SLM</p> | <p>1. Status of National Biosecurity Plan and Strategy;</p> <p>2. Number of laws supporting biosecurity;</p> <p>3. Number of IAS management strategies</p> | <p>Research completed for National Biosecurity Plan completed by Year 2. METT finalized in Year 1.</p> | <p>National Biosecurity plan completed and in line with Micronesia Biosecurity Plan. At least 1 national law supports National Biosecurity Plan; At least 2 IAS Control and Eradication Strategies developed.</p> | <p>There is a national invasive strategic plan 2018-2021, but there is no reference of GEF involvement</p> <p>Some research completed, a list of species and top 5 IAS identified</p> | <p>N/A</p> <p>NV</p> <p>UK</p> |
| <p>3.2.3 At least 4 states have SLM and PAN plans aligned with climate change adaptation plans, with at least one modeling a gender-inclusive approach</p> | <p>1. Vulnerability and resiliency scores;</p> | <p>METT includes measures for climate change adaptation, vulnerability, and resiliency.</p> | <p>At least 1 community with streamlined PAN and SLM shows improved vulnerability and resiliency scores.</p> | <p>METTs have been developed whether they include target measures is not known</p> | <p>NV</p> |

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| to climate change adaptation | 2. Number of communities with Climate Change Adaptation included in PAN and SLM plans | | | | |
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Progress towards outcomes

Summary Total indicators assessed 35; N/A =not applicable (6); NA =not achieved (4); Achieved = A (6) PA=partially achieved (6); NS=not started (4); NV=reported in PIR-not verified through consultations and/or documentation (3); UK= status and progress unknown by reviewer (6)

| Project objective and Outcomes | Indicator (One indicator per row) | Baseline level | Mid-term target | End-of-project target | Reviewer comments | Progress towards Mid-term targets |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Objective: | 1. Extent, type, or size of threats from Climate Change, Habitat degradation / loss, IAS, and Over / Illegal harvesting; Population size / spatial range of biodiversity. | <p>Climate change: Bleaching can affect up to 80% of Palau's reefs; 100% of atoll, beach, and strand vegetation at risk of being lost.</p> <p>Habitat degradation/loss: Siltation rate at 150 km²/year; Forest loss unknown; Fires impact 100% of terrestrial conservation areas. IAS: Only one species of <i>Fabaceae</i> currently targeted for control at a rate of 1 tree per day or less; Macaques present but not established on Babeldaob and Koror.</p> <p>Over/Illegal Harvesting: Loss of mangroves at 0.04%/year; Dugongs and Micronesian Pigeons declining in population and spatial extent; 2011 fish catch 56% of 2007 catch.</p> | <p>Exact targets determined during Inception Phase. Indicator species determined as part of METT.</p> <p>Preliminary targets: 1 – 100% of bleaching resistant sites in the RISL and 50% of bleaching resistant sites elsewhere protected in MPAs 2- Siltation rate in Airai Bay reduced by 10% (135 km²/yr) 3 – 30% of terrestrial conservation areas free of fires</p> <p>Declining threat scores from start to finish;</p> <p>Increasing or stable populations / geographic extent of populations</p> | <p>Exact targets determined at Mid-Project Workshop, with research conducted beforehand.</p> <p>Preliminary targets: 1 – At least 2 IAS with active management 2 – Macaques do not spread to Babeldaob 3 – Mangrove loss declines by 25% to 0.03%/yr 4 – Declining trends in dugongs and pigeons begin showing a plateau 5 – Fish catch improves</p> <p>Declining threat scores from start to finish</p> <p>Increasing or stable populations / geographic extent of populations</p> | Targets still not identified and still unsure if can get the data | N/A |
| | 2. GEF METT Threat Scores (Objective 1, Section II) | GEF METT Threat Scores (out of undesired max of 159): RISL – 59; Northern Reefs – 41; Ngeremeskang – 83; Ngardok – 53 | GEF METT Threat Scores reduced by at least 10% | GEF METT Threat Scores reduced by at least 25% | GEF METT not conducted at mid-term due to limited in country engagement and inability of reviewer to conduct for 4 unknown sites remotely | NS |

| Project objective and Outcomes | Indicator (One indicator per row) | Baseline level | Mid-term target | End-of-project target | Reviewer comments | Progress towards Mid-term targets |
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| | 3. GEF METT Assessment Form Scores (Objective 1, Section II) | GEF METT Assessment form score (out of desired 112): RISE – 77; Northern Reefs – 61; Ngeremeskang – 46; Ngardok – 68 | GEF METT Assessment form scores increased by at least 10% | GEF METT Assessment form scores increased by at least 30% | See above. | NS |
| Outcome 1.1: | 1. Number of states engaged in PAN | PAN activities ongoing in piecemeal way without coordination; 15 states engaged in PAN | PAN Strategy includes guidelines for state PAN activities. 16 states engaging with PAN. | Majority of PAN Activities are in line with National PAN Strategy and SLM Strategy; 16 states with PAN sites | All 16 states are engaged in PAN program. PAN strategy does not include SLM activities or state management plan guidelines | A NA |
| | 2. Existence of METT | Draft marine, terrestrial, and socioeconomic METT developed, but not finalized. Little quantitative understanding of PAME. | Standardized PAN METT identified and implemented. | METT finalized, implemented, and utilized for adaptive management in 4 new PAN sites and 5 existing PAN sites. METT provides evidence that PAME is increasing. | Unable to verify status of development or implementation | PA |
| | 3. Extent of PAN coverage (same measure as GEF METT (Objective 1, Section I)) | Coverage of all ecosystem types is unknown. | Baseline established when METT finalized. | PAN is expanded to include at least one representation of all key ecosystems. At least 1 site is added to PAN or has a changed management regime to maximize refugia or resiliency to climate change. At least one site provides benefits for women or marginalized populations | Ecology baselines and taxonomic baseline studies have been conducted according to the report but not verified by the review. Studies have not been compiled to provide a gaps analysis | UK |

| Project objective and Outcomes | Indicator (One indicator per row) | Baseline level | Mid-term target | End-of-project target | Reviewer comments | Progress towards Mid-term targets |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| | 4. Total hectares of marine and terrestrial area projected | 21 PAN Sites in 13 states; 23,000 hectares marine PAN sites and 4200 hectares terrestrial PAN Sites | 2 new or expanded PAN sites. | 25 PAN sites; PAN coverage expanded by 95,000 hectare marine and 6,300 hectares terrestrial (138,000 marine and 10,500 hectares terrestrial, total) | The current status is 39 sites, 69555 ha marine and 3985 ha terrestrial. It is not known if the terrestrial PAs have been reduced since project baseline or the initial baseline coverage was incorrect | PA |
| | 5. Percentage of endemic and endangered species covered by PAN | Current baseline unknown - many ecosystems and species are protected, but gaps are unknown | List of key ecosystems and map of locations developed. List of endangered species developed. List of recorded endemic species developed. Baseline estimates for existing protection of species are developed. | Combined, PAN sites and protect 100% of endangered megafauna and trees and an increasing percentage (by year) of endangered microfauna and flora. Combined, PAN sites protect at least 1 known occurrence of each recorded endemic species, or coverage of known endemic species increases significantly from start to end of project. | Studies are reported to have occurred but not verified. However, it is known that there is no compilation of all these studies. It is not known the current status of mapping, or baseline estimates | NV/UK |
| Outcome 1.2: | 1. Stakeholder management capacity | Management capacity is limited. | | Increasing stakeholder management capacity; Number of conservation staff increases; Number of individuals receiving training increases; | Although no MT targets identified, management training has occurred, number of individuals trained however is unknown | A |

| Project objective and Outcomes | Indicator (One indicator per row) | Baseline level | Mid-term target | End-of-project target | Reviewer comments | Progress towards Mid-term targets |
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| | 2. Public perception of PAN/MPAs (% support) | Inconsistent support and understanding of PAN at state and community levels; levels of support and reach unknown. States to be targeted (and total stakeholder population) to be determined during Inception Phase. Baseline level of % support, number of people currently active to be determined during Inception Phase. | Initial results of public perception surveys show increasing trend in support | At least 80% of stakeholder population in 8 states exposed to new PAN information. % of public supporting PAN/MPAs increased from baseline to finish. | Socio-economic studies have been carried out in states, results show generally increased support knowledge and awareness from 2014 baseline | A |
| | 3. Number of conflicts between PAN and SLM | Zero (0) Palau-based crowd sourced data and documentation of PAN/SLM conflicts. | | Conflicts between PAN and SLM reduced. | | N/A |

| Project objective and Outcomes | Indicator (One indicator per row) | Baseline level | Mid-term target | End-of-project target | Reviewer comments | Progress towards Mid-term targets |
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| | 4. Status of revenue assessment | PAN depends heavily on Green Fee; long-term sustainability could be impacted by global economic fluctuations. Of 21 sites, over 80% (17) are reliant on Green Fee for over 90% of budget. | At least 1 state shows increased resiliency to economic fluctuations (indicators to be determined by METT, e.g. Staff turnover, % of management plan implemented) | Financial sustainability of PAN is improved; Funding portfolio is increasingly diversified in at least 3 sites. Exclusive reliance on Green Fee reduced (only 13 sites reliant on Green Fee for majority of budget; Green Fee provides less than 70% of budget). Dollar amount raised from conservation from diversified streams increases yearly. | 1 state received investment partnership initiative and its investments are showing an increasing trend but difficult to assess if this makes them resilient to economic fluctuations. Reported but not verified that an assessment of the SF plan was competed and recommendations provided. An investment partnership programme has been initiated and there is interest an action by the states | PA |
| | 5. GEF METT (Objective 1, Section III) Financial Sustainability Scores raised on meeting agendas | GEF METT Financial Sustainability Score Total = 30% out of desired 100%. (Component 1, Legal frameworks score = 38%; Component 2, Business planning = 36%; Component 3, PA Revenue Generation = 17%) | Total GEF METT Financial Sustainability Score improves by at least 20%. | Total GEF METT Financial Sustainability Score improves by at least 50% (For a final score of at least 45). | Financial scorecard shows a 27% increase | A |
| Outcome 2.1: | 1. Existence of National SLM Action Plan | Zero (no National SLM Action Plan exists) | National SLM Action Plan drafted and agreed. | | | PA |

| Project objective and Outcomes | Indicator (One indicator per row) | Baseline level | Mid-term target | End-of-project target | Reviewer comments | Progress towards Mid-term targets |
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| | 2. Number of actions implemented from National SLM Action Plan | | | Number of actions from National SLM Action Plan increases (yearly) | | NS |
| | 3. Number of public mandates requiring PAN/SLM linkages; Degree of alignment between PAN and SLM documents | Baseline is zero for Public Mandates | MNRET issues written mandate that PAN and SLM are to be integrated. Assessment report on the coordination process completed. | Degree of alignment (number of sections that match in each document; number of conflicts) increases yearly. | | UK |
| | 4. GEF METT (Objective 2, Part V, #6) Score for Policy and Regulatory Frameworks | GEF METT Score baseline is 9 (out of desired 24) | GEF METT Score improves by at least 20%. | GEF METT Score improves by at least 66% (to at least 15 out of 24). | <i>GEF METT has not yet been conducted.</i> | NS |
| Outcome 2.2: | 1. Number of violations in forests | Reported violations for forests unknown; to be determined during Inception Phase. 100% of terrestrial conservation areas negatively impacted by fires; Baseline for all other indicators to be determined during Inception Phase or by METT. | At least 1 PAN Site with no fires for 1 year; | Number of reported terrestrial violations (including fire) declines yearly; | It was mentioned that there have been no fires in the consultations, but it is unclear how this is monitored or reported | NV |
| | 2. Number of trained tourism professionals with terrestrial expertise | | At least 1 cohort trained in Terrestrial conservation (12 people); | Number of trained terrestrial experts increases yearly (Minimum of 36); | Consultations with BOT not held. As such based on unverified status reported | NV |
| | 3. Number of non-Koror tourist opportunities | | At least 1 state with increased revenue from non-Koror tourism. | Desirability of non-Koror tourism (dollars spent, number of visitors) increases yearly | Investment Partnership programme active in Melekeok State | A |
| | 4. Type and extent of negative environmental impacts | | | 4 states have stable or decreasing environmental impact from tourism | No baseline or mid targets to asses | N/A |

| Project objective and Outcomes | Indicator (One indicator per row) | Baseline level | Mid-term target | End-of-project target | Reviewer comments | Progress towards Mid-term targets |
|--------------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| | 5. Number of dollars generated by non-Koror tourism | | | 4 states have increasing revenue generation from tourism | No baseline or mid targets to assess | N/A |
| | 6. Number of land use plans | 3 states with incomplete land use plans; | | 4 states with full land use plans | 4 sustainable resource use plans developed/in process for integration into state master plans | PA |
| | 7. Water quality | Exact baseline for biochemical parameters to be established during Inception Phase | Baseline biochemical indicator status established | Stable or improving water quality tests in 100% of states with land use plans or utilizing best practices | No baseline established | NA |
| | 8. Farm productivity; Area of reforestation /rehabilitation | | | At least 1 farm maintains or increases productivity (dollars, output, or levels of effort) using Best Agricultural Practices; Area of reforestation or forest rehabilitation increased from start to end | No baseline, no information | UK |
| | 9. Perceptions of food security | Exact baseline for socioeconomic parameters to be established during Inception Phase | Baseline socioeconomic indicator status established | Responses to socioeconomic surveys show increasing positive perceptions of food security from start to finish of project | Perceptions identified in socioeconomic studies | A |
| | 10. Number and types of "hotspots" protected | | "Hotspots" identified; | Number of unprotected "hotspots" increases from start to finish | No baseline data | NA |

| Project objective and Outcomes | Indicator (One indicator per row) | Baseline level | Mid-term target | End-of-project target | Reviewer comments | Progress towards Mid-term targets |
|--------------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Outcome 3.1: | 1. MNRET Capacity (# staff, expertise, partnerships) | MNRET is currently the agency responsible for Coordinating implementation of environmental policy, but the agency lacks capacity to oversee implementation of multiple national environmental policies. | MNRET needs assessment completed; Strategic plan updated; | Capacity of MNRET significantly increased (# staff, levels of expertise). | MNRET is now MoAFE some training has been provided- but it is no clear how many and exactly what training although some has been around enforcement | PA |
| | 2. Convention reporting | Agency is understaffed and behind on many MEA convention outputs. | Staffing needs identified; Qualified staff hired and trained | Overall convention reporting performance (number of reports submitted, on-time performance) increases. Number of partners assisting with convention reporting and project reporting increases from start to finish of project. | There are no activities related to convention reporting in the project activity plan | UK |
| | 3. Number of mechanisms created or used for information sharing | | | At least 1 new information sharing mechanism created and used; Number and type of documents increased significantly from start to end of project; # downloads increases yearly; Geographic reach increases from start to finish of project; | Zero project outputs were provided for the review. Some were found through the internet others direct from SHs consulted. Although no baseline clearly this indicator has not been achieved | NA |

| Project objective and Outcomes | Indicator (One indicator per row) | Baseline level | Mid-term target | End-of-project target | Reviewer comments | Progress towards Mid-term targets |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| | 4. Number and type of organizations and individuals participating in two-way learning and information sharing | Knowledge sharing between agencies and across sectors is inconsistent. Current mechanisms include infrequent Conservation Consortium meetings and emailed document reviews | Number of two-way learning opportunities increased across at least 4 topics (sustainable agriculture, animal waste, earth moving, water resources) | At least 80% of stakeholders participating in two-way learning and information sharing. | Related activities and status unknown | UK |
| Outcome 3.2: | 1. Number of documents undergoing PAN/SLM/Cross-sector review | Baseline is zero | Coordination review process and checklist or criteria to review areas of alignment created, agreed, and under use. | By the end of project, at least 90% of documents produced in Palau (plans, policies, strategies, SOPs, regulations) by one of the members of the GEF 5 Project Steering Committee or related stakeholder goes through a coordination Review | Waste water marine and freshwater regulations reviewed; SLM action plan meetings identified areas for alignment | PA |
| | 2. Number of competing objectives addressed and resolved | | | By the end of project, at least 90% of documents produced in Palau (plans, policies, strategies, SOPs, regulations) by one of the members of the GEF 5 Project Steering Committee or related stakeholder goes through a coordination Review and shows positive alignment with PAN/SLM/Cross-Sector issues and has no competing objectives. | | N/A |

| Project objective and Outcomes | Indicator (One indicator per row) | Baseline level | Mid-term target | End-of-project target | Reviewer comments | Progress towards Mid-term targets |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------|-----------------|--|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | 3. Number of cross-sector violations (e.g., earth moving), species plans, and threats | | | Number of earthmoving violations decreased from start to finish of project. Number of cross-sector species management activities increased from start to finish. Number and extent of cross-sector threats decline | | N/A |

ANNEX V. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY SCORE CARD

| PART II: FINANCIAL SCORECARD - ASSESSING ELEMENTS OF THE FINANCING SYSTEM | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| Component 1 - Legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks | | | |
| Element 1 - Legal, policy and regulatory support for revenue generation by PAs | | | |
| (i) Laws or policies are in place that facilitate PA revenue mechanisms | 2 | 0: None 1: A few 2: Several 3: Fully | but could do with a review Melekeok and Aimeliik IPP and tourism laws or policy to establish tourism commission for Melekeok, Aimeliik, Ngardmau and Ngiwal (Duke) |
| (ii) Fiscal instruments such as taxes on tourism and water or tax breaks exist to promote PA financing | 1 | 0: None 1: A few 2: Several 3: Fully | Green fees, also investment - IPP for Melekeok and Aimeliik, Fishing Permit for Kayangel and Ngarchelong, Visitor's fee in Ngeremlengui (Duke) |
| Element 2 - Legal, policy and regulatory support for revenue retention and sharing within the PA system | | | |
| (i) Laws or policies are in place for PA revenues to be retained by the PA system | 2 | 0: No 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, satisfactory | States retain site funds, reported to PAN Visitors fee for Ngeremlengui, IPPs for Melekeok and Aimeliik |
| (ii) Laws or policies are in place for PA revenues to be retained at the PA site level | 2 | 0: No 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, satisfactory | Visitors Fee for Ngarmeskang Bird Sanctuary |

| | | | |
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| (iii) Laws or policies are in place for revenue sharing at the PA site level with local stakeholders | 3 | 0: No 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, satisfactory | Specify % to be shared: |
| (i) A Fund has been established and capitalized to finance the PA system | 2 | 0: No 1: Established 2: Established with limited capital 3: Established with adequate capital | Support through Green fee and investment earnings. Other sources are solicited through grants. Fund generated adequate revenue for full operation and development of PAN sites before Covid pandemic. Funding has been cut by about 28% even with the Republic supplement of 500k. |
| (ii) Funds have been created to finance specific PAs | 3 | 0: No 1: Partially 2: Quite well 3: Fully | 60% of Green Fee fund to go to PA sites rest goes to General operation to PAN fund/PAN office, special projects, IPP, allocation not always meets needs of site and supplemented by draw down from PAN investment through Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT). Other states also access grants and donor funds through state and local NGOs or CBOs. |
| (iii) Fund expenditures are integrated with national PA financial planning and accounting | 2 | 0: No 1: Partially 2: Quite well 3: Fully | Need to submit work plans to PAN office and PAN Fund allocate accordingly |
| Element 4 - Legal, policy and regulatory support for alternative institutional arrangements for PA management to reduce cost burden to government | | | |

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| <p>(i) There are laws or policies which allow and regulate concessions for PA services</p> | <p>3</p> | <p>0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory</p> | <p>Annual budget is determined by site management-based management plan with IUCN category level and PAN Office guidance. Budget allocations are expected to follow PANF recommended % allocation per operation category, e.g., salary not exceed 60% but with the pandemic the % have been readjusted to meet current cuts without compromising operations so salary allocation is around 70% or more.</p> |
| <p>(ii) There are laws or policies which allow and regulate co-management of PAs</p> | <p>2</p> | <p>0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory</p> | <p>State manages and so can decide but must be in line with PAN policies, some states manage sites through board Ngarchelong and Kayangel states co-manage the Northern Reefs. Currently, PAN sites in Babledaob are conducting co-surveillance with neighboring states, the national fish and wildlife, and fire and rescue division. Site restoration activities are supported by local NGOs and traditional community organizations. Some sites are co-managed by Boards representative of key community stakeholders, and some with traditional council of chiefs.</p> |

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| <p>(iii) There are laws or policies which allow and regulate local government management of PAs</p> | 3 | <p>0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory</p> | <p>PAN sites are managed by state, or local government who are the resource owners.</p> |
| <p>(iv) There are laws which allow, promote and regulate private reserves</p> | 2 | <p>0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory</p> | <p>Law allows for nomination of private reserves but PAN funding has to be administered through state. Therefore private owners are required to establish an MOU with state. E.g., Sonsorol State signed an MOU with Merir Council of Chiefs (as resource owners) to co-manage with state in charge of administration and reporting of funds while the council is in charge of site management. There are no specific regulations for individual resource owners.</p> |
| <p>Element 5 -National PA Financing Strategies</p> | | | |
| <p>(i) There are policies and/or regulations that exist for the following which should be part of a National PA Finance Strategy:</p> | | | |
| <p>- Comprehensive financial data and plans for a standardized and coordinated cost accounting systems (both input and activity based accounting)</p> | 3 | <p>0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory</p> | <p>Expense tracking tool is used to report quarterly expenditure based on an annual work plan and budget, developed in line with PAN site management plan</p> |

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| <p>- Revenue generation and fee levels across PAs</p> | <p>1</p> | <p>0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory</p> | <p>Specify the tariff levels for the PAs: Every state decides own fee but under discussion more standardize</p> |
| <p>- Allocation of PA budgets to PA sites (criteria based on size, threats, business plans, performance etc)</p> | <p>2</p> | <p>0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory</p> | <p>Based more on activities proposed and fairly standard for PA, they will know and then put in activities, but full proposal, all receive but not equal depend on performance, variation between budgets. Budget is based more on performance and level of site development. E.g., some sites are extensive but only focus on enforcement while older sites have established additional management programs, i.e., ecological monitoring, eco-tour, plant nurseries, fisheries compliance, etc.</p> |
| <p>- Safeguards to ensure that revenue generation does not adversely affect conservation objectives of PAs</p> | <p>2</p> | <p>0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory</p> | <p>Need to meet PAN regulations at site, otherwise become ineligible. PAN Office reviews management plans, annual work plans, programmatic reports and conduct site assessments, as necessary, to ensure regulations are complied with.</p> |

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| - PA management plans to include financial data or associated business plans | 2 | 0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory | Management plans have cost data, some have financing mechanism, e.g., Tourism activities, no business plan. Management plans require an annual proposed budget component which first year work plan is usually based upon. |
| (ii) Degree of formulation, adoption and implementation of a national financing strategy[2] | 3 | 0: Not begun 1: In progress 2: Completed and adopted 3: Under implementation | Part of it implemented. Fully implemented. Ministry of Finance collects Green Fee and \$15 per visitor is disbursed to PAN Fund which is divided into % by law. |
| Element 6 - Economic valuation of protected area systems (ecosystem services, tourism based employment etc) | | | |
| (i) Economic valuation studies on the contribution of protected areas to local and national development are available | 0 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Satisfactory 3: Full | Provide summary data from studies: assess sea cucumber stocks in a community in Babeldaob/ |
| (ii) PA economic valuation influences government decision makers | 0 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Satisfactory 3: Full | Specify ministries that have been influenced: MNRET and Office of the President -verify with other |
| Element 7 - Improved government budgeting for PA systems | | | |
| (i) Government policy promotes budgeting for PAs based on financial need as determined by PA management plans | 2 | 0: No 1: Partially 2: Yes | This is mandated. Regulations require site plan in order to receive funding. |

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| (ii) PA budgets includes funds to finance threat reduction strategies in buffer zones (eg livelihoods of communities living around the PA)[3] | 2 | 0: No 1: Partially 2: Yes | All sites were meant to sustain or protect resources that complement livelihoods. E.g., MPAs support spawning aggregation, spillover and regulated harvest; and TPAs support soil quality, water quality and quantity, promote best farming practices, regulated logging, restoration projects and eco-friendly development. |
| (iii) Administrative (eg procurement) procedures facilitate budget to be spent, reducing risk of future budget cuts due to low disbursement rates | 1 | 0: No 1: Partially 2: Yes | At national level yes, at state level unknown |
| (iv) Government plans to increase budget, over the long term, to reduce the PA financing gap | 1 | 0: No 1: Partially 2: Yes | PAN FUND NGO. This has been an issue raised across the network from site to PAN Fund. It has also been recommended that for PAN Office to fulfil its mandate, the 10% of green fee cap needs to be removed. It has been recommended by sites and PAN Fund as well during PAN Conference in 2019. |
| . | | | |
| (i) Mandates of public institutions regarding PA finances are clear and agreed | 3 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Improving 3: Full | Regulations and procedures are there and undergoing review at the present. |
| Element 9 - Well-defined staffing requirements, profiles and incentives at site and system level | | | |

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| (i) Central level has sufficient economists and economic planners to improve financial sustainability of the system | 2 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full | State positions and describe roles: states have access to limited pool of local consultants to facilitate planning and grant writing. PAN Office and PAN Fund also provide assistance, support and recommendations. |
| (ii) There is an organizational structure (eg a dedicated unit) with sufficient authority and coordination to properly manage the finances of the PA system | 3 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full | PAN Fund is a dedicated unit to manage finances at system level and at the site level, the state government manage the finances. |
| (iii) At the regional and PA site level there is sufficient professional capacity to promote financial sustainability at site level | 2 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full | State positions and describe roles: The PAN Fund Board consist of finance and economic experts highly qualified to promote financial sustainability. A couple of states with Governors with business backgrounds and competent coordinators have passed investment acts for sustainable financing for their sites. |
| (iv) PA site manager responsibilities include, financial management, cost-effectiveness and revenue generation [4] | 2 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full | Some PAN site managers still need management and leadership training. |
| (v) Budgetary incentives motivate PA managers to promote site level financial sustainability (eg sites generating revenues do not necessarily experience budget cuts) | 1 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full | Few sites do seek grants and partially funded by states. Now more than ever with no green fee it is a need to develop management capacity. |

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| (vi) Performance assessment of PA site managers includes assessment of sound financial planning, revenue generation, fee collection and cost-effective management | 2 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full | The states PAN programs that meet all are considered best performing sites. PAN Office is working and assisting sites to be able to perform at this level. |
| (vii) There is capacity within the system for auditing PA finances | 3 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full | PAN Fund is audited annually so are the states. |
| (viii) PA managers have the possibility to budget and plan for the long-term (eg over 5 years) | 3 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full | All management plans are for 5-year period |
| Total Score for Component 1 | 67 | Actual score: | |
| | 90 | Total Possible: 90 | |
| | 74% | % achieved | |
| Component 2 - Business planning and tools for cost-effective management | | | |
| Element 1 - PA site-level management and business planning | | | |
| (i) Quality of PA management plans used, (based on conservation objectives, management needs and costs based on cost-effective analysis) | 3 | 0: Does not exist 1: Poor 2: Decent 3: High quality | The PAN site management plans meet PAN requirements but there is need to build site management capacity to implement |

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| <p>(ii) PA management plans are used at PA sites across the PA system</p> | <p>2</p> | <p>0: Not begun 1: Early stages Below 25% of sites within the system 2: Near complete Above 70% of sites 3: Completed or 100% coverage</p> | <p>Specify if <i>state</i> management plans are current or out-dated: CURRENT: Kayangel, Ngarchelong, Ngaraard, Ngeremlengui, Aimeliik, Ngchesar, Koror, Angaur, Hatahobei; UNDER REVISION: Ngardmau, Ngiwal, Airai; UNDER DEVELOPMENT: Sonsorol; PENDING REVIEW: Ngatpang, Melekeok, Peleliu. All sites require management plans to access funding.</p> |
| <p>(iii) Business plans, based on standard formats and linked to PA management plans and conservation objectives, are developed across the PA system[5]</p> | <p>1</p> | <p>0: Not begun 1: Early stages Below 25% of sites within the system 2: Near complete Above 70% of sites 3: Completed or 100% coverage</p> | <p>No business plans for sites but the management plans require a "sustainable financing" plan so all sites have goals to develop mechanisms for revenue generating, i.e., investment programs and eco-tour</p> |
| <p>(iv) Business plans are implemented across the PA system (degree of implementation measured by achievement of objectives)</p> | <p>1</p> | <p>0: Not begun 1: Early stages Below 25% of sites within the system 2: Near complete Above 70% of sites 3: Completed or 100% coverage</p> | <p>Melekeok has established its investment program and working on eco-tour plan; Aimeliik has completed its eco-tour plan and currently developing its investment program; Ngiwal and Ngardmau are currently developing their eco-tour plans. The rest of the states are currently working on master plans and linking PAN sites to their tourism and resource management plans.</p> |

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| (v) Business plans for PAs contribute to system level planning and budgeting | 1 | 0: Not begun 1: Early stages Below 25% of sites within the system 2: Near complete Above 70% of sites 3: Completed or 100% coverage | About 30% of states working on investment and eco-tour programs were considered in and are supported at system level planning and budgeting. |
| (vi) Costs of implementing management and business plans are monitored and contributes to cost-effective guidance and financial performance reporting | 3 | 0: Not begun 1: Early stages Below 25% of sites within the system 2: Near complete Above 70% of sites 3: Completed or 100% coverage | Expense tracking tool is used to report quarterly expenditure based on an annual work plan and budget, developed in line with PAN site management plan. The quarterly reports are reviewed by PAN Office and funding dispersed by PAN Fund. |
| Element 2 - Operational, transparent and useful accounting and auditing systems | | | |
| (i) There is a transparent and coordinated cost (operational and investment) accounting system functioning for the PA system | 3 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Fully completed | The PAN Fund |
| (ii) Revenue tracking systems for each PA in place and operational | 2 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Fully completed | Revenue tracking systems for PAN fully operational at system level. Some states track revenue generated at PA but not reported to PAN |
| (iii) There is a system so that the accounting data contributes to system level planning and budgeting | 3 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Fully completed | Expense tracking tool and regular reporting provide accounting data that inform system level planning and budgeting |
| Element 3 - Systems for monitoring and reporting on financial management performance | | | |

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| (i) All PA revenues and expenditures are fully and accurately reported by PA authorities to stakeholders | 3 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Complete and operational | Reports can be obtained and an annual report is publicized by PAN Fund |
| (ii) Financial returns on tourism related investments are measured and reported, where possible (eg track increase in visitor revenues before and after establishment of a visitor centre) | 1 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Complete and operational | Only the number of visitors to PA sites are reported to PAN but revenue is reported to state. |
| (iii) A monitoring and reporting system in place to show how and why funds are allocated across PA sites and the central PA authority | 3 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Complete and operational | Expense tracking tool has been developed and regularly updated to track progress |
| (iv) A reporting and evaluation system is in place to show how effectively PAs use their available finances (ie disbursement rate and cost-effectiveness) to achieve management objectives | 1 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Complete and operational | The Protected Areas Management Effectiveness evaluation is held every 5 years but was not conducted in 2020. Only Airai State was done prior to revision/update of management plan. PAME needs to be updated. |
| Element 4 - Methods for allocating funds across individual PA sites | | | |
| (i) National PA budget is allocated to sites based on agreed and appropriate criteria (eg size, threats, needs, performance) | 1 | 0: No 1: Yes | FY Budget is determined on annual work plans with priority actions based on management plans |
| (ii) Funds raised by co-managed PAs do not reduce government budget allocations where funding gaps still exist | 1 | 0: No 1: Yes | Fund raised by PA is not necessarily reported to PAN Fund. Budget allocations are based on annual work plans. |

| Element 5 - Training and support networks to enable PA managers to operate more cost-effectively[6] | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| (i) Guidance on cost-effective management developed and being used by PA managers | 3 | 0: Absent 1: Partially done 2: Almost done 3: Fully | Funding guidelines, i.e., % allocation per budget category, is provided and PAN Office facilitate the planning process to assure guidelines are considered. |
| (ii) Inter-PA site level network exist for PA managers to share information with each other on their costs, practices and impacts | 3 | 0: Absent 1: Partially done 2: Almost done 3: Fully | The Association of State PAN Coordinators (ASPC) has been established and organized. |
| (iii) Operational and investment cost comparisons between PA sites complete, available and being used to track PA manager performance | 1 | 0: Absent 1: Partially done 2: Almost done 3: Fully | This is an important component which has been discussed but not developed yet. Data is available but tool not yet developed. |
| (iv) Monitoring and learning systems of cost-effectiveness are in place and feed into system management policy and planning | 2 | 0: Absent 1: Partially done 2: Almost done 3: Fully | The expense tracking tool also allows for measure of programmatic progress toward achievement of management goals and objectives, lessons learned, challenges and adaptive management. |
| (v) PA site managers are trained in financial management and cost-effective management | 1 | 0: Absent 1: Partially done 2: Almost done 3: Fully | There has been a couple of trainings on the expense tracking tool. Training is ad hoc depending on site request to PAN Office or PAN Fund, and opportunistic ones offered by partners. There is need to develop a PAN financial management and reporting guide. |

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| (vi) PA financing system facilitates PAs to share costs of common practices with each other and with PA headquarters[7] | 3 | 0: Absent 1: Partially done 2: Almost done 3: Fully | This is very much encouraged. E.g., There is an existing co-surveillance program with PAN sites (state) and Ministry of Justice (National Fish & Wildlife and Fire & Rescue) facilitated by PAN Office and partners share cost |
| Total Score for Component 2 | 42 | Actual score: | |
| | 59 | Total Possible: 59 | |
| | 72% | % achieved | |
| Component 3 - Tools for revenue generation by PAs | | | |
| (i) An up-to-date analysis of revenue options for the country complete and available including feasibility studies; | 2 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: A fair amount 3: Optimal | Sustainable Finance Plan was recently reviewed and updated |
| (ii) There is a diverse set of sources and mechanisms, generating funds for the PA system | 2 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: A fair amount 3: Optimal | if plan implemented fully -yes, currently - GREEN fees, endowment earnings, PAN IPP, sites generating revenue but COVID affecting significantly |
| (iii) PAs are operating revenue mechanisms that generate positive net revenues (greater than annual operating costs and over long-term payback initial investment cost) | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: A fair amount 3: Optimal | |
| (iv) PAs enable local communities to generate revenues, resulting in reduced threats to the PAs | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: A fair amount 3: Optimal | mostly service provision in ecotourism, rangers/employment |
| Element 2 - Setting and establishment of user fees across the PA system | | | |

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| (i) A system wide strategy and action plan for user fees is complete and adopted by government | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully | If PA sites have tariffs but there is no system strategy score as partial: |
| (ii) The national tourism industry and Ministry are supportive and are partners in the PA user fee system and programmes | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully | There are efforts supported by PAN, Bureau of Tourism and Palau Visitors Authority. There is a pilot project with Melekeok to develop site standards that may be adopted by PAN. |
| (iii) Tourism related infrastructure investment is proposed and developed for PA sites across the network based on analysis of revenue potential and return on investment [8] | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully | Aimeliik analysis and eco-tour plan has been completed. Melekeok, Ngardmau and Ngiwal are currently developing their eco-tour plans with analysis. |
| (iv) Where tourism is promoted PA managers can demonstrate maximum revenue whilst not threatening PA conservation objectives | 2 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully | Expected. Tourism is regulated but impact measures are not yet developed. |
| (v) Non tourism user fees are applied and generate additional revenue | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully | In Ngarchelong and Kayangel, a fishing permit fee is collected and enforced by PAN officers but revenue is not reported to PAN |
| Element 3 - Effective fee collection systems | | | |
| (i) System wide guidelines for fee collection are complete and approved by PA authorities | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Completely 3: Operational | No system wide. Only at PA (state) level |

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| (ii) Fee collection systems are being implemented at PA sites in a cost-effective manner | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Completely 3: Operational | Fee collections are implemented but cost-effectiveness has not been determined |
| (iii) Fee collection systems are monitored, evaluated and acted upon | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Completely 3: Operational | not reported to PAN. Only at state |
| (iv) PA visitors are satisfied with the professionalism of fee collection and the services provided | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Completely | This can be done through visitor surveys and has been recommended to PA sites but not yet implemented |
| Element 4 - Communication strategies to increase public awareness about the rationale for revenue generation mechanisms | | | |
| (i) Communication campaigns for the public about tourism fees, conservation taxes etc are widespread and high profile at national level | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully | Green fees, campaigning to states, PAN forums through the state |
| (i) Communication campaigns for the public about PA fees are in place at PA site level | 2 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully | States advertise through Palau Visitors Authority and other media, i.e., social media |
| Element 5 - Operational PES schemes for PAs[9] | | | |
| (i) A system wide strategy and action plan for PES is complete and adopted by government | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing 3: Fully | |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| (ii) Pilot PES schemes at select PA sites developed | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing 3: Fully | There was a pilot project done at Melekeok with TNC but have not seen a report |
| (iii) Operational performance of pilots is monitored, evaluated and reported | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing 3: Fully | |
| (iv) Scale up of PES across the PA system is underway | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing 3: Fully | |
| Element 6 - Concessions operating within PAs[10] | | | |
| (i) A system wide strategy and implementation action plan is complete and adopted by government for concessions | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing 3: Fully | There are no concessions at the sites, yet. Visitors fees and permits are issued at state offices. |
| (ii) Concession opportunities are operational at pilot PA sites | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing 3: Fully | n/a |
| (iii) Operational performance (environmental and financial) of pilots is monitored, evaluated, reported and acted upon | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing 3: Fully | n/a |

| | | | |
|---|------------|--|--|
| (iv) Scale up of concessions across the PA system is underway | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing 3: Fully | n/a |
| Element 7 - PA training programmes on revenue generation mechanisms | | | |
| (1) Training courses run by the government and other competent organizations for PA managers on revenue mechanisms and financial administration | 2 | 0: None 1: Limited 2: Satisfactory 3: Extensive | PAN fund tries to give some training, financial management reporting etc. also partner with eg. Belau National Museum with site managers |
| Total Score for Component 3 | 17 | Actual score: | |
| | 71 | Total Possible: 71 | |
| | 24% | % achieved | |

PART III- FINANCIAL SCORECARD - SCORING AND MEASURING PROGRESS

| | |
|---|------------|
| Total Score for PA System | 126 |
| Total Possible Score | 220 |
| Actual score as a percentage of the total possible score | 57% |
| Percentage scored in previous year or previous time the scorecard was applied [2015] | 30% |

ANNEX VI. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

Name

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Profession | Independent Consultant |
| Nationality | Irish |
| Country experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Europe: Mediterranean Sea (21 countries +EU), Cyprus, Macedonia, Ireland, UK • Africa: South Africa, Zambia, Ethiopia, Tanzania • Americas: Peru, Colombia, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, Antigua & Barbuda; Dominica; Caribbean region • Asia: Indonesia, • Oceania: Papua New Guinea |
| Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PhD ecology Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, 2001 • BSc (hons) Zoology, Glasgow University Scotland, 1998 |

Short biography

Dr. Anouska Kinahan is an independent consultant (www.akconservaitonconsulting.com). A multidisciplinary background, Anouska merges 16 years' practical experience in protected areas, biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management, business and sustainable financing, climate mitigation and adaption, and community conservation, with 20 years research across four continents. Prior to working as an independent consultant, she spent 12 years as a technical advisor for an international NGO, residing for extended periods in developing countries providing technical guidance to governments across Africa, and South America/Caribbean. She is experienced in all aspects of project cycle management, evaluation methods and adaptive management, as well as in grant writing, securing funding, implementing and co-managing large bilateral projects including leading the development of their monitoring and evaluation programs. She is an experienced reviewer of policies, programs, projects, plans, publications, institutional systems and processes, and grant applications. Her experience in bilateral project development and practical implementation means that she has a keen eye for detail while critically assessing the overall picture with conservation impact and outcomes in mind. She has significant experience in building capacity in, and supporting the development of, biodiversity-related institutions and governments staffs' technical skills and behavioural competencies in monitoring and evaluation methods. She established, managed and guided the strategic direction of a Planning, Projects and Monitoring and Evaluation Department for a newly established government agency responsible for the country's Protected Areas System. Contracted under a number of UN agency-GEF financed projects, she is highly familiar with UN, and GEF values, goals and modalities. Her wide range of biodiversity and ecosystem management technical skills, coupled with her diverse practical and sustainable financing experience, enables her to understand how to maximize project efficiency without jeopardising project effectiveness, which she applies to all her reviews ensuring that conservation strategies and projects are relevant, measurable, inclusive, adaptive and sustainable.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- Institutional strengthening for effective biodiversity management
- Strategic planning for conservation organizations & PA systems
- Project/ programme design, management, monitoring & evaluation
- Protected area design, management, monitoring and evaluation
- Business and sustainable finance planning for PA's
- Workshop Facilitation
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Applied Research & ecological monitoring

Selected assignments and experiences

Independent evaluations:

- Mid-term review GEF 5 project
- Mid-term review of Shell Beach Management Plan
- Mid-term review of Kanuku Mountains Management Plan
- End review Guyana's National Protected Areas Strategy

- Regional advisory committee for the IUCN BIOPAMA-Caribbean for reviewing grant applications

Other selected independent assignments

- Regional Post-2020 Strategy development for Marine protected areas and Other effective area-based conservation measures in the Mediterranean
- National Protected Areas System Plan for the Commonwealth of Dominica
- National level indicators and standards for Antigua and Barbuda's protected areas system plan
- Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission Strategic Plan
- Shekerley Mountains Management Area Management Plan
- Guyana's National Protected Areas System Strategic Plan
- Protected Areas Commission Strategic Plan
- National Level Financing Strategies for Antigua and Barbuda's Protected Areas System
- Bale Mountains National Park Business and Sustainable Finance Plan
- Protected Areas System Financing prefeasibility assessment Papua New Guinea

ANNEX VII. REVIEW TORS (WITHOUT ANNEXES)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mid-Term Review of the UNEP/GEF project

“Project Title” and “GEF ID Number”

Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

(This section describes what is to be reviewed. Key parameters are: project timeframe, funding envelope, results framework and geographic scope)

1. Project General Information

Table 1. Project summary

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| UNEP Sub-programme: | | UNEP Division/Branch: | |
| Expected Accomplishment(s): | | Programme of Work Output(s): | |
| SDG(s) and indicator(s) | | | |
| GEF Core Indicator Targets (identify these for projects approved prior to GEF-7 ²) | | | |
| Dates of previous project phases: | | Status of future project phases: | |

FROM THE PROJECT’S PIR REPORT (use latest version) :

| | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| Project Title: | | | |
| Executing Agency: | | | |
| Project partners: | | | |
| Geographical Scope: | | | |
| Participating Countries: | | | |
| GEF project ID: | | IMIS number*³: | |
| Focal Area(s): | | GEF OP #: | |
| GEF Strategic Priority/Objective: | | GEF approval date*: | |
| UNEP approval date: | | Date of first disbursement*: | |

²This does not apply to Enabling Activities

³ Fields with an * sign (in yellow) should be filled by the Fund Management Officer

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Actual start date⁴: | | Planned duration: | |
| Intended completion date*: | | Actual or Expected completion date: | |
| Project Type: | | GEF Allocation*: | |
| PPG GEF cost*: | | PPG co-financing*: | |
| Expected MSP/FSP Co-financing*: | | Total Cost*: | |
| Mid-term Review (planned date): | | Terminal Evaluation/Review (planned date): | |
| Mid-term Review (actual date): | | No. of revisions*: | |
| Date of last Steering Committee meeting: | | Date of last Revision*: | |
| Disbursement as of 30 June [year]*: | | Date of planned financial closure*: | |
| Date of planned completion⁵*: | | Actual expenditures reported as of 30 June [year]⁶: | |
| Total co-financing realized as of 31 December [year] | | Actual expenditures entered in IMIS as of 31 December [year]*: | |
| Leveraged financing:⁷ | | | |

2. Project Rationale

[Describe project context and justification]

3. Project Results Framework

[Present the project objective(s), components, outputs, outcomes and long-lasting impacts, as per the Project Document (i.e. the results framework). Include the Theory of Change diagram, where available. Use tables as appropriate.]

4. Executing Arrangements

[Present GEF Implementing Agency and Executing Agencies. Specify UNEP Branch and Unit responsible for project implementation and project execution partners. Briefly describe role and composition of management and supervision structures of the project. Use table or diagram as appropriate.]

5. Project Cost and Financing

⁴ Only if different from first disbursement date, e.g., in cases where a long time elapsed between first disbursement and recruitment of project manager.

⁵ If there was a "Completion Revision" please use the date of the revision.

⁶ Information to be provided by Executing Agency/Project Manager

⁷ See above note on co-financing

[Present total project budget at design, broken down per component and per funding source (i.e. GEF grant and any co-financing. Use tables as appropriate. Present most recent figures on expenditure.]

6. Implementation Issues

[Insert text - record any issues that have arisen in the initial implementation period including: significant delays, changes in partners, implementing countries and/or results statements. Some of these issues may have been reported in annual Project Implementation Review reports. Note the dates when such changes have been approved and who by]

Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW

(Apart from section 9, where you could insert up to 3 strategic questions that are in addition to the review criteria, this section is standard and does not need to be revised for each project)

7. Objective of the Review

In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy⁸ and the UNEP Programme Manual⁹, the Mid-Term Review is undertaken approximately half-way through project implementation to analyze whether the project is on-track, what problems or challenges the project is encountering, and what corrective actions are required. The MTR will assess project performance to date (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine the likelihood of the project achieving its intended outcomes and supporting their sustainability.

8. Key Review Principles

Mid-Term review findings and judgements will be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the Review Report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) as far as possible, and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned (whilst anonymity is still protected). Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

As this Review is being undertaken at the mid-point of project implementation, particular attention will be given to identifying implementation challenges and risks to achieving the expected project objectives and sustainability, which will support potential course correction. Possible questions to be considered include:

- Does the TOC properly reflect the project's intended change process?
- Is the stakeholder analysis still appropriate and adequate to support the project's ambitions?
- Are results statements in keeping with both UNEP and GEF definitions (e.g. outcomes are expressed as the uptake or use of outputs)
- Are roles and responsibilities commonly understood and playing out effectively?
- Is there an effective monitoring mechanism for the project's implementation (this is separate from, and supports, reporting in the annual PIR)?
- Is the rate of expenditure appropriate for the mid-point?
- Have plans for inclusivity (human rights, gender considerations, disability inclusion etc) been implemented as planned, or does more need to be done?
- Are safeguard identification and mitigation plans being monitored and steps taken to minimize negative effects?
- Is there an exit strategy in place and are the elements needed for the project's benefits to be sustained after the project end, being incorporated in the project implementation?

⁸ <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies>

⁹ <https://wecollaborate.unep.org>

- Have recommendations from previous performance assessments (where they exist) been appropriately addressed?
- (Where relevant) What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?
- What corrective action is needed at this mid-point for the project to optimise its effectiveness?

A Mid-Term Review is a *formative assessment*, which requires that the consultant(s) go beyond the assessment of “*what*” the project performance is and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of “*why*” the performance is as it is. (i.e. what is contributing to the achievement of the project's results). This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project at the mid-point and the recommendations that support adaptive management for the remainder of the project.

Attribution, Contribution and Credible Association: In order to *attribute* any outcomes and impacts to a project intervention, one needs to consider the difference between what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project (i.e. take account of changes over time and between contexts in order to isolate the effects of an intervention). This requires appropriate baseline data and the identification of a relevant counterfactual, both of which are frequently not available for evaluations/reviews. Establishing the *contribution* made by a project in a complex change process relies heavily on prior intentionality (e.g. approved project design documentation, logical framework) and the articulation of causality (e.g. narrative and/or illustration of the Theory of Change). Robust evidence that a project was delivered as designed and that the expected causal pathways developed supports claims of contribution and this is strengthened where an alternative theory of change can be excluded. A *credible association* between the implementation of a project and observed positive effects can be made where a strong causal narrative, although not explicitly articulated, can be inferred by the chronological sequence of events, active involvement of key actors and engagement in critical processes.

Partners and key project Stakeholders. A key aim of the Mid-Term Review is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff, the Executing Agency and key project stakeholders. The Review Consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the review process and in the communication of review findings and key lessons. Clear and concise writing is required on all review deliverables. There may be several intended audiences, each with different interests and needs regarding the report. The Task Manager will plan with the Review Consultant which audiences to target and the easiest and most effective way to communicate the key review findings and lessons to them. This may include some or all of the following: a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of a review brief or interactive presentation. Draft and final versions of the Main Review Report will be shared with key stakeholders by the Task Manager and a copy of the final version will be submitted to the UNEP Evaluation Office.

9. Key Strategic Questions

In addition to the review criteria outlined in Section 10 below, the Review will address the **strategic questions**¹⁰ listed below (no more than 3 questions are recommended). These are questions of interest to UNEP and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution. Also included are five questions that are required when reporting in the GEF Portal and these must be addressed in the MTR.

Q1:

Q2:

Q3:

Q4:.....(Where relevant) What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?

Address the questions required for the GEF Portal in the appropriate parts of the report and provide a **summary of the findings in the Conclusions section of the report:**

¹⁰ The strategic questions should not duplicate questions that will be addressed under the standard review criteria described in section 10.

- a) Under Monitoring and Reporting/Monitoring of Project Implementation:
What is the performance at the project's mid-point against Core Indicator Targets? (For projects approved prior to GEF-7, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided¹¹).
- b) Under Factors Affecting Performance/Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation:
What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program? (This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval)
- c) Under Factors Affecting Performance/Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality:
What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding gender-responsive measures and any intermediate gender result areas? (This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent)
- d) Under Factors Affecting Performance/Environmental and Social Safeguards:
What has been the experience at the project's mid-point against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval? The risk classifications reported in the latest PIR report should be verified and any measures taken to address identified risks assessed. (Any supporting documents gathered by the Consultant during this review should be shared with the Task Manager for uploading in the GEF Portal)
- e) Under Factors Affecting Performance/Communication and Public Awareness:
What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding the implementation of the project's Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions. (This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)

10. Review Criteria

All review criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Sections A-G below, outline the scope of the criteria and a link to a table for recording the ratings is provided in Annex 1. A weightings table will be provided in excel format (see note in Annex 1) to support the determination of an overall project rating.

A. Strategic Relevance

The Review will assess the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the donors, implementing regions/countries and the target beneficiaries. The Review will include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's mandate and its alignment with UNEP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. Under strategic relevance an assessment of the complementarity of the project with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups will be made. This criterion comprises four elements:

i. **Alignment to the UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy¹² (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities**

The Review should assess the project's alignment with the MTS and POW under which the project was approved and include, in its narrative, reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW. UNEP strategic priorities include the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building¹³ (BSP) and South-South

¹¹ This does not apply to Enabling Activities

¹² UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>

¹³ <http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction/about/bsp.htm>

Cooperation (S-SC). The BSP relates to the capacity of governments to: comply with international agreements and obligations at the national level; promote, facilitate and finance environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen frameworks for developing coherent international environmental policies. S-SC is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries.

ii. Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partner Strategic Priorities

Donor strategic priorities will vary across interventions. The Review will assess the extent to which the project is suited to, or responding to, donor priorities. In some cases, alignment with donor priorities may be a fundamental part of project design and grant approval processes while in others, for example, instances of 'softly-earmarked' funding, such alignment may be more of an assumption that should be assessed.

iii. Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities

The Review will assess the alignment of the project with global priorities such as the SDGs and Agenda 2030. The extent to which the intervention is suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries, sub-regions or regions where it is being implemented will also be considered. Examples may include: UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) or, national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) plans or regional agreements etc. Within this section consideration will be given to whether the needs of all beneficiary groups are being met and reflects the current policy priority to leave no-one behind.

iv. Complementarity with Relevant Existing Interventions/Coherence¹⁴

An assessment will be made of how well the project, either at design stage or during the project inception or mobilization¹⁵, took account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UNEP sub-programmes, or being implemented by other agencies within the same country, sector or institution) that address similar needs of the same target groups. The Review will consider if the project team, in collaboration with Regional Offices and Sub-Programme Coordinators, made efforts to ensure their own intervention was complementary to other interventions, optimized any synergies and avoided duplication of effort. Examples may include work within UNDAFs or One UN programming. Linkages with other interventions should be described and instances where UNEP's comparative advantage has been particularly well applied should be highlighted.

B. Quality of Project Design

The quality of project design is assessed during the review inception phase in order to highlight any design features that may affect project implementation and which should be assessed during the Mid Term Review. The UNEP Evaluation Office offers a tool to structure this assessment of design quality (the Reviewer may have an alternative tool). When this tool is used, ratings are attributed to identified sub-criteria and an overall Project Design Quality rating is established. The complete Project Design Quality template should be annexed in the Review Inception Report. Later, the overall Project Design Quality rating¹⁶ should be entered in the final review ratings table (as item B) in the Main Review Report and a summary of the project's strengths and weaknesses at design stage should be included within the body of the Main Review Report.

C. Effectiveness

¹⁴ This sub-category is consistent with the new criterion of 'Coherence' introduced by the OECD-DAC in 2019.

¹⁵ A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

¹⁶ In some instances, based on data collected during the review process, the assessment of the project's design quality may change from Inception Report to Main Review Report.

The Review will assess effectiveness across three dimensions: availability of outputs, achievement of project outcomes and, where appropriate and feasible, likelihood of impact. At the mid-point more emphasis is placed on performance at the output and outcome levels, but observations about likelihood of impact may be helpful for course correction or adjusting the emphasis of the project's efforts (these adjustments should be reflected in the recommendations made in the Main Review report),.

i. Availability of Outputs¹⁷

The Review will assess the project's success in producing the programmed outputs and making them available to the intended beneficiaries as well as its success in achieving milestones as per the project design document (ProDoc). Any formal modifications/revisions made during project implementation will be considered part of the project design. Where the project outputs are inappropriately or inaccurately stated in the ProDoc, reformulations may be necessary in the reconstruction of the Theory of Change (TOC). In such cases a table should be provided showing the original and the reformulation of the outputs for transparency. The availability of outputs will be assessed in terms of both quantity and quality, and the assessment will consider their ownership by, and usefulness to, intended beneficiaries and the timeliness of their provision. It is noted that emphasis is placed on the performance of those outputs that are most important to achieve outcomes. The Review will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards.

ii. Achievement of Project Outcomes¹⁸

The achievement of project outcomes is assessed as performance against the project outcomes as defined in the reconstructed ¹⁹ Theory of Change. These are outcomes that are intended to be achieved by the end of the project timeframe and within the project's resource envelope. Emphasis is placed on the achievement of project outcomes that are most important for attaining intermediate states. As with outputs, a table can be used to show where substantive amendments to the formulation of project outcomes is necessary to allow for an assessment of performance. Where possible, the Review should report evidence of attribution, contribution or credible association between UNEP's intervention and the project outcomes. In cases of normative work or where several actors are collaborating to achieve common outcomes, evidence of the nature and magnitude of UNEP's 'substantive contribution' should be included and/or 'credible association' established between project efforts and the project outcomes realised.

iii. Likelihood of Impact

It is noted that at the project's mid-point, any assessment of the likelihood of impact is challenging. Below is the guidance provided for Terminal Reviews, which may still provide some insights relevant to insights available at the mid-point.

Based on the articulation of long-lasting effects in the reconstructed TOC (i.e. from project outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact), the Review will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality. Project objectives or goals should be incorporated in the TOC, possibly as intermediate states or long-lasting impacts. The Evaluation Office's approach to the use of TOC in project reviews is outlined in a guidance note and is supported by an excel-based flow chart, 'Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree'. Essentially the approach follows a 'likelihood tree' from project outcomes to impacts, taking account of whether the assumptions and drivers identified in the reconstructed TOC held. Any unintended positive effects should also be identified and their causal linkages to the intended impact described.

¹⁷ Outputs are the availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness of individuals or within institutions (UNEP, 2019)

¹⁸ Outcomes are the use (i.e. uptake, adoption, application) of an output by intended beneficiaries, observed as changes in institutions or behavior, attitude or condition (UNEP, 2019)

¹⁹ UNEP staff are currently required to submit a Theory of Change with all submitted project designs. The level of 'reconstruction' needed during a review will depend on the quality of this initial TOC, the time that has lapsed between project design and implementation (which may be related to securing and disbursing funds) and the level of any changes made to the project design. In the case of projects pre-dating 2013 the intervention logic is often represented in a logical framework and a TOC will need to be constructed in the inception stage of the Review.

The Review will also consider the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects (e.g. will vulnerable groups such as those living with disabilities and/or women and children, be disproportionately affected by the project?). Some of these potential negative effects may have been identified in the project design as risks or as part of the analysis of Environmental and Social Safeguards.

The Review will consider the extent to which the project has played a catalytic role²⁰ or has promoted scaling up and/or replication as part of its Theory of Change (either explicitly as in a project with a demonstration component or implicitly as expressed in the drivers required to move to outcome levels) and as factors that are likely to contribute to greater or long-lasting impact.

Ultimately UNEP and all its partners aim to bring about benefits to the environment and human well-being. Few projects are likely to have impact statements that reflect such long-lasting or broad-based changes. However, the Review will assess the likelihood of the project to make a substantive contribution to the long-lasting changes represented by the Sustainable Development Goals, and/or the intermediate-level results reflected in UNEP's Expected Accomplishments and the strategic priorities of funding partner(s).

D. Financial Management

Under financial management the Mid-Term Review will assess: a) whether the rate of spend is consistent with the project's length of implementation to-date, the agreed workplan and the delivery of outputs and b) whether financial reporting and/or auditing requirements are being met consistently and to adequate standards by all parties. Any financial management issues that are affecting the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance will be highlighted. Expenditure should be reported, where possible, at output/component level and will be compared with the approved budget.

Ratings should be provided for three sub-categories (*adherence, completeness and communication*), as assessed at the mid-point: i) the Review will verify the application of proper financial management standards and adherence to UNEP's financial management policies; ii) the Review will record where standard financial documentation is missing, inaccurate, incomplete or unavailable in a timely manner and iii) the Review will assess the level of communication between the Project Manager and the Fund Management Officer as it relates to the effective delivery of the planned project and the needs of a responsive, adaptive management approach.

E. Efficiency

Under the efficiency criterion, the Review will assess the extent to which the project delivered maximum results from the given resources. The Review will assess the *cost-effectiveness and timeliness* of project execution.

Focusing on the translation of inputs into outputs, *cost-effectiveness* is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. *Timeliness* refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently. The Review will describe any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximize results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe and consider whether the project is being implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative interventions or approaches. The Review will also assess ways in which potential project extensions can be avoided through stronger project management.

²⁰ The terms catalytic effect, scaling up and replication are inter-related and generally refer to extending the coverage or magnitude of the effects of a project. Catalytic effect is associated with triggering additional actions that are not directly funded by the project – these effects can be both concrete or less tangible, can be intentionally caused by the project or implied in the design and reflected in the TOC drivers, or can be unintentional and can rely on funding from another source or have no financial requirements. Scaling up and Replication require more intentionality for projects, or individual components and approaches, to be reproduced in other similar contexts. Scaling up suggests a substantive increase in the number of new beneficiaries reached/involved and may require adapted delivery mechanisms while Replication suggests the repetition of an approach or component at a similar scale but among different beneficiaries. Even with highly technical work, where scaling up or replication involves working with a new community, some consideration of the new context should take place and adjustments made as necessary.

The Review will give special attention to efforts being made by the project teams during project implementation to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities²¹ with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency.

F. Monitoring and Reporting

The Review will assess monitoring and reporting across three sub-categories: monitoring design and budgeting, monitoring implementation and project reporting.

i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting

Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART²² results towards the achievement of the project's outputs and outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender, marginalisation or vulnerability, including those living with disabilities. In particular, the Review will assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project indicators as well as the methods used for tracking progress against them as part of conscious results-based management. The Review will assess the quality of the design of the monitoring plan as well as the funds allocated for its implementation. The adequacy of resources for Mid-Term and Terminal Evaluation/Review should be discussed, where applicable.

ii. Monitoring of Project Implementation

The Review will assess whether the monitoring system is operational and facilitates the timely tracking of results and progress towards project milestones and targets throughout the project implementation period. This assessment will include consideration of whether the project gathered relevant and good quality baseline data that is accurately and appropriately documented. This should include monitoring the representation and participation of disaggregated groups, including gendered, marginalised or vulnerable groups, such as those living with disabilities, in project activities. It will also consider the quality of the information generated by the monitoring system during project implementation and how it is being used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability. The Review should confirm that funds allocated for monitoring are being used to support this activity.

The performance at the project's mid-point against Core Indicator Targets should be reviewed. For projects approved prior to GEF-7, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided.

iii. Project Reporting

UNEP has a centralised Project Information Management System (PIMS) in which project managers upload six-monthly progress reports against agreed project milestones. This information will be provided to the Review Consultant(s) by the Project Manager. Donors may have specific reporting requirements and copies of reports will be made available by the Project Manager. The Review will assess the extent to which both UNEP and Donor reporting commitments have been fulfilled. Where corrective action is indicated in any project reports (e.g. as an identified risk), the Review Consultant will record whether this action has been taken.

G. Sustainability

²¹ Complementarity with other interventions during project design, inception or mobilization is considered under Strategic Relevance above.

²² SMART refers to results that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented. Indicators help to make results measurable.

Sustainability²³ is understood as the probability of the benefits derived from the achievement of the project outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. The Review will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that *are likely* to undermine or contribute to the endurance of benefits at the outcome level. Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. Where applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of project outcomes may also be included.

The Review will ascertain that the project has put in place *an appropriate exit strategy* and measures to mitigate risks to sustainability. The Review Consultant will consider: a) the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards, b) the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained and c) the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance. It will consider whether institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure.

H. Factors and Processes Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

(These factors are rated in the ratings table but are discussed within the Main Review Report as cross-cutting themes as appropriate under the other review criteria, above. If these issues have not been addressed under the Review Criteria above, then independent summaries of their status within the reviewed project should be given in this section.)

i. Preparation and Readiness

This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilisation stage of the project. The Review will assess whether appropriate measures were taken to either address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilisation. In particular the Review will consider the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team, the confirmation of partner capacity and development of partnership agreements as well as initial staffing and financing arrangements.

ii. Quality of Project Management and Supervision

For GEF funded projects 'project management and supervision' may refer to the project management performance of the Executing Agency and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP as Implementing Agency. The performance of parties playing different roles should be discussed and a rating provided for both types of supervision (UNEP/Implementing Agency; Partner/Executing Agency) and the overall rating for this sub-category established as a simple average of the two.

The Review will assess the effectiveness of project management with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; managing team structures; maintaining productive partner relationships (including Steering Groups etc.); maintaining project relevance within changing external and strategic contexts; communication and collaboration with UNEP colleagues; risk management; use of problem-solving; project adaptation and overall project execution. Evidence of adaptive project management should be highlighted.

iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs, target users of project outputs and any other

²³ As used here, 'sustainability' means the long-term maintenance of outcomes and consequent impacts, whether environmental or not. This is distinct from the concept of sustainability in the terms 'environmental sustainability' or 'sustainable development', which imply 'not living beyond our means' or 'not diminishing global environmental benefits' (GEF STAP Paper, 2019, Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment)

collaborating agents external to UNEP and the implementing partner(s). The assessment will consider the quality and effectiveness of all forms of communication and consultation with stakeholders throughout the project life and the support given to maximise collaboration and coherence between various stakeholders, including sharing plans, pooling resources and exchanging learning and expertise. The inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender groups, should be considered.

The progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program should be reviewed. This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval.

iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

The Review will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context the Review will assess to what extent the intervention adheres to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment²⁴.

The report should present the extent to which the intervention, following an adequate gender analysis at design stage, has implemented the identified actions and/or applied adaptive management to ensure that Gender Equality and Human Rights are adequately taken into account. In particular, the Review will consider the extent to which *project design, the implementation that underpins effectiveness and monitoring* have taken into consideration: (i) possible gender inequalities in access to, and the control over, natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) to environmental degradation or disasters; (iii) the role of women in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

The progress, challenges and outcomes regarding gender-responsive measures and any intermediate gender result areas should be reviewed. This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent.

v. Environmental and Social Safeguards

UNEP projects address environmental and social safeguards primarily through the process of environmental and social screening, risk assessment and management (avoidance or mitigation) of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities. The Review will confirm whether UNEP requirements²⁵ were met to: screen proposed projects for any safeguarding issues; conduct sound environmental and social risk assessments; identify and avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, mitigate, environmental, social and economic risks; apply appropriate environmental and social measures to minimize any potential risks and harm to intended beneficiaries and report on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken.

The Review will also consider the extent to which the management of the project is minimising UNEP's environmental footprint.

²⁴The Evaluation Office notes that Gender Equality was first introduced in the UNEP Project Review Committee Checklist in 2010 and, therefore, provides a criterion rating on gender for projects approved from 2010 onwards. Equally, it is noted that policy documents, operational guidelines and other capacity building efforts have only been developed since then and have evolved over time. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7655/-Gender_equality_and_the_environment_Policy_and_strategy-2015Gender_equality_and_the_environment_policy_and_strategy.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

²⁵ For the review of project concepts and proposals, the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) was introduced in 2019 and replaced the Environmental, Social and Economic Review note (ESERN), which had been in place since 2016. In GEF projects safeguards have been considered in project designs since 2011.

The Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval should be reviewed, the risk classifications verified and any measures taken to address identified risks assessed. Any supporting documents gathered by the Consultant should be shared with the Task Manager.

vi. Country Ownership and Driven-ness

The Review will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project. While there is some overlap between Country Ownership and Institutional Sustainability, this criterion focuses primarily on the forward momentum of the intended projects results, i.e. either: a) moving forwards from outputs to project outcomes or b) moving forward from project outcomes towards intermediate states. The Review will consider the involvement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices (e.g. representatives from multiple sectors or relevant ministries beyond Ministry of Environment). This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes and that is necessary for long term impact to be realised. This ownership should adequately represent the needs and interests of all gender and marginalised groups.

vii. Communication and Public Awareness

The Review will assess the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups arising from the project during its life and b) public awareness activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large. The Review should consider whether existing communication channels and networks were used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gender or marginalised groups, and whether any feedback channels were established. Where knowledge sharing platforms have been established under a project the Review will comment on the sustainability of the communication channel under either socio-political, institutional or financial sustainability, as appropriate.

The progress, challenges and outcomes regarding the implementation of the project's Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions should be reviewed. This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval.

Section 3. REVIEW APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

(This section has both standard text and parts that are specific to the project, to be filled in)

The Mid-Term Review will use a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the review process. Both quantitative and qualitative review methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the Review Consultant maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the review implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the review findings.

Where applicable, the Review Consultant should provide a geo-referenced map that demarcates the area covered by the project and, where possible, provide geo-reference photographs of key intervention sites (e.g. sites of habitat rehabilitation and protection, pollution treatment infrastructure, etc.)

The findings of the Review will be based on the following: [This section should be edited for each Review]

- (a) A **desk review** of:
 - Relevant background documentation, inter alia: [add items]
 - Project Document and Appendices

- Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;
 - Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence and including the Project Implementation Reviews and Tracking Tool etc.;
 - Evaluations/Reviews of similar projects.
- (b) **Interviews** (individual or in group) with:
- UNEP Task Manager (TM) and team members; *[add people as appropriate]*
 - Representatives of Executing Agencies and national governments; *[add people as appropriate]*
 - UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO);
 - Representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's, farmers and trade associations etc).
- (c) **Field visits:** *[indicate number of proposed country visits, as appropriate]*
- (d) **Other data collection tools:** If needed, to be decided by the Review Consultant at the inception phase

11. Review Deliverables and Review Procedures

1. The Review Consultant will prepare:

- **Inception Report:** (see Annex 3 for guidance on structure and content) containing confirmation of the results framework and Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, review framework and a tentative review schedule.
- **Preliminary Findings Note:** typically, in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings is intended to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings.
- **Draft and Final Review Reports:** (see Annex 4 for guidance on structure and content) containing an Executive Summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the review findings organised by review criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

Review of the Draft Review Report. The Review Consultant will submit a draft report to the Task Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. Once a draft of adequate quality has been peer-reviewed and accepted, the Task Manager will share the cleared draft report with key project stakeholders for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the Task Manager for consolidation. The Task Manager will provide all comments to the Review Consultant for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.

At the end of the review process and based on the findings in the Review Report, the Task Manager will prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals, and circulate **Lessons Learned**.

12. The Review Consultant

The Review Consultant who will work under the overall responsibility of the Task Manager *[insert name]*, in consultation with the Portfolio Manager *[insert name]*, Fund Management Officer, *[insert name]*. The consultant will liaise with the Task Manager on any procedural and methodological matters related to the Review. It is, however, the consultants' individual responsibility (where applicable) to arrange for their travel, visa, obtain documentary evidence, plan meetings with stakeholders (with assistance from the Executing Agency), organize online surveys, and any other logistical matters related to the

assignment. The Task Manager and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the Review Consultants to conduct the Review as efficiently and independently as possible.

The Review Consultant will be hired over a period of X months [00 Month/Year to 00 Month/Year] and should have the following: a university degree in environmental sciences, international development or other relevant political or social sciences area is required and an advanced degree in the same areas is desirable; a minimum of X years of technical / evaluation experience is required, preferably including evaluating large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach; and a good/broad understanding of [add technical experience] is desired. English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. For this consultancy, fluency in oral and written English is a requirement and proficiency in X/knowledge of [language] is desirable. Working knowledge of the UN system and specifically the work of UNEP is an added advantage. The work will be home-based with possible field visits.

The Review Consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the Task Manager, for overall management of the review and timely delivery of its outputs, described above in Section 11 Review Deliverables, above. The Review Consultant will ensure that all review criteria and questions are adequately covered.

13. Schedule of the Review

The table below presents the tentative schedule for the Review.

Table 3. Tentative schedule for the Review

| Milestone | Tentative Dates |
|---|-----------------|
| Inception Report | |
| Review Mission | |
| E-based interviews, surveys etc. | |
| PowerPoint/presentation on preliminary findings and recommendations | |
| Draft Report to Task Manager | |
| Draft Report shared with the wider group of stakeholders | |
| Final Main Review Report | |
| Final Main Review Report shared with all respondents | |

14. Contractual Arrangements

The Review Consultant(s) will be selected and recruited by the Task Manager under an individual Special Service Agreement (SSA) on a “fees only” basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UNEP/UNON, the consultant(s) certify that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, they will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project’s executing or implementing units. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance by the Task Manager of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:

Schedule of Payment for the Consultant:

| Deliverable | Percentage Payment |
|---|--------------------|
| Approved Inception Report (as per annex I document #9) | 30% |
| Approved Draft Main Review Report (as per annex I document #10) | 30% |

| |
|-----------------------------------|
| Approved Final Main Review Report |
|-----------------------------------|

| |
|-----|
| 40% |
|-----|

Fees only contracts: Where applicable air tickets will be purchased by UNEP and 75% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for each authorised travel mission will be paid up front. Local in-country travel will only be reimbursed where agreed in advance with the Task Manager and on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion.

The consultants may be provided with access to UNEP's information management systems (e.g. PIMS, Anubis, SharePoint etc) and if such access is granted, the consultants agree not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the Review Report.

In case the consultant(s) are not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the Task Manager, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Head of Branch/Unit until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UNEP's quality standards.

If the consultant(s) fail to submit a satisfactory final product to the Task Manager in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, UNEP reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultants' fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by project team to bring the report up to standard or completion.

