

Implementation of the Fanga'uta Lagoon Stewardship Plan and Replication of Lessons Learned to Priority Areas in Vava'u (Tonga R2R Phase 2)

Basic Information

GEF ID

10518

Countries

Tonga

Project Title

Implementation of the Fanga'uta Lagoon Stewardship Plan and Replication of Lessons Learned to Priority Areas in Vava'u (Tonga R2R Phase 2)

GEF Agency(ies)

UNDP

Agency ID

UNDP: 6475

GEF Focal Area(s)

Biodiversity

Program Manager

Sarah Wyatt

PIF

Part I – Project Informatics

Focal area elements

1. Is the project/program aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements in Table A, as defined by the GEF 7 Programming Directions?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/27/2021

Yes. However, during PPG it will be important to continue to refine the approach and ensure that it focuses on globally important biodiversity and the GEF incremental role related to other initiatives.

9/26/2021

(Please note: Given the delay in revision and numerous changes, please see the comments at the top of the boxes)

No, the biodiversity justification requires work. We cannot fund work based on Least Concern species especially those that are only “possibly” resident. Our focus is globally significant biodiversity. Subsistence fishing or any ecosystem service is not a global biodiversity benefit. The first paragraph in the biodiversity context is confusing about the past and current extent of mangroves. The text from the background intro better serves as a justification than much of what is in this section.

The paragraph on the MACBIO report is helpful justification for support for the Vaipua MPA as well as the text on page 16. Please note that there are different, higher standards for GEF support for new PAs than for mainstreaming. These meet that standard but it is important not to try to overreach in justification for other sites.

3/25/2020

No, while this project is generally in-line with the biodiversity strategy. There is an overarching issue that this project does not provide justification for how working in the lagoon will contribute to the conservation of globally significant biodiversity. Rather the project focuses on ecosystem services, which are not the same thing. While we understand that many of these activities may be important for development in Tonga, they do not meet the threshold for GEF biodiversity funding. For a biodiversity project, we would ask that you reconsider working in the lagoon.

From an LD perspective, components of the project are aligned with Objectives 1-1 and 2-5, however further details are required as indicated in the comments below.

4/9/2020

No, it still does not meet the standards of global biodiversity significance as described in the GEF-7 strategy. There is also no response in regards to the LD comments.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

Added more description under the Biodiversity context and under 1 a-6) global environmental benefits on the importance of the mangrove forest biodiversity, referring to the recent draft mangroves red list assessment report for the IUCN.

The Fanga'uta Lagoon is the only protected area in Tonga for wetland habitat and is the largest area of wetlands in Tonga. The Fanga'uta Lagoon was declared a marine reserve in 1974 under the Birds and Fish Preservation (Amendment) Act for the protection of fish species and for protection of mangroves as the key nursery habitat for finfish including snapper and mullet. Mullet fishing in the lagoon peaked in the 1960s and went into decline before commercial fisheries (but not subsistence fishing) in the lagoon were prohibited in 1974. The biodiversity values of the lagoon are noted in the IUCN Directory of Protected Areas in Oceania published in 2001 and the Tonga's NBSAP Stocktaking Report of 2004 which record the number of species in the lagoon.

Added more text on the importance of agrobiodiversity under the Biodiversity context

UNDP Response (13 Sept 2021)

Regarding global biodiversity significance, more commentary has been added under 1 a-6) "Global environmental benefits" on the importance of preserving the unique mangrove species in Tonga (referenced from Ellison J.C., Tonga Environment Planning and Management Strengthening Project (TEMPP) Working Paper No. 5, 1998 and summarized in the Tonga Country Report on Mangroves 2002

by Netatua Prescott).

Although a mangrove species may have a wide range internationally, areas of its range become genetically isolated and develop special varietal characteristics or ecological practices. This is evident in differences between the same species from different countries or even different islands within a country. The *Rhizophora mangle* in Tonga is unique in flower structure from that which occurs in Hawaii. The large mono-specific areas of *Excoecaria agallocha* in Tonga are found nowhere else in the world, it is usually a sub-dominant forest species. These species are both found within the Fanga'uta Lagoon. It is important to preserve these genetically unique characteristics of species from island group to island group. It is recommended that there is no transport of seeds between islands to preserve the local genetically unique characteristics, for example, mangrove seeds from Tongatapu should not be planted in Ha'apai or Vava'u, each island group must use seeds collected locally for planting.

After discussions with government, the project is now focused on biodiversity conservation.

Additional sites are proposed after consultations and field visits have been conducted.

Two priority biodiversity sites in Vava'u have been included in the updated PIF instead of the Western District mangrove areas:

1. The Lualoli, Taula and Maninita Islands, three small uninhabited islands located approximately 20km south of 'Uta Vava'u, selected for their global significance and biodiversity values.
2. The Vaipua Channel, an estuarine lagoon area in 'Uta Vava'u. This was selected for its similarities to the Fanga'uta Lagoon and its biodiversity values.

There is a small existing marine protected area covering the immediate area around each of the Lualoli, Taula and Maninita islands and this is proposed to be extended to a much larger area encompassing all three islands. The 2014 BioRAP identified many conservation values for the Lualoli, Taula and Maninita Islands including: reef health, reef fish and fish biomass, corals, sea turtle nesting beaches, seabirds breeding site and a rare plant (*Sesbania coccinea*). This area also has a high marine mammal population especially humpback whales (seasonally) and reefs that support sharks. These three islands are also identified by Birdlife International as the Maninita Important Bird Area (IBA). This IBA is a major breeding site for black and brown noddies, white terns, with smaller numbers of red-footed boobies and frigate birds. The nesting colonies support over 15,000 seabirds, especially the black noddy on Maninita and the white tern on Taula.

The Vava'u Turtle Monitoring Program (VTMP) turtle nesting survey in 2012/13 identified hawksbill turtle nesting evidence on the beach at Maninita Island. Hawksbill turtles are listed as critically endangered on the IUCN Red List.

Maninita Island was highlighted in the BioRAP as one of two locations of particular interest for conservation due to the comparatively higher abundance and diversity of fish and better balanced fish community structure.

The Vaipua Channel contains an important mangrove nursery area recognized by the local community as an area worth preserving for its biodiversity values as a nursery ground for a large number of crustacean and fish species that spend other parts of their life cycle elsewhere, such as coral reefs. A large number of species that spend their juvenile stages in mangrove areas are of conservation significance, and provide a crucial trophic link between terrestrial and marine habitats. Survey sites near Taoa in the Vaipua Channel had high coral cover and potential for reef development. Almost a quarter of the benthic cover was Crustose Coralline Algae (CCA), a very important encrusting pink algae that helps reefs recover.

UNDP Response 10/15/2021

1. Project Information. The title in the PIF and the title in the Portal is revised. A new LOE is provided with the revised title.

2. The sections in the PIF – Background and Biodiversity Context – are significantly rewritten to highlight the biodiversity significance of the proposed project sites. Recognizing the need for more updated data on biodiversity, Output 1.2.1 is reworded to emphasize biodiversity surveys to be conducted during project implementation to generate primary data.

Indicative project/program description summary

2. Are the components in Table B and as described in the PIF sound, appropriate, and sufficiently clear to achieve the project/program objectives and the core indicators?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/27/2021

Yes.

During PPG, please undertake a careful review of the ToC particularly in regards to livelihoods related activities. We note that there have been many well-intentioned initiatives that fall short because they do not consider the full breadth of what is needed for success and potential unintended consequences. We understand that this type of analysis cannot be done at PIF and it will be important to evolve and be reflective of the current situation in-country and in the particular communities and groups targeted (noting that dramatic economic shifts are occurring resulting from COVID and it is difficult to know at this time what the situation will be in a year especially in the tourism industry). It will also be important to work together with the bridge project while maintaining that GEF resources are not meant to mitigate impacts of such a project.

9/26/2021

No, this project lacks a clear theory of change to realize the desired objectives. Please note that a theory of change is not simply table B or the log frame with boxes and arrows but rather an examination of how the activities implemented result in the desired outcomes with assumptions that are internal to the project logic.

In particular, the introductory text notes that R2R Phase I identified a lack of economic alternatives as the principle cause of environmental degradation. Yet, the barrier analysis lists this issue last while focusing more on “awareness” both in the barrier analysis and the actual project design. People can be completely aware of biodiversity value but if they lack economic options they may not be able to act on this awareness. Therefore, it would seem to make sense to have a component or various parts of components devoted specifically to addressing the economic drivers whether by working to improve agricultural or fishing practices, creating jobs (through activities that have a realistic opportunity for success) etc.

realistic opportunity for success), etc.

The description of Outcome 1 does not seem to match the activities proposed underneath it.

At the same time, it's unclear why people related activities for Fanga'uta seem to be split across components. While there may be a logic to it, it could also make sense to ensure that local people are part of management plans.

3.1.4 – South-south cooperation is very much welcome but it will be important to ensure that these activities are cost-effective. There could be interesting opportunities to collaborate with IW:LEARN and collaborate with more than just Cook Islands (noting that Muri Lagoon still has many issues).

Output 1.1.1 – This reads more as an outcome. Improved coral cover is something that would take while to see materialize and is the result of various activities rather than something that is just done.

1.1.2 – Are there resources to disseminate and support the implementation of these lessons?

1.1.3 – It would be good to connect the implementation of eco-tourism with support for biodiversity conservation. The GEF generally does not support trash management or clean up as part of biodiversity projects as this does not address the root of the problem.

1.1.4 – Careful consideration of these activities is required to ensure, in line with the guidance from USAID's conservation enterprise work, that they will actually be viable at the end of the project.

3/25/2020

Yes. It is surprising to see so many government resources listed as grant/investment mobilized. Please review GEF guidelines to ensure that they are being classified correctly.

4/8/2020

No, overall this project struggles because the issues raised in question 1. Unfortunately, due to issues with the Portal these were not raised during the first review. Overall, it's hard to justify working on biodiversity within the lagoon. We recommend shifting focus to the Western district as well as other islands that have recognized global biodiversity significance or focusing on land degradation.

Please address the following:

~~Bridge construction. The impending construction of a bridge at the mouth of the lagoon will likely have additional negative consequences~~

bridge construction - The impending construction of a bridge at the mouth of the lagoon will likely have additional negative consequences for water movement and quality.

1.1.1 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 – The use of biodiversity funds for restoration requires meeting a high bar in terms of direct benefit for biodiversity of global significance because they are quite expensive, which these activities do not meet especially given the impending bridge construction. Ecosystem service conservation does not meet this standard either.

1.1.3 – What kinds of alternative livelihoods? This is a substantial activity that requires real effort and careful consideration, but is only given half a subcomponent. SMAs would, hopefully, result in greater fish stocks so they won't need alternative livelihoods in the long term.

1.1.4 – How much tourism does Tonga receive regularly? Given the description of the lagoon, it seems unlikely that this would be attractive to tourists. How will these activities be made to be self-sustaining and actually deliver benefits back to biodiversity conservation?

1.2.1 – Didn't GEF-5 already fund a Spatial Plan? How will this project improve the situation?

1.2.2 - If possible, we would like to see an increase the number of hectares where possible, indicate how many small farmers would benefit and the likely % increase in their income.

2.1.2- Recommend mainstreaming LDN/SLM approaches into exiting policy frameworks.

In addition:

Thank you for the additional information on the LD context. In order to strengthen the need for LD financing , please provide at least an estimate (hectares or %) of the portion of the targeted landscape that is degraded. Please also provide an indication (qualitative or quantitative) on how agricultural productivity has been affected by land degradation? We would expect that at CEO Endorsement there is a more detailed analysis of the context on these issue

Note: It would be good to see some discussion how this work has any relation to the other islands of Tonga. They have not received much GEF support on natural resources.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

The MEIDECC co-financing is reclassified as recurrent expenditure

UNDP Response (13 Sept 2021)

Note that one cofinancing source has now been excluded with the refocusing of the project in terms of focal area and sites. The total cofinancing is lower by over \$500,000.

The proposed construction of the bridge would be in the Nuku'alofa sector at the mouth of the lagoon, in the branch that is impacted by urbanisation. The Mua and Vaini sectors of the lagoon will have no adverse effects from the bridge. In addition, the proposed design will aim to minimize any negative consequences for water movement and quality. It is likely that the design will be for a raised elevated bridge structure high enough for small boats to pass underneath. The bridge piers would be constructed using methods to minimise the re-

suspension of sediments (e.g. by employing caisson technology). ADB will follow its stringent environmental and social safeguards.

1.1.1 and 1.1.2. As discussed earlier, the mangrove species in Tonga have local genetic uniqueness and should be protected, particularly within the Fanga'uta Lagoon which has the largest area of mangroves in Tonga. The Fanga'uta Lagoon marine reserve protected area needs to be more effectively managed as its mangroves are ecologically viable and climate-resilient representative samples of the country's ecosystems. Rehabilitation of degraded mangrove areas will be the focus.

A dedicated output on alternative livelihoods in in the PIF. The feasibility of options for alternative livelihoods will be assessed during the PPG with the inclusion of a livelihood specialist in the PPG team. Options for alternative livelihoods are proposed in the text and will follow the conservation enterprise model. Yes, alternative livelihoods should not be needed in the long term as fish stocks recover.

Ecotourism in the lagoon started in the first phase project. The modest facility was one of the showcases during the GEF Constituency Workshop hosted by Tonga. The intention is to further develop ecotourism during the PPG by potentially expanding to other sites within the lagoon to form a 'network' of sites. The proposed ecotourism sites would be within the Mua and Vaini sectors of the lagoon where the water quality is better, particularly near the mouth of the lagoon. Target will be domestic and international visitors who may come to visit Tonga for conferences and primarily tourism. Options for sustainable ecotourism will be evaluated during the PPG.

As mentioned above, the focus of the project has been changed to BD with the addition of two priority sites in Vava'u as well as the Fanga'uta Lagoon.

Outer islands of Eua and Vava'u are currently receiving GEF support on natural resources under the GEF-6 Regional Invasive Program for the Pacific which is focussed on eradication of weeds. Tonga's share of GEF-6 financing was \$1.5million of the total project fund of \$6.2million.

The project has been extended to cover biodiversity conservation at two priority sites in Vava'u.

UNDP Response (15 October 2021)

1. Theory of Change is added as an Annex in the PIF. This is described as introduction to section on Alternative Scenario.
2. The barrier analysis and the TOC identified and discussed other barriers, including "High dependence on marine resources ..." on the part of the coastal residents and "Lack of financial capacity" on the part of the government.
3. All Outputs in Outcome 2.1 are all elements of the FSP. The scope of the FSP is broader - the elements of the plan that are not eligible for GEF support and hence not included in this proposal. Note that some cofinancing will support the ineligible activities, particularly the IURSP project funded by ADB.
4. The implementation of community-level activities as those related to the Lagoon will be through the Community Management Committees which are mentioned throughout the PIF as activity under Output 1.1.1 and as a separate Output 2.1.1. People-related activities will be undertaken for different purposes and these are reflected in the appropriate outputs or outcomes. The implementation of the activities, however, will be streamlined during the PPG to ensure efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
5. Output 3.1.4 South-South cooperation will be carried over from the experiences in the Pacific R2R program and beyond. It will most likely focus on Pacific SIDS and other SIDS globally. IWLEARN will be tapped where possible and this is mentioned in Output 3.1.4.

6. Output 1.1.1 is slightly revised. It is envisioned that the rehabilitation activities will result in observable improvements in the status of ecosystems by the end of the 5-year period. This will be revisited during the PPG and appropriate indicators will be identified.
7. Output 1.1.2 The dissemination of information beyond the project will be budgeted for. The implementation of the lessons learned is through the replication of the best practices from Fanga-uta lagoon to Vava-u in Outcome 1.2.
8. Output 1.1.3 The implementation of eco-tourism will be environment-friendly. Mechanisms for ensuring this within the project and in collaboration with other projects, e.g., Integrated Urban Resilience Sector Project and relevant urban services of the government.

Output 1.1.4 Alternative livelihoods will consider the lessons from the USAID project. These will be designed appropriately during the PPG and project implementation where communities, specifically the beneficiaries will themselves, identify appropriate livelihoods with the facilitation by the project.

Co-financing

3. Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines, with a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/27/2021

Yes, thank you.

9/26/2021

No, please explain how the \$5 m from Transport is co-financing. Please to include the missing sources of co-financing and Investment mobilized /recurrent expenditures on the table C in the Portal – please assure that every investment mobilized is appropriately identified.

3/25/2020

Yes.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (15 October 2021)

1. The sources of co-financing are included. It might have been missed when the information was entered into the GEF portal. Cofinancing will be further reviewed during the PPG.
2. The “Integrated Urban Resilience Sector Project” will implement elements of the FSP not eligible for GEF financing but which contribute to the objectives of the project, particularly in improving water quality of the lagoon that in turn contribute to healthy ecosystems. This project is described in the baseline section.

GEF Resource Availability

4. Is the proposed GEF financing in Table D (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from (mark all that apply):

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/27/2021

Yes, thank you for making the adjustments.

9/26/2021

Yes, however as discussed via email Tonga as resources remaining in their STAR that it would be good to use as part of this project. We hope this can be done for simplicity sake and to ensure Tonga receives its full STAR. Please let us know if there are any questions or concerns.

3/25/2020

Yes.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (15 October 2021)

1. The PMC from co-financing is now adjusted at 5%.
2. All unutilized STAR allocation for Tonga are programmed in this project. A revised LOE is provided.

The STAR allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

3/25/2020

Yes.

Agency Response

The focal area allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

3/25/2020

Yes.

Agency Response

The LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion
NA

Agency Response

The SCCF (Adaptation or Technology Transfer)?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion NA

Agency Response

Focal area set-aside?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion NA

Agency Response

Impact Program Incentive?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion NA

Agency Response

Project Preparation Grant

5. Is PPG requested in Table E within the allowable cap? Has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated? (not applicable to PFD)

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

3/25/2020

Yes.

Agency Response

Core indicators

6. Are the identified core indicators in Table F calculated using the methodology included in the corresponding Guidelines? (GEF/C.54/11/Rev.01)

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/27/2021

Yes.

We note that we do not require METT scores at PIF and that was not the request. However, we have received feedback that METTs can be difficult to apply and complete for small-scale, community-based PAs. In order for the PA hectares to "count" at the end of the project, there must be an increased METT score. Therefore, in some cases projects have chosen to report on such MPAs under the mainstreaming core indicator. It is also important to ensure that MPAs truly meet the criteria of PAs and would not better be classified as mainstreaming under international standards. IUCN recently published specific guidance on this subject.

9/26/2021

Yes, however the numbers are quite low (as is a challenge with SIDS). Would it be possible to include other hectares of improved management for biodiversity either terrestrial or marine? Also, is the project including restoration hectares that should be included in Core Indicator 3? Right now the value in the Portal for CI 3 is zero.

Also, please note that protected areas require a METT assessment with improved score. The work in the Lagoon might be more accurately described as mainstreaming.

3/23/2020

No, please fill out the appropriate core indicators in the portal. How were the carbon benefits calculated?

4/9/2020

No, new protected areas need an associated number of hectares. Where are they located? Do they meet the KBA or other standard of global biodiversity significance? The text of the project says no new PAs will be created.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

The area of wetlands (mangroves) originally entered in Indicator 3 is moved under Indicator 5.

The PIF only cited the carbon benefits from mangroves from a study. This project will not be delivering on the carbon sequestration as direct but as co-benefits as it will be focused on BD and LD. To avoid confusion, the research report from the MACBIO study is now deleted.

UNDP Response (13 Sept 2021)

The project will support the establishment of new protected areas in Vava'u to provide biodiversity conservation at two priority sites. The information is included in the PIF and the annex.

UNDP Response (15 October 2021)

1. The project focuses solely on BD (coastal/marine) as indicated in Table A of the PIF. During the PPG, opportunities to support terrestrial PAs in the context of MPAs will be looked into. Additional areas may be reported as appropriate.
2. This comment on additional areas is well noted. However, UNDP proposes that this will be undertaken during the PPG as more information, which are not readily available, is needed to fill in the Core Indicator Worksheet. Mainstreaming is now included in the wording of the objective.

Project/Program taxonomy

7. Is the project/program properly tagged with the appropriate keywords as requested in Table G?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

9/26/2021

Yes.

3/23/2020

No, there are keywords missing focusing on the thematic substance (such as mainstreaming, agriculture, etc).

4/9/2020

Yes.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

Several thematic keywords were changed to not checked:

- Under Protected Areas and Landscapes, unchecked the key words "Terrestrial protected areas" and "productive landscapes"
- Under "Mainstreaming", unchecked "Infrastructure"

Addressed the remaining keywords that were checked but missing from the narrative by making changes to the Outputs in the logic framework narrative under the alternative scenario as follows:

- Added text on community-based natural resource management for the SMAs to Output 1.1.3.
- Added text on mainstreaming of agrobiodiversity added to Output 1.2.2 (primary reason for planting of mixed seedlings).
- Added text on community-based natural resource management for SLM to Output 1.2.2.

Added text to the LDN Strategy in Output 2.1.4 relating to Land Productivity and Food Security

art II – Project Justification

1. Has the project/program described the global environmental/adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers that need to be addressed?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

9/26/2021

Yes.

3/25/2020

No, the project does not justify the global biodiversity benefits that would result from this project.

The project needs to demonstrate the GEBs for land and not just the Lagoon. The focus will need to be on rehabilitating the land and the soils with a co-benefit being the reduced chemical run off/pollution for the Lagoon. How much of the land is used for productive purposes (agriculture and forests) and what are the main crops, how much land is degraded and what are all the causes of land degradation apart from agro-chemical use? How has it affected productivity and income for small farmers/livelihoods? What is the role of the private sector in all of this apart from the small farmers?

4/9/2020

Yes. The LD issues have been addressed and the BD issues are mentioned in other questions.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

Added more description under the Biodiversity context and under 1 a-6) global environmental benefits on the importance of the mangrove forest biodiversity, referring to the recent draft mangroves red list assessment report for the IUCN.

Added background on agriculture and statistics on agricultural land use and chemical use from the 2015 Agricultural Census to the Background context section under 1a-1).

There is limited information on forest cover as described in new text added to the Background context section under 1a-1). Tonga will soon begin its first ever field verified national forest inventory through funding from FAO. This is a three-year project that is planned to run from 2020 to 2022.

The causes of land degradation include agrichemical use, alteration of traditional fallow systems, intensive use of mechanical tillage, deforestation, free roaming livestock and cyclone damage. Added more discussion in the Land degradation context under 1a-1) including loss of mangrove and other forest cover. While the causes of land degradation are known, the split land area degraded due to the different causes (agrichemical use, alteration of traditional fallow systems, intensive use of mechanical tillage, deforestation, free roaming livestock and cyclone damage) is unknown.

There is no statistical data available on how land degradation has affected productivity and income for small farmers.

The private sector has a limited role in farming. The 2015 Agricultural Census figures show 86% of Tonga's households (84% of Tongatapu's households) are agriculturally active. Subsistence and semi-subsistence agricultural activities dominate agricultural activities in Tonga for all the main subsectors, namely, cropping, livestock, fisheries, forestry, and handicrafts. On average, over 95% of the agriculturally active households in Tonga were engaged mainly in subsistence and semi-subsistence agricultural activities (and 5% were engaged in commercial

nousenoids in Tonga were engaged mainly in subsistence and semi-subsistence agricultural activities (and 5% were engaged in commercial agricultural activities). There were only 5 agriculturally active organisations on Tongatapu recorded in 2015.

UNDP Response (13 Sept 2021)

Added information on the biodiversity values in the two sites in Vava'u under the Biodiversity context section. Note that the project has been revised to focus only on BD focal area.

2. Is the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects appropriately described?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

9/26/2021

Yes, we understand that they are relatively limited.

3/25/2020

No, Tonga is not an LDC.

4/9/2020

Yes.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

Agree, Tonga is not an LDC. All LDC references in the PIF have been deleted (two LDC references were deleted from Section 1a-5).

3. Does the proposed alternative scenario describe the expected outcomes and components of the project/program?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/27/2021

Yes.

During PPG please consider the following -

- Enforcement - The comment about tight knit and small communities making enforcement challenging was not to encourage an anonymous reporting system. If government and CSO representatives believe this will be effective, by all means move forward with it. However, it will be important to consider whether an approach more focused on awareness raising, support for taking good actions, permitting, and work to shift cultural norms might be more effective than an enforcement focused approach. It would be good to think through a specific theory of change for this area of work and discuss unintended consequences. It is worth noting that enforcement generally occurs after damage is done and requires people to enforce against those they might know, hold power, or otherwise have barriers to realizing actual enforcement.

- Outputs and outcomes - It will be important to have clarity on the structure and approach. We expect there will be some revisions as this project adapts to the changing realities and projects. We note, for instance, that hectares of coral recovered is not an output but rather an outcome or indicator.

9/26/2021

Barriers – Enforcement – It is important to consider cultural context when it comes to enforcement and where to place an emphasis for the project. In other Pacific countries, the close knit nature of culture where many people are related or only have a few degrees of separation as well as strong land rights may make enforcement challenging for a government. It is important to take these difficulties into consideration.

1.1.4 – It will be good to examine the viability of these options with the conservation enterprise theory of change approach from USAID to ensure that they have the intended impact and last past the project.

3 – It will be important that these activities are well-grounded culturally and considered for whether they will create the desired change. We note that while there is significant space given to this in the document – the budget is rather small.

COVID – There is no discussion of COVID and how this project could support Tonga to build back better/direct tourism in nature positive

ways/etc. Please include some information on this topic.

Minor corrections –

Pg 15 – “trophic link between terrestrial and marine habitats” – what is meant by this? This would imply that a trophic link is required

Pg 32 – Conversation should be conservation.

Pg 33 – NBSAF -> NBSAP

3/25/2020

No, this project seems heavy on plans, databases, and consultations instead of the implementation of activities on the ground. It would be good to have greater focus on investment activities and what they would entail, such as types of alternative livelihoods. We suggest looking at USAID materials on conservation enterprise to help guide this project.

The use of STAP's guidance for developing LDN projects is noted, we also recommend use of the Checklist for Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes (LDN TPP). A brief theory of change would also be useful at this stage.

For LD related interventions:

- any restoration would need to be on productive lands, so less focus on mangroves for the LD focal area.
- The project should consider engaging farmer extension services and or working with farmers cooperatives/ NGOs who can also be trained and provide support after the project has ended
- The planned land use planning and enabling environment interventions are positive, however what is the project doing about ensuring they improve their monitoring and tracking systems – for land degradation and to track areas that have been rehabilitated.
- The project would need to demonstrate how it plans to scale the interventions so that they can be adopted on the other islands.

4/9/2020

No, please see the responses to question 2. In this case, mangrove restoration in the lagoon does not fit with the BD or LD strategies.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

Component 1 is primarily INV type. The proposal blends on-the-ground activities with planning, e.g., Output 1.2.1 while Output 1.2.2 are purely work on the ground. All outputs under Outcome 1.1 support on-the ground implementation of the Fanga'uta Lagoon Stewardship Plan that was completed during the first phase of the first phase of the project. Note that \$2.6M (over 70%) of the total project grant is allocated for this component. Some clarifications are made in the PIF to address the comment.

Detail provided on alternative livelihood options that would also be conservation enterprises in the description of the alternative scenario in 1a-3) under Output 1.1.3 (to alleviate impacts of the SMAs and reduce pressure on finfish fishing in lagoon). Also, more description provided on potential conservation enterprises for ecotourism in 1a-3) under Output 1.1.4 Eco-tourism sites.

The Checklist for Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes added to the description of the activities under Output 2.1.4 in 1a-3).

The description of the LD related interventions under Output 1.2.1 (Land-use spatial plan) have been changed to provide more focus on the productive lands, less on mangroves.

The description of the LD related interventions under Output 1.2.2 (SLM) have been changed to include engaging with farmer extension services and working with farming NGOs.

Added text on assisting Tonga to establish monitoring and tracking systems for land degradation and areas that have been rehabilitated under Output 1.2.1 (Land-use spatial plan for Tongatapu).

The method for scaling up these interventions to the national level will be refined in the PPG phase of the project.

UNDP Response (13 Sept 2021)

Note that the project has been revised to focus only on BD focal area.

The project will support the rehabilitation of critical lagoon ecosystems focusing on mangroves to improve the water quality and overall status of the entire lagoon, which will in turn improve the other natural ecosystems, including coral reefs, mangroves, seagrasses and fisheries.

UNDP Response (15 October 2021)

Barriers – this observation is instinctive, particularly in small islands which are tightly knit by blood relations or by affinity. This is mentioned in the discussion of this barrier and is now included as an activity in Output 2.1.4 and in the discussion of one of the barriers.

1.1.4 – this will be addressed during the PPG. Additional text is provided.

3 – This is noted and it is emphasized that unless the high dependence on marine resources is reduced, the sustainability of impacts cannot be guaranteed. During the PPG, the budget allocation across activities will be assessed.

COVID – text is now included in the section on Risks.

Minor Corrections – done, either corrected or deleted.

4. Is the project/program aligned with focal area and/or Impact Program strategies?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/27/2021

Yes.

9/26/2021

No, please see previous reponses.

3/25/2020

No, the project needs to demonstrate benefits for globally significant biodiversity.

4/9/2020

No, see preceding comments.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

Refer to responses in preceding comments.

UNDP Response (13 Sept 2021)

Refer to responses to preceding comments including the inclusion of two priority biodiversity areas in Vava'u.

In addition, the project is aligned with the GEF-7 strategy for Improving Financial Sustainability, Effective Management, and Ecosystem Coverage of the Global Protected Area Estate.

The proposed project seeks GEF support to strengthen the three elements of a sustainable protected area system: 1) effective protection of ecologically viable and climate-resilient representative samples of the country's ecosystems and adequate coverage of threatened species at a sufficient scale to ensure their long term persistence; 2) sufficient and predictable financial resources available, including external

funding, to support protected area management costs; and 3) sustained individual and institutional capacity to manage protected areas such that they achieve their conservation objectives.

Under #1, the Fanga'uta Lagoon mangroves are ecologically viable (one of the oldest mangrove systems in the Pacific) and climate-resilient (able to withstand sea level rise and to reduce impact of storm surges) and representative samples of the country's ecosystems (largest mangrove area in Tonga).

Under #2, the GEF-7 programming direction for biodiversity states that "countries may require a sequence of GEF project support over a number of GEF phases to achieve financial sustainability". This proposed project is the second GEF phase for the Tonga Ridge-to-Reef for the Fanga'uta Lagoon and aims to ensure that the Fanga'uta Lagoon Stewardship Plan is implemented and achieves financial sustainability. The government of Tonga has limited government resources and needs additional financial support for management of the Fanga'uta Lagoon protected area.

Under #3, the proposed project includes individual and institutional capacity strengthening under Outcome 2, which capacity building and training on biodiversity for government staff and communities and key stakeholders.

UNDP Response (15 Oct 2021)

Refer to responses to comments as indicated above.

5. Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

9/26/2021

Yes.

3/25/2020

No, this project might be helped by clarifying the GEF increment on existing and future initiatives. Tonga is not an LDC, so the LDCF isn't relevant for them.

4/9/2020

No, this still remains unclear. Because the listed baseline projects include GEF projects (in the strict definition GEF projects can't be baseline for other GEF projects while we understand that they are an important piece of the general baseline), it is important that this section focus

on what initiatives the GEF work is building upon.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

Agree, added text to 1a-5). GEF funding will enable global environmental benefits to be realised from primarily development-oriented baseline projects (which would not normally realize GEBs given that the baseline projects are more based on development rather than on biodiversity conservation or addressing land degradation).

UNDP Response (13 Sept 2021)

Agree, GEF projects are not counted as baseline so the two GEF-5 projects are now removed from this section in the PIF.

6. Are the project's/program's indicative targeted contributions to global environmental benefits (measured through core indicators) reasonable and achievable? Or for adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

9/26/2021

Yes.

During PPG, please include a more significant consideration of the CCA benefits from this project.

3/25/2020

No, please note that new protected areas need to meet the KBA standard to receive GEF support.

4/9/2020

No, new PAs are still in the Portal. While there isn't justification for restoration at this time, if there is restoration how will it be protected without some status as a protected area.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

Not proposing any new PAs. Only proposing to improve management effectiveness of Fanga'uta Lagoon which is a marine reserve and a KBA. The work in other areas of the island outside the lagoon are for conservation of remaining mangrove stands with implications for mainstreaming biodiversity. The project will undertake preliminary work to assess biodiversity and relative importance of the mangrove areas in the Western District and evaluate the feasibility of declaring as a protected area (the project will not support the establishment of any new protected areas). (this text added under Output 1.1.2 and under 1a-6).

UNDP Response (13 Sept 2021)

The areas of mangroves rehabilitated needs to be moved to under the Integrated Water other core indicators not under BD nor LD.

New protected areas are now proposed in Vava'u only.

UNDP Response (15 Oct 2021)

The suggestion is noted - to be done during the PPG.

7. Is there potential for innovation, sustainability and scaling up in this project?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

9/26/2021

Yes. Greater consideration will be needed during PPG.

3/25/2020

No, scaling up opportunities are not discussed. Given the other revisions needed for this project, this section will also need revision.

4/9/2020

Yes. However, scaling-up remains weak as this project does not include the other islands.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

Added more text on scaling up under 1a-7).

UNDP Response (13 Sept 2021)

The project is being scaled up through the inclusion of two priority biodiversity sites in Vava'u, one of the other main island groups in Tonga. One of the two Vava'u areas, the Vaipua Channel is an estuary lagoon and is well suited for replication of the Tonga R2R Phase I activities.

UNDP Response (15 Oct 2021)

Noted for consideration during the PPG.

Project/Program Map and Coordinates

Is there a preliminary geo-reference to the project's/program's intended location?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

9/26/2021

Yes.

Agency Response

Agency Response

Stakeholders

Does the PIF/PFD include indicative information on Stakeholders engagement to date? If not, is the justification provided appropriate? Does the PIF/PFD include information about the proposed means of future engagement?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/27/2021

Yes, thank you for the additions and we look forward to seeing the results of further consultations during PPG.

9/28/2021

No, while the PIF includes some good information on the consultations carried out during project design, please ask agency to provide an indicative table of specifics (national and regional agencies and groups) and types of stakeholders on more local levels and their anticipated roles and how they will be consulted during the project preparation phase.

3/25/2020

Yes, the project does seem to have done an impressive amount of consultations already.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (15 Oct 2021)

A matrix of stakeholders is added in the PIF.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Is the articulation of gender context and indicative information on the importance and need to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, adequate?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

3/25/2020

Yes, there is sufficient consideration now. However, it does appear that this will be an important issue to include from the beginning and throughout project development.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

Agree, we will take note of this during the PPG.

Private Sector Engagement

Is the case made for private sector engagement consistent with the proposed approach?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

9/26/2021

Yes. We understand that COVID may make it challenging to work with the tourism sector in particular, but it would be good to work with the private sector (remembering that fishers and farmers are also the private sector) during PPG to ensure that the project is structured in ways that work for all potential involved parties. For example, there may be need for support for sustainable supply chains to ensure a market for the agroforestry products.

3/25/2020

Yes.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (15 October 2021)

The suggestion is noted and will be undertaken during the project preparation and implementation.

Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Does the project/program consider potential major risks, including the consequences of climate change, that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved or may be resulting from project/program implementation, and propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/27/2021

Yes. During PPG, please include a more substantial climate risk review and consideration for COVID and the need for adaptive management and approaches.

9/26/2021

No, please consider the various climate change risks for Tonga and how they relate to this project. Also, please discuss the risks from COVID.

3/25/2020

No, this risk table does not address some of the more likely major risks of to the project, such as the lack of uptake of ideas and impediments to implementation.

4/9/2020

Yes.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

Added a risk to Section 5 and to the SESP in Annex D; Weak governance that could impede implementation of integrated approaches and the uptake of new ideas by government, communities and other stakeholders.

UNDP Response (15 October 2021)

Climate change risks have been included. Risks from COVID are also described

Coordination

**Is the institutional arrangement for project/program coordination including management, monitoring and evaluation outlined?
Is there a description of possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects/programs and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project/program area?**

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

9/26/2021

Yes, this is adequate for now. During PPG, it would be good to look for other partners and possible collaborations with other Ministries such as Education.

3/25/2020

Yes.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (15 Oct 2021)

Suggestion is noted.

Consistency with National Priorities

Has the project/program cited alignment with any of the recipient country's national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

3/25/2020

Yes.

Agency Response

Knowledge Management

Is the proposed "knowledge management (KM) approach" in line with GEF requirements to foster learning and sharing from relevant projects/programs, initiatives and evaluations; and contribute to the project's/program's overall impact and sustainability?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

3/25/2020

Yes, though more work will be needed on this at CEO Endorsement.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (04/06/2020)

This will be noted during the PPG.

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS)

Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately documented at this stage and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

9/26/2021

Yes.

Agency Response

Part III – Country Endorsements

Has the project/program been endorsed by the country's GEF Operational Focal Point and has the name and position been checked against the GEF data base?

checked against the GLI data base:

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/27/2021

Yes.

9/28/2021

No, the title in the Portal does not match the title on the LoE. It would be good to have a bit more of a concise title than what is in the Portal. Hopefully this can be adjusted along with the higher amount in a new LoE.

3/25/2020

Yes.

Agency Response

UNDP Response (15 October 2021)

A new LOE is provided. The title will be changed in the portal.

Termsheet, reflow table and agency capacity in NGI Projects

Does the project provide sufficient detail in Annex A (indicative termsheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments. Does the project provide a detailed reflow table in Annex B to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments. After reading the questionnaire in Annex C, is the Partner Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

NA

Agency Response

EFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

Is the PIF/PFD recommended for technical clearance? Is the PPG (if requested) being recommended for clearance?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/29/2021

Yes, we will work to resolve the core indicator issues in the Portal.

10/27/2021

No, please remove the tag for the core indicator of land restoration and provide information on the source and type of cofinancing of the Vava'u Ocean Initiative.

9/26/2021

No, please revise and resubmit.

3/25/2020

No, we recommend significant changes to the project and are available to discuss.

4/9/2020

No, we apologize for the oversight on missing some very important comments related to the content of this proposal. We are available to discuss options.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Additional recommendations to be considered by Agency at the time of CEO endorsement/approval.

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

Review Dates

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review	3/29/2020	4/6/2020
Additional Review (as necessary)	4/9/2020	
Additional Review (as necessary)	9/26/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/27/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/29/2021	

PIF Recommendation to CEO

Brief reasoning for recommendations to CEO for PIF Approval

