

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Project ID:	10267
Project Name:	ISLANDS - Pacific Child Project
Countr(ies):	Regional, Asia/Pacific
Implementing Agency:	UNEP

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I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

ISLANDS - Pacific Child Project

Country

Regional, Asia/Pacific

GEF ID

10267

Implementing Agency

UNEP

Executing Entity

SPREP

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

FSP

PIR Submission

9/12/2025

Fiscal Year , PIR Number

FY 2025 , 4th PIR

Objective

To prevent the build-up of POPs and mercury materials and to manage and dispose of existing harmful chemicals and wastes across Pacific SIDS

B. Ratings and Disbursements

Implementation Progress

Moderately Unsatisfactory

Development Objective

Unsatisfactory

Overall risk

High Risk

Project Financing

21,800,000.00

Cumulative Disbursement

2,942,000.00

C. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval

5/15/2021

Agency Approval

5/28/2021

Implementation Start

7/23/2021

First Disbursement

8/23/2021

Expected MTR 6/30/2025	Actual MTR
Expected Completion 3/31/2026	Actual Completion

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Progress: Information on progress and outcomes of project implementation activities

The project has seen notable progress in the latter half of the reporting period, although overall implementation remains significantly behind schedule. Following the 2024 Management Review, a number of corrective measures were implemented, including expansion of the Project Management Unit (PMU). Recruitment of additional staff is nearly complete, with a Project Manager now in place and the onboarding of two Technical Experts scheduled for Q3 2025. 11 of 14 national Legal Agreements (LoAs) are signed, with remaining three expected to conclude in Q3 2025.

Component 1 – Preventing the future build-up of chemicals entering SIDS

Procurement was finalized to support both the development of National Hazardous Waste Management Strategies (NHWMSs) for Pacific SIDS and a regional Code of Conduct on hazardous waste management. These contracts are mobilized, with inception work underway. The Samoa-specific hazardous imports strategy has been rescheduled, and related outputs (digital training guide and regional webinars) are dependent on the national strategies being drafted. While delivery is still at the procurement stage, tangible results are expected in the next reporting period.

Component 2 – Safe management and disposal of existing chemicals, products, and materials

Preparations for the disposal of DDT and PCB stockpiles in Papua New Guinea are complete, with the tender finalized and a contractor identified. However, activities remain stalled pending the signature of the PNG LoA, which prevents disbursement and contract initiation. This bottleneck was flagged at both the 2024 and 2025 PSC meetings.

In the area of end-of-life vehicles (ELVs), a feasibility study in Fiji was completed, providing the technical basis for regional recycling partnerships. Follow-on activities (private sector partnership, operator training, and POPs disposal from ELVs) have been rescheduled to the next reporting period.

Under landfill rehabilitation and composting, JPRISM3 (a cofinancing Japan-funded regional programme implemented by SPREP) is leading feasibility and design work for the Ha'apai and 'Eua sites in Tonga, in coordination with MEIDECC and WAL, with designs expected by mid-2026. In Nauru, alignment with an Asian Development Bank (ADB) project has been reached, with ISLANDS set to provide equipment to strengthen the national composting facility. For Kiribati, a contract was awarded to Tonkin & Taylor for feasibility and initial design of an atoll-appropriate landfill wall in Tarawa, with detailed engineering design (Activity 2.4.2) to follow in the next period.

Component 3 – Safe management of products entering SIDS / closing material loops

Most activities under this component, including e-waste systems, bulky waste transfer stations, and used oil management systems, have been rescheduled following PSC approval of the revised workplan. Preparatory work has been advanced, but implementation will begin in subsequent reporting periods.

Component 4 – Knowledge management and communication

Progress was most visible in the Mercury Free Pacific campaign, launched at the 32nd SPREP Meeting. The consultant was engaged to prepare the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Mercury, which is well advanced and will be finalized following country consultations. Under the Tide Turners Youth Programme, contracts continued in Samoa and Tonga, with new CSO partners engaged in Solomon Islands, FSM, and Palau. In Samoa, Brown Girl Woke engaged 300 youth, and in Tonga, the No Pelestiki campaign reached 700 youth. Although the Tide Turners consultant resigned in June 2025, the IA fast-tracked recruitment of a replacement through SPREP's temporary staff mechanism to maintain momentum.

The third Project Steering Committee (PSC) convened in March 2025, where a revised workplan and forecast were presented, and a follow-up virtual meeting approved the re-revised workplan and forecast. The PSC also considered strategic directions, including the possible inclusion of PFAS contamination work and a no-cost extension of the project to 2028. Discussions on agriculture and single-use plastics were also initiated at the ISLANDS Forum and subsequent meetings but require further follow-up in the next reporting period.

The Implementing Agency extended the contract of the PRINCE2-qualified Task Manager in the Pacific Subregional office to support the Executing Agency through mentoring and training, and enhancing the monitoring and supervision of the project.

While the project has overcome many of the structural barriers noted in earlier PIRs, including workplanning, LoAs, and PMU capacity, implementation is still at an early stage. With staffing and contracts now largely in place, the next reporting period is expected to see acceleration across components. Nonetheless we anticipate the midterm review (scheduled for Q4 2025) will make wide-ranging recommendations including a project redesign to rationalize activities, respond to emerging priorities, and strengthen execution arrangements.

B. Challenges: Information on challenges of project implementation activities

Since the last PIR report (July 2023 to June 2024), which detailed significant project management challenges, the GEF ISLANDS Project has continued to face difficulties.

Key Challenges and Corrective Actions Taken:

- **Institutional, Technical and Leadership Capacity**

The delay in the recruitment of the technical officers, transition period of the new Project Manager in 2024 plus the extended medical leave has impacted the quality and efficiency of project delivery. In the interim, the Director of WPMC was backstopping the PM's work while the remainder of the team stepped up to push the project forward. There is no structured support system from SPREP to manage gaps caused by staff shortages, transitions, or extended leave periods, leading to disruptions in continuity and momentum. Staff may be pulled into unrelated tasks, resulting in a lack of focus on project priorities and reduced overall effectiveness. The IA has positioned an assistant Task Manager in the Pacific to help maintain continuity of the project and to ensure that project staff primarily focus on the project.

- **Recruitment and Retention Challenges**

It remains challenging to recruit and retain qualified staff, particularly in technical roles, due to competition, limited availability of expertise within the region, and resource constraints. The IA TM in the Pacific helps to help build capacity of the people willing to serve in the waste sector.

- **Lengthy Procurement Processes**

Procurement procedures are time-consuming, causing delays in project activities and reducing the ability to respond quickly to emerging needs. The IA has consulted alternative procurement partners including UNOPS and ESCAP in the region, to explore bringing additional support to the EA.

- **State of Emergency in Samoa**

Samoa has been experiencing frequent power outages over the past three months due to a declared state of emergency. This has significantly disrupted operations and communications. EA has a generator in the office, which, where possible, minimises workflow disruption due to power outages.

Despite many setbacks, the legal agreements are now in place, the project team is being staffed, and NPO positions are being filled and regional contracts are being awarded. The project appears to be primed and ready for a project reset to begin in the next reporting period.

C. Stakeholder Engagement

With the project finally engaging in the new PIR year with on the ground activities, the project will formalize its SEP. Currently the project PMU is operating under SPREP's ESMS (Safeguard 2: Stakeholder Engagement & Information Disclosure) for stakeholder information and engagement transparency across the project cycle. The ESMS also provides for a corporate level GRM while the project will work to consolidate a project level GRM as it rolls out its regional and national level activities. The ISLANDS Pacific team is also applying the ISLANDS Stakeholder Engagement Handbook issued by the Global CCKM project and the programme's SEP templates shared with Executing Agencies. Key activities to date include: designation of national focal points, standing PSC/NWG consultations, and use of the ISLANDS communities of practice for ongoing dialogue and disclosures. The project SEP will be disclosed on SPREP and country partner websites and updated periodically.

During the reporting period, the ISLANDS PMU convened a meeting of all 14 project countries at the 2024 Cleaner Pacific Roundtable Meeting, 5 - 9 August, in Funafuti, Tuvalu. The Third PSC Meeting was held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, on March 10-11, 2025. This strategic scheduling aimed to share logistical costs and resources with the Waigani Scientific Technical Advisory Committee (STAC-10) and the pre-meeting to the Basel Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conference of Parties 2025. Representatives from 14 participating countries gathered to discuss the progress and challenges of the GEF ISLANDS Pacific Project.

Country missions were undertaken by PMU staff in the second of 2024 to the remaining countries that had not yet identified project activities under their respective country plans (the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Palau, and the Solomon Islands). The completion of these overdue consultations completed the set of national level documentation for all 14 participant countries of their costed workplans, with the LOAs readied for country signatures.

The ISLANDS Forum 2025 'From Challenges to Solutions: Advancing Sound Management of Chemical and Waste in SIDS' was held in Geneva, on 12-13 May, 2025. The event marked the first in-person gathering of SIDS representatives under the programme, bringing together 16 Pacific representatives (including the SPREP representatives). The Forum provided an opportunity for the Pacific representatives from countries, the PMU, and SPREP to learn and share lessons and learnings from the experience of the other ISLANDS subregional projects. The PMU and SPREP shared a invited presentation on the Moana Taka Partnership mechanism as an example of a logistics solution that uses empty cargo return routes in collaboration with Swire Shipping to carry qualified waste streams back from Pacific islands free of charge. This has significantly reduced logistical hurdles and costs, while improving environmental outcomes across participating island states.

In this reporting year, the project has become significantly more engaged with the project countries, with frequent engagements bilaterally over revisions to the draft Letters of Agreements (LOAs) and workplans. While some issues were resolved with aforementioned country missions, the majority were discussed and concluded through continuous engagement efforts through Zoom and MS Teams teleconference calls. These engagements worked to raise the visibility of the project across the busy landscape of other projects and competing national demands, while creating a greater space for the consideration of the chemicals and hazardous wastes issues along side the more perennial solid waste management focus of most national waste management and pollution control offices. Through frequent deep

dives (e.g. into used oil, e-waste, ELVs, and hazardous waste collection systems) helped countries have clearer scopes, sequences, and responsibilities, that will greatly help the project in reducing rework of activities and delays in implementation (when countries often request delays or adjustment/change in scope).

The project's engagement with national focal points led in turn to becoming involved with new project stakeholders in the CSO, NGO, and private sector spaces. In having the project focal points bring in CSOs, NGOs, and private operators, the project is now identifying a widening of the coalition needed (including the opportunities) for delivery of national and regional activities. Additionally, the wider engagement with recycling associations, private sector operators, and other potentially aligned partners has raised the profile of chemicals and hazardous wastes alongside the usual solid waste agenda.

The PMU were reconnected to the Swire Shipping company, to further the discussions and plans made around the use of the Moana Taka Partnership framework to support of a regional ELV hub. This helped the project to clarify and reshape the approach for the project and its investment in the ELV waste stream focus. As the project talks to these existing mechanisms for utilization under the ISLANDS opportunity, the operational pathways for hazardous wastes have shifted from concept to become concrete for countries who are now engaged with the PMU in discussing SOPs in connection and in alignment with Basel, Waigani, and Minamata obligations and utilisation. Inter-agency coordination is strengthening through MOUs and joint workflows.

D. Gender Equality

The project does not have a project-level Gender Action Plan but will utilize and apply the soon to be formalized SPREP GESI Policy (2025) by integrating gender and social inclusion throughout implementation and monitoring of its national and regional sets of activities. In line with the policy's project-cycle guidance, the PMU will track sex-disaggregated participation and results, and analyse gaps to adapt delivery (e.g., scheduling, invitations, access). This approach follows SPREP's requirement that *all people-level indicators be disaggregated by sex* and that monitoring explicitly examine women's and men's outcomes. Current activities initiated in this PIR period have had the PMU work with consultants to discuss the policy and make explicit requests on its use in consultations with country representatives, stakeholders, and partners. The PMU has provided guidance on special social groups that have evolved around waste management that should be considered for focused consultation. Additionally, the PMU has initiated the development of a Pacific Women of Waste network and community of practice as an established and recognized platform to highlight the role of women in waste management with the objective to provide a supportive network for professional development, empowerment, and learning exchange for women and girls. The PMU will help champion the development of this initiative within the SPREP WMPC programme, and in alignment with similar other networks within SPREP and the Pacific region. This initiative was recently endorsed at the PWP Expo in May, 2025, and aligns closely with the project's recommendation to work through women's coalitions and to strengthen the participation, voice and safety of women and girls in decision-making.

As the project begins implementation of regional and national level activities, the PMU will use the SPREP Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Policy, 2025, and the Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) manual to guide its management and direction of its project activities design and implementation as the basis for monitoring and reporting. For example it will work with countries and consultants to undertake rapid gender analysis, collect sex-disaggregated data, guide inclusive and segregated consultation approaches with communities and stakeholders, and encourage partnership with women's organizations in countries, while continuing to support the development and establishment of a Pacific Women of Waste initiative.

E. Knowledge Management

At the GEF ISLANDS Forum held from 12–13 May 2025 in Geneva, Pacific Island representatives, led by SPREP, actively contributed to advancing the dialogue on chemical and waste management solutions for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The Pacific delegation played a key role in sharing regional innovations, current hazardous waste practices and lessons. Notably, SPREP presented on the PMU's behalf, the Moana Taka Partnership, a cost-effective logistical solution that leverages the return leg of shipping routes (offered through collaboration with Swire Shipping) to transport eligible waste streams from Pacific islands free of charge for appropriate treatment or disposal overseas. This initiative was highlighted as an effective model of public-private cooperation that addresses logistical and financial barriers common in the region. Pacific delegates also participated in cross-regional knowledge exchanges alongside Caribbean and Indian Ocean counterparts, contributing to discussions on scalable technologies, legislative reform, and sustainable financing mechanisms for hazardous waste, e-waste, and end-of-life vehicle management. The Forum also marked the first in-person gathering of ISLANDS Programme participants and the establishment of the Project Steering Committee for the CCKM component, underscoring the growing regional momentum and shared commitment to tackling pollution and waste challenges in SIDS.

Project Management Lessons Learned:

Letters of Agreement: It is clear that the burden of work to define the details of the LoA was placed on the countries rather than at the EA. Once the EA began to take on the work of the LoA, it was then completed relatively quick. It is not reasonable to place the burden of work to determine the details of a workplan on capacity stretched governments.

Project Management: Project management principles and practices are not as common in the Pacific SIDS. Someone at the IA needs to be close to the EA (in timezones) to help guide and apply project management principles to ensure projects are delivered on time, on budget and on scope.

In-person Meetings: Difficult barriers such as low capacity in SIDS governments can be overcome by country visits by the EA, or meeting in person on the sidelines of global or regional meetings. In the Pacific, people who are physically present are given priority to those who only contact them via email.

III: Minor Amendments

CONTEXT	
Result Framework	
Components and Cost	
Institutional And Implementation Arrangements	
Financial Management	
Implementation Schedule	
Executing Entity	
Executing Entity Category	
Minor Project Objective Change	
Safeguards	

Risk Analysis	
Increase of GEF Financing up to 5%	
Co-Financing	
Location of Project Activity	
others	Country activities adjusted slightly to cater for needs of the country: Fiji - inclusion of 25 community waste management/recycling systems added to the project Nauru - no major change. Project will now only be contributing equipment to ADB recycling and composting plant. RMI - change to composting Samoa - change from e-waste to Hazardous Waste legislation and system Solomon Islands - change to e-waste and sustainable financing Additionally, IA is planning a project Reset after the MTR.

IV: Geographic Coordinates of Project Activities

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Avarua	-21.2075	-159.77545	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Suva	-18.13683	178.42531	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Palikir	6.92477	158.16109	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
South Tarawa	1.3278	172.97696	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Majuro	7.08971	171.38027	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Alofi	-19.05294	-169.91957	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Yaren District	-0.55085	66.9252	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Ngerulmud	7.50077	134.6238	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Port Moresby	-9.4789	147.1494	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Honiara	-9.43333	159.95	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Nuku'alofa	-21.13683	-175.20114	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Funafuti	-8.52425	179.19417	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Port Vila	-17.7333	168.3167	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Apia	-13.83333	-171.76666	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

V. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category
M and E Document

Title
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