

# PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

|                      |                                                                                                                |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project ID:          | 10161                                                                                                          |
| Project Name:        | Ecosystem Restoration and Sustainable Land Management to improve livelihoods and protect biodiversity in Nauru |
| Countr(ies):         | Nauru                                                                                                          |
| Implementing Agency: | UNEP                                                                                                           |

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                                              |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>I. OVERVIEW .....</b>                                                                     | <b>3</b> |
| A. Description .....                                                                         | 3        |
| B. Ratings and Disbursements .....                                                           | 3        |
| C. Key Dates .....                                                                           | 3        |
| <b>II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES .....</b>                                                  | <b>4</b> |
| A. Progress: Information on progress and outcomes of project implementation activities ..... | 4        |
| B. Challenges: Information on challenges of project implementation activities .....          | 5        |
| C. Stakeholder Engagement .....                                                              | 5        |
| D. Gender Equality .....                                                                     | 6        |
| E. Knowledge Management .....                                                                | 7        |
| <b>III: MINOR AMENDMENTS .....</b>                                                           | <b>7</b> |
| <b>IV: GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES .....</b>                                | <b>8</b> |
| <b>V. ANNEX .....</b>                                                                        | <b>8</b> |

## I. Overview

### A. Description

Project name

Ecosystem Restoration and Sustainable Land Management to improve livelihoods and protect biodiversity in Nauru

Country

Nauru

GEF ID

10161

Implementing Agency

UNEP

Executing Entity

Department of Commerce, Industry and Environment,  
Government of Nauru (DCIE)

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

FSP

PIR Submission

9/3/2025

Fiscal Year , PIR Number

FY 2025 , 3rd PIR

Objective

To achieve land degradation neutrality and improve ecosystem services in Nauru through integrated landscape management and conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity

### B. Ratings and Disbursements

Implementation Progress

Moderately Satisfactory

Development Objective

Moderately Satisfactory

Overall risk

Moderate Risk

Project Financing

3,835,750.00

Cumulative Disbursement

350,300.00

### C. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval

9/27/2021

Agency Approval

4/5/2022

Implementation Start

5/30/2022

First Disbursement

8/31/2022

|                                 |                   |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Expected MTR<br>5/30/2025       | Actual MTR        |
| Expected Completion<br>5/1/2027 | Actual Completion |

## II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

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

1. Engagement of Subcontractor and Consultant Pacific Community (SPC) Engagement The project successfully formalized its partnership with the Pacific Community (SPC) through a signed Letter of Agreement (LOA) with the Department of Environment Management and Agriculture (DEMA). This agreement marks a significant milestone, solidifying technical cooperation to support legal and institutional frameworks for land restoration and conservation. As part of the engagement, SPC conducted an in country scoping mission in April 2025, during which they: Met with DEMA to discuss workplan and outline approach for implementation Held targeted consultations with key stakeholders, including government departments, and civil society (Nauru growers). The rollout of the technical activities outlined in the LoA will rollout starting August 2025. Ecosystem Services and Sustainable Financing (EESF) Consultant In parallel, the project successfully engaged the EESF Consultant in the first quarter of 2025, aligned with the NRG Project's procurement plan. The consultant has submitted Inception report detailing the proposed methodology and work plan. The consultant is currently developing the Ecosystem Services Valuation Report, which will be a key advocacy tool to demonstrate the long-term economic value of conservation compared to continued phosphate mining. This evidence-based analysis will be used to inform policy dialogue with the Government of Nauru and advocate for permanent protection of ecologically significant areas. The consultant's first in country mission is scheduled August 4-9 2025, during which he will:

- Conduct stakeholder consultations with government agencies, communities, and private sector actors;
- Facilitate a workshop focused on sustainable financing mechanisms and potential revenue-generating models for restoration;
- Begin assessment of financial partnerships, public-private collaboration opportunities, and ecosystem-based funding streams.

2. Institutional Capacity Building and Regional Learning Knowledge Exchange through SPC and Regional Forums The collaboration with SPC has also provided valuable opportunities for capacity strengthening among the NRG Project team. With support from SPC, two staff members—the Land Technical Support Officer (LTSO) and the Finance/Administrative Officer-Landscape Officer—participated in the Pacific Agriculture Forum held in Tonga (May 2025). Their participation in a dedicated side event on Ecosystem restoration that provided a platform to: Share Nauru's experiences and restoration challenges with regional peers; Learn from best practices in land degradation neutrality (LDN) being implemented across the Pacific; Build professional networks with technical experts, donors, and government counterparts from other island states. Additionally, the Project Manager participated in a regional workshop in Suva (Fiji) on the Valuation of Ecosystem Goods and Services (VEGS). The workshop was designed to enhance participants' understanding of ecosystem valuation methodologies and promote the integration of natural capital into national development policy. The training equipped the NRG team with skills to: Quantify and communicate the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services; Inform decision-making processes at the policy level; Prioritize restoration investments based on ecological and economic return.

3. Community Engagement and Public Awareness The

project's communication activities have continued under full implementation. The NRG website and Facebook page remain active and regularly updated, and additional awareness campaigns were carried out in alignment with global environmental recognized dates. New promotional content and an updated factsheet was developed and distributed along with printed educational materials (bumper stickers, brochure, file folders) to promote the project. World Environment Day 2025 The NRG Project actively participated in the World Environment Day Celebrations on June 5th 2025, in collaboration with DEMA. The project contributed by sponsoring prizes for community competitions that promoted environmental awareness, sustainable behavior, and youth engagement. This outreach played a critical role in: Raising public awareness of the importance of land restoration and conservation; Fostering a sense of ownership and environmental stewardship among community members; Strengthening the visibility of the NRG Project within Nauru's national development agenda. M & E Monitoring and evaluation activities have been consistently maintained. Quarterly financial reports, Half Annual Progress Report (pending submission), were completed. Process monitoring continues through bi-weekly PMU virtual meetings with the CTA, allowing for adaptive management and improved coordination across stakeholders

## **B. Challenges: Information on challenges of project implementation activities**

During Year 2 of the GEF-10161 Nauru Restoration Generation (NRG) Project, several challenges significantly affected implementation progress. A major constraint was the delayed engagement of the Pacific Community (SPC), the project's primary technical subcontractor responsible for key activities across all three core components. Finalizing the Letter of Agreement with SPC took longer than expected due to internal administrative processes on their side, causing delays in activities such as stocktake of legislation related to SLM, development of the geospatial database, extension training, and protected area planning. This was further compounded by delays in the release of the cash advance from UNEP, which prevented the disbursement of the first tranche of funds to SPC and also stalled consultant recruitment, for the Environmental Economics and Sustainable Financing (EESF) consultant. Additional challenges The challenges outlined below have affected multiple areas of the NRG Project's implementation and not confined to a single activity or outcome. Project complexity The project includes an ambitious total of 95 activities (many of which are highly technical) distributed across four components. Overall, it seems the project design did not adequately consider the country context, limited timeframe, and high dependence on external partners required to deliver these outputs. Many activities are also interlinked and this has increased implementation complexity, leaving little room for delays or adaptive management when unforeseen challenges arise. Consequently, the project has been forced to navigate overlapping timelines, partner engagement delays, and significant coordination demands, all of which have slowed progress. Limited Technical Capacity: Many government departments involved in the project (e.g. DEMA, NRC, DLMS and DCCNR) have small teams with limited specialized expertise in areas such as geospatial systems, environmental economics, invasive species management, and land restoration techniques. This lack of in-house technical capacity has slowed progress on complex activities and increased reliance on external consultants and agencies. Reliance on subcontractor: The project design placed substantial responsibility on SPC to implement core technical outputs, without fully accounting for the time and procedural delays associated with formalising LoA this has made implementation highly vulnerable to administrative bottlenecks, delayed activity rollouts, and reduced flexibility when timelines slip Fragmented Mandates and Coordination Weaknesses: Responsibilities for sustainable land management, biodiversity conservation, and land-use planning are spread across several agencies, often without clear coordination mechanisms. For example, while DEMA leads environmental governance, DLMS and DCCNR for land-use planning, and NRC leads land rehabilitation. As a result collaboration among them has often been inconsistent or delayed affecting project implementation. Monitoring and reporting require multiple agencies to coordinate but this has been difficult due to misaligned mandates, unclear reporting structures, and competing priorities across departments. Changes in Government and Leadership: The change in government has made it difficult to hold project partners accountable for co-

financing and implementation commitments. Department heads are often reluctant to endorse or prioritize actions made under previous administrations, especially when those commitments were made without documented handover or sufficient institutional backing. This is particularly evident in the failure to document co-financing commitments, due to internal constraints or shifting priorities.

### C. Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement has remained strong and inclusive since project inception. The 4th Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting (11 participants ) was held on December 3rd 2024 , followed by Technical Advisory Committee meeting (TAC) was also held June 25th 2025 (meeting minutes pending). These meetings have been key in furthering engagement and technical dialogue among government, NGO, and community stakeholders and continue to guide project implementation and foster shared ownership. Overall there has been consistent participation of key stakeholders across government agencies, community leaders and NGOs.

Challenges:

While stakeholder participation has generally been positive, several implementation challenges have emerged

1 Delays in Data Access: Despite formal support from relevant departments, data critical to monitoring e.g.

Mapsmaps, rehabilitation

progress, or environmental baselines) are often delayed and difficult to obtain.

2 Co-financing Bottlenecks: Although commitments were made at project design, the materialization of cofinancing particularly

from state-owned enterprises such as NRC and RONPHOS has been slower than expected.

3 Institutional Coordination: A significant barrier has been conflicting mandates and shifts in policy directions across

departments. While senior staff sitting on the PSC and TAC have demonstrated support, decisions or strategic directions are sometimes reversed or redefined at a higher political level beyond their control. This has resulted in stalled activities and the need to renegotiate roles and responsibilities.

These challenges outlined have necessitated frequent engagement, flexibility in work planning, and efforts to maintain open lines of communication across agencies. Therefore the PMU have strengthened efforts to support stakeholders in fulfilling their roles such as assisting in reporting and frequent bilateral meetings.

Strategic Stakeholder Engagement to Safeguard Conservation Priorities Amid Mining Pressures

The Director and Secretary of DEMA have also played a proactive role in leading high-level discussions with relevant government officials, including direct engagement with the Ministers overseeing mining and land management given the project conflict between the project's conservation objectives and the economic reliance on phosphate extraction in Nauru.

As part of this effort, a formal presentation delivered to the responsible minister, clearly articulating the long-term ecological and socio-economic value of conservation and sustainable land management as compared to the short term financial gains of mining. This presentation was essential in promoting a more balanced, evidence-based approach to national decision-making and ensuring that environmental objectives of the project are taken into consideration.

### D. Gender Equality

The NRG project has a dedicated Gender Action Plan, which was designed during the project preparation phase. The intention was for this plan to be fully implemented with ongoing support from UNCCD gender expert during the project's execution phase. However, progress on formalizing and operationalizing the plan has been delayed in the engagement of a UNCCD expert to provide training and guide implementation of the plan. The CTA has since made multiple follow ups with the designated Project Officer, Munazza Naqvi and a

way forward was agreed: the UNCCD will now facilitate the delivery of the Gender Action Plan along with their additional responsibilities

to carry out the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting activity for the project.

Despite these delays in the implementation of the Gender Action plan, the project has actively integrated gender consideration into its implementation. Women have been included in stakeholder consultations and cross-sectoral committees, and the project has made deliberate efforts to schedule meetings in accordance with a gender-sensitive calendar to ensure women's full participation.

Additionally, the project has prioritized capacity building opportunities particularly in relation to land-use decision-making and sustainable land management. These actions reflect the project's commitment to gender equity, even as formal technical support for the Gender Action Plan is still being mobilized.

## E. Knowledge Management

During this reporting period (July 2025), the KM strategy is being implemented effectively, with core platforms in place, knowledge products in development, and stakeholder capacities steadily increasing. Overall knowledge management systems and platforms are frequently updated and maintained.

1 Project Website updated to with project accomplishments, reports, videos, and awareness materials

2 Social media (Facebook) is being actively used with weekly posts to increase outreach

3 A project monitoring database is operational and supports tracking of indicators for adaptive management. Overall, the dissemination of knowledge is guided by the project's communication plan that is implemented on a rolling basis and updated annually (Activity 4.4.1, 4.4.4). For this reporting period, the implementation of this plan for this reporting focused on raising and increasing awareness among key target groups on the considerable environmental, social and economic impacts of mining on land degradation in Nauru and the importance of conservation to achieve a sustainable livelihood.

## III: Minor Amendments

|                                               |                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| CONTEXT                                       |                                                             |
| Result Framework                              |                                                             |
| Components and Cost                           |                                                             |
| Institutional And Implementation Arrangements |                                                             |
| Financial Management                          | Minor amendments Minor amendments on budget table were made |
| 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                             |  |

#### IV: Geographic Coordinates of Project Activities

| Location Name | Latitude | Longitude | GeoName ID |
|---------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Anibare Bay   | -0.53459 | 166.95032 | 2,110,446  |

Location Description:

**Protected Area**

Activity Description:

| Location Name                | Latitude | Longitude | GeoName ID |
|------------------------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Ijuw Anabar Mangrove Wetland | -0.521   | 166.95813 | 2,110,433  |

Location Description:

**Mangrove wetland**

Activity Description:

#### V. ANNEX

|                                       |                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Uploaded Document                     |                                                                 |
| Document Category<br>M and E Document | Title<br>10161-PIR-UNEP-2025-Nauru Restoration Generation (NRG) |