PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)
PROJECT TYPE: FULL SIZED
TYPE OF TRUST FUND:GEFTF

PART I: PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Project Title:	**Conserving biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem functions through a "Ridge to Reef" approach in the Cook Islands**		
Country(ies):	Cook Islands	GEF Project ID:[1]	5348
GEF Agency(ies):	UNDP (select) (select)	GEF Agency Project ID:	5168
Other Executing Partner(s):	National Environment Service, Ministry of Marine Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, Cook Islands Tourism Corporation	Submission Date: Resubmission:	4 April 2013 12 April 2013
GEF Focal Area (s):	Multi-Focal Area	Project Duration (Months)	48
Name of parent program (if applicable): For SFM/REDD+ ☐	Pacific Islands Ridge-to-Reef National Priorities – Integrated Water, Land, Forest and Coastal Management to Preserve Biodiversity, Ecosystem Services, Store Carbon, Improve Climate Resilience and Sustain Livelihoods	Agency Fee ($):	384,068

A. INDICATIVE FOCAL AREA STRATEGY FRAMEWORK[2]:

Focal Area Objectives	Trust Fund	Indicative Grant Amount ($)	Indicative Co-Financing ($)
BD-1	GEFTF	3,159,164	10,500,000
B2	GEFTF	944,940	3,000,000
IW-1	GEFTF	163,327	793,673
Total Project Cost		4,267,431	14,293,673

B. INDICATIVE PROJECT FRAMEWORK

Project Objective: To build national and local capacities and actions to ensure effective conservation of biodiversity and enhancement of ecosystem functions within and around marine and terrestrial PAs (including community conservation areas)

Project Component	TA / INV	Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Trust Fund	Indicative Financing ($)	Indicative Cofinancing ($)
Strengthening national system of protected areas	**INV**	Operationalization of management in the 1.1 million square km Cook Islands Marine Park: National agencies responsible for marine and terrestrial PA management (currently by the Ministry of Marine Resources and the National Environment Service respectively) are effectively delivering PA management functions across the Marine Protected Area, including Community Conservation Areas (planning; financing; monitoring, enforcement) (capacities	**1.1 Legal / Regulatory Framework for Marine Protected Area:** Legal framework for the newly established MPA clarified and legal regime for PA management updated (*inter alia* configuring the management structure and responsibilities for PA management, financing arrangements, and the inclusion of traditional communal conservation areas within the PA system)	GEF	3,000,000	10,681,489

[1] Project ID number will be assigned by GEFSEC.
[2] Refer to the reference attached on the Focal Area Results Framework when filling up the table in item A.

		tracked by Capacity Score Card and PA management using the METT)				
		Effective community conservation of key biodiversity areas covering 11700 ha of coastal/ marine areas and 11200 ha of terrestrial areas (tracked by METT for community conservation areas, with average score of at least 60 by end of project) Stable or increased populations of critically endangered species such as Green Turtle and Giant Wrasse (baseline to be established during PPG stage); as well as globally vulnerable endemic bird species such as Atiu swiftlet (*Collocalia sawtelli*), Rarotonga starling (*Aplonis cinerascens*), and Mangaian kingfisher (*Todiramphus ruficollis*)	**1.2 Institutional capacities emplaced for the management of Protected Area nationally** (government capacities and institutional mechanisms for participatory planning, surveillance, enforcement and reporting – including joint work between Ministry of Marine Resources and the National Environment Service; national system of support to community conservation areas and cross learning between CCAs) **1.3 Financial sustainability framework for Protected Areas System developed** - valuation of the ecosystem services and financial benefits of PAs quantified; costing for effective management worked out nationally - brokerage of annual budgetary appropriations to underwrite the costs of PA functions at the new MPA (staff/ equipment, infrastructure and maintenance) from government budgets - additional sources of financing identified and mechanisms detailed to access and utilize such funds (such as through re-vitalization of a percentage of airport departure tax being provided for environment fund; use of part of international fishing licenses for conservation)			
2. Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats to protected areas from production landscapes	TA	Threats to marine and terrestrial protected areas mitigated from agriculture and tourism sectors: • Improved water quality in lagoons (through measures to control agrochemical related water pollution) in at least 10 sites • Avoidance of habitat loss from farming on 300 farms covering 6,000 ha of agro ecosystems • At least 20 tourism businesses near CCAs accredited and regularly monitored for biodiversity management performance using environmental guidelines developed through project support and included in national accreditation process Tourism related infrastructure development in or around CCAs undergo clear EIA and adapted to conserved biodiversity as necessary Increase in contribution and support from tourism entrepreneurs reported by CCAs in and around CCAs for biodiversity conservation (tracked by their resource	**2.1 Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into agriculture sector** – (through agriculture sector plan, capacity building for conservation farming sustainable agricultural intensification to reduce habitat loss) ; supporting community landuse planning to prevent encroachment onto sensitive areas) **2.2 Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into tourism sector:** (tourism sector plans and actions supported to ensure that tourism accreditation system include environmental standards, and they are enforced; ensure that planned tourism infrastructure development are biodiversity friendly (walking paths, cycling paths etc.) and assist the government tourism agency is able to promote eco-based tourism as incentive for conservation)	GEF	1,052,431	2,897,500

		investment / contribution in relevant actions)				
Sub-Total					4,052,431	13,578,989
Project Management Cost					215,000	714,684
Total Project Costs					4,267,431	14,293,673

C. INDICATIVE CO-FINANCING FOR THE PROJECT BY SOURCE AND BY NAME IF AVAILABLE, ($)

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Amount ($)
National Government	National Environment Service	Grant	2843673
		In-kind	200000
National Government	Ministry of Marine Resources	Grant	6,650,000
		In-kind	350000
National Government	Agriculture	Grant	920,000
		In-kind	80000
National Government	Tourism	Grant	1,880,000
		In-kind	120000
GEF Agency	UNDP	Grant	50,000
Non-Governmental Organization	Ipukarea Society	Grant	1,200,000
			14,293,673

D. INDICATIVE TRUST FUND RESOURCES ($) REQUESTED BY AGENCY, FOCAL AREA AND COUNTRY1

GEF AGENCY	TYPE OF TRUST FUND	FOCAL AREA	Country name/Global	Grant amount (a)	Agency Fee (b)[2]	Total c=a+b
UNDP	GEF TF	Biodiversity	Cook Is	1,896,636	170,697	2067333
UNDP	GEF TF	Climate Change	Cook Is	1,772,557	159,530	1,932,087
UNDP	GEF TF	Land Degradation	Cook Is	443,139	39,883	483,022
UNDP	GEFTF	International Waters	Global	155,099	13,958	169,057
Total Grant Resources				4,267,431	384,068	4,651,499

* **Government of Cook Islands wishes to avail of the STAR flexibility mechanism in order to maximize in GEF V the use of resources for this priority project..**

E. PROJECT PREPARATION GRANT (PPG)[3]

Please check on the appropriate box for PPG as needed for the project according to the GEF Project Grants:

	Amount Requested ($)	Agency Fee for PPG ($)[4]
• (upto) $150k for projects up to & including $6 million	150,000	13,500

PPG AMOUNT REQUESTED BY AGENCY(IES), FOCAL AREA(S) AND COUNTRY(IES) FOR MFA AND/OR MTF PROJECT ONLY

TRUST FUND	GEF AGENCY	FOCAL AREA	Country Name/Global	(in $)		
				PPG (a)	Agency Fee (b)	Total c = a + b
GEF TF	UNDP	Biodiversity	Cook Islands	66,667	6,000	72,667
GEF TF	UNDP	Climate Change	Cook Islands	62,305	5,607	67,912
GEF TF	UNDP	Land Degradation	Cook Islands	15,576	1,402	16,978
GEFTF	UNDP	IW	Global	5,452	491	5,943
Total PPG Amount				150,000	13,500	163,500

[3] On an exceptional basis, PPG amount may differ upon detailed discussion and justification with the GEFSEC.
[4] PPG fee percentage follows the percentage of the GEF Project Grant amount requested.

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PART II: PROJECT JUSTIFICATION[5]

A. PROJECT OVERVIEW:

A.1. Project Description.

In August 2012, the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Hon. Henry Puna, announced the creation of the Cook Islands Marine Park encompassing approximately 1.1 million square kilometres of the country's southern Exclusive Economic Zone (or more than 50% of country's EEZ) at the opening ceremony of the 43rd Pacific Islands Forum. By creating the Park, the Government signalled its commitment to sustainable development and intention to balance economic growth interests in sectors such as such as tourism, fishing and agriculture, with biodiversity conservation objectives. This project will enhance the Cook Islands' capacities to effectively manage its protected area estate, focusing more specifically on the operationalization of the Marine Park– and community conservation areas falling within it. The project will assist the Government to tailor its policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks to suit the specific characteristics of this large marine protected area – where protection and sustainable use will need to be zoned and planned carefully, with the recognition that tenure over most land areas are vested into local communities through a traditional tenure system. This project has been designed to engineer a paradigm shift in the management of marine and terrestrial PA sites from a site centric approach to a holistic "ridge to reef" management approach, whereby activities in the immediate production landscapes adjacent to marine and terrestrial protected areas will be managed to reduce threats to biodiversity stemming from key production activities (tourism and agriculture).

A.1.1) The global environmental problems, root causes and barriers

Country Overview & Context:

The nation of the Cook Islands is made up of 15 islands located within a 2 million km2 of EEZ in the Southern Pacific Ocean. Geographically and in terms of governance, the Cook Islands is divided into two groups, the Northern Group of islands (atolls and sand cays) and the Southern Group of islands (volcanic and makatea islands) that includes its largest island, Rarotonga, where the capital Avarua is located. In 1965 the Cook Islanders chose self-governance in free association with New Zealand. As a result, the Cook Islands is responsible both for its internal and external affairs. The Cook Islanders are mostly of Maori descent. Preliminary results from the 2011 census suggest that the total population of the country is 17,791[6], of which 13,097 live on Rarotonga, which has a total land area of 67 km^2. Rarotonga is the main commercial and administrative centre. The scattered geography, dispersed and often small population centres, and isolation from markets and trade opportunities makes the delivery of basic economic and social services a significant challenge across the country. There is considerable out-migration of the population from the outer islands to the urban centre of Rarotonga, and thence to New Zealand and Australia. The Cook Islands has extremely limited land resources, with 99.99% of the area within the EEZ consisting of marine areas. Of its approximate 240 square kilometres of land, 26.2 % is *makatea* land (lime and rock), and only 4.3 % is used for agricultural purposes. Approximately 70 % of the land consists of steep sloping lands, wetlands, fernlands and escarpments. The level of subsistence living in the Cook Islands (particularly in the outer islands) is also high, with an estimated 66% and 64% of all households engaged in subsistence farming and fishing activities.

Most land in the Cook Islands is held under customary tenure. Under the traditional system, responsibilities for decision making on land were vested in family, clan or tribal elders. A landholder's right is not to the land itself, but as a member of a descent group, they have usufruct rights: to use the land for building, gardening, hunting, gathering and other activities. Native land in the Cook Islands cannot be bought or sold, except to the Government for public purposes (i.e. the construction of infrastructure). It may however be leased for up to 60 years at a time.

[5] Part II should not be longer than 5 pages.
[6] http://www.stats.gov.ck/Statistics/CensusSurveys/censurvnav.htm

Environmental context[7]:

Though the total land area of the country is only 23,990 hectares, terrestrial areas register high ecosystem diversity and endemism. The Islands have diverse origins – some are high volcanic islands, some are almost atolls (partially submerged volcanic island, has the features of both a volcanic island and an atoll and surrounded by a barrier reef); others are raised makatea, sand-cays; and some are atolls. The inventory of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems includes cloud forests, coastal forest (mostly lost), fernlands, Makatea forest, Strand vegetation, freshwater lakes and Tidal salt marsh (Ngatangiia). The forests on the upper slopes of Rarotonga are representative of the original montane forests of the Cook Islands. These forests are some of the best remaining examples of primary montane rain and cloud forest remaining in Eastern Polynesia. WWF has listed the forests of the Cook Islands (particularly on Rarotonga) as one of its key Global 2000 Ecoregions and considers them to be in a critical/ endangered state.[8] The Islands also fall under Conservation International's Polynesia-Micronesia hotspot[9]. Birdlife International has listed at least 11 endemic birds on the Islands, and recognises 2 endemic bird areas[10]. Of the 538 known angiosperm species recorded in the southern Cook Islands, approximately 4% are endemic. The plant Island Nesoluma found in the Cook Islands is considered globally threatened. About 13 endemic species of endodontid snails and 11 species of charopid snails have been recorded, with several already extinct, and others facing severe threats, especially on Rarotonga. The Micronesian Skink, also found in the Cook Islands is considered globally endangered. The mist landsnail is unique because it is viviparous (bears live young), and is endemic to Rarotonga. The avifauna is particularly important in the global context. Eight species of range-restricted birds have been recorded, six of which are endemic. Of the three single island endemics, the Atiu swiftlet, Rarotonga starling, and Mangaian Kingfisher are globally Vulnerable. The Rarotonga monarch was once considered one of the rarest birds in the world and was believed to be extinct in 1900 but was rediscovered in the mid-1980s.

The Key marine ecosystems of the Cook Islands include shallow lagoons with fringing reefs around high islands in the south, and atolls in the northern group with their large, deep lagoons encircled by coral reef. Other notable marine ecosystems include seamounts, sea bed, and the open ocean water columns. The diversity of marine species include at least 7 species of mammals, 570 species of bony fish species, 390 shellfish species, over 100 species of crustaceans, over 116 species of hard corals, and 62 species of seaweed and algae. The marine ecosystems are home to several globally endangered species such as the Giant Wrasse and the Green Turtle. They also host several globally Vulnerable species including the Bigeye Tuna, Black-blotched Stingray, Giant Grouper, Oceanic Whitetip Shark, Blue Marlin, and the Blacksaddled Coral Grouper. Several Vulnerable coral species are found in its reefs, including *Acropora anthocercis; A. globiceps; A. horrida; A. microclados; A. paniculata; A. polystoma; A. retusa; and A. speciosa***.** Several endemic marine species have also been recorded such as Cook Island Brittlestar *(Asterostegus maini), Cook Islands Flashlight Fish (Photoplepharon rosenblatti), and Orange Spotted Soapfish (Belonoperca pylei).*

The biodiversity of the Cook Islands faces a number of anthropogenic threats, foremost of which are the following:

Alien species: Alien animal and plant species that have either been deliberately or accidentally introduced in the country threaten native species by preying on, smothering or out competing them. Indian mynas were introduced to control agricultural insects in the early twentieth century, but are thought to be interfering with the nesting of the endemic Mangaia kingfisher (*Todirhamphus ruficollaris*). The African ant (*Pheidole megacephala*) is thought to have directly caused extinction of endemic snail species on Rarotonga. Additionally, invasive alien plant species such as the creeper *Micania micrantha* have started to spread on the islands. The smothering of trees by this vine impacts nesting habitats of birds such at the Rarotongan Starling. Additionally, the introduced Albizzia tree has also established itself in Rarotonga, at the expense of native species. Feral Pigs and Goats are also a problem in the Ngaputoru Group where they damage turtle nesting areas by trampling and excavating nests.

[7] Globally threatened species downloaded from www.redlist.org in October 2012
[8] http://worldwildlife.org/ecoregions/oc0103
[9] http://www.conservation.org/where/priority_areas/hotspots/asia-pacific/Polynesia-Micronesia/Pages/default.aspx
[10] http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/country/cook-islands

Land conversion and unsustainable land use: Extensive forestry operations in the country have been discontinued, and tree cover over steep escarpment areas of the islands has remained relatively stable as a result in recent years. However, over the centuries, there was a progressive conversion of lowland forests and wetlands (especially on Rarotonga) to agriculture, plantations, infrastructure and settlements. Consequently, little native vegetation remains in the more accessible lowland zones. The conversion of coastal areas for tourism related infrastructure also means that only remnants of the natural coastal forests and salt marshes remain. Consequently, the availability of habitats of the Beach Morning Glory or *Poue* (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*) and Portia Tree or *Miro* (*Thespesia populnea*) have significantly declined. In some instances, tourism infrastructure may also impact the nesting sites of sea turtles. There is some on-going conversion of natural habitats in Rarotonga for house construction, as people move inland and up the hills that house globally significant cloud forest ecosystems.

Unsustainable harvesting of wild resources: Overharvesting of Parrotfish, Giant clams (*Paua)* and Coconut crabs (*Kaveu)* is contributing to their decline on some islands and are thought to be impacting on local food security as well. Excessive harvesting of sooty terns on Penrhyn (the only island other than Suwarrow in the Cooks that harbours these birds) has reduced the population there. There are also some concerns that some international fishing vessels may also be breaching their contract with the Government and harvesting products that they are not permitted to and/or fishing in areas that are prohibited under their license conditions, despite having monitors on board the ships.

Fire: The risk of fire is a pertinent concern, particularly on the Ngaputoru Group where the Mitiaro fan palm *Iniao* is endemic. Occasional forest fires in the Rarotonga cloud forest also cause damage to native vegetation.

Climate change: The changes in global sea and ambient temperatures are expected to have significant impacts on the Cook Island's biodiversity. Higher sea water temperatures are likely to cause coral bleaching. The changes in rainfall patterns and amounts will also impact ecosystems such as cloud forests. Sea level rises will also impact low lying atoll islands in the northern group of islands. The changes in sea temperatures and currents will also likely shift the patterns of occurrence of tuna species, whales and possibly the migration patterns of sea turtles.

Protected areas establishment has been a key mechanism in the Cook Islands' efforts to conserve biodiversity of global significance[11]**.** Its current terrestrial PA system covers 1146.5 hectares or around 4.7% of the terrestrial area. The marine environment is slightly more complicated with seasonal protection on habitats and certain species ranging from no harassment of cetaceans in the country's entire EEZ to seasonal closures of some invertebrate food species. An estimate of current protected areas, as reported in the 4th National Report to the CBD is presented in Annex 1.

Suwarrow National Park is the only protected area currently that is directly managed by the Government (National Environment Service). The establishment of a new protected area covering the globally important cloud forests of Rarotonga is under Government consideration. As indicated, the Prime Minister has announced

[11] Protected areas in the CI are established under the Environment Act 2003, which provides national legislation for the conservation and management of Biodiversity as follows:
- Protected Species – Designating animals and plant as protected species for the purpose of this Act.
- Providing for the protection, conservation and management of wildlife, protected species or both.
- Regulating or prohibiting trade and commerce in wildlife, protected species, or both.
- Protected Areas – Establishing Protected Areas and regulating or prohibiting activities within these protected areas.

For the majority of protected areas, additional legislations are made. These include Suwarrow National Park Declaration, Takutea Island Regulations, Takuvaine Water Catchment Regulations, National Whale Sanctuary Declaration, Rakahanga *ra'ui* by-laws and Pukapuka *ra'ui* bylaws, Aitutaki Motu Kitiu and Ootu Marine Reserves. The community conservation areas that are not legally under the above-mentioned legal instruments do not have formal legal standing as PA – and thus are some are included in national PA database and some are not making it difficult track their existence and management.

that the Cook Islands will establish a new marine reserve covering an area of 1.1 million square kilometers[12]. Most existing protected areas are community conservation areas (called *Ra'ui*) that are primarily governed under traditional protection regimes, which will overlap with existing protected areas. As many as 22 community conservation areas exist.

A.1.2 the baseline scenario and any associated baseline

The Cook Island Government annually invests around 53 million US dollars in all sectors of the Government. The current baseline investment by the national Government into environmental management related actions with a bearing on biodiversity totals at least USD 15 million dollars over the planned 5 year life of the project. This includes Government investment through the National Environmental Service of approximately USD 0.8 million per annum to incorporate biodiversity management in national and sectoral policies and planning processes and promoting and enhancing community participation and actions to help conserve biodiversity. Additionally, the Ministry of Marine Resources invests USD 1 million annually on the monitoring and control of illegal practices in its marine areas, on the implementation of the Cook Islands Lagoon Monitoring Programme (which includes water quality monitoring in Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Manihiki) and on an education and public awareness programme on marine issues. Furthermore, the Ministry of Agriculture invests around USD 0.25 million annually on 'biosecurity' related activities, such as strengthening internal bio-security controls to prevent the introduction and spread of alien invasive species in the country (through periodic training and capacity building); and promoting a "Biological Soil School Programme" aimed at implementing eco-friendly methods of soil/water management. The Cook Islands Tourism Corporation invests around 3.3 million US dollars – mostly on tourism promotion activities nationally and internationally. The Corporation promotes ecologically sustainable tourism.

Despite existing investments and activities, under the business-as-usual scenario 1) PAs will remain poorly managed and under-funded and 2) biodiversity conservation in protected areas will continue to be impacted by unsustainable sectoral practices – particularly by agriculture and tourism in PA adjacent areas. The long-term solution is, therefore, to implement a ridge-to-reef approach that combines a functional, representative and sustainable national system of terrestrial, coastal and marine protected areas that are complemented by appropriate sectoral practices in adjoining / upstream watersheds to mitigate threats to conservation from outside protected areas. However, several barriers exist to the attainment of the long term solution. These are described below:

Barrier 1: Limited national and local capacities and systemic mechanisms (including financing) for protected areas management

The Cook Island's national protected areas authority is the National Environment Service (NES). The NES has a total staff complement of 28 staff[13], of whom only 4 focus exclusively on biodiversity. The Ministry of Marine Resources (staff number of around 44, with 50% stationed in Rarotonga) is responsible for marine resources management. With the recent announcement of the new marine park covering a large part of the EEZ, MMR will have an increasing role to play in marine biodiversity conservation. Although the MMR deploys staff to the field in the Outer islands, most of them have limited knowhow in the biodiversity conservation arena or experience spearheading measures to mitigate threats to biodiversity. There is a need to build the capacity of staff at NES and the MMR to fulfill PA management functions; this requires that responsibilities for these functions are clarified and cooperation between the agencies enhanced. It will also require the employment and redeployment of staff to address unmet conservation needs. Currently a Marine Park Steering Committee has been constituted which is headed by the Prime Minister's Office and includes key Government agencies such as the Environment Service, Ministry of Marine Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, and even an NGO (Ipukarea Society). This Committee has been formed to ensure the implementation of the Government plans to establish

[12] This will be a large managed resource PA, incorporating lands and seas under community management, including existing community reserves, no take zones, seasonal closure areas, and areas where sustainable fishing, agriculture and other economic activities will be permitted.

[13] http://www.environment.gov.ck/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=62&Itemid=29

the marine park in a coordinated manner between all relevant sectors. However, the future options for continuing this Committee as the key coordinating committee for the Park or to substitute by another coordination mechanism is yet to be clarified.

Traditional protection areas – called Ra'ui- are declared by traditional leaders and are locally managed by community members. Management measures include traditional practices—most commonly, seasonal closures of an area (mostly marine areas) to ensure replenishment of a stock of an important economic species (fish for example) – but now also include longer term closures from harvesting of areas to conserve particularly threatened species. Many Ra'ui areas are now also important tourism destinations (such as the Muri lagoon in Rarotonga), and traditional protection systems alone may not be effective in conserving such areas. The efficacy of current protection practices in conserving biodiversity is not being routinely monitored. In any case, the local communities currently lack knowhow and capacity to enhance their traditional protection practices. In some Ra'ui the local communities have not prioritised the conservation of species that are not of direct utility to them.

Several gaps identified in the country's NCSA report are pertinent for protected areas management – such as:

- Insufficient legislation for the management of protected areas including that specifying mandates for preparing and enforcing management plans to avoid and reduce adverse development impacts; Legal provisions for the designation, declaration and management of protected areas have not been articulated;
- Limited capacity to engage stakeholders to develop and implement participatory management plans; there is a lack of general public involvement in management; non-governmental and community-based organisations have little capacity to carry out conservation management activities;
- Limited capacity to support the management of Ra'ui areas; Lack of assessment of effectiveness of Ra'ui areas; and
- Insufficient resources, including technical expertise for effective management of protected areas

Barrier 2: Key economic sectors from outside protected areas do not sufficiently integrate biodiversity conservation into their activities, and could thus undermine PA integrity

A significant number of households in the Cook Islands still practice farming for subsistence, and increasingly in Rarotonga, for the sale of products to the local market. There is an increasing tendency to use agrochemicals – such as inorganic fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture. Such chemicals leach and pollute streams and lagoons and thus negatively impact biodiversity therein. Some farmers are also clearing natural vegetation for agriculture – such as for pineapple farming- which can increase the likelihood of soil loss from such land, as well as cause loss of important natural habitats. Thus agricultural practices are directly contributing to biodiversity loss. The national agricultural service has limited capacities to promote effective landuse and agricultural practices and the current work has not necessarily focused on important landscapes adjacent to protected areas. As agricultural staff on the outer islands primarily report to the local authorities, the Ministry also has limited direct influence on land use planning and management – as needed to promote conservation friendly agriculture practices on those islands. In addition to agriculture, tourism is one of the primary economic sectors for the country – contributing over 70% of the nation's GDP. The plans and programmes of the tourism sector has primarily focused on marketing the nation as a major tourism destination, and they do not have a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability nor on ensuring that the tourism sector benefits conservation. For example, the national system for accrediting tourism businesses does not have an environmental code. Whilst some tourism businesses (such as resorts) contribute towards conservation voluntarily, many do not. If the current situation were to continue, growing threats from these two key economic sectors are likely to have increasing negative impacts on biodiversity.

A.1.3) the proposed alternative scenario, with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project and; A.1.4) Incremental cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTF, LDCF/SCCF and co-financing:

The project has two components-- designed to overcome the afore-mentioned barriers. The first component will strengthen the national system of protected areas, while under the second component; the project will build the national capacity to mitigate threats to biodiversity in protected areas emanating from agriculture and tourism.

Component 1: Strengthening national system of protected areas

The project will strengthen the capacity of the Government to manage the Cook Islands Marine Park, including community based management of local marine and terrestrial ecosystems designated as community conservation areas. At the national level, the project will support the Government's efforts to promote conservation in one of the world's largest marine reserves. The project will assist the Government to strengthen the legal provisions governing PA management, amongst other things to clarify management mandates. The roles and responsibilities of the national Government and local Government agencies and local communities will be clarified—with respect to the discharge of different PA management functions. Support will be provided to zone the park, delineating strict protection and sustainable use zones. A comprehensive management plan for the marine reserve will be developed. The capacities of NES and MMR staff to deliver PA management functions will also be strengthened (these functions would include—participatory management planning, monitoring resource use, reporting, and enforcement). A key action of the project will be to assist the Cook Islands identify and access sustainable financing for protected areas system nationally. This will seek to increase Government budgetary appropriations for PA management, utilise existing allocations more effectively, and tap additional funds (i.e. tourism fees[14]). These funds would be deployed to address threats, including the control of invasive species, and enforcement.

At the local level, in order to operationalize the large marine reserve, the project will target relevant areas in the southern group of islands. It will strengthen the management of at least 11,700 ha of community conserved reef/ marine/ coastal areas that have already been identified as Key Biodiversity Areas. These will include several sites in Rarotonga (1,600 ha), Aitutaki Island Key Biodiversity Area (4,300 ha), Mangaia Island KBA (400 ha reef), and Palmerston KBA (5,400 ha of reef and lagoon). Such conservation work will be complemented by the strengthening of community conservation of terrestrial areas equalling at least 11,200 ha. This will include at least 2,900 ha of Atiu Island, 100 ha of Takutea Wildlife Sanctuary, 5,200 ha of Mangaia Island KBA and 3,000 ha of Mitiaro Island KBA. The project will develop appropriate mechanisms for local capacity building – building on existing vehicles (such as through local school teachers/ marine and environment staff/ and/ or possibly deploying additional manpower on site to assist in conservation planning and awareness and working with local NGOs). Traditional Ra'ui management will be strengthened to discharge PA functions, including participatory management planning, management actions (including specific actions to protect globally threatened species and habitats), monitoring and evaluation and enforcement (including inspection and fines). These will be developed in close consultation with local leaders (traditional and formal) and local communities. Local businesses, NGOs and local youth will be involved in PA monitoring. The project will also ensure that there are clear legal provisions to empower local environmental wardens to enforce locally agreed rules and regulations effectively. The project will also ensure that PA management includes issues of resilience to climate change such as coral reef management through the protection of refugia; enhancing reef connectivity; and sustainable fishery management.

Component 2: Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats to protected areas from production landscapes

The project will mitigate threats to protected areas from production sectors – specifically focusing on two key production sectors – agriculture and tourism. The project's interventions will focus in areas linked upstream of marine community conservation areas and/ or linked to terrestrial community conservation areas to cover the areas outside protected areas, such that they complement the protected areas management as part of a "ridge to reef" approach. The project will first ensure that overall landscape management – including PA management –

[14] Options include, allocation of a portion of the airport tax to conservation, investment of fishing license fees in management of the MMR—especially to regulate the activities of distant water fishing vessels, and tourism sector investment—whereby tourism businesses sponsor conservation work (a further review of these options will be undertaken in the PPG stage).

is incorporated into the integrated island development plans being developed for each inhabited island[15]. With regard to the agricultural sector, the project will assist the Government to undertake measures to ensure that the threats posed by the agriculture sector to biodiversity are effectively mitigated. This will include developing a national strategy for conservation-friendly agriculture as well as working with farming households and farmers groups at priority sites to sustainably intensify farming[16] with the explicit purpose of avoiding habitat loss. The project will also promote the cultivation of indigenous crops and trees (fruits/ nuts etc.) and helping link farmers to markets for these products. This will include supporting farmers to undertake a more integrated pest and also fertility management to reduce dependence on agrochemicals by more judicious use of such chemicals (amounts, timings) as well the use of more organic fertilizers. The project will also work with farmers (who are usually small holders) to plan and plant fruits and others along the contour to avoid soil and nutrient runoffs and to avoid clearance of ecologically sensitive areas for farming.

The project will also work to mainstream biodiversity conservation into tourism development. The proposed actions under this will include integration of biodiversity considerations into the tourism accreditation process; ensure planned tourism infrastructure developments are biodiversity friendly (setbacks from sensitive habitats.) and assist the national tourism promotion centre to promote eco-based tourism as an incentive for conservation.

A.1.5) Global environmental benefits (GEFTF, NPIF) and adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)

Global Benefits:

The global biodiversity benefits of the project will arise from the effective management of the newly established marine park covering at least 1.1 million square kilometres, which will include effective community conservation of 22,000 ha of critical marine and terrestrial ecosystems as a sub-system of the wider PA**.** As noted previously under the environmental profile of the country, over 20 species of globally threatened coral species and over 13 globally threatened marine animal species are found in the Cook Islands. Effective management of the large marine protected areas will ensure that the habitats of such threatened animal species and the species themselves are afforded better protection. In addition conservation efforts on islands will ensure that populations several endemic and globally threatened species of birds will continue to survive and thrive.

Adaptation benefits

The adaptation benefits of this project will be brought about from the positive impacts on local livelihoods and their capacity building. Some 7000 local community members will be directly engaged in the planned conservation activities under the project. This populace will benefit from the added conservation security afforded to ecosystem goods and services vital to their welfare – particularly increased production of fish and other marine products from community managed marine areas even in the context of climate change. In effect, the marine protected areas will act as fish reserves – and should over time increase local production (from an increase in spawning biomass, as larger fish are protected, and the protection of fish hatchery and juvenile grow out areas leading to increased recruitment into adjacent production areas). For terrestrial areas, the local benefits will include improved water retention and infiltration into underground aquifers. This is of particular importance in the outer islands – where the degradation of the freshwater lenses is undermining household water security and this is expected to be further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. The strong focus the project has on developing national awareness and capacities on conservation and climate change will also benefit local households directly by enabling them to understand and plan further adaptation actions. The project will pursue a gender-sensitive approach whereby women's participation in conservation will be strongly promoted (through targeted training, social mobilisation and other means) and thereby increasing their ability to adapt.

[15] Critical to ensure the infrastructure such as roads are not placed in ecologically sensitive areas, and that decisions to award land to development, including tourism, seek to avoid the loss of critical ecosystems, and reduce impacts where unavoidable.

[16] Conservation farming would seek to ensure proper soil and water conservation measures on farms (including ditching and terracing as needed to reduce erosion and the subsequent loss of on farm productivity—which is a driver of farm expansion).

Innovativeness, sustainability and potential for scaling up

The project is considered innovative for a number of reasons. Firstly, this project will assist the country to operationalize one of the biggest marine protected areas in the world, in the context of a significantly low population spread over a large area. This will necessitate a new and innovative model of managing this large marine area. Secondly, given that the large marine PA also includes islands with settlements and community conserved areas, many different government sectors will need to be involved for an overall effective management of the PA. This is a departure from the past national approach where PAs were mostly under the purview of the Environment Services. This multi-sectoral approach to PA management will be innovative for the Cook Islands. This multi-sectoral approach is also expected to lead to sustainable management of the ridge to reef in the country. Through the participation of the CI in the regional Ridge to Reef programme for the Pacific, there will be opportunities to scale up this approach to other Pacific countries,

A.2 Stakeholders: Identify key stakeholders (including civil society organizations, indigenous people, gender groups, and others as relevant) and describe how they will be engaged in project preparation:

The key stakeholders involved in the project are:

Stakeholder	Expected Role in Project Implementation
The House of Ariki and Te Koutu Nui:	The House of Ariki represents the tribal leaders across the Cook Islands. Given the strong traditional land tenure, their involvement and support for community conservation area declaration and support will be critical for the success of the project. At each of the conservation sites, relevant traditional leaders will be directly involved in the delineation, rule formulation and implementation of conservation activities. In addition, the project will ensure that the formal body – i.e. the House is also kept abreast of the project's progress and impacts.
National Environment Service (ES):	The National Environment Service is the focal Government Agency responsible for implementing the CBD, the CCD, and related MEAs. The key units within the Agency that are responsible for conservation activities include biodiversity conservation, education and awareness and environmental monitoring. The Service will be the primary responsible for coordination and management of the project and particularly on implementation of activities related to terrestrial biodiversity conservation. It will also facilitate the linkages with other related project initiatives in country, both internationally and nationally.
Ministry of Marine Resources	The Ministry of Marine Resources has the principal function of, and authority for the conservation, management, development of the living and non-living resources in the fishery waters in accordance with this Act and the Ministry of Marine Resources Act 1984. In this context, the Ministry will be the focal agency for the implementation of the project's activities related to marine and coastal area conservation.
Ministry of Agriculture (MoA):	The Agriculture department's primary role is in development of crops and food security. Linkages between natural resources and agro-resources mean agriculture plays a key role in the project design and implementation. Additionally, agriculture also has a role in reducing threats caused by land based sources of pollution, particularly in terms of pesticides and agro-chemicals. The Ministry also has a role in conserving agricultural biodiversity and ensuring that land and water resources are sustainably managed. The Ministry will play critical role in effective management of agro-ecosystem that will connect ridge to reef under Component 2 of this project.
Cook Islands Tourism Corporation	This agency promotes tourism in the country and accredits tourism related businesses (accommodations, restaurants etc.). Their role will be to ensure that tourism activities do not impact negatively on globally significant biodiversity but that they contribute positively to the nation's biodiversity. They can also play a role in highlighting the importance of biodiversity for tourism and to market. The Corporation will play an important role in mainstreaming biodiversity under Component 2 of this project.
Cook Islands Natural Heritage Trust (CINHT):	The Natural Heritage Trust was established in 1999 by an Act of Parliament. The Natural Heritage Trust played a key role during NBSAP development and implementation. The Trust also has developed and maintained a biodiversity database, which comprises nearly 2 decades of baseline biodiversity information specifically to the Cook Islands. The Natural Heritage Trust will be a key stakeholder in the project design and development, and will play a technical advisory role during implementation.
Marine Park Steering Committee	This has been established in 2012 by the Government, involving different sectoral Government agencies and NGOs to support the operationalization of the Cook Islands Marine Park. This Committee is currently chaired by the Chief of Staff from the Prime Minister's Office. The Committee will be important to ensure strong coordination between different planned activities relating to the Marine Park operationalization.
Taporo'poro Ipukarea	This is an environmental NGO with a wide remit, primarily as a Government watchdog, advocate of reduction of chemical use and pollution, waste management and recycling and conservation of biodiversity. The NGO

Society (TIS):	has worked on a recovery program for the endangered Rarotonga Monarch (*Pomarea dimidiata*), worked on a successful "Save Our Suwarrow" campaign amongst others. It is currently involved in promoting effective Cook Island Marine Park management through fund raising and has been delegated by the Marine Park steering committee to receive external funding expected from a group of marine conservation philanthropists. They are also tasked with managing the initial work to operationalise the Marine Park, using this funding, in 2013, together with the Koutu Nui. They are expected to play a role in local capacity building.
Titikaveka Growers Association (TGA)	This association has been promoting organic agriculture in Rarotonga with local farmers. This NGO could be a possible technical agency to support local activities on sustainable agriculture under Component 2.
Local community groups	Local communities will be primary agents to manage community conservation areas and also in local agro-ecosystems management. Local traditional leaders as well as formal leaders (such as the parliamentarians) will play key roles in ensuring local conservation area declaration and management, whilst local farmers groups/ fishers groups, women's groups, youth groups etc. will also play key roles in different aspects of conservation planning, implementation and also in landscape management under this ridge to reef programme.

A.3 Risk. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design (table format acceptable):

Risk	Level	Mitigation Measures
Poor collaboration between programme partners leads to fragmented approach to protected areas management	Medium	Since the project involves a number of key Government agencies, close cooperation will be important to ensure a successful outcome. Cooperation will be fostered through joint work planning and implementation. The project will build on existing coordination mechanisms such as the Marine Park Steering Committee, which is chaired by the Office of the Prime Minister to ensure cross sectoral participation. This is illustrative of the high importance the Government has attached to proper coordination between sectors for the Park establishment. These mechanisms will be clearly worked out and presented in the full project document for the actual management oversight for the Park. This cross –sectoral participation is also expected to reduce the capacity risks, including possible absorptive capacity risks maximizing on available institutional capacities within the Government and having provisions to redeploy resources and roles and responsibilities between institutions to meet capacity needs, and devolution of management to local communities and others (NGOs and the private sector as appropriate for specific actions).
Stakeholders, particularly local communities, are not able to perceive benefits from conservation during programme duration.	Low	The local communities may not see direct benefits from conservation activities within the short time frame of the project. However, it has been noted that increased local awareness on the positive impacts of such actions on the environment provides a good foundation for success. Project actions will build on the naturally conservation oriented ethos of traditional society – to ensure that management measures are culturally appropriate.
Poor accessibility to outer islands from Rarotonga will make it difficult to generate equitable benefits to outer islands from the project	Medium	Since the project sites are widely scattered over a vast ocean space and since there is no regular transport between many islands, there will be operational difficulties in implementing the project. The project will use mechanisms including the use of internet communication etc. to ensure that there is regular communication, feedback, and training for local staff/ communities and that adequate resource are allocated for such actions.
Climate change related impacts could undermine conservation efforts	Medium	There is evidence that the intensity of tropical cyclones in the vicinity of the Cook Islands is increasing, as indicated by the increase in the open water wave heights associated with tropical cyclones. Any severe climatic variations may impact local activities or undermine conservation efforts. The project will ensure that there are contingency plans for such unforeseen situations.

A.4. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF financed and other initiatives: Implementation of the proposed project will be carried out in coordination with, and where relevant, building on the on-going GEF funded and other donor/ partners supported projects, which are listed below:

- UNEP-GEF PAS Implementing the Island Biodiversity Programme of Work by Integrating the Conservation Management of Island Biodiversity: this initiative is supporting a number of activities relevant to the proposed project, such as a programme to conserve rare Vairakau Maori (traditional medicine) plants; a program to conserve rare birds, rare plants and marine turtles in Mauke and northern islands; and a program to manage Teroto Nui and Teroto Iti te Pito o Kare ('muddy lakes') on Mitiaro. There is no duplication in effort with the proposed project, which seeks to strengthen the systemic capacities to manage PAs, operationalise the new Marine Park and address threats to PAs from production practices on PA adjacent lands. The NES - as the focal agency for this project as well as the proposed project will ensure strong coordination.
- The UNEP-GEF PAS Prevention, Control and Management of Invasive Alien Species in the Pacific Islands: This project is working in the following islands to support several activities such as ship rat early detection surveillance (trapping and monitoring) on Aitutaki, Suwarrow and Atiu; promoting management practices for *Cuscuta* and Beach Burr on Rarotonga and Pukapuka; for sand flies on Aitutaki and Mitiaro; and eradicate red passion fruit using best management practices in Mauke. The proposed new project will not invest directly in the control of IAS—but will seek to increase PA finance to address such work over the longer term.
- UNDP-AF project - Adaptation Fund Project is promoting Climate-resilient agricultural and fisheries practices on Manihiki, Aitutaki, Mangaia, Atiu, and Mauke; enhanced Water capture, storage and groundwater management capacities in at least 7 islands, including Pukapuka, Nassau, Mitiaro, Palmerston, Aitutaki, Atiu, Mangaia and Rarotonga, through community-based actions and infrastructure climate-proofing projects; enhance coastal protection at Rakahanga, Aitutaki, and Palmerston; and enhance resilience of tourism enterprises to climate change in Manihiki, Aitutaki, and Atiu islands. The proposed UNDP-GEF project will build on these activities and help ensure that they are biodiversity friendly and not duplicate actions, with the focus of this UNDP-GEF project being on sustainable agriculture management and intensification to reduce habitat clearances and impacts through judicious use of agrochemicals.
- The Cook Islands is part of the FAO supported regional programme on Food Security for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (FSSLP). The programme is expected to concentrate on the Food Security situation of the Southern islands. The proposed UNDP-GEF project will also closely cooperate with this project.

As noted earlier in the PIF, the Marine Park Steering Committee will be an important mechanism to ensure strong coordination between different planned activities relating to the operationalisation of management in the Marine Park. Project implementation will also be closely coordinated other Ridge to Reef projects in the Pacific under the umbrella R2R programme for GEF5, which will be led by UNDP—helping to cross fertilise lessons and good practices. This will be done through an IW project that is being proposed in conjunction with the regional R2R approach.

B. DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSISTENCY OF THE PROJECT WITH:

B.1 National strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions, if applicable, i.e. NAPAS, NAPs, NBSAPs, national communications, TNAs, NIPs, PRSPs, NPFE, etc.:

The project will directly support the implementation of the Cook Islands' National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) (2011-2015). The Government has identified "ecological sustainability" as one of its eight key priorities; the NSDP lists six subsidiary key objectives for this priority. These are enumerated as: 1. "the use of all our natural resources is managed well to ensure their sustainability". 2. "Our scarce and degraded natural resources are effectively monitored and restored"; 3. "The pollution of air, water and land resources is managed so that impacts are minimized and community and ecosystem health are not adversely affected". 4. "Irreversible loss and degradation of biodiversity (marine, terrestrial, aquatic ecosystems) is avoided"; 5. "Our actions to protect and manage our ecosystems and natural resources will include Climate Change Adaptation and emissions reduction measures". Key strategies advanced under the NSDP (that this project will help spearhead) include 1. "Improve the Management and Quality of our Water Resources through an Integrated Approach; 5. "Develop and Implement Interventions to Ensure that Land Use is Sustainable"; 4. "Implement an Ecosystem

Approach to the Management of Marine Resources"; 6. "Protect our Biodiversity and Ecosystems". The NSDP's Priority Area 6 is on Ecological Sustainability. Here the plan calls for Strengthening Natural Resource Management and Climate Change Mitigation. This project is directly aligned with the following key actions under Priority Area 6:

- Improve the conservation and management of biodiversity, to increase resilience to the impacts of climate change (through Component 1 of this project)
- Strengthen and build resilience in the fisheries sector, ensuring a higher resilience to the impacts of climate (through Component 1 of this project)
- Promote agricultural Livelihood resilience and food security, and resilience to the impacts of climate change, (through Component 2 of this project).

The project will also directly contribute to the Cook Island's NBSAP Strategic Goal C: Conserve important ecosystems through a system of protected areas with regulated and monitored activities", particularly the following two actions identified under it:

- Develop a programme to select areas to establish a national system of community-based protected areas to protect important terrestrial ecosystems.
- Develop a programme to select areas to establish a national system of community-based protected areas to protect important reef and lagoon ecosystems.

The project will also contribute to Strategic Goal F: Make biodiversity information more readily available to all stakeholders and interested people and Strategic Goal H: Secure long-term financial sustainability for all biodiversity related activities and programmes. The NBSAP has also highlighted the need to mainstream biodiversity conservation into important economic sectors to mitigate threats to biodiversity. It specifies, under Strategic Goal G, the priority "Integrate biodiversity into national and sectoral legislation, policies, plans and programmes". This project's Component 2 is directly aligned with this NBSAP priority. Furthermore, the project is strongly aligned with the Cook Islands Joint National Action Plan (JNAP) for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction, especially Strategy 2, Actions 8 and 9: Strengthen and build resilience in the fisheries sector, ensuring a higher resilience to the impacts of climate (Action 8) and Improve the conservation and management of biodiversity, to increase resilience to the impacts of climate change (Action 9).

The project will directly support the CI to achieve the following Aichi Targets; especially those under Strategic Goal B: Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use: **Target 5**: By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced (Project Component 1).

- **Target 6**: By 2020 all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits (Components 1 and 2)
- **Target 7**: By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity (Component 2)
- **Target 8**: By 2020, pollution, including from excess nutrients, has been brought to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity (Component 2)

Component 1 will support the implementation of the Strategic Goal C: To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity, particularly:

- **Target 11:** By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative

and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

- **Target 12:** By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained.

The project is well aligned with the GEF/UNDP's Programme Framework Document for the regional programme "Pacific Islands Ridge-to-Reef National Priorities – Integrated Water, Land, Forest and Coastal Management to Preserve Ecosystem Services, Store Carbon, Improve Climate Resilience and Sustain Livelihoods". The project's two components are primarily aligned with the Regional PFD Component 1: National Multi-focal Area Ridge-to-Reef Demonstrations in all Pacific Island Countries, particularly with the following two Outcomes:

- Ridge-to-Reef approach achieved in demonstration sites through the scaling up of IWRM and introduction of ICM towards integrated management of natural resources and to reduce watershed and coastal pollution in priority catchments
- Improved terrestrial and marine biodiversity conservation in priority catchments and linked coastal areas

The project will also contribute to the following Outcome under this Component:

- Improved resilience to climate change of island ecosystems and communities in priority catchments

B.2 GEF focal area and/or fund(s) strategies, eligibility criteria and priorities:

This project will enhance the Cook Islands' capacities to effectively manage its protected area estate, focusing more specifically on the operationalization of the Marine Park– and community conservation areas falling within it. The project will assist the Government to tailor its policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks to suit the specific characteristics of this large marine protected area – where protection and sustainable use will need to be zoned and planned carefully, recognizing that tenure over most land areas are vested in local communities. This project has been designed to engineer a paradigm shift in the management of marine and terrestrial PA sites from a site centric approach to a holistic "ridge to reef" management approach, whereby activities in the immediate production landscapes adjacent to marine and terrestrial protected areas will be managed to reduce threats to biodiversity stemming from key production activities (tourism and agriculture).

Component 1 addresses the GEF's Biodiversity Focal Area Objective 1 "Improve Sustainability of PA Systems" and Outcome 1.1: "Improved management effectiveness of (existing and) new protected areas". Additionally, the project will also institute mechanisms for sustainable financing of the national protected area system, thereby directly contributing to Outcome 1.2: Increased revenue for protected area systems to meet total expenditures required for management and Output 3: Sustainable financing plans. Component 2 will directly contribute to the GEF 5 BD2 Objective: Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors, as the project spearheads the integration of biodiversity considerations into the agriculture and tourism sectors in landscapes linked to the community conservation areas– which fits with Output 2: National and sub-national land-use plans (number) that incorporate biodiversity and ecosystem services valuation. The project will also directly contribute to IW Focal Area's Objective 1. Multi-state cooperation on water uses in transboundary surface and ground water Output 1.3 Pollution Reduction, improved water efficiency, IWRM through the project's activities under Component 2 on pollution reduction in the streams in selected sites.

B.3 The GEF agency's comparative advantage to implement this project:

UNDP has supported a number of national level planning and assessments on environmental issues in the past. With the support from the GEF, UNDP has supported the development of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, to implement a Biodiversity Enabling Activity 'Add-on' Component and also to undertake a National Capacity Self-Assessment. In addition, UNDP also implemented several regional/ global projects that have had a component for the Cook Islands. For example, it implemented the GEF funded South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme, a capacity building project on Sustainable Land Management, and another on Integrated Water Resources Management. Under the International Waters programme, UNDP has also implemented several GEF supported projects in the country, such as the Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) of the Pacific Small Island Developing States; Pacific Islands Oceanic Fisheries Management Project; PAS Implementing Sustainable Integrated Water Resource and Wastewater Management in the Pacific Island Countries ; and the Implementation of Global and Regional Oceanic Fisheries Conventions and Related Instruments in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS). UNDP has also supported Sustainable Village Development Plans development in Pukapuka and Mitiaro islands, and similar exercises are being planned in Rarotonga. These plans created good momentum for community engagement, and identified community needs and plans in agriculture, water, and coastal issues, but without integrating climate risks, and providing funds for actual implementation. UNDP is also in the process of implementing an Adaptation Fund Board supported project in the country. This planned project will build on experiences of past projects and will build on on-going projects.

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the Pacific Sub-region for 2008-2012, which also covers the Cook Islands, has noted under Outcome 4 that the UN will assist Pacific nations in “The mainstreaming of environmental sustainability and sustainable energy into regional and national policies, planning frameworks and programmes; and Pacific communities sustainably using their environment, natural resources and cultural heritage.” Therefore, this proposed project will directly support this Outcome. Under this Framework, UNDP’s Country Program Document (CPD) for the Cook Islands (2008-2012) has identified sustainable environment management as one of the key areas for cooperation. The CPAP has stressed that UNDP will assist the Cook Islands achieve MDG 7 by providing coordinated and gender sensitive policy and technical advice to address serious environmental challenges; supporting community based environment management and disaster risk reduction – including village and local level plans development and capacity development. The project is also in full alignment with UNDP’s new global Strategic Response Framework for Biodiversity, which includes Signature Programmes on protected areas, ecosystems management and mainstreaming. UNDP has been supporting numerous protected areas strengthening projects in Asia and the Pacific on PA estate expansion and management, in partnership with the GEF. UNDP’s support for this project will be provided through its multi-country office in Samoa, as well as through a locally recruited staff through joint UN presence. Additionally, technical support and project oversight will be provided by UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor based at UNDP’s Asia Pacific Regional Centre, and through its global Ecosystems and Biodiversity team, as required.

PART III: APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT BY GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT(S) AND GEF AGENCY(IES)

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S): (Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter(s) with this template).

NAME	POSITION	MINISTRY	DATE *(MM/DD/YYYY)*
Mr. Vaitoti TUPA	GEF OFP and Director	Environment Service	11 APRIL 2013

B. GEF AGENCY(IES) CERTIFICATION

request has been prepared in accordance with GEF/LDCF/SCCF policies and procedures and meets the /LDCF/SCCF criteria for project identification and preparation.					
AGENCY COORDINATOR, AGENCY NAME	**SIGNATURE**	**DATE (MM/DD/YYYY)**	**PROJECT CONTACT PERSON**	**TELEPHONE**	**EMAIL ADDRESS**
Adrian Dinu, Officer-in-Charge and Deputy Executive Coordinator, UNDP - GEF		April 12, 2013	Sameer Karki, EBD	+662 304 9100 Ext. 2729	sameer.karki@undp.org

Annex A: Currently recorded Cook Islands
Protected Areas

Island	Type	Name of Area	Total Area	Comments
Takutea	Wildlife Sanctuary	Takutea Wildlife Sanctuary	120 ha	Established 1903, re-established in 1950 by Takutea Island Trust.
				Endorsed as a Community Conserved Area under the Atiu and
				Takutea Environment Regulation 2008. Inclusion of lagoon not determined
Suwarrow	National Park	Suwarrow National Park	160 ha	Established in 1978 under the Prime Minister's Office. Inclusion of the lagoon not determined
Rarotonga	Nature Conserved Area	Takitumu Conservation Area	155 ha	Established in 1996 under landowner committee to protect endangered native birds and their habitat
	Nature Reserve	Highland Paradise	32.5 ha	Family operated reserve containing natural features of cultural significance
	Marine Reserve	Aroa Raui	32.5 ha	Established in 2006 to allow the rejuvenation of natural resources
	Marine Reserve	Tokerau Raui	4 ha	Established in 2007 to allow the rejuvenation of natural resources
	National Park Reserve (Terrestrial)	Nikao Social Centre	?	Established in 2000 for Public Recreation
	Marine Reserve	Pouara Raui	5 ha	Established to allow the rejuvenation of natural resources
	Marine Reserve	Aroko Raui	71.1 ha	Established in 1998 to allow the rejuvenation of natural resources
	Marine Reserve	Titikaveka Raui	?	Established to allow the rejuvenation of natural resources
	Marine Conserved Reserve	Tikioki Raui	40	Permanent reserve area

	Community Managed Area	Takuvaine Water Catchment	229 ha	Established in 2006 under the Environment (Takuvaine Water Catchment) Regulations for species and habitat protection
Aitutaki	Marine Reserve	Ootu Raui	220 ha	Established in 2000 as a 140 ha reserve, additional 70 ha included as restricted entry zone
	Marine Reserve	Motu Kitiu Raui	407 ha	Established in 2000 as a 210 ha reserve, additional 197 ha included as restricted entry zone
	Marine Reserve	Maina Raui 1	128 ha	Established in 2000 as a No Entry reserve, predominantly reef flat
	Marine Reserve	Maina Raui 2	81 ha	Established in 2000 as a Restricted Entry reserve, 80ha is inclusive of lagoon
Pukapuka	Marine and Terrestrial Reservee	Motu Kotawa	90 ha	Reserved for Yato Village, inclusive of entire islet and surrounding lagoon
	Marine and Terrestrial Reserve	Motu Ko	300 ha	Reserved for Ngake Village, inclusive of entire islet and surrounding lagoon
	Marine and Terrestrial Reserve	Motu Uta	50 ha	Reserved for Loto Village, inclusive of 30% of the islet
	Marine and Terrestrial Reserve	Motu Niua	10 ha	Reserved for Yato Village
Mitiaro	Wetland	Te Roto Nui	?	Reserved for habitat protection and rejuvenation of freshwater eels (Anguilla obscura)
Rakahanga	Lagoon	Te Taha ki Raro	?	
	Marine Reserve	Paerangi	?	
	Marine and Terrestrial Reserve	Te Kainga	?	
Manihiki	Salt-marsh lakes	Lake Porea and Tepuka Roto	?	Traditional breeding and raising ground for Milkfish (Chanos chanos) to supplement food supply during periods of rough seas

Annex B: Maps of the Cook Islands's Location and the different island groups