

## Mid-Term Review

GEF/UNDP/Government of Cook Islands

### Conserving biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem function through a "Ridge to Reef" approach in the Cook Islands

UNDP GEF PIMS: 5168

Executed by  
National Environment Service



The Rarotonga Starling (*Aplonis cinerascens*) endemic to Rarotonga and now restricted to the interior, has a mutualistic relationship with *Fitchia speciosa*, an endemic tree which has a large, spiky orange flower with copious amounts of nectar from April to June. The *Fitchia* flowers grow bent back towards the branch and this enables the starlings to feed on the nectar and pollinate the tree. This is an interesting and not widely known example of bird pollination, or ornithophily<sup>1</sup>.

Andrew Laurie, MTR Consultant  
Cambridge, UK  
1 February 2018

[andrew.laurie@cantab.net](mailto:andrew.laurie@cantab.net)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sherwincarlquist.com/fitchia-story.html>  
<http://www.arkive.org/rarotonga-starling/aplonis-cinerascens/>

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## Acknowledgements

The consultant would like to thank the many people who gave up their time to talk or write about their observations and experiences in relation to the project, often at short notice and at inconvenient times and locations. They helped me to build up a picture of the project and to inform the review. I was welcomed and hosted by Louisa Karika, R2R Manager and Maria Tuoro, R2R Coordinator, and received excellent and thoughtful support from them and Olaf Rasmussen (National Environment Service R2R Officer) and Tatiana Paulo (R2R Administrative and Finance Assistant) who, among other things drove me safely to and from my various meeting places. Richard Story (Ministry of Marine Resources, Aitutaki), Olaf Rasmussen, Ben Maxwell (NES), Metua Vaimene (Destination Development, Cook Islands Tourist Corporation) and Gerald McCormack (Natural Heritage Trust) were informative guides and good company during field visits on Aitutaki and Rarotonga. I am grateful too to Anne Trevor of the UNDP MCO Samoa and Michael Green, UNDP Regional Technical Advisor, for their support before and during the MTR. I thank the many other experts and officials on Rarotonga and Aitutaki who took the time to share their views with me and answer my questions. Thank you too to Ronnie Siulepa my gracious host at the Central Motel.

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABS	Access and Benefit Sharing	MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
BD1	Biodiversity 1	MTR	Mid Term Review
BD2	Biodiversity 2	MU	Moderately Unsatisfactorily
BTOR	Back to Office Report	NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity	NBSC	National Biodiversity Steering Committee
CBO	Community Based Organization	NES	National Environment Service
CCCI	Climate Change Cook Islands	NFP	National Focal Point
CIBD	Cook Islands Biodiversity Database	NGO	Non Governmental Organization
CIBED	Cook Islands Biodiversity and Ethnobiology Database	NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
CIMP	Cook Islands Marine Park	NP	National Park
CITC	Cook Islands Tourism Corporation	NPD	National Project Director
CNA	Capacity Needs Assessment	OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
CP	Consolidation Phase	PA	Protected Area
CR	Consolidation Report	PIC	Pacific Island Countries
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor	PIF	Project Identification Form
CW	Consolidation Work shop	PIR	Project Implementation Review
DCD	Development Coordination Division	PMU	Project Management Unit
EBA	Endemic Bird Areas	ProDoc	Project Document
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Area	PSC	Project Steering Committee
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone	R2R	Ridge to Reef
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	SRF	Strategic Results Framework
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	SRCICC	Strengthening the Resilience of the Cook Islands to Climate Change
GEF	Global Environmental Facility	SSC	IUCN Species Survival Commission
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	TA	Technical Assistance
GIS	Geographic Information System	TIS	Te Ipukarea Society
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer	TNA	Training Needs Assessment
HoA	House of Ariki	TOR	Terms of Reference
IBA	Important Bird Area	UN	United Nations
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature	UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
IW1	International Waters 1	UNDP	United Nations Development Program
MFEM	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
MMR	Ministry of Marine Resources	WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

## 1. Executive Summary

### 1.1 Project Information Table

Project Title	Conserving biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem function through a "Ridge to Reef" (R2R) approach in the Cook Islands		
UNDP Project ID	5168	PIF Approval Date:	14 June 2013
GEF Project ID	5348	CEO Endorsement Date:	23 February 2015
Atlas Project ID:	00084399	Project Document Signature Date (date project began):	6 July 2015
Country:	Cook Islands	Date coordinator hired:	7 Sept 2015 (PC)
Region:	Asia Pacific	Inception Workshop date:	20-21 October 2015
Focal Areas:	Biodiversity, International Waters	Midterm Time Frame:	1 August 2017 to 28 February 2018
GEF Focal Area Objectives and Outcomes:	BD1: To improve sustainability of Protected Area systems <i>1.1 Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas</i> <i>1.2 Increased revenue for protected area systems to meet total expenditures required for management</i> BD2: To mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into production landscapes, seascapes and sectors <i>2.2: Measures to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity incorporated in policy frameworks.</i> IW1: To catalyze multi-state cooperation to balance conflicting water uses in trans-boundary surface/groundwater basins while considering climatic change <i>1.3: Innovative solutions implemented for reduced pollution, improved water use efficiency, sustainable fisheries with rights-based management, IWRM, water supply protection in SIDS, and aquifer and catchment protection</i>	Planned closing date:	6 July 2019
Trust Fund:	GEF TF	If revised, new date:	N/A
Implementing Partner:	National Environment Service		
Project Financing	<i>at CEO endorsement (US\$)</i>		<i>at MTR (US\$)</i>
[1] GEF financing:	4,267,431		4,267,431
[2] UNDP contribution:	50,000		50,000
[3] Government:	13,500,000		13,500,000
[4] Other partners:	1,400,000		1,400,000
[5] Total co-finance [2+3+4]	14,950,000		14,950,000
TOTAL COST [1 + 5]	19,217,431		19,217,431

## 1.2 Description of Project

The Cook Islands are 15 islands in two distinct groups in the southern Pacific Ocean separated by a large area of ocean. They lie between American Samoa to the west and French Polynesia to the east between 9° and 22° S and 157° and 166° W (see map in Annex 1). There are 13 inhabited islands and two uninhabited ones. The area of the country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is 1.9 million km<sup>2</sup>. In 2012 the southern half (ca 1.0m km<sup>2</sup>) of the EEZ was declared by the Prime Minister as the Cook Islands Marine Park (CIMP), and the R2R project was conceived at that time, with the aim of building on this initiative. The project aims to establishing a national protected area system on land and sea and reduce impacts of economic activities on protected areas and biodiversity through incorporation of biodiversity considerations into land use planning and action, fishing and other marine resource harvesting, agriculture, and tourism (see Table 3, Section 3.2). The project is viewed as the first step in a long term programme.

Since the project started, the CIMP has been extended to include the whole of the EEZ, and 50nm exclusion zones have been established for large scale commercial fishing, and sea bed mining and exploration, around each island. The Marae Moana ("sacred ocean") Policy provides the framework for the establishment of an innovative zonation system for protected areas under the CIMP on both land and sea. The project was formulated under the Ridge to Reef (R2R) banner<sup>2</sup> because "basin-wide" integrated approaches are relevant, sensible and necessary in small island states such as the Cook Islands. Lessons learned under the project, both negative and positive are to be shared with other Pacific Island Countries (PICs) through the activities of the UNDP-GEF Regional R2R Project<sup>3</sup>.

The project has substantial co-finance, including US\$1.2m from an international NGO, Oceans 5<sup>4</sup>, and US\$200,000 from a local NGO, the Te Ipukarea Society (TIS). There is high level of government co-finance, notably from the National Environment Service (NES), indicating the strong commitment of government to the project.

The cross-sectoral nature of the project requires good collaboration between government agencies (see Annex 2 for a useful organigram) and non-governmental organizations. The National Environment Service is the lead Executing Agency, responsible for coordination and management, and overall facilitation of collaboration with partners, including the Ministry of Marine Resources (MMR), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), House of Ariki (HoA), Cook Islands Tourism Corporation (CITC), Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and Te Ipukarea Society. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) is co-chaired by the NES and TIS. The project is expected to support and work closely with the Marae Moana Coordination Office (MMCO).

## 1.3 Project Progress Summary

There has been slow progress towards the Objective. Administration, contracting and financial reporting has taken up a lot of staff time, both in the Project Management Unit (PMU)<sup>5</sup> at NES and at Ministry of Finance and Economic Development's Donor Coordination Division (MFEM / DCD). A system, introduced last year, of advancing funds each quarter to two different project accounts (at both MMR and NES), although not necessarily an unworkable model, has nevertheless created problems for NES, the official implementing agency, in their accounting.

Annex 3 summarizes the main activities and achievements under each of the seven outputs (see Table 3) of the project. It is based on project management's assessment of progress in the 2017 Project Implementation Review (PIR), the MTR Form 4<sup>6</sup> (see Annex 4), and the MTR desk review, interviews and observations. The emphasis has been on survey work, meetings to explain the R2R approach, training, and procurement of equipment. The reports seen by the MTR consultant are good. On the policy side, the CIMP has been extended to cover the whole of the EEZ and the Marae Moana Act has been passed.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thegef.org/topics/ridge-reef>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.pacific-r2r.org/r2r-documents/rsc-meeting-documents/rpsc2-presentations/110-status-report-on-project-implementation-rpsc2-20170730/file>

<sup>4</sup> <http://oceans5.org/who-we-are/>

<sup>5</sup> Referred to as Project Coordination Unit in the Prodoc but in this report as PMU

<sup>6</sup> Completed by the Project Coordinator during the MTR Mission

Several training courses have been held, a lot of them in GIS, and project and other staff have traveled to other South Pacific nations for various meetings and training events. A group are now studying (appropriately) at James Cook University, Australia under its post graduate distance learning Ridge to Reef Sustainable Development Program<sup>7</sup>. Various meetings and seminars have been held to discuss protected areas and lagoon master plans. *Ad hoc* assistance has been provided to support ongoing conservation activities such as the annual rat poisoning programme at Takitumu Conservation Area during the breeding season of the Rarotonga Flycatcher (*Pomarea dimidiata*). Programmes promoting organic agriculture and biodiversity friendly tourism have been implemented.

Although discrete activities listed in the Prodoc have been undertaken, many of them very well, there has been insubstantial progress under the project towards a functioning legal, policy and management framework for protected areas (Component 1) and the routine consideration of biodiversity conservation in livelihoods and economic development plans and actions (Component 2). Biodiversity surveys have been undertaken on land and sea, but their contribution to the overall project aims has not been thought out sufficiently. Videos have been produced that draw attention to the environmental damage caused by domestic waste, bad sewage systems and by tourists feeding fish and walking on reefs. However, biodiversity criteria to be developed under the project for the existing accreditation system for hotels and tour operators have not yet been drafted, and damaging activities continue. There has been steady work on promotion of organic agriculture, work that the Ministry had already been engaged in before the project began and not aimed specifically at protected areas. Training has been undertaken and much of it greatly appreciated. However, the Prodoc specified a capacity needs analysis (CNA) (Activity 1.3.1) to precede development of a training plan and the CNA has still not been done.

#### 1.4 MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary

The ratings given at the MTR based on findings in the report below and the full table in Annex 5 are given in Table 1 with a summarized assessment of the achievements under each aspect. The overall rating of Moderately Unsatisfactory is in line with the ratings given to the project by both UNDP MCO, the Project Manager/Coordinator and the UNDP RTA in the PIR 2017.

*Table 1. Summary of Ratings and Achievements*

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy (as in Prodoc)	MS	Sound realistic approach, foreseeing wide stakeholder consultation and engagement and considerable technical assistance in protected area system and site management, species conservation programmes and environmental impact assessment. Perhaps includes overambitious policy and legal outputs as achievement of these depends on decisions outside the project's control. Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and Indicators poorly formulated. Description of activities mixes project and supporting actions to such an extent that scope of project unclear.
Progress Towards Results	Objective MU	There has been progress on both components but there has been insufficient work with each relevant sector both separately and severally to establish and implement policies on protected areas and effective mainstreaming of biodiversity into productive sectors by the scheduled end of the project without major shortcomings
	Comp. 1 MU	General support leading up to declaration of Cook Islands Marine Park. However, no coordinated approach to required work on CIMP zonation, protected area system plan, protected area site planning, training, public involvement and awareness, and database development. Concentration on surveys but these surveys not conducted as part of coherent programme to develop a) representative PA system in consultation with stakeholders and b) management plans for Aitutaki Lagoon and selected PAs.
	Comp. 2 MU	Surveys to identify ecologically sensitive areas (eg wetlands), awareness programme on impacts of tourism, small grants to tour companies, and demonstrations of financial opportunities linked to agricultural practices that reduce or eliminate use of agrochemicals. Level of activity low. Lacking a comprehensive and coherent plan under each of the three

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.jcu.edu.au/ridge-to-reef>

		outputs, a focus on protected areas. Public awareness activities not coordinated as part of a communication plan.
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	MU	The project is showing too prescriptive an approach to project implementation (i.e. following the Prodoc without questioning it where necessary). Activities appear to have been chosen from the Prodoc by each agency rather independently. It would be much better if implementation were based instead on a joint, overarching project level, plan of action based on project objective and expected results. The indicators given in the project document have not been questioned and there has been little adaptive management. The project appears to have drifted in to certain activities that are interesting and easy to do, such as surveys and training, without thinking about how those activities will contribute to the objective. The PMU lacks technical expertise in the core aspects of the project - protected areas and mainstreaming - and has become to a certain extent overwhelmed with administration and finance. Quarterly work plans and reports have been prepared by each partner separately, with insufficient consultations and integration into a combined plans and reports. PMU is keen to get the project going in a technically sound way and have responded positively to MTR recommendations, including an emphasis on objective-oriented work planning in a project workshop scheduled to take place immediately after the MTR mission. With the new determination by project management to turn the project around there is expectation that adaptive management will increase.
Sustainability	MU	<p>Under Component 1 the project has ambitious aims in establishing a protected area system that works in the particular context of Cook Islands tradition and requiring extensive institutional collaboration and public acceptance. Staffing will be required. However, the Marae Moana Policy establishes the institutional fabric required.</p> <p>MMR has engaged a Communications Officer under the project and has undertaken to absorb the position at the end of the project.</p> <p>Component 2 involves institutionalization of practices that take into account biodiversity considerations, sometimes through legal measures. Unless these are completed before the end of the project there is a risk that momentum will be lost and the results will not be achieved later. Here too the Marae Moana Policy provides the potential basis for mainstreaming as its objectives are multi-sectoral if action is taken soon</p> <p>The lack of a University in the Cook Islands makes it more difficult than in many other countries to establish a core of expert and interested people to champion the cause of protected areas and species conservation and keeping exploitation to sustainable levels. The project should be considering how to overcome this barrier to sustainability. The Marae Moana Technical Advisory Group provides expert advice and advocacy, but does not automatically provide inspiration, support and training for future conservationists.</p>

## 1.5 Summary of conclusions

### DESIGN

1. The project concept is technically strong with most risks well assessed
2. The organizational risk (poor collaboration between programme partners) was underestimated
3. The Marae Moana Office was rather surprisingly (given their central role in Component 1) omitted from the list of Government Partners (Prodoc para 155)
4. Rather than focusing on mainstreaming within production *landscapes*, it would have been better to include *seascapes* too. The Prodoc mentions *seascapes* but inconsistently.
5. Mainstreaming of biodiversity should have explicitly included the exploitation of marine resources including fish and invertebrates.

### IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

6. Many of the individual activities have been carried out well, but progress towards project results has been slow.
7. Progress is much less than was expected by Mid-term, and there is a severe risk that the outputs will not be of sufficient quality to contribute satisfactorily to each component.
8. Project management arrangements are insufficient for the heavy work load
9. The project staff are good and dedicated but they are overstretched

10. The PMU lacks technical capacity and has only engaged two of the 21 consultants planned under the project
11. Project implementation began with differing institutional visions of how the project would be managed
12. Out-posting of staff is not working as a way to bring both agencies together with a single shared project vision and will not work without shared goals
13. Activities are frequently rolled over from quarter to quarter
14. Difficulties with the system whereby project GEF funds are advanced to and disbursed by both NES and MMR have hampered project progress
15. Attendance at Project Steering Committee meetings by senior officials of many of the main project partners has been poor.
16. PSC meetings deal with three to five projects in one sitting, and there is little time for technical discussions or in-depth consideration of work plans submitted to be approved officially at the meetings.
17. Partners submit plans separately only shortly before PSC meetings, and coordination by PMU to build these into a coherent programme aimed at the expected project results, is minimal. The main work plans considered are those submitted by MMR, NES, MoA and HoA. TIS, MMCO and NHT should be more involved than they are at present.
18. The PMU office staff work alongside others as part of a bigger office in NES, so the project lacks both identity, and space for visitors, including outposted PMU staff, to interact both informally and formally, or to read, sit and think.
19. The Prodoc was not critically reviewed and revised during the Inception Phase in order to bring it up to date with new circumstances
20. The SRF lacks "Outcomes" that describe desired 'end states'
21. Many of the indicators in the SRF are inadequate as measures of project impact.
22. Expenditure of project funds stands at about 15% at mid-term, leaving US\$3.6m<sup>8</sup> available for the final 18 months of the project.
23. It is impossible to achieve the planned results and disburse the remaining funds (US\$3.6m in the remaining 18 months available (to July 2019) so an extension would be required in order to use the remaining funds wisely. The project should not be allowed to continue under the *status quo* - it should only be allowed to continue if PMU and stakeholder/partner collaboration is fundamentally improved

#### COMPONENTS 1 and 2

24. Knowledge of the biodiversity and threats to biodiversity is for the most part already sufficient to start planning protected areas.
25. The existing Cook Islands Biodiversity Database is an excellent source of information on species and is used daily, for example, in MMR, for reviewing and refining survey results. An expanded version (CIBED) is under development and will be even more valuable as a resource.
26. The MMCO, supported by the TAG, has a central role to play in the setting up of a protected area system but is not being involved to full effect in the project
27. Training is being carried out before the assessment of training needs. The Capacity Needs Assessments described in the Prodoc to assess both training and material needs (eg equipment and laboratory supplies) have not been done.
28. Training organized by the project in the Cook Islands has been one-off training. Measures to institutionalize training, so that courses can be repeated after the project, have not been taken.
29. Various public awareness activities are being implemented by the project and are well-received, but there is no project communication plan.
30. MMR, NES, MMCO and various donor-funded projects and programmes have their own sometimes overlapping training, communication and procurement plans.
31. The project was designed to cover terrestrial and marine environments within the Cook Islands Marine Park. For policy and protected area system the scope has to be the CIMP, which is now the whole archipelago, and for pilots and demonstrations cost-effect and time considerations will keep the focus (as in the Prodoc) on the southern islands. It is possible, however, that leverage of funds during the next two years could enable to the project to achieve results on the ground in the northern islands also.

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<sup>8</sup> at time of MTR mission, November 2017



## SUSTAINABILITY

32. It is not clear how staff for a Protected Area Office under Marae Moana, and volunteer wardens, for example, will be supported after the project ends, and whether government has committed to their support in the long term
33. The project has not provided sufficient focus on integrated cross-sectoral planning and management according to the R2R landscape/seascape approach and without that focus the project will not deliver results, or institutionalize mechanisms that will survive post-project and ensure sustainability.

## 1.6 Summary of Recommendations

The recommendations given in full in Section 5 are summarized in Table 2

Table 2 Summary of Recommendations

Rec #	Summarized Recommendations	Entities Responsible <sup>9</sup>
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT		
1	Announce and launch a 10 week Consolidation Phase (CP) during which project scope and strategic results framework will be reviewed and objectives clarified, and changes will be made to project management, specifically through recruitment of long term technical staff for the PMU and improvements in how the PMU works with partners and other stakeholders. This will require a team of two Consolidation Phase consultants, one international and one national, who will work together with PMU on all aspects of the CP.	PMU, UNDP MCO,
2	Begin recruitment of two senior technical advisers to guide, advise and work together with PMU staff, partners and other stakeholders after the Consolidation Phase (a) A long term, highly experienced and qualified Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) (b) A long term, highly experienced and qualified Protected Area Management Expert	PMU, UNDP MCO
3	PMU and the two CP Consultants hold a series of individual and small group meetings with partners and other stakeholders to establish a shared vision of project scope and implementation and institutional sustainability of project outcomes post project.	PMU CP Consultants
4	Revert to a single source (the PMU) for disbursement of project funds.	PMU, MFEM UNDP MCO
5	Review project progress, refine the SRF and its indicators, define revised targets and institutional responsibilities, and draw up a Project Workplan to achieve revised targets by end of October 2020 (ie 15 months beyond current expected end of project).	PMU, CP Consultants
6	Hold a two day multi-stakeholder Consolidation Workshop <sup>10</sup> (CW) to build on the stakeholder/partner consultations and reach agreement on targets, revised indicators, key activities, project work plan to October 2020, roles of consultants, and new arrangements for routine work planning by project partners. The CP consultants will play a leading role in the CW, possibly with the support of a suitably qualified external facilitator <sup>11</sup> . Much of the groundwork will be done previous the CW so that progress can be made during the workshop itself.	PMU, CP Consultants UNDP MCO
7	Establish the strengthened PMU, in an office dedicated to the project, with workspace for the long term CTA and Protected Area Consultant, short term consultants, out-posted PMU staff and liaison officers.	Strengthened PMU, NES
8	Introduce and operate a more pro-active, R2R project-centred, inclusive approach to quarterly work-planning led by PMU and increasing the involvement of NHT, TIS, MMCO and possibly others, as full partners.	Strengthened PMU
9	Increase international technical exchange	Strengthened PMU, TIS, UNDP MCO
COMPONENTS 1 and 2		

<sup>9</sup> The entities in column 3 are ultimately responsible for carrying out these recommendations and will be expected to engage consultants as necessary to do this

<sup>10</sup> similar in scope to an Inception Workshop

<sup>11</sup> Preferably with experience on theory of change processes

10	Select a small number of activities that are almost ready for implementation as pilots to a high standard and "fast-tracking" to demonstrate good practice in application of the R2R approach and to produce lasting tangible products. (a) Preparation of the Aitutaki Lagoon Management Plan (b) Work to complete the Cook Islands Biodiversity and Ethnological Database (CIBED) (c) Drafting of biodiversity criteria for tourism accreditation	Strengthened PMU, MMR, NHT, CITC, Stakeholders
SUSTAINABILITY		
11	Carry out needs assessments and prepare comprehensive capacity development and communication plans for the project while ensuring that the project's activities take place as part of overall training and communications for biodiversity conservation and the environment in the country and for the long term. (a) Training needs assessment based on analysis of requirements in each relevant agency and what training has been done so far. (b) Comprehensive communication plan for the project aimed at informing and involving all stakeholders, including the general public and government staff.	Strengthened PMU, Partners
12	Plan for and support government in providing technical counterpart staff to sustain the work of the project in biodiversity conservation, including protected area management	Strengthened PMU, Partners
13	Apply for a no-cost extension of the project for 15 months until October 2020.	Strengthened PMU, UNDP MCO

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Purpose of the MTR

GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (2010)<sup>12</sup> has two overarching objectives at the project level: to promote accountability for the achievement of GEF objectives through the assessment of results, effectiveness, processes and performance; and to improve performance by the promotion of learning, feedback and knowledge sharing. The Mid-term Review (MTR) is an integral part of the UNDP/GEF project cycle. Its purpose is to identify potential project design issues, assess progress towards the achievement of objectives, identify and document lessons learned, and to recommend specific actions that might improve the project. It is expected to serve as a means of validating or filling the gaps in the initial assessment of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency obtained from monitoring. Thus, the MTR provides an opportunity to assess early signs of project success or failure and prompt necessary adjustments.

Particular emphasis is placed on project results to date, and the probability of the planned results being achieved within the given timeframe. Circumstances change between project design and inception, and also during implementation, so adaptive management is an important part of project implementation. The MTR looks at how well the project document has been adapted to new circumstances while keeping to the original aims and satisfying the stakeholders. Sticking to the letter of the project document rather than the spirit of the project is a common flaw in project management.

### 2.2 MTR Scope and Method

The MTR followed GEF monitoring and evaluation policy<sup>12</sup>, the Terms of Reference (Annex 6) and Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects<sup>13</sup>. The review process is independent of GEF, UNDP, the Government of Cook Islands, project staff and project partners. The review was carried out by a single International Consultant through a desk review in August, a field mission in November and report preparation in December 2017. MTRs are normally carried out by a team of at least two, including a National and an International Consultant. The National Consultant, in addition to his or her role as reviewer, normally assists with interpretation and translation, as well as making arrangements for meetings and field trips before the mission starts. Opinions and recommendations are those of the MTR consultant, who adhered to the Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement, and signed and submitted the form in Annex 9 to UNDP MCO in September 2017.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.thegef.org/news/independent-evaluation-gef-partnership-promoting-accountability-and-learning>

<sup>13</sup> <http://operaciones.pnud.cl/Adquisiciones/2015/053->

[2015/Anexo%20L-%20Guia%20de%20evaluacion%20de%20medio%20término%20proyectos%20GEF.pdf](http://operaciones.pnud.cl/Adquisiciones/2015/053-2015/Anexo%20L-%20Guia%20de%20evaluacion%20de%20medio%20término%20proyectos%20GEF.pdf)

The TOR for the MTR, the UNDP-GEF MTR Guidance document and the Prodoc table of contents specify that project progress should be assessed against project Outcomes. This project has Components in place of Outcomes so the MTR consultant assessed progress against Components instead. This is a design problem (see also Section 4.1.2) with its origin in the GEF project preparation process where Components required in the PIF and Outcomes in the Prodoc.

The MTR included five days preparation and document review, a week of consultations in Avarua, five full or half day field visits (Takitumu, the Needle, Maungatea, and Aitutaki Lagoon), further interviews and discussions in Aitutaki, a stakeholder workshop in Avarua for presentation and discussion of initial findings, and two weeks for preparation of the draft report. The draft was submitted on 20th December and the agreed schedule was for collated comments stakeholders to be sent to the MTR consultant in early January and for the final report to be approved by 19th January. This timetable has slipped because there were delays in completing the stakeholder review process. Details of the in-country itinerary, including field visits, and stakeholders met are provided in Annex 8. The main documents consulted are listed in Annex 7.

Consultations included semi-formal interviews (in person and by telephone or Skype), informal conversations and email exchanges with project staff and consultants, UNDP staff, government officials, local residents, NGO staff, members of the general public with specific interests in and knowledge of conservation, and other stakeholders and interested individuals. Those interviewed either individually or in small groups are listed in Annex 8. Almost all of them were invited to complete a simple questionnaire (Annex 10) and 15/35 of them did so. The results of the questionnaire analysis are given in Annex 11. Interviews covered some of the same ground as the questionnaire, were guided by the kind of questions found in Annexes 12 and 13, and explored different aspects of the project according to the interviewees' expertise and role with regard to the project. The PMU was asked to complete various assessments (see MTR Inception Report submitted 18 September 2017) of project progress and performance. Only two of the nine assessments (Forms 1 and 4) requested were completed by the end of the mission and the responses received were analyzed, along with the completed questionnaires, in support of the overall review. Recommendations have been made for changes in management and implementation over the remaining months of the project.

The review was undertaken in as participatory a manner as possible in order to build consensus on achievements, short-comings, lessons learned and opportunities for strengthening the project through adaptive management and other means. Information was cross-checked between as many different sources as possible before inclusion in the findings. The Project Coordinator kindly assisted with Interpretation from and into Cook Islands Maori where necessary.

Initial findings and draft recommendations were shared at a meeting in Avarua on 23rd November 2017 with members of the government, project staff, some of the key stakeholders, and the local UN representative (see Annex 14 for list of participants). It was disappointing that the range of stakeholders represented was rather narrow and that the Ministry of Agriculture, a key partner, did not attend. Further meetings were held on 24th November before departure of the MTR consultant that night.

The report provides descriptive assessments of strategy and design, and formal ratings of progress, implementation and adaptive management, and sustainability against the criteria given in the TOR. The rating systems used follow those specified in the Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects (see Annex 15). The status and quality of delivery of the project objective and components were assessed against the targets established for indicators in the Strategic Results Framework. The indicators themselves were also assessed both for design and application. Many of the indicators are inappropriate as measures of project impact, and this has implications for some of the assessments of progress made in the project progress reports, and in particular in the 2017 PIR where progress is reported against indicators only.

### *2.3 Structure of the review report*

The report begins with an Executive Summary (Section 1), followed by this introductory section describing the purpose, scope and methodology of the MTR (Section 2). Section 3 describes the goal and expected results of the project. Findings are presented in Section 4, dealing in turn with project design and strategy, implementation and adaptive management, progress towards results, and sustainability of results. Section 5 summarizes conclusions, noting strengths, including results so far, and weaknesses, and makes 13

recommendations. There are 24 annexes with details of rating scales, itinerary, a summary of the questionnaire responses and detail on the MTR consultant's assessments and recommendations.

### 3. Project description and background

#### 3.1 Development context

##### 3.1.1 Environmental significance

The project aims to protect biodiversity, with a focus on the ecosystem and species levels. The establishment of protected areas is an important tool in this, but it is not enough alone. Action outside protected areas to limit the damage to ecosystems and species is also provided for under the project and is an essential part of the "solution". The Cook Islands EEZ is a massive area of ocean, already declared a shark sanctuary in 2012<sup>14</sup> and in 2017 declared as a Marine Park in its entirety. Zonation is to be developed and the CIMP provides the opportunity and the framework for a stunning range of results in oceanic protection.

On land, the mountains of the interior of Rarotonga support some of the best remaining examples of montane rainforest in the tropical Pacific. Cook Islands (*Homalium acuminatum*) dominates the lower slopes. It is a particularly hard wood and this attribute, and the rugged terrain, have protected the forest from over-exploitation. At higher levels, above 400m, a cloud forest ecosystem has survived, and, although small in extent, is both relatively intact, and poorly studied. The most common tree species in the cloud forest are Polynesian *Metrosideros* (*Metrosideros collina*) and Rarotonga Fitchia (*Fitchia speciosa*) (see cover page). Poor access due to the steepness of the terrain and the presence of only rudimentary tracks has led to whole taxonomic groups being almost overlooked. Vascular plants, whether indigenous or introduced, are relatively well known. Eighteen plant species are endemic to the island of Rarotonga, of which 12 occur in cloud forest habitats, and two are solely found in cloud forest (*Cyrtandra lillianae* and *Radiogrammitis cheesemanii*). Rarotonga's cloud forests are critical for the conservation of endemic flora, providing habitat for eight of the island's 10 endemic flora listed by the IUCN as "Critically Endangered", "Endangered", or "Vulnerable"<sup>15</sup>. Little is known regarding the non-vascular flora, and further study is likely to result in the addition of many new indigenous moss, lichen, and liverwort species, some of which are likely to be undescribed endemics. The Cook Islands are home to six endemic breeding birds, including the Rarotonga Starling (*Aplonis cinerascens*), and the Rarotonga Flycatcher (*Pomarea dimidiata*), which has been introduced to the island of Atiu as a conservation measure. There are numerous ecological and evolutionary puzzles. For example, the endemic Rarotonga Fitchia Weevil (*Rhynchogonus lineatus*) is one of about 118 species of *Rhynchogonus*, all of them flightless and all but three restricted to single Pacific islands, so how did they get to each island?

The unique features of the islands' biodiversity have led to international recognition. Birdlife International has identified nine Important Bird Areas (IBA) within the country. WWF has listed the southern Cook Islands Forests as a Global 200 Ecoregion and the full biodiversity significance of this ecoregion is given in Annex 16.

##### 3.1.2. Socio economic significance

Montane habitats of the interior of Rarotonga, southern Cook Islands, are critical to the health and well-being of the island's people, and its indigenous biota. The steep mountain slopes, isolated and at least partly protected by their extreme terrain, support one of the best remaining examples of montane rainforest in the tropical Pacific, and are critical habitat for many of the island's endemic species. For these reasons, the montane and cloud forests of Rarotonga are internationally significant. Rainfall increases dramatically with altitude, and cloud forest on the mountain summits intercepts, filters, and releases water that supplies the island's streams, which are the sole water supply for the island. Cloud forest habitats, with their abundance of non-vascular plant species such as lichens, can increase water yield relative to other vegetation types, because lichens can absorb water from moisture-laden air in the absence of precipitation.

Biodiversity supplies a wide range of resources used for subsistence or commercial purposes by society, and is hence of value to the nation's economic development, and in poverty alleviation, food security, and the

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.picionline.org/PICI\\_Sharks.htm](http://www.picionline.org/PICI_Sharks.htm)

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272094089\\_Survey\\_of\\_endemic\\_flora\\_of\\_Rarotonga\\_and\\_preparation\\_of\\_IUCN\\_threat\\_assessments](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272094089_Survey_of_endemic_flora_of_Rarotonga_and_preparation_of_IUCN_threat_assessments)

good health, nutrition and wellbeing of people. Without clean forests, reefs and lagoons, there will be shortages of water and food. Agriculture, water storage, housing, tourism, light industry, schools and recreation compete for use of scarce land around the coastline. The threats to biodiversity and livelihoods<sup>16</sup> from invasive alien species (IAS) are growing as the number of visitors, and trade, increase. The small size of catchment areas and the close proximity of lagoon ecosystems make it difficult to prevent or mitigate marine pollution emanating from the land. There is a growing risk that environmental damage will feed back into discouraging overseas visitors, to the detriment of the economy. Tourism accounts for well over 60% of GDP so environmental conservation is an important consideration for national and local economies. Marine resource harvesting has been controlled for centuries under the Ra'ui system, and more recently under the Marine Resources Act (2005) and management of sport fishing within lagoons (eg for Bonefish (*Albula glossodonta*)). Building of houses and infrastructure on sensitive lands is controlled through an EIA system that does not always take biodiversity into account sufficiently, and the project aims to improve the EIA system, including the introduction of independent review. Agrochemicals have been linked to lagoon water pollution, including eutrophication, and the project aims to introduce incentives and stimulate farmers to change their use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides.

### 3.1.3 Institutional and policy significance

As in many other South Pacific nations most of the land in the Cook Islands is in customary ownership, so the development of a protected area system, and the planning and implementation of individual site management regimes, requires extensive community consultations and sensitive and creative approaches on behalf of the relevant governmental agencies. Areas of both land and sea have been set aside for protection under diverse customary practices, private initiatives and governmental orders. Several categories appear on lists of the Cook Islands' protected areas, both marine and terrestrial. Many are *ad hoc* categories for specific sites known as *Ra'ui*, aimed at banning collection of marine species used for food or trade for set periods of months or years. One example of a protected area focused on biodiversity conservation, the Takitumu Conservation Area, is privately owned, and managed, with great dedication, by highly motivated volunteers with rather insecure financial assistance from various sources. Others include Suvarrow National Park (1978) which is the Cook Islands' only National Park, and Takutea Wildlife Sanctuary (1903) which is managed by the traditional leaders of nearby Atiu to protect its nesting seabirds. Published lists of protected areas vary in both PA categories used and numbers of sites reported. The project foresees the passing of a Protected and Managed Areas Act that will formalize the various categories of protected area. The project works with national government and island councils and with land owners, both individually and through associations such as the House of Ariki, in order to facilitate the acceptance of the concept of a national system to standardize categories and management aims. It is not unusual for national protected area systems to include private and publicly owned protected areas with a wide range of ownership and management regimes. They are on the one hand subject to various levels of restrictions of use under national or local laws or regulations and at the same time rely on the motivation of individuals or groups in civil society to manage sites for biodiversity conservation and to ensure that any use or harvest is sustainable. At present the categories are not defined, and are being used loosely.

NES deals with all issues concerning biodiversity conservation and servicing the UN Biodiversity Convention (CBD), including IAS issues following Article 8h of the Convention. MMR deals with marine resources and has been heavily involved in strengthening regulations for Ra'ui and providing enforcement for by-laws. There are complex differences in jurisdiction, such that the Environment Act does not apply on some islands. And Ra'ui administered by traditional chiefs, and recently again by the Koutu Nui, are not enforced legally, and rules may be being broken. The Ministry of Agriculture takes the lead on alien species - both prevention of entry and control and decisions on whether to attempt control measures for established species.

### ***3.2 Problems that the project sought to address: threats and barriers targeted***

The Cook Islands rely greatly on natural resources to support the national economy, local livelihoods and human well-being. The biodiversity of the Cook Islands is on the one hand of global significance and on the other hand a vital resource for sustainable livelihoods. The problems that the project is addressing are on two levels.

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<sup>16</sup> See outcomes of recent GEF project on IAS in the Pacific. <https://www.sprep.org/ias/technical-assistance>

First are the threats to biodiversity and ecological services, including:

- loss, fragmentation and degradation of natural habitats through development on sensitive lands
- pollution, including nutrient loading, on land and sea arising from agriculture and poor solid waste and sewage disposal, exacerbated by a growing tourism trade
- overfishing and over-collection of wild species
- the impacts of invasive species
- global climate change that could reduce montane forest cover and seriously affect water supplies on Rarotonga

Second are the barriers to lessening those threats:

- although there is a new, almost complete, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), its implementation plan is not signed up to by all necessary stakeholders
- local level and island plans do not incorporate biodiversity conservation,
- economic incentives to damage biodiversity not curbed by incentives and other measures to protect it
- the need for reconciliation of the special circumstances of traditional land and marine tenure in the Cook Islands and the range<sup>17</sup> of extant protected areas and their varied basis in national, island and customary law, rules and practice, with an overarching legal framework
- important services of food security, water supplies and livelihood support provided by ecosystems not dealt with in an integrated manner.
- responsibilities are widely dispersed among many different institutions and stakeholders with few mechanisms for identifying and assessing problems and threats that cut across organizational mandates or encompass multiple areas of the landscape/seascape, or for addressing identified problems and threats in a coordinated and inter-sectoral manner.
- farmers and relevant authorities have little information and few demonstrated examples on how to reduce erosion and the use of harmful agricultural chemicals
- the small population of the Cook Islands and close kinship ties complicate enforcement
- some national legislation, on the environment for example, does not apply on certain islands, and there are strong feelings on one side and the other about the relative weight that should be given to customary practices and government practices (notable after a longish period with a minority government)

The barriers targeted by the project are expressed in the Prodoc as:

- **Barrier 1: Limited national and local capacities and systemic mechanisms (including financing) for protected areas and Ridge to Reef management approaches**
- **Barrier 2: Key economic sectors from outside protected areas do not sufficiently integrate biodiversity conservation into their activities, and could thus undermine PA integrity**

### *3.3 Project Description and strategy*

The project has a multi-pronged approach:

- (a) introducing and enabling high level policy measures to establish a national protected area system that describes the various categories with their management regimes and has oversight over planning and funding
- (b) establishing institutional mechanisms to ensure that protected area policy is implemented and observed by different governmental and non-governmental agencies, by the Aronga Mana and Koutu Nui, and by the general public,
- (c) working with government agencies and the private sector to incorporate consideration of biodiversity and ecosystem services into routine day-to-day decision making and planning
- (d) an emphasis throughout on consultation with traditional leaders, their organizations and communities.

Planning biodiversity conservation and protected area systems and sites requires good information systems, and the project aims to establish these and to carry out field surveys where necessary to provide data. The

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<sup>17</sup> variously interpreted at present - the best list probably being the one in the R2R Inception Report (p10) (reproduced in this MTR Report as Annex 7)

cross-cutting nature of protected area management and the need to involve landowners on such a scale, requires a very active project stakeholder coordination system and a well planned and implemented strategy for communication, including training, and public information and involvement. The project objective, components and outputs are given in Table 3. Twenty-four activities are described in the Prodoc, each of which consists of a large number of actions - 131 in all. These are listed in Annex 4, which illustrates the heavy workload expected of the project and provides a basis for rethinking and focusing the scope of project activities.

*Table 3: Project Objective, Components and Outputs*

THE PROJECT OBJECTIVE: To build national and local capacities and actions to ensure effective conservation of biodiversity, food security and livelihoods and the enhancement of ecosystem functions within the Cook Islands Marine Park
<b>COMPONENT 1:</b> Strengthening protected areas management
<b>Output 1.1:</b> Strengthened legal / regulatory and policy frameworks for protected areas <b>Output 1.2:</b> Expanded and strengthened management systems for protected areas <b>Output 1.3:</b> Strengthened institutional coordination and capacities at the national and local levels for the participatory management of protected areas <b>Output 1.4:</b> Financial sustainability framework developed for system of protected areas
<b>COMPONENT 2:</b>
Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats within production landscapes
<b>Output 2.1:</b> Ridge to reef approaches integrated into land use and development planning <b>Output 2.2:</b> Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into agriculture sector <b>Output 2.3:</b> Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into tourism sector is developed and continuously updated

The project was designed as a new approach in the Cook Islands to fostering inter-sectoral coordination on biodiversity conservation in both protected and productive landscapes and seascapes, utilizing an integrated approach that includes ecosystems and their related. It was foreseen that the project would integrate activities and achievements with other GEF projects and programmes in the Cook Islands and in the region<sup>18</sup> to ensure that actions are complementary and that resources and information are shared where practical.

### *3.4 Project Implementation and partner arrangements*

The NES is specified as the lead Implementing Partner. NES is accountable to UNDP for the disbursement of funds and the achievement of the Project Objective and components, according to approved work plans. In general on such projects the Implementing Partner is the entity responsible for the project outcomes and accountable for its project management, including monitoring and evaluation activities, the achievement of outputs and effective use of resources. A single Implementing Partner is designated to lead each project. The Implementing Partner may establish agreements with other organizations or entities in order to support the achievement of the outputs envisaged in the project, and these are called "Responsible Parties". This was foreseen in the R2R Prodoc. The Responsible Party is designated by the Implementing Partner to

<sup>18</sup> These projects include:

- UNDP-GEF Regional R2R Program "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"
- UNDP-GEF regional project "Ridge to Reef: Testing the Integration of Water, Land, Forest & Coastal Management to Preserve Ecosystem Services, Store Carbon, Improve Climate Resilience and Sustain Livelihoods in Pacific Island Countries".
- UNEP-GEF regional project "Implementing the Island Biodiversity Programme of Work by Integrating the Conservation Management of Island Biodiversity" (IIB project)
- UNEP-GEF regional project "Prevention, Control and Management of Invasive Alien Species in the Pacific Islands"
- UNDP-GEF national project "National Biodiversity Planning to Support the implementation of the CBD 2011-2020 Strategic Plan in the Cook Islands"
- UNDP-GEF national project "Strengthening the Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing in the Cook Islands"

support the implementation, planning and / or monitoring of certain activities / components within the project's framework, using their technical skills and management services to support the achievement of project objectives. An Implementation Agreement should be signed between the Implementing Partner and the Responsible Party during the project Inception Phase.

Funds are advanced as for all donor projects in Cook Islands, through the Development Coordination Division of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. UNDP is assigned an important guidance role, including quality assurance and oversight, and monitoring of risks.

The Prodoc specifies that day-to-day project management and coordination will be under the supervision of a Project Coordinator reporting to the National Project Director (in this case the Director of NES) and supported by:

- two Project Officers one in NES and one in MMR who each report two ways - to the Project Coordinator on the one hand, and to their respective institutional supervisors on the other
- a Ra'ui Site Coordinator "based at the Aronga Mana" who reports to the Project Coordinator

In addition there is provision for 21 National and International Technical Assistance Consultants (65 person months and a budget of ca US\$950,000) over the duration of the project. Further technical exchange and assistance is provided for through collaboration with other UNDP-GEF regional and national biodiversity projects (see above 3.3), and national NGOs.

The TOR for the Project Coordinator post are particularly broad and challenging for such a complex project, and the qualifications and experience requirements specify substantial technical experience in "natural resource planning and management (preferably in the context of protected area planning and management". Reference is made to a Chief Technical Advisor in the Prodoc (para 148) but there is nothing further on this under the TORs for Project Staff (Section IV Part III).

The National Project Director (NPD) is responsible for oversight and carries overall responsibility and accountability for achieving the project results. The National Biodiversity Steering Committee (NBSC), chaired by the NES, functions as the Project Steering Committee (PSC) for this project and for all other UNDP-GEF Biodiversity projects in the Cook Islands (up to five at one time). The PSC meets quarterly, provides guidance and oversight and endorses the Annual Work Plan and Combined Delivery Report at the end of each year. Membership of the PSC is wide-ranging, including representatives from over 10 institutions and was reviewed during the Inception Phase (Annex 17).

The project was to be implemented over a period of four years under UNDP's *Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT)* procedures. In-kind (0.3%) and cash (99.7%) co-financing pledged in the Prodoc amounts to US\$14,950,000, to be used mainly for salaries, travel expenses, equipment, programmes and subsidies, and basic operation and management expenses of the various project partner agencies that are participating in activities related to protected areas management.

National Environment Service	\$2,500,000
Ministry of Finance and Economic Management	\$11,000,000
Oceans 5	\$1,200,000
Te Ipukarea Society	\$200,000
United Nations Development Programme	US\$50,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>US\$14,950,000</b>

### 3.5 Project timing and milestones

The main milestones with actual and expected dates are given in Section 1.1. The main dates of relevance now are that the MTR is due to be completed and approved by UNDP MCO and NES at the latest by 28 February 2018, and the current planned date for project completion is 6 July 2019. Annual reporting under the PIR system began, as required, in 2017.



### 3.6 Main stakeholders

The ProDoc (para 64/Table 5) identifies many stakeholders and defines their roles, including:

- The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and national government agencies responsible for environmental quality, biodiversity conservation, the consumptive and non-consumptive use of natural resources (marine, mineral and terrestrial), water and infrastructure development
- Local and traditional leaders including Island Councils and Executives, Houses of Ariki and Koutu Nui
- Environmental NGOs, including Te Ipukarea Society and Muri Environment Care, and
- Local community groups and the private sector, including the Tourism Industry Council, private tourism operators, Titikaveka Growers Association, and individual members of the public.

The Ministry of Health and the Pacific Islands Conservation Initiative were added during the Inception Phase (Annex 17). The Inception Report stressed that the complex land and marine tenure systems affecting institutional relationships between national and community-based governance structures has resulted in responsibility for the management of resources and development being widely spread, in particular on the Outer Islands where local communities have extensive ownership and responsibility for development. As the vast majority of protected areas targeted by the project are under the ownership and management authority of non-state stakeholders the participation of civil society organizations and community leaders is essential.

## 4. MTR Findings

### 4.1 Project Strategy

#### 4.1.1 Project Design

The overall thrust of the Project is clearly defined and sound, with its emphasis on strengthening the Cook Islands protected area system, the conservation of globally significant biodiversity, and mainstreaming of consideration of biodiversity and protected areas across economic sectors, with sustainability of results to be achieved through (a) high level policy measures and the institutional mechanisms to ensure that policy is implemented across a wide range of governmental and non-governmental agencies and the general public, and (b) wide consultation with the general public, NGOs and the traditional leaders.

Concern about the environment of the Cook Islands has been growing for years: problems addressed by the project and the solutions proposed have been addressed and attempted long ago. The informative and well written (apart from the map) 2003 State of the Environment Report<sup>19</sup> could almost have been written today. That report, together with the first (2002) NBSAP<sup>20</sup>, give an excellent picture of the problems facing the Cook Islands and what should be done about them, almost as relevant now as it was then and more clearly presented than some recent publications. The same issues - waste management, land management and ownership, absentee landlords, siltation, sand-mining, overexploitation, destructive fishing practices (this reportedly to a lesser extent now), water supply and usage remain to be solved. Protected area management plans have been prepared in the past, so the R2R project could be building on these, yet this was not made clear in the Prodoc.

All strands of the project (Policy, Institutions, Public consultation, involvement and awareness, capacity building and Knowledge management) are fundamental to the success of the project in achieving its Objective and expected results. Key strengths and weaknesses of the design are summarized in Table 4, together with threats and examples of opportunities to address some of the weaknesses. Recommendations for taking up potential opportunities are outlined in Section 5.

The project concept makes good sense, takes a holistic approach to protected areas and biodiversity, acknowledges the importance in the Cook Islands context of extensive consultation with customary land-owners, and advocates collaboration with other UNDP-GEF regional and national biodiversity projects. However, it is perhaps too prescriptive - useful in understanding the intention at the time of writing but a little overwhelming (see Annex 4) to the implementing team unless pared down to a more manageable set of

<sup>19</sup>State of the Environment Report 2003 (World Bank, IUCN) prepared by Teariki Rongo\* under Regional Environment Technical Assistance Project (2003) <http://www.sprep.org/attachments/56.pdf>

\*MMR Project Officer on this R2R Project

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/ck/ck-nbsap-01-en.pdf>

activities based on the circumstances at the start of implementation. At first there appeared to be an intention to modify the project scope. During the Inception Phase (Inception Report p10) it was decided that the project team and key partners would visit each of the southern islands to present the elements of the project design solicit feedback and use the consultations to finalize the scope of project activities. These initial activities for community consultation and participation were to be supplemented throughout the remainder of the project by follow-up consultations and the participation of local stakeholders in decision-making regarding project activities on each island.

There are unrealistic expectations of the Project Coordinator, and a management structure and TA proposal that appears not to have been fully examined and agreed with partners.

There is some confusion over nomenclature in the various references to managed areas. One of the proposed consultants is called a Productive Area Management Planner, yet there is no mention of such a category elsewhere in the Prodoc.

*Table 4. Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of project design*

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>The overall project concept is simple and rational, with sustainable policy and institutional outcomes to be achieved through consultations, public engagement, and demonstrations at site level.</p> <p>Wide stakeholder involvement in preparation</p> <p>Much useful information - policy, institutional and biological/technical</p> <p>Collaboration with other GEF projects in the Cook Islands and in the region</p> <p>Policy links to the National Sustainable Development Plan (2007-2020), the 2002 NBSAP, the National Environment Strategic Action Framework (NESAF) 2014-2019 and other plans and policies<sup>21</sup></p> <p>High level of co-finance from Cook Islands Government, and NGO contributions too, demonstrating strong commitment</p> <p>Planning and implementation covers both marine, freshwater and terrestrial areas and biodiversity</p> <p>Wide representation, including government development agencies and non-governmental organizations specified in the outputs and activities and in the Project Steering Committee</p> <p>Comprehensive stakeholder engagement planned</p> <p>Emphasis on establishing knowledge management systems that will outlast the project</p> <p>Includes development of measures to ensure financial sustainability of protected area system</p>	<p>The design was perhaps overambitious given the four year timeframe and the inherent difficulties in achieving policy outcomes that are not in the power of the "project" to achieve. Output 1, for example, depends on enactment of a Protected and Managed Areas Act.</p> <p>The SRF not properly constructed. Many of the indicators are flawed (see Annex 20 for details) and there is no need to have so many. Common problems include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• measuring project outputs rather than impacts on expected "outcomes" (Annex 18)</li> <li>• not being sufficiently numerical to measure gradual progress</li> <li>• measuring changes that are not attributable to the project,</li> <li>• impractical - too much effort to determine absolute values as opposed to trends</li> </ul> <p>The need for technical support at the heart of the project (the PMU) to inform coordination of all project partners was not spelled out. The Project Coordinator's duties in the TOR are very heavy. A Chief Technical Adviser is referred to once in the text but there is no provision for this in Part III</p> <p>Cross-sectoral coordination is the key to project results but was not made sufficiently overt in descriptions of project management arrangements.</p> <p>Large number of consultancies (21): fewer and longer consultancies would reduce administrative load and could improve technical results.</p> <p>Few if any references given for statements of fact</p>

<sup>21</sup> including Cook Islands Tourism Master Plan, Joint National Action Plan (JNAP) for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction, Cook Islands National Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Policy, National Sanitation Policy, National Integrated Waste Management Plan, and individual Island Development Plans (IDPs)

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>(Further) development of partnership with the Cook Islands GEF Small Grants Programme to support development of sustainable livelihoods in or around the protected areas thus supplementing the biodiversity conservation objective of the Project.</p> <p>The project is well placed to mount a high level campaign to bring together all relevant stakeholders and to develop a comprehensive knowledge centre and authoritative approach to biodiversity and protected area policies, activities and technical tools in the country</p> <p>Large amount of funds remaining to be spent if only project can sort itself out</p> <p>More attention on the project now as other GEF projects come to an end and there is a chance to take a comprehensive look at project results so far, the resources remaining, the work already done previously and determine priorities for a coherent approach and focus on achieving project results.</p>	<p>PMU understaffed and not engaging with partners effectively to plan activities at the overarching project level.</p> <p>Interagency cooperation is generally poor</p> <p>Inflexible attitudes of some who have already decided that land and marine tenure systems exclude the possibility of a good protected area system and effective management of sites.</p>

#### *Stakeholder engagement*

The extent to which stakeholders were involved in and supported the development of the Project is not clearly described in the Prodoc, although reference is made to a stakeholder analysis (para 64). The comprehensive list of proposed partners in project implementation is a particularly strong point of the design, reflecting the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration on protected areas and biodiversity conservation.

#### *Replication approach*

The Project design has the potential for considerable replication in the future, with knowledge, best practices and lessons learned from experience gained during planning and implementation at project sites being available to be shared and communicated for application at other protected areas and for development of national standards. Aspects of the Project's design that facilitate opportunities for replication include the following:

- Demonstrations on how to prepare protected area and species management plans including the delineation and gazetting of protected areas
- Demonstrations on how to reduce chemical pollution from agricultural run-off and erosion
- Demonstrations on how to prepare island conservation strategies
- Demonstrations on how to reduce impact of tourism on biodiversity and ecosystem services

The training proposed under the project could have been planned in a way that made it clear that institutionalization of such training would be the priority for the project. Much of the training under projects such as this one is one-off training that later requires another project to come along before it can be repeated, and the R2R project is following the same pattern.

#### *Co-finance*

US\$14,950,000 was listed as cofinance in the Prodoc. The MTR consultant was shown the cofinancing letters from Annex 2 of the Prodoc<sup>22</sup>. They confirm commitments or intentions of co-finance. Most of the

<sup>22</sup> comments here on co-finance are based entirely on that documentary evidence and, as stated at the end of the paragraph are purely for consideration in the light of future project design

funds committed by government appear to be from externally funded projects, which raises questions about its validity as cofinance. The US\$ 11,000,000 pledged by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, is stated in the letter to be through projects funded by the Cook Islands Government, the European Union and the New Zealand government to reduce the inflow of nutrients to inshore ecosystems in the southern group of islands. Normally the ultimate donor would be expected to write the co-finance letter. On the other hand, the US\$2,500,000 pledged from the National Environment Service is represented as core funding related to the objective of the GEF project and is entirely appropriate to count as co-finance. The US\$1,200,000 from Oceans 5 is for a clearly related purpose related to the R2R project, namely the setting up of the CIMP through grants to the Te Ipukarea Society and the Marae Moana Establishment Trust. Te Ipukarea Society reports US\$200,000 through externally funded projects. If some of these funds are from Oceans 5 they would be being counted twice but there is no way of knowing from the documents seen whether this is the case or not. UNDP MCO is listed in the Prodoc as committing US\$ 50,000 but there is no corresponding co-finance letter in the bundle provided to the MTR consultant.

#### *Cost-effectiveness*

The Prodoc (paras 132-133) states the grounds upon which the selected "GEF Alternative" (Prodoc paras 78-84) can be considered cost-effective. The arguments are for the most part good:

- cost-sharing for protected area management with private land-owners and other stakeholders;
- company funding available in the tourism sector;
- emphasis on strengthened regulations, capacity building and changed practices in the agricultural sector;
- the opportunities afforded by the Oceans 5 donation for operationalizing the CIMP including the development of protected area legislation, community consultations, institutional strengthening and zonation for the whole CIMP;
- and the institutionalization of collaboration and sharing of resources and information among NES and MMR staff, traditional leaders, Island Councils, local community members and other stakeholders on all of the inhabited southern islands.

#### *Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector*

The design provided for collaboration and parallel activities with four regional UNDP-GEF projects and two national UNDP GEF projects (Prodoc paras 189-192; this report Section 3.3). This is a strong feature of the design but perhaps not developed sufficiently to indicate exactly how the various projects interrelate. The project is described as forging a new approach to inter-sectoral coordination on biodiversity conservation from high elevation forests to the offshore marine environment and is expected (Prodoc para 189) to stand out by developing mechanisms and models for integrating activities and achievements of multiple projects.

The Oceans 5 programme (2014-16) supporting the development of the Marae Moana Act was reflected in the co-financing commitments, but not elsewhere in the project document, although the expectation that a Protected and Managed Areas Act would have been passed in 2016 is implicit under Component 1 (Prodoc para 90) and the project is expected to develop regulations and protected area categories under that Act.

The Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation carried out extensive benthic surveys in 2013/14 using the standard AGGRA protocol<sup>23</sup>, including assessments of fish abundance and size around Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Palmerston, and another was done with the assistance of the Waitt Foundation<sup>24</sup>. The Prodoc stated that the survey data would be used to establish baseline populations for selected fish species (Section 2 Part 1 SRF Analysis). Perhaps a baseline index is possible but not a population level. Two reports have been published<sup>25</sup> and the main fish survey report is expected to be published in March 2017.

#### *Risks and assumptions*

Key assumptions (in Prodoc SRF) made in the design of the project were sensible, but some were perhaps overoptimistic and not all have held. In particular the assumption that "legal gazetting of new Protected Areas

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.agrra.org/coral-reef-monitoring/>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.maraemoana.gov.ck/images/marine-park-survey.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.livingoceansfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Aitutaki-COTS-report-sml.pdf>

<https://www.livingoceansfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/cook-islands-field-report-final.pdf>

is not held up in the executive or legislative branches" has not held. The planned Act has not been developed yet, and although progress has been made in declaring exclusion zones around each island, this is far from legal gazettement of individual protected areas.

The Risk Matrix (Table 18 para 130 in the Prodoc) includes a realistic assessment of risks, and mitigation measures that in some places merely restate the risk. However, some of the risks have materialized. For example, the organizational risk of poor collaboration between partners has materialized, although partly, as reported below, as a result of weak project management. Risks were linked to overall sound mitigation measures. The project, however, has been slow to implement mitigation measures. MTR comments on the risk assessment are given in Annex 19. The Organizational Risk was underestimated, and it should have been clear to government stakeholders that this was an underestimate.

#### *Gender*

The project sought to partner with the Cook Islands National Council of Women (CINCW), a national women's umbrella organisation with affiliates throughout the country, that addresses environment concerns within its strategic and operating plans.

#### 4.1.2 Results Framework/Logframe

The SRF overall hierarchy is logical but lacks clearly stated Outcomes (see 2.2). The Project Objective is clearly stated in the Prodoc under the section headed "Project Objective, Outcomes and Outputs/Activities" (see para 90). However, no *outcomes* (expected results) are listed. The two *components* indicate the general fields of activity (1. Protected areas, and 2. Mainstreaming), and under the *components* it is the *outputs* that are worded as expected results. In the project's Inception Report it was proposed that "*Components*" be renamed as "*Outcomes*" and the 2017 PIR has renamed them without comment. Simply renaming them does not convert the *components* into *outcomes* because the *components* are not worded as results. In this project it is the *outputs* that describe an expected future condition and it is the activities that are nearer in style and scope to the outputs of many other projects.

Many of the indicators and their targets are poorly formulated (see Annex 20), not helped by the fact that they are measuring vague "components". Many are not sufficiently attributable to project activities and there is often poor definition of monitoring protocol and baseline. Some merely restate expected results or outputs rather than measure progress towards impacts (eg Consolidated Management Authority for protected areas of the Cook Islands). Some are also very complex and multi-stranded (eg Lagoon ecosystems are managed in a coordinated way and with clear ecological conservation objectives). There are also problems associated with attributability, practicality and cost-effectiveness. For example, it is most unlikely that accurate population estimates of "priority species" can (or even should) be made three times during the project, it is impractical and not cost-effective to even attempt this in most cases, and any observed changes could not be definitively attributable to the project so would not be indicators of project impact.

Such flaws should have been picked up during review of the draft Prodoc, and failing that during the Inception Phase. These indicators and targets have been employed to monitor project impacts in project reports and the 2017 PIR even though many are unsatisfactory. The MTR consultant was particularly concerned because he was told that some of the survey work has been done specifically to provide baseline data for such unsatisfactory indicators.

Although there is mention of project Goals (Prodoc para 153), none are stated explicitly. The "Project's Long term solution" (Prodoc para 55) is *"to implement a ridge-to-reef approach that combines a functional, representative and sustainable national system of terrestrial, coastal and marine protected and managed areas (including protected natural areas, community conservation areas, and Ra'ui sites) that are complemented by appropriate sectorial practices in adjoining / upstream watersheds to mitigate threats to conservation from outside protected areas."* This captures the essence of the project well and could form the basis for a rethink of the project results hierarchy (see Section 5.2).

#### *4.2 Progress Towards Results*

##### 4.2.1 Progress towards Objective and Components

Annex 5 gives the justification for the Objective and Component ratings in the requested format and they are summarized in Table 1 above. There are some anomalies in this analysis because, as pointed out above

(Section 4.1.2) many of the project indicators, on which the objective and components have been assessed in Annex 5 are flawed and some of the end of project targets under component indicators (for example. Aitutaki Lagoon Master Plan, Protected and Managed Areas Act, 15 PA Management Plans completed) are actually the same or similar to results listed in project outputs. In Annex 5 judging by the indicators alone would have resulted in worse ratings than the **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)** given for objective and components (see below in 4.2.1.1. to 4.2.1.3). This is because following some of the flawed indicators gives a poorer assessment of actual progress than judging qualitatively using common sense against the project outputs. Ratings based on progress towards the indicators should be limited to valid indicators. Annex 5 also gives the project and UNDP's assessment of progress as of July 2017 in the PIR, which was also classed as Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU). The PIR assessment is wordy and longwinded and demonstrates clearly the inadequacies in the indicator suite.

#### *Objective*

There has been slow progress towards the Objective and the rating given to this is **Moderately Unsatisfactory**. There is significant capacity available but it has not yet been engaged efficiently and the poor rating reflects this. The project has not dealt satisfactorily with its core role of coordination and targeted capacity building across central government sectors, island councils, traditional leaders, business and the general public. It is the capacity to work together that has not yet been achieved. The project still has the opportunity to work with all stakeholders, as laid out in the Prodoc, and bring together the various strands of biodiversity conservation, including protected area systems and site management. The Marae Moana policy provides a framework under which a comprehensive (terrestrial and marine) protected area act could be developed.

The project is trickling along with piecemeal activities - many of them valuable and well implemented - such as species surveys, the production of short videos, rapid wetland surveys, purchase of equipment and laboratory supplies. Opportunities are being lost, however, to guide these activities and to improve their impact on the objective. There is, it appears, not enough technical, as opposed to financial, scrutiny by PMU of the plans of each partner.

#### *Component 1*

**"Strengthening Protected Areas Management"** is rated as **Moderately Unsatisfactory** (Table 1 and Annex 5), and that is probably on the generous side. The wording of the component itself is loose (see above, Section 4.1.1): any progress can be viewed as achieving at least some strengthening. The outputs are ambitious in that they include results out of the control of the project. Interviews showed a range of different opinions about the likelihood of a comprehensive protected area policy, law and regulations being completed. The CIMP has been expanded and this is a promising sign. It is also one of the intended results of the project - although that result is rather tucked away under communication, public outreach and education (Activity 1.2.5). It is, however, the details of zonation, links to the planned new PA classification system, and engagement with all stakeholders, national and international, to get cooperation on the ground that will be the key to successful operationalization of the Marine Park and little or no progress has been made in this regard. The Marae Moana Act itself formally establishes the CIMP over the entire Exclusive Economic Zone of the Cook Islands as well as the lagoons, reefs and territorial seas. As part of the Bill, 50-nautical mile Marine Protected Areas are established around each of the islands where no longline, purse seine fishing, or seabed minerals activities are permitted, a precautionary measure to protect biodiversity including whales, dolphins, sharks, turtles, and seabirds, to provide an opportunity for tuna to spawn, and to provide local fishermen with an improved chance of catching tuna. The CIMP is seen as promoting the Cook Islands as a "clean and green" tourist destination. It does not cover the terrestrial area, and until detailed zones and regulations are developed it is a "paper park". Nomenclature of categories will have to be defined to make clear the actual levels of protection afforded by the Act.

Marae Moana Policy does cover the land areas. The project has not taken advantage of the opportunity to direct its resources toward a coordinated and coherent approach to the main elements of protected area system and site management including the Protected Area Office in the OPM and the new protected area classification system with descriptions of each category matched as far as possible with IUCN categories.

The results of individual surveys are interesting and useful (eg the recent Mitiaro and Mauke botanical surveys collected data to support IUCN Redlist classification) but there has been no strategic analysis of the

immediate needs and priorities for each individual survey in the context of the project components, and in the context of previous surveys of the same areas. The results of surveys that have been done within the last few years should in many cases be adequate to get ahead with site selection, first drafts of site and species management plans, and establishing simple inexpensive monitoring programmes using earlier protocols. A Management Plan for the Cloud Forest was prepared under the UNDP GEF Integrated Island Biology project and, although it is far from being a fully supported Management Plan, it should provide a good start for the R2R project to build on. The results of earlier sea bird surveys, and reef surveys of southern group islands should also in many cases provide sufficient information on which to begin planning.

### *Component 2*

**"Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats within production landscapes"** is rated as **Moderately Unsatisfactory** (Table 1 and Annex 5). The key word here is "effective". Useful activities have been undertaken in land-use planning and decision-making, tourism and agriculture but links to Component 1, and a coordinated approach to planning and prioritizing activities under the project have seen limited progress. The biodiversity criteria to be incorporated into the existing Tourism Accreditation Scheme have not been developed, let alone incorporated. Easy opportunities to begin a step by step sensitization of tour operators and tourists to a greater appreciation of biodiversity are being missed. For example, the Muri Lagoon tours tend to race each other at high speed in the lagoon, there is little respite on the larger tours from loud music, and one of the activities engaged in is taking a bucket full of hermit crabs, dumping them on the sand and asking tourists to pick a winner as they race for the shade. These points may seem trivial to some people; but unaddressed they perpetuate an attitude imposing on nature rather than reflecting on the wonders of it. There are so many absolutely fascinating aspects of Cook Islands ecology to talk about and at least some time should be found to do that.

The work in agriculture to reduce use of agrochemicals and nitrogen run-off into in-shore marine environments has been piecemeal and has not been focused geographically. The Prodoc focus on the Avana valley demonstration has been dropped as the landowner who had agreed to participate at the planning stage changed his mind about working with the project. The various activities do not hang together as a coherent strategic approach to establishing (a) a financially sustainable protected area system for the country that has the support of the public, and (b) sound site level planning and management at the selected sites.

Fisheries are an important economic sector, but they are not dealt with under Component 2. The respective responsibilities of NES and MMR regarding biodiversity in the sea are unclear and not universally subscribed to by project stakeholders. It is inherently problematic for an agency to both exploit its resources and be responsible for enforcement of protected area and species legislation.

### *Training*

Training appears to be going the way of so many project training programmes - namely one-off training exercises that will leave little behind in terms of institutionalized training courses that can be repeated in the future. There is a specific problem in Cook Islands in that there is no science based college or university in the country, and the University of the South Pacific's campus is said to be about to close. Although called for under the Prodoc, no training needs or other capacity needs assessments (TNA, CNA) have been done under the project, and yet considerable training has already been done. Much of this training is of no doubt interesting and useful but what is the balance? Why so much on GIS? Have the right people been trained? Are they being trained to actually do GIS or to be able to interpret GIS reports and to commission GIS reports when they need them? The training (and equipment and facilities) required to achieve the project objective and components, and affordable within the project budget, should have been defined early on.

### *Public information and involvement*

Communications and public outreach and education are an important part of Output 1.1 (see Prodoc para 106) and the project has held events in schools and elsewhere, published leaflets, prepared videos and engaged a communications officer in the MMR. A comprehensive strategy is required to address the needs satisfactorily - to tie together all project activities in this area in both Components 1 and 2, and thus to prepare people from cabinet to the general public for a new PA classification system and regulations, to incorporate ridge to reef approaches into school curricula (see Prodoc para 106) and to inform and engage people and institutions in addressing the impacts of infrastructure development, tourism, fishing and agriculture. A

Communications Strategy was published as Annex 2 of the Inception Report but it is lightweight and inadequate as a guide to communications under such a complex project.

#### 4.2.2 Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective

##### *Reputational*

The MTR consultant noted from interviews that there is widespread interest in the Marae Moana, clear commitment from government to make it work, and great potential for a coordinated approach to protected areas and biodiversity management on both land and sea, with the Marae Moana as a kind of banner and inspiration. However, the PMU does not appear to be acting as an authoritative and technically confident leader to bring stakeholders together to achieve solid results under the project. The PMU has not developed a reputation as a centre of excellence in protected areas and biodiversity - somewhere to which a wide range of stakeholders go to for information, answers and advice on the species, habitats and ecosystems and our impacts upon them. A piece in the Cook Islands Herald of 22 November 2017 (p17) captures a strand of opinion that sees the R2R project's \$4million dollars along with the funds of other development projects spent on "hot air and meet and greets and at the end of the day nobody is none (*sic*) the wiser."

There are highly qualified and experienced staff in the NES and MMR, but the PMU is not set up in a way that ensures quality and does not feel able even to write TORs for recruitment of consultants that they have planned to recruit. If PMU does not know what should be done, use of consultants will be sub-optimal. It is unwise to assign to consultants tasks that really should be done in a participatory manner. The consultants should work as members of teams, leading in the right directions, engaging others in the processes, and assisting where necessary.

##### *Cross-sectoral*

Barriers to cross-sectoral collaboration have not yet been breached sufficiently by the PMU. One of the major shortcomings of the project so far has been in inter-agency collaboration - substantive engagement, exchange of expertise and coordinated actions with the full range of agencies relevant to protected area management. There is wide membership of the Steering Committee and there have been training and publicity workshops attended by various individuals and organizations, but the project should be going beyond these large group activities to detailed and regular meetings with responsible partners and other stakeholders, and to seeking out win-win collaborative opportunities where they occur. Te Ipukarea Society has links with Birdlife and IUCN that could help in finding international expertise to assist with overarching guidance to the project and to protected area system and site planning in particular.

There are differences in perception, and, perhaps some contradictions or overlaps in the law, regarding areas of responsibility of government agencies, particularly NES and MMR and linked to the Marine Resources Bill, under preparation that will replace the Marine Resources Act (1984). Under the Environment Act 2003 NES has responsibilities both on land and in the sea, and the MMR, under the Marine Resources Act 2005 has responsibilities for protection of marine fauna and flora. The Environment Act administered by NES, provides for the protection, conservation, and management of the environment in a sustainable manner. It supports the conservation and management of biodiversity through provisions to establish Protected Areas and regulate or prohibit activities within these; to designate animals and plants as protected species; to provide for the protection, conservation and management of wildlife; and to regulate or prohibit trade and commerce in wildlife. The Environment Act, however, only applies on those islands that have formally adopted the Act (Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Atiu, Manihiki, Mauke and Mitiaro). It does not apply to the territorial sea and the EEZ, and action proposed for these areas outside the jurisdiction of any 'island' is governed by the National Environment Council, comprised of one representative from each of the Island Environment Authorities. The Marine Resources Act provides for the conservation, management and development of marine resources and related matters. The Act provided the legal framework for the Cook Islands to declare its entire EEZ as a shark sanctuary, and for the passage of Marine Resources (Shark Conservation) Regulations in 2012. The Marine Resources Bill (still a draft) will replace the Marine Resources Act imminently: its principal objective is to provide for the sustainable use of the living marine resources in and around the Cook Islands for the benefit of the people of the Cook Islands.



There are sensitivities too about the roles of the Office of the Prime Minister where the Marae Moana Coordination Office<sup>26</sup> is based, and the House of Ariki and Koutu Nui. The latest draft (October 2017) of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) assigns institutional responsibilities in implementation but are these signed up to: too much of the coordination is left to the future with the accompanying risk that protected areas and biodiversity mainstreaming are not advanced in a systematic way. The project provides an opportunity to see enhanced collaboration across sectors and between government and non-governmental agencies and for some of these divisions to be lifted when national benefits are realized.

There appears to be an attitude barrier in some of the statements given during interviews: namely that the differing traditional land and marine tenure regime of the Cook Islands, and the differences between islands in the reach of national legislation, precludes a nationally coordinated system of protected areas. There were equal numbers of interviewees who believed that, as advocated in the Prodoc, the future for protected areas and biodiversity conservation lay in national legislation supported by community consultation, as there were who thought the future should lie in building on the traditional customary approach to protected areas as in the Ra'ui system. This stance in effect forms barriers to progress on the project and should be confronted, discussed and turned into opportunities.

### *4.3 Project Implementation and Management*

The Prodoc was signed in July 2015 and the Inception Workshop and the appointment of a Project Coordinator followed soon afterwards in September 2015. Despite this quick start it took a long time to initiate activities, and project implementation has been slow and it has been given the rating **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)** (see Table 1). The Inception Report was not published until mid-2016<sup>27</sup>. At the MTR only around 15% of the funds have been disbursed.

#### 4.3.1 Project Management Unit

The project management unit is housed in the National Environment Service. It is not physically a separate unit: three project employees share a room with NES staff members, one of whom is the Islands Futures Manager who was appointed as Project Manager of the R2R Project and also manages other UNDP GEF BD projects. There are three out-posted staff: an MMR Project Officer and an MMR Media and Communications Officer work at MMR, and a Ra'ui Coordinator works at the House of Ariki headquarters on the west of Rarotonga. There are designated liaison officers at CITC and Ministry of Agriculture who are not paid with GEF funds (see list below).

The project staff and the CITC and MoA liaison officers are able, experienced, enthusiastic and committed, but the PMU lacks the necessary identity and shared and authoritative technical direction and management strength to capitalize on this and to shape and guide contributions from each partner.

There is provision under the project for 21 short-term consultants (see table on p113 in Part III of Prodoc), but very few of these positions has been filled. A contract to carry out a stakeholder analysis as part of the Aitutaki Lagoon Master Planning process is about to be issued. Some of these consultancies have been budgeted for in recent quarterly work plans and the funds have been rolled over sometimes more than once to subsequent quarters.

Recruiting such a large number of consultants would be unfortunate for two reasons. Project outputs have been assigned to each consultant with little consideration of feasibility of tasks and overall coordination. Some tasks are duplicated or have already been completed, and some it would be unwise to assign to single consultants to achieve alone. Simply making consultants responsible for the production of protected area and productive area<sup>28</sup> management plans is a sure way to get plans that is unacceptable to the stakeholders. Second, even with sound TORs the recruitment of so many consultants given the current strength of the PMU

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<sup>26</sup> Named in the Marae Moana Act

<sup>27</sup> "The draft inception report following the inception workshop in October 2015 must be finalised as soon as possible" UNDP MCO BTOR 19 May 2016

<sup>28</sup> Locally managed productive areas under the project could be classified as multi-use protected areas and come under a single national protected area system

will not help and would likely make things worse. It is time consuming and skillful work to coordinate, oversee and provide direction to the work of consultants, and the current management arrangements are simply inadequate to take on consultants on such a scale.

Title	Location	Duties
Paid by Government		
Director of NES (and Project Director)	NES (own office)	Overall responsibility as NPD
Manager, Islands Future Division, NES (and Project Director)	NES	Intermediate responsibility and coordination with other biodiversity projects under NES
Liaison Officer, MoA	MoA	Planning, liaison and reporting of project activities carried out under MoA
Liaison Officer, CITC	CITC	Planning, liaison and reporting of project activities carried out under CITC
Paid from project GEF funds		
Project Coordinator	NES	Day to day technical and administrative coordination
NES Project Officer	NES	Planning, liaison and reporting of project activities carried out under NES
Administrative and Finance Assistant	NES	Financial reporting of all project activities to MFEM and UNDP MCO
MMR Project Officer	MMR	Planning, liaison and reporting of project activities carried out under MoA Also responsible in practice for ensuring financial accounting
MMR Media and Communications Officer	MMR	Communication with the public and other stakeholders
Ra'ui Coordinator	House of Ariki	Planning, liaison and reporting of project activities carried out under House of Ariki

It is also important that expertise on PAs is retained in NES or wherever PA management will be - is to be a credible unit by the end of the project (see under Needs Assessments - 5.1.3.4).

#### 4.3.2 Role of UNDP

UNDP MCO has played a steady though necessarily distant role in project management since the beginning of the project including the drafting of TOR for a Chief Technical Advisor. PMU has not, however, acted quickly on many such inputs.

UNDP MCO and UNDP RTA have provided good guidance on both technical approach and administration but could have acted sooner and more robustly to address management problems as they arose. The Inception Phase should have led to a better basis for project implementation. The PIR report has been filed as required but opportunities to point out the poor indicators were missed. Forms were completed that are based on flawed indicators so do not reflect actual progress under the project. Interviews with PMU staff indicated that UNDP MCO has advised the PMU to follow the budget exactly, citing for example the budget footnotes in the Prodoc, rather than supporting a more adaptive approach. More adaptive management and flexibility is required and certainly expected by GEF. UNDP MCO dispute this finding and this disagreement in itself is a signal that the relationship is not quite right.

UNDP MCO take the trouble to consider, in all the projects implemented by them (including those for GEF) how well they also fulfil key aspects of UNDP's own agency development mission, including contributions towards higher level development changes, impacts on the poor, marginalized and disadvantaged, gender equality and empowerment, instances of south-south cooperation. This project by its very nature addresses all such these aspects as biodiversity and the environment is at the heart of sustainable

economic development. Lessons learned and examples of innovative solutions to identified problems will be taken on by UNDP and applied in project design and implementation in the future.

#### 4.3.3 Steering Committee

The Project Steering Committee was formed as described (see Section 3.5) and has been co-chaired by NES and Te Ipukarea Society. Co-opting the TIS as co-chair is a particularly promising move, indicating government willingness to involve NGOs in the work. The PSC (= NBSC) has met regularly (approximately every three months) as recommended in the Prodoc. It functions as the Steering Committee for all UNDP-GEF BD projects, of which there have been five at times over the last two years. The MTR consultant reviewed the six sets of minutes provided. Attendance records of some agencies (eg MoA, CITC, House of Ariki) has been poor and, even among agencies that are represented regularly, high level representation is rare. Director level representation has been rare. The highest levels of attendance - 100% or near 100% have been by Marae Moana, MFEM (DCD), NES and TIS. UNDP MCO was represented once in the six meetings reviewed, and the Seabed Minerals Authority never<sup>29</sup>. Apart from the first steering committee meeting in September 2015 which had only five participants, attendance has varied between 13 and 23, with six to eight of these at each meeting being project staff. Given that the steering committee oversees several projects at once, wide and substantive agency interactions at the meetings is not possible. This is not necessarily bad but can only work well if other ways of involving partners and stakeholders outside the formal PSC meetings are in operation. Reporting has been good: full minutes of meetings are available.

Representation on the Steering Committee is one thing, but genuine participation in project planning and implementation is quite another. TIS is a Co-Chair of the PSC but has been involved very little in either implementation or planning despite its eminent suitability to carry out important parts of the project, and bein listed as a partner in the Prodoc.

#### 4.3.4 Work planning

The original budget and workplan<sup>30</sup> in the Prodoc was not expanded to a detailed plan during the Inception Phase. This was unfortunate. Project documents are inevitably out of date by the time that projects begin, so the Inception Phase is an important time to review the workplan, the SRF and the basis for M&E, and that opportunity was missed. From 2017 onwards more detailed annual work plans were produced but project management has been too prescriptive in many ways. The project kept to the wording of each Activity even though some Activities were by then out of context, rather than taking an objective-oriented approach to work planning. The difficulties in developing a more coherent programme were compounded because each of the main partners (MMR, MoA and CITC) developed their proposed activities independently, and sometimes the activities, although finding a kind of fit with Prodoc wording, are not coordinated with other partners' activities in the same area, or are out of sequence. So sometimes the workplans are rather a forced match between a proposed action and the wording of the Activity in the Prodoc. These lists of proposed actions have generally been approved at Steering Committee meetings without context. The MMR Project Officer explained that each individual action matches MMR institutional priorities and work plans. When the priorities and work plans of project and institution coincide this is fine: indeed it is the job of the project to influence institutional work plans so that all partners are working together. However, at present the project is failing to combine the efforts of all stakeholders in a properly integrated and sequenced programme of work to achieve project aims.

#### *Coordination*

The sequence under each Activity described in the Prodoc is generally from planning to implementation (see for example the discrete actions under Activity 1.2.2 in Annex 4) yet the project is funding implementation (eg signage) before protected area planning has been completed<sup>31</sup>. This is justifiable in some cases, but it would be much easier for project implementation if plans were completed and budgeted and then funded as whole plans with project contributions streamlined as a result. Similarly, under Activity 1.2.5, the Prodoc describes

<sup>29</sup> Based entirely on the six sets of minutes provided to the MTR

<sup>30</sup> There is some confusion here because the UNDP ATLAS workplan is in fact little more than a budget. This is a point that needs attention in UNDP/GEF projects in general.

<sup>31</sup> See for example 2017 Q1 work plan. These are all important actions (the *Pandanus* survey was important in getting IUCN Red Listing) but they are put together in the absence of any overall planning and collaborative context. Planning can begin on the basis of earlier surveys. "Support for Marine (Inshore Fisheries) Officers" sounds vague.

a sequence of actions coordinating with existing communication strategies (Annex 4) and ideally a plan should be prepared. Perhaps that should be mentioned as the task of the communications officer (see under this activity in 2017 Q1 WP) but in that case it should be for the whole project, even though the project post and current focus is in MMR. Under Component 2 in the 2017 Q1 WP MMR has funding for water quality monitoring laboratory stock and consumables, and MoA for promotion of sustainable agricultural practices. The MTR Consultant saw no evidence that these actions were being coordinated.

#### *Adaptive approach*

The MTR consultant was told that the PMU was too inflexible when approving activities and budgets and that it sticks unreasonably closely to the Prodoc, and (see 4.3.2) the PMU made the same comment about UNDP MCO. Whatever the truth here, a more proactive and adaptive approach is required based on objective-oriented planning and revisiting the Prodoc which at present is being used as a menu from which to choose single items for implementation rather than as a guide on which to base work plans that will achieve the overall aims. A detailed workplan for the project should have been developed during the Inception Phase and then used as the basis for annual workplans thereafter. It is not too late to do this now (see Section 5.2)

#### 4.3.5 Finance and administration

The MTR consultant was told by several different informants that the arrangements for routine disbursements and approvals of expenditure were overly bureaucratic and time-consuming. Government regulations regarding tendering are strict and project management has struggled to reconcile this with operation of the UNDP quarterly advance system. Frequent need to obtain and process quotes for services or goods has led to implementation of project actions being delayed so much that actions are rolled from quarter to quarter. Projects should not be subject to undue restrictions, and this is generally held to be acknowledged by government's signature of the Project Document. Proactive measures are needed to address this problem.

At the beginning of the project all disbursements were made by DCD on behalf of the PMU. This is the normal arrangement for donor-funded projects in the Cook Islands. However, as there were a large number of payments being made, and as the PMU had their own finance assistant, a decision was made to pass on the disbursement responsibility to the project. After discussions between partners and DCD, it was agreed that advance payments from DCD would be split, with funds for project activities scheduled to be carried out by MMR advanced direct to MMR, and all other funds advanced to the PMU. In theory this could have worked well, but only with efficient planning, accounting and shared goals. Problems were reported soon after the new arrangement was introduced, and were still being reported at the time of the MTR mission. The accounts reported by MMR to PMU did not meet the standards requested by the PMU who are responsible to UNDP MCO for accounting for the use of all the funds. Early in 2017 there was discussion of changing the arrangement so that all funds would be channeled through the PMU, but so far no change has been made. MFEM and MMR reported that recent changes in MMR procedures will lead to improvements. PMU are unconvinced and consider that the present system is extremely time-consuming for both them and for MMR and takes time away from implementation<sup>32</sup>.

#### 4.3.6 Finance and co-finance

The project budget covers a period of four years under UNDP Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT) procedures. There is still over US\$ 3.5m (Table 5) in the project budget yet only 18 months remaining under the project. GEF project activities normally start to be wound up at least three months before the end of a project, so this leaves now less than 15 months under current project timing. It is unsurprising<sup>33</sup> that the first half year's expenditure (ca US\$40,000) was lower than expected, but since then expenditure has been steady at between 20% and 25% of that expected. It is unrealistic and potentially wasteful of funds to attempt to catch up on delivery by drawing up a work plan that would disburse funds over the final 15 months at nearly three times the annual rate planned in the Prodoc.

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<sup>32</sup> Having funds disbursed by two different groups magnifies financial planning problems inherent in complex projects such as this one. For example, through no fault of their own, when MMR were unable to disburse funds for logistic reasons for an extended time, the UNDP rules on disbursement prevented advances being made to the main PMU account and other activities were delayed.

<sup>33</sup> Many projects experience a slow start

Table 5 Total GEF budget and annual expenditures

Budgets and expenditure	US\$
Four year budget (Prodoc)	4,267,431
Spent 2015 (Q3 to Q4)	42,123
Spent 2016	324,449
Spent 2017 from Q1 to Q3	295,028
So expenditure to end of Q3 2017	661,600 (15.5% of 4 yr budget)
Funds that remained for 2017 Q4*	475,802
Budgeted 2018	1,975,962
Budgeted 2019 (Q1 to Q2)	1,154,067
Funds that remained as of 1/10/2017*	3,605,831 (84.5% of 4 yr budget)

\* some of these spent by now

The project is in one way in an excellent position because there are plenty of funds remaining for achievement of results in line with the objective and components. The MTR consultant detected some pressure to speed up activities and financial progress. It is important, however, that steps are taken to ensure technical quality and effectiveness. There is a danger here of encouraging unwise expenditure in the pursuit of financial progress at the expense of output quality.

Co-finance expenditures have been reported (see Annex 21) but details and evidence were not available for all contributions. The use of the Oceans 5 contribution is well documented: it was used to support the establishment of the Marae Moana and has been used well by all accounts. The NES contribution has been used in support of NES staff and in facilities, and that support appears to be full and unstinting. The MFEM support is slightly puzzling because it in effect passes the co-finance commitment to third parties who have not signed up to it. It is also unclear how co-finance from MFEM (which includes project funds from external donors) is 45% spent after 2.5 years, as there are no details given of the projects which are being regarded as co-finance. TIS has contributed much in staff time and facilities, but TIS have, like MFEM, pledged donor funds, and one of their donors was Oceans 5. This is not important from project implementation point of view and no action is required: the MTR consultant notes it for the benefit of project formulation in the future and for follow-up by UNDP-MCO with UNDP-GEF.

#### 4.3.7 Audit

The Prodoc specifies an annual audit. The first audit of the project was in progress during the MTR mission. It was organized by UNDP MCO - it was not a financial audit but rather an Internal Control Audit for NES Projects so it includes ABS and NBSAP Projects as well. It was being conducted by the Cook Islands Audit Office. The Audit Report was expected by the end of December.

#### 4.3.8 Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems and reporting

Relevant columns from the Prodoc Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (Prodoc para 171 Table 20) are reproduced in Annex 22 with MTR comments. The first PIR was due in 2017 and was submitted on time. The PIR is pretty frank regarding past performance and ratings, but is overoptimistic regarding on forecasts for progress in the remaining period of the project. The format of the PIR relies on the indicator table to collect information on project progress. As some of the indicators are flawed, some lack baselines, and others have not been measured since inception, the reports of progress are not focused on the important questions. Apart from the failure to comment on the inapplicability of the indicators, the PIR 2017 makes a lot of sense and the MTR supports many of its conclusions.

At project submission (2014) to GEF the following Tracking Tools and Scorecard were completed:

- GEF BD1 Tracking Tool: Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for each of six Protected Areas
- GEF BD1 Tracking Tool: Financial Sustainability Scorecard for Protected Area Systems
- GEF BD2 Tracking Tool: Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation in Production Landscapes/Seascapes and Sectors
- GEF IW Tracking Tool: International Waters
- Capacity Development Assessment Scorecard for Protected Area Systems

Many of these appear in some way in the list of indicators in the SRF. None of them had been even attempted at mid-term<sup>34</sup>, and although the METTs were received in December 2017, shortly after the draft MTR report had been submitted, only one had been done acceptably. Completion at mid-term is obligatory, so this is an urgent task for project management. It is clear that the PMU lacks the time and expertise to complete all the expected reports and push a coordinated project forward and that they require, in general, long term and high level technical support. These monitoring tools have to be completed according to a standard, consultative process. Results can be affected by who does the assessments and how. Most were completed at Prodoc submission by Brad Auer and Stephen Lyon, the Project Development Consultants. Rather than just quickly filling in the forms to meet UNDP-GEF MTR requirements a group should be established that will dedicate time to the task and be available for repeat assessments later in the project and beyond (see Section 5.2).

Internal reporting on project activities by the main partners (NES, MMR, MoA and CITC) has been good when done but is incomplete. Full reports of Steering Committee meetings and discussions are available with contributions by different partners. The MTR consultant saw detailed reports from NES on project activities such as surveys, and did not see such detailed reports from other partners. Reporting on overall project progress falls to NES, but they sometimes lack information on details of activities carried out under MMR and MoA.

The MTR Consultant requested, but did not receive, a list of consultants with TOR and reports to date and was told that so far there have been very few.

#### 4.3.9 Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement was a strong point of the project design. The Prodoc list of stakeholders and PSC membership was reviewed in the Inception Workshop PSC (Inception Report pp10-11). Annex 17 gives an MTR update on current status of stakeholders. Project staff are no doubt in contact with most if not all of the stakeholders outside the immediate partners, but it seems that expectations have not been met with respect to the level of stakeholder engagement and cross-sectoral coordination that were in the design. Stakeholder engagement cannot be based simply on representation on the Project Steering Committee. There has been insufficient one to one engagement with stakeholders whose cooperation and understanding is required to achieve the ambitious objective and components/outputs of the project. There are inherent difficulties in getting people with the necessary authority in each agency to meet on a sufficiently regular basis to reach consensus on policy, strategy and action plans.

Outside the core group of project partners who submit quarterly work plans and reports to the PSC through the PMU, there is considerable expertise that is not being utilized effectively. TIS have hardly been involved and have much to contribute. NHT has conceived and taken part in key species surveys but is not involved to its full potential in the database and publication aspects of the project. And the MMCO has offered to oversee (and has prepared TOR for) four consultancies<sup>35</sup> but the offer has not been taken up by the project. These and other opportunities could be taken up, to link with the launch and implementation of the NBSAP. UNDP has the status necessary to bring agency heads together at high level and there is an opportunity for UNDP MCO to consider in establishing better stakeholder collaboration.

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<sup>34</sup> The MTR consultant requested these tracking tools on numerous occasions from three months before the mission to during the first week of the mission

<sup>35</sup> 1.Capacity needs assessment for biodiversity conservation and PA management. 2. Cost-benefit analysis for a sustainable financing mechanism and Marae Moana work plan. 3. Marae Moana Outlook Report (useful in terms of the data and information sharing aspects of project). 4. Translation of policy and legislation into Cook Islands Maori.

#### 4.3 10 Communications

Public awareness and training activities have been planned and implemented in almost every quarter. Both are important. Good work has been done, but value can be added quite easily. So far no overall project communication and training plans based on needs assessment have been prepared, and there is inadequate overall direction to communications as a whole. No needs assessment to prepare customized products for target groups has been conducted prior to designing communication messages and means accordingly<sup>36</sup>. The effectiveness of posters has been assumed (as it often is in such projects), but there may be better approaches. It is important to consider international best practice. A Project Communication Strategy is required to guide the project's public information and involvement, in the same way that a Training Plan should guide its training. Apart from having more impact on project aims, having agreed plans will streamline project administration, quarterly work planning, advances of funds, and accounting. For such a small country with several overlapping projects and programmes in the field of biodiversity and climate change a coordinated approach is required to ensure that individual project communication strategies and training plans are developed in line with those of other projects and programmes.

Analysis of the questionnaires completed by MTR interviewees indicated that most interviewees had a reasonably good understanding of what Ridge to Reef means and the problems that economic development is posing to biodiversity and livelihoods. There was an extraordinary range of opinions about what protected area categories have been established. When asked how the project has contributed so far to changing policy and practice, to improving human capacity and infrastructure, or to removing threats, the answers were either realistic (none, not enough, or very little) or lists of activities (that might or might not eventually have an impact). The James Cook University distance learning course was much referred to as a useful activity. Reported problems focused mainly on project management that is under strength, and on poor communication between partners, and 9/15 respondents recommended revising the Prodoc and simplifying it, with prioritization. The responses are summarized in Annex 11.

#### Gender

There is good representation of both sexes in the management and implementation of the project and the MTR consultant saw no evidence of discrimination on the basis of sex. However, the planned partnership with the Cook Islands National Council of Women has not been as strong as implied in the Prodoc text and the Prodoc list of stakeholders.

#### *4.4 Sustainability*

The project has ambitious aims in establishing policy and institutional changes and complex agreements between stakeholders. Progress has been slow even during project implementation: and unless aims are achieved before the end of the project there is a risk that there will not be another opportunity to stimulate and institutionalize the required cross-agency collaboration and engage all stakeholders. The rating given for Sustainability (see Table 1) is **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**.

It is important that attention be given to establishing knowledge, identification ability, understanding of threats, and support for biodiversity conservation across society, particularly in young people. The Aitutaki Reef Keepers / Araura Enviro Squad are a promising example of young people being enthused to get involved in conservation through controlling waste products going in to the Aitutaki Lagoon<sup>37</sup>. Araura College students have undertaken bold and sophisticated surveys of waste disposal and plan to expand their scope in the future.

There should be sustainability in databases to be used in protected area system and site planning and species conservation planning under the R2R project (eg under Output 3 in the Prodoc). The Cook Islands Biodiversity Database (CIBD) is currently being expanded as the Cook Islands Biodiversity and Ethnobiology Database (CIBED) to assist the Cook Islands Government to meet their local, CBD, CITES and CMS objectives using both taxonomic and ethno-ecological knowledge systems<sup>38</sup>. Currently under the NHT and

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/cepa/toolkit/2008/cepa/index.htm>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.araura.edu.ck/enviro-squad/>

<sup>38</sup> <http://csac.anthropology.ac.uk/Research/Cibed>

with funding insecure, this requires sustainable funding and additional staff to manage it into the future. The draft NBSAP identifies support for the expansion of this database as a priority action and assigns this to the NHT, the IIB and the ABS projects and government, but it is most relevant to the R2R project A spatial protected areas file could be incorporated, although there is probably no immediate necessity to link each species to occurrence or not within specific protected areas, because at present doing it to island level will produce more or less the same result. This is a good example of where training would be of importance for institutionalization of capabilities (see the NBSAP). The MTR consultant was told that the intention of the project was to start developing a new database because, for example, the existing one does not include protected areas. Better technical assessment of the options is needed before making such a decision.

#### 4.4.1 Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

The Marae Moana Policy and Marae Moana Act (2017) have been passed, and this is a great advance. The third and final phase of the 2020 visionary framework (Te Kaveinga Nui), the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) 2016-2020<sup>39</sup>, which is "a scorecard for development rather than an explicit plan", was published in 2016 (i.e. under the influence of the R2R project) and provides indicators for 16 goals, many of them extremely relevant to the R2R project. There are separate goals for the marine and terrestrial environment: Goal 11: Promote sustainable land use, management of terrestrial ecosystems, and protect biodiversity and Goal 12: Sustainable management of oceans, lagoons and marine resources, although the NDSP is explicit in stating that marine and land areas should be managed together.

Much remains to be done in terms of institutions, including: Protected and Managed Areas Act, Protected Area classification system, Protected Areas Office, institutional coordination committees, establishment of the authority of the traditional leaders in the PMNA, formalization of the consideration of biodiversity in policy and practice in land use planning and decision making, tourism, marine resource harvesting, and agriculture. Unless these results are achieved there are severe risks to sustainability of project results. Training for protected area management and biodiversity conservation is being carried out under the project, but this is generally one-off training. In order to ensure sustainability of project results, it is important that required recurrent training be established locally so that it can be repeated for new staff. In most countries such training can be given as standard post-graduate training in local academic institutions, but there is no University in the Cook Islands so this option is not available. It is possible that the University of the South Pacific will soon close its campus in the Cook Islands and may at that time open a Research Centre. The possibility of this forming a base for developing and maintaining biodiversity expertise should be pursued if this research centre is ever established (See Recommendations, Section 5.2).

#### 4.4.2 Financial and socio-economic risks to sustainability

Protected areas will require funding beyond the end of the project, and it is important that the project is successful in developing financial sustainability solutions for the protected area system (Output 1.4). At present much of the work of protection is done by volunteers or undertaken by customary bans that are reliant on people respecting or being seen to respect traditional practices. There are various bylaws (eg Aitutaki Fisheries Bylaws) under which prosecutions can be and are being made for collection of certain species, and the project has as one of its activities the empowerment of environmental wardens to enforce local regulations. Such empowerment is complex as communities are small and it takes some authority and boldness to enforce regulations through taking punitive measures against friends and relatives. Other methods of encouraging compliance are also required. Education can help and so can economic incentives but neither are straightforward.

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CIBED is a species oriented database of species within the territory of the Cook Islands, including marine areas. Data for each species includes taxonomic classification, Scientific names (including variant names), European Names, Maori names (with island variants recorded) and a set of search categories and values. Main search categories include: National Presence, Biological Groups, Island Presence, Origin, Habitat, Endangered, Biosecurity, Invasiveness, Medical, Use of Biodiversity. Each of these headings contains subcategories and values that can be selected to restrict a search, along with textual terms that will search name fields, note fields and comment fields associated with each species. Media can be associated with each species, which includes images, videos, sound recordings, pdf files, word files and text files. Not all species have media, but the majority do. There are presently 4350 different species in the database, with several hundred more to be entered.

Adding support for protected areas should not be complicated. With respect to the database structure, services and web application, these were designed to be easy to change so that they could be adapted to other island nation groups.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cobp-coo-2017-2019-ld-01.pdf>



Small grants provide important funds to the Takitumu Conservation Area, for example, which has survived for years without a steady budget. Other protected areas are similarly reliant and this is a fragile way to operate. So there is a risk of not being funded, even at the very modest levels required (some individuals donate their time and in some cases funds for operations). The NBSAP has an early section on economic valuation for biodiversity, but there is no guarantee that people or governments will change their destructive behaviour, even if they know the value of what they are destroying. A lot of the NBSAP activities are to be funded by projects, and this demonstrates the need for core funding.

Little has been done yet on financial sustainability under the project and there does not appear to be a good assessment of the funds available and being used, and whether increased inter-agency and stakeholder coordination could improve performance and increase cost-effectiveness. For example, there are opportunities to be pursued through ministry staff based on outer islands and in developing incentives for local communities to take action themselves.

#### 4.4.3 Environmental risks to sustainability

Environmental assessment is needed for every intervention. An ecosystem-based or holistic approach should be taken, looking at the management aims for the area, and planning an appropriate methodology in detail, based on previous experience in the area and elsewhere. Chemical and biological control methods for IAS need careful assessment using the ecosystem approach. Very often attempts at control can lead to greater problems than are being faced, so any actions have to be applied with due caution, and controls to eliminate negative impacts. A recent application to NES to introduce *Puccinia arechavaletae* and *Cissoanthonomus tuberculipennis* for biological control of Grand Balloon Vine (*Cardiospermum grandiflorum*) in Rarotonga demonstrates the care that is going into this kind of EIA. Activities with IAS funded under the project should be subject to the same rigorous assessment even though they do not involve introductions. Buildings and other construction are also being assessed carefully, but there is a need for more detailed examination of potential impacts on biodiversity itself in the standard EIA procedure.

Chinese provincial government officials from Guangzhou have requested assistance from MMR in establishing a sea cucumber fishery on Aitutaki that depends on restocking from captive breeding. Such an enterprise should be examined in minute detail. It is highly likely that unless offtake is extremely low, and variable (and therefore not interesting to the Chinese commercially) there will be overharvesting and perhaps local extinction of the species of sea cucumber being harvested as has already occurred where Chinese led overexploitation of sea cucumbers has already happened. This could have knock-on effects on the reefs due to the ecological roles of holothurians<sup>40,41</sup>.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

#### 5.1.1 Strengths and results

The overall concept for the project is sound. The Project Document is strong on the biological, institutional and legal background, specifies the need for cross-sectoral collaboration under the banner of R2R, called for wide stakeholder consultation and engagement, stresses the special circumstances regarding customary land and marine tenure and island governance in the Cook Islands, and encourages exchange of knowledge and experience with international practitioners. The Prodoc specifies a Project Coordinator and two Project Officers, all three with technical qualifications and provides for a high level of technical assistance contracts - 21 in all, including international consultancies with in protected (and "managed/productive") area management. The design also advocates collaborative agreements with international organizations and projects active in biodiversity conservation.

The PMU staff are good and dedicated although they are overstretched in terms of technical coordination (see 5.1.2). There is fine technical capacity in the PMU's Project Officers in their particular specialities, but they do not work at the level of the overarching project. Steering Committee meetings are held regularly and reported on well.

<sup>40</sup> [http://www.kpress.info/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=559%3Asea-cucumbers-play-key-ecological-roles-in-the-marine-environment&catid=8%3Anews&Itemid=103](http://www.kpress.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=559%3Asea-cucumbers-play-key-ecological-roles-in-the-marine-environment&catid=8%3Anews&Itemid=103)

<sup>41</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311234596\\_Ecological\\_Roles\\_of\\_Exploited\\_Sea\\_Cucumbers](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311234596_Ecological_Roles_of_Exploited_Sea_Cucumbers)

There has been progress under each of the two project components. Under Component 1 the passing of the Marae Moana Act in 2017 and the declaration of the whole EEZ of the Cook Islands as a Marine Park is a sign of firm commitment and a welcome and important step towards the results expected. Surveys have been, and are being, carried out and training courses and public awareness events have been held. The James Cook University distance learning course appears to be particularly apposite and appreciated. Survey reports seen by the MTR Consultant are good. Under Component 2 further surveys (wetlands) training (GIS and low input agriculture), and public awareness events (on impacts of agriculture and tourism) have been carried out, and there has been consultation with Island Councils on R2R approaches in Island Development planning.

#### 5.5.2 Weaknesses

The Strategic Results Framework was, and is, unsatisfactory, as there are no "end state" Outcomes to aim for as results, and indicators that are mostly not "SMART"<sup>42</sup>. Component 2 could be revised to implicitly include seascapes as well as landscapes (see also four paragraphs below). During the Inception phase the project document was not critically reviewed to bring it up to date with new circumstances, the opportunity to revise the SRF was not taken, and project implementation began with differing institutional visions of how the project would be managed (see Recommendations 1, 5)

Although the project stressed that agencies would have to work together towards the same goals, its design failed to make this explicit in the project management arrangements, and this made it more likely that the project would run into coordination problems. (see Recommendations 1, 3)

The project is not looking sufficiently at "the big picture". Mainstreaming is more than about making sure each sector has biodiversity conservation activities in their work programme. How the economy is being developed is just as responsible for threatening biodiversity as the actual day to day activities of tourism and agriculture. So there needs to be some sort of overarching green policy that guides all development. (see Recommendations 1, 5).

The chance to build on the position of the Marae Moana Coordination Office in the Office of the Prime Minister and the approval of the CIMP and Marae Moana Policy is being missed, probably for internal "political" reasons. The MMCO is given a key role in the project narrative, particularly in establishing a Protected Area Office (Activity 1.3.2) but is not listed as a "partner", and has been treated differently as a result. It has a potential role under both Components 2, particularly as there is an associated Technical Advisory Group (TAG). (See Recommendations 1, 5, 8).

Component 2 could have, and probably should have, included seascapes in the title: much of the impact of tourism is in the sea and inshore and pelagic fisheries also have impacts. Conceptually, the design treats MMR differently from other production sector partners. MMR is fundamentally an exploiter of biodiversity and also has an interest (and a mandate in the new (draft) Marine Resources Bill) in setting up protected areas, specifically to declare any area of the fishery waters to be a marine reserve or marine park<sup>43</sup>. There are synergies in resource protection areas but there are also potential conflicts of interest. So the fisheries aspects under Component 1 (protected areas) might have sat better under Component 2 (mainstreaming). (See Recommendations 1, 3)

The Project Coordinator's duties in the TOR are heavy for a project that is expected to disburse about US\$1m per year through multiple agencies and individual consultants on many different islands, and the PMU is under strength in both project management expertise and the main technical aspects of the project. Out posting of staff is not really working as a way to bring both agencies together with a single shared project vision. The Project Officers are involved in agency specific planning and coordination of project funded actions within their agencies. There has been slow pace of progress towards project results, repeated rolling over of activities from quarter to quarter, and problems with the system under which both NES and MMR

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<sup>42</sup> Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound

<sup>43</sup> This is unnecessary because the Marae Moana Act provides for inter-agency and multi-disciplinary approaches to producing marine spatial plans

disburse project funds with NES having the responsibility to account for funds advanced to both agencies. (See Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 6, 7)

There have only really been two years of sustained operations so far (2016, 2017) and the project is greatly behind and only has 18 months to run. It is impossible to achieve the planned results in the remaining time available. There is ca US\$3.5m remaining in the GEF portion of the project budget. The MTR consultant detected pressure to spend money to increase the “delivery rate” and regard this as unwise without attention to ensuring high quality results. (See Recommendations 1, 13)

The list of consultants in the Prodoc (Part III Terms of References) includes experts in pretty well every field required under the project. There are consultants to set up a protected area office in the Marae Moana Office, to establish a PA System Information Management System, to develop PA Financing Mechanisms, Island Conservation Strategies and develop policies to guide development in environmentally sensitive areas, to name a few. As pointed out earlier in this report, current project management could not possibly handle so many consultants all operating on different mini-projects and in the opinion of the MTR consultant it was a flaw in the design to expect all 21 to be managed by a single coordinator, even with relevant technical experience, as proposed. When consultants are eventually engaged they should be given tasks as part of a participatory process, not just asked to produce written outputs assigned to them as individuals. (See Recommendations 1, 6,7,8, 9)

Although PSC meetings are held regularly attendance by senior officials of many of the main project partners has been poor, and some agencies have low attendance records. PSC meetings have dealt with three to five projects in one sitting, and in effect rubber stamp the work plans submitted by each project partner as there is no time for technical discussions and the plans are prepared only shortly before the meetings. (See Recommendations 1, 7)

Use of consultants has been far below that foreseen in the design. One consultant is about to be engaged to do a stakeholder analysis in preparation for the Aitutaki Lagoon Master Planning process. Without a process agreed this seems premature. Stakeholder consultation is important at this stage. But this should be done once a planning team has been formed under an experienced team leader, and the planning process has been agreed. Two marine scientists have been engaged to do reef surveys (coral, fish and invertebrates) and are doing a thorough and professional job with great enthusiasm. How these surveys fit with the overall project aims and complement earlier surveys is not clear. (See Recommendations 1, 2, 8)

Despite completing and reporting well on many activities progress is much less than was expected by Mid-term and there is a severe risk that the outputs will not be of sufficient quality to contribute significantly to each component. not hang together. Most of these activities have been undertaken with enthusiasm and to a high standard but they are not sufficiently coordinated and directed as a coherent strategy to achieve overall project aims - even if initially on a single island or in a single area. (See Recommendations 1, 8, 10, 11)

Planning of management regimes for most if not all of the project sites can start now, based on information already available on the biodiversity and threats to it. Knowledge of the biodiversity and threats to biodiversity is for the most part already sufficient to start planning: it is unnecessary to go on and on surveying under the project before starting to plan and implement. It is important to put planning of site management under the project before implementation so that less time is spent at this stage on the administration involved in single *ad hoc* activities such as signage for protected areas. It would be better to prepare a plan and fund and implement it. (See Recommendations 1, 8, 10)

The existing Cook Islands Biodiversity Database is an excellent source of information on species and is used daily, for example in MMR for reviewing and refining survey results, yet the MTR Consultant was informed that the project does not intend to support the updating and finalization of the enhanced CIBED. (See Recommendation 10)

There have been no training needs assessments to guide the training taking place under the project; nor overall capacity needs assessments looking at material needs - equipment and laboratory supplies for example. Some of the training appears to be either *impromptu* or led by institutional interests that may or

may not coincide with project aims. And the project does not yet have its own communication plan to guide its public information and involvement, and education activities, (See Recommendations 1, 10)

## 5.2. Recommendations

**1. Announce and launch a 10 week Consolidation Phase (CP) during which project scope and strategic results framework will be reviewed and objectives clarified, and changes will be made to project management, specifically through recruitment of long term technical staff for the PMU and improvements in how the PMU works with partners and other stakeholders. This will require a team of two Consolidation Phase consultants, one international and one national, who will work together with PMU on all aspects of the CP.**

During the CP a long-term Chief Technical Advisor and Protected Area Management Advisor (see Recommendation 2), and possibly a Workshop Facilitator (see Recommendation 6) will be recruited. Other consultant recruitment, and initiation of new project activities will be suspended in order to give PMU time to reflect and plan without the distraction and workload of administering activities.

**2. Begin recruitment of two senior technical advisers to guide, advise and work together with PMU staff, partners and other stakeholders after the Consolidation Phase**

**(a) A long term, highly experienced and qualified Chief Technical Adviser (CTA)** with wide experience in (i) protected area management, preferably including marine protected areas, and (ii) landscape and seascape approaches to the consideration of biodiversity in economic development planning and action. The CTA will advise on and participate in the entire project programme working alongside partners and other stakeholders, track and assess and provide feedback on assignments and activities/outputs of partners and technical consultants, and be engaged in the policy components. The CTA will be expected to establish a system of scrutiny including assessment of the likely or actual impacts of each project activity during planning, prior to final approval, during implementation, and on completion.

**(b) A long term, highly experienced and qualified Protected Area Management Expert** to focus on (i) the establishment of the PA system, its categories, and the supporting legislation and (ii) the demonstration of PA site management through formation of and guidance to planning teams at selected PAs.

TOR for these two consultants should be short and concise. The TOR drafted by UNDP MCO are rather too long and prescriptive and include over-bureaucratic payment arrangements.

These staff members should be appointed as soon as possible and it would be ideal for one or both to be appointed before the beginning of the CP. However, it is unrealistic to expect that they will be in place before the end of the Consolidation Phase so appointment of two Consolidation Phase consultants for short term (8 weeks) is envisaged (See Recommendation 1)

**3. PMU and the two CP Consultants hold a series of individual and small group meetings with partners and other stakeholders to establish a shared vision of project scope and implementation and institutional sustainability of project outcomes post project.**

These meetings will identify the expectations of partners and other stakeholders in the Steering Committee and beyond and will prepare the ground for the Consolidation Workshop (See Recommendation 6). MMCO, TIS and NHT should be involved more as partners in implementation alongside MoA, MMR, CITC and HoA.

**4. Revert to a single source (the PMU) for disbursement of project funds.**

This action will remove one of the factors (alongside weak technical oversight and coordination) that has affected project performance and coherence. Whereas at present both PMU and MMR receive and disburse funds, in future PMU will be made responsible for all advance funds and disbursement. This change will be made alongside other changes in project administration (See Recommendations 7 and 8) that will improve coordination with partners and convince MMR that they have an important part to play in achieving the aims of a well-respected project. MFEM and UNDP MCO will be involved in this change in addition to PMU, the CP Consultants and MMR

**5. Review project progress, refine the SRF and its indicators, define revised targets and institutional responsibilities, and draw up a Project Workplan to achieve revised targets by end of October 2020 (ie 15 months beyond current expected end of project).**

Assess progress made by the project itself and other actors under each output, define work required in order to achieve project targets by July 2020. Take a critical look at the SRF, define end-state "outcomes" to replace the components, and where necessary define SMART indicators to replace existing ones, so that it becomes possible to measure impacts made by the project in progress towards achievement of its aims. Annex 20 gives MTR suggestions regarding revisions to the R2R SRF. UNDP GEF Biodiversity Advisory Notes in Annexes 18 and 23 could be useful too: they are old but sound and as applicable today as they were in 2003.

Aim for project policy outcomes to apply to terrestrial and marine environments within the *expanded* Cook Islands Marine Park (see 1.5 #31), with field visits planned to take into account cost-effectiveness and logistics. The project must be careful to maintain balance, and must not neglect biodiversity considerations for development planning on Rarotonga itself.

As close alignment as possible with the NBSAP outputs and the work of the many other projects and programmes under different agencies is required. Review carefully work done outside the project on marine and terrestrial surveys, biodiversity databases and publications, and protected area and species management plans, and plan for the project to build on rather than duplicate earlier work. Excellent though the dive and other survey teams may be, the project should be more strategic in their deployment. Regarding the Cook Islands Biodiversity and Ethnobiology Database the project should plan to build on what is being done already, in partnership with NHT, rather than start something new.

**6. Hold a two day multi-stakeholder Consolidation Workshop <sup>44</sup> (CW) to build on the stakeholder/partner consultations and reach agreement on targets, revised indicators, key activities, project work plan to October 2020, roles of consultants, and new arrangements for routine work planning by project partners. The CP consultants will play a leading role in the CW, possibly with the support of a suitably qualified external facilitator<sup>45</sup>. Much of the groundwork will be done previous the CW so that progress can be made during the workshop itself.**

The Consolidation Workshop will take place towards the end of the Consolidation Phase. After the workshop and before the end of the CP, a Consolidation Report (CR) will be produced by the CP consultants in close collaboration with PMU and partners and will include:

- Assessment of progress to date
- Setting of realistic targets under each Component
- Realistic Overall Work plan to achieve revised targets by end of July 2020
- Revised 2018 Annual Work Plan to fit the Overall Work Plan
- Revisions to SRF
- Definition of consultancy requirements in the context of enhanced PMU
- Proposed measures to ensure institutional sustainability of protected areas and mainstreaming after the project ends
- Outline of agreed process for assessing needs in training and communication and producing training and communication plan in concert with other partners in biodiversity conservation
- Outline TOR and guidelines for the main consultancies envisaged. Do not rely on consultants to simply draft policy, institutional and technical outputs: establish processes instead.
- New procedures for involvement of stakeholders in planning and for disbursement of funds and financial accounting
- Clear setting out what will be done with which partner, with the inclusion of MMCO

The CR will provide documentary support for the PMU and the incoming CTA and Protected Area consultants post Consolidation Phase.

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<sup>44</sup> similar in scope to an Inception Workshop

<sup>45</sup> Preferably with experience on theory of change processes

**7. Establish the strengthened PMU, in an office dedicated to the project, with workspace for the long term CTA and Protected Area Consultant, short term consultants, out-posted PMU staff and liaison officers.**

Ideally the CP consultants will hand over personally to the incoming CTA and Protected Area consultants. Having a dedicated and discrete project office will increase the sense of identity of the project and lay the foundations for improvement in its public image and reputation. "Hot desking" facilities will enable partners to feel able to drop in and consult documents or discuss with PMU staff or consultants even without making formal appointments.

**8. Introduce and operate a more pro-active, R2R project-centred, inclusive approach to quarterly work-planning led by PMU and increasing the involvement of NHT, TIS, MMCO and possibly others, as full partners.**

Regular one-to-one and small group engagement with partners and other stakeholders is required to deepen relationships and ensure good project outcomes. There is considerable expertise available in partners outside the core group of MoA, CITC, MMR and HoA. The core group should be expanded immediately to include the Marae Moana Coordination Office and Technical Advisory Group, National Heritage Foundation and Te Ipukarea Society (see 4.3.9).

Putting more work into preparation of the annual workplan and then following it, would help partners in seeking necessary clearances in good time. Short workshops and half day PSC meetings are not sufficient mechanisms for getting effective annual and quarterly workplans with the genuine support of all stakeholders and partners. Exhaustive preparatory meetings between partners in small meetings over two or three weeks are required and should be established as routine practice so that workplans reflect overarching project priorities in addition to activity-level logistical detail. Revisions may be required to Project Officer TORs. The MMR and NES Project Officers, the HoA Ra'ui Coordinator, and the liaison officers in other partner agencies should be more involved with overall project planning, not only with narrower agency activities. If the project is to succeed all partner agencies should come together under a genuinely shared vision of the project. Reporting requirements should be kept to the minimum necessary for PMU to effectively oversee all activities as they unfold.

**9. Increase international technical exchange**

Obtain international assistance through networking to engage consultants, to exchange information and experiences about best practices in PA system and site management, especially with customary land ownership, and mainstreaming biodiversity and the environment into development policy and practice. TIS are in a good position to advise and participate in this area through their links with Birdlife, IUCN and others. The project should consider and advocate more explicitly learning from the experience of neighbouring island nations with customary land ownership and strong cultural traditions linking people with the land and sea. In Fiji community consultations on protected areas are formalized through a National Protected Areas Committee made up of people from different sectors, that makes decisions on terrestrial and marine conservation areas and helps to coordinate regulations. In the Cook Islands the Marae Moana Technical Advisory Group could perhaps fulfil similar functions.

**10 Select a small number of activities that are almost ready for implementation as pilots to a high standard and "fast-tracking" to demonstrate good practice in application of the R2R approach and to produce lasting tangible products.**

**(a) Preparation of the Aitutaki Lagoon Management Plan**

The Aitutaki Lagoon Masterplan is an excellent candidate for "fast-tracking" that covers elements of both project components and would be a pilot for site-level planning for biodiversity conservation. It's preparation requires wide coordination between agencies and the general public, has been discussed and been "in progress" under the project for a long time, and there is nothing to stop it from being done apart from inertia in finding someone experienced to lead the process. The aims are clear in most people's heads, but need to be clarified and accepted by all stakeholders (fishermen, Bonfish Tour Operators, Sand Miners, Hotel and other tour operators, conservationists etc. Many of the management zones have already been defined and are in operation (inner lagoon, bonfish fisheries, bonfish nursery, bonfish spawning ground, kitesurfing, bird breeding grounds, long reef Ra'ui etc). There is good citizen support and an active youth organization, the Araura Enviro Squad (see Section 4.4). The lagoon, or selected parts of it

could be classified as an IUCN Category V or VI protected area. Once agreed by all stakeholders the Management Plan could be funded in part by the R2R project thus simplifying the current system under which quarterly advances are provided for single management actions.

**(b) Work to complete the Cook Islands Biodiversity and Ethnological Database (CIBED)**

Completion of the outstanding work on the Cook Islands Biodiversity and Ethnobiology Database (CIBED) (See Recommendation 5) is a great opportunity to capitalize on 30 years of work to date. Protected areas could be incorporated into the CIBED (See Section 4.4). First a consensus is required on the nature and purpose of the different types of databases required to manage and conserve biodiversity per se, in relation to PAs, and for the benefit of the Cook Islands people and a sustainable economy.

**(c) Drafting of biodiversity criteria for tourism accreditation**

as a pilot to demonstrate how to make full assessment of human impacts on biodiversity and how, when and whether to trade off with economic benefits

**11. Carry out needs assessments and prepare comprehensive capacity development and communication plans for the project while ensuring that the project's activities take place as part of overall training and communications for biodiversity conservation and the environment in the country and for the long term.**

Utilize existing programmes and institutional arrangements in preference to creating new ones. It is inefficient to have training and communication for each project and programme. Coordination is required, possibly for capacity needs assessment with the assistance of Marae Moana Coordination Office.

**(a) Do a training needs assessment based on analysis of requirements in each relevant agency and what training has been done so far.** Prepare a training plan for the project, taking into account training scheduled under other programmes<sup>46</sup> and sharing resources where feasible. Embark on a programme of training coordinated across all partners. Wherever possible training should be institutionalized so that training courses are not one-off events but can be repeated again by a local institution (even a New Zealand one) post-project. The possibility of the University of the South Pacific opening a Research Centre on Rarotonga (see Section 4.4.1) should be followed: it might provide a basis for institutionalization of training. Link training to achievement of specific project outputs, as opposed to doing the training in isolation. GIS training and training in the 3D mapping tool is really interesting, but it would be more powerful if deployed as part of an active and agreed management planning exercise for example.

**(b) Prepare a comprehensive communication plan for the project aimed at informing and involving all stakeholders, including the general public and government staff.** Ensure that the project's activities fit under a comprehensive communications plan for biodiversity conservation and the environment in the country and for the long term. Consider obtaining the assistance of IUCN's Commission on Education and Communication for this. Consider too the production of a major volume on the biodiversity and protected areas of the Cook Islands. This volume would be online as well as in print, would have accurate data and descriptions of land, sea and species, and would fill a gap that at present is felt by anyone searching for a comprehensive and reliable source on the islands' biodiversity and protected areas. NHT would be a suitable partner here.

**12. Plan for and support government in providing technical counterpart staff to sustain the work of the project in biodiversity conservation, including protected area management**

There is little chance of the planned Protected Area Office under the OPM (Marae Moana CO) being effective post-project unless dedicated staff are engaged and trained very soon. Similarly staff will be required to manage the Cook Islands Biodiversity and Ethnobotany Database in the long term post-project. The NBSAP lists training of an operator as a priority action (see Section 4.4). Other outcomes and outputs too, will have to be incorporated officially into government policy and the legal framework. Output 1.4 covers sustainable finance for protected areas, and this will have to be considered in the context of sustainable finance for biodiversity and the environment in general. The institutional arrangements under Marae Moana (see Annex 2) will greatly outlast the project and provide a good launching pad for a long term programme to build capacity and mainstream biodiversity conservation.

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<sup>46</sup> eg. Learning Needs Assessment for climate change

### **13. Apply for a no-cost extension of the project for 15 months until October 2020.**

Remaining funds are far more than could be spent wisely before the project's current end date of July 2019. Management costs were minimal in the early years of the project<sup>47</sup> and the funds for consultants have hardly been touched. Extension would be conditional on action on Recommendations 1-12 leading to real changes in project performance. Carrying on as if there will be no extension as at present is likely to lead to annual workplans with impossible delivery targets. So before the extension has been granted or even applied for, the project should work according to overall and annual work plans that cover the period to October 2020. The application for conditional no-cost extension should be submitted after the appointment of the Chief Technical Adviser and once changes in project management have been adopted as routine, possibly as early as August 2018.

## **Annexes**

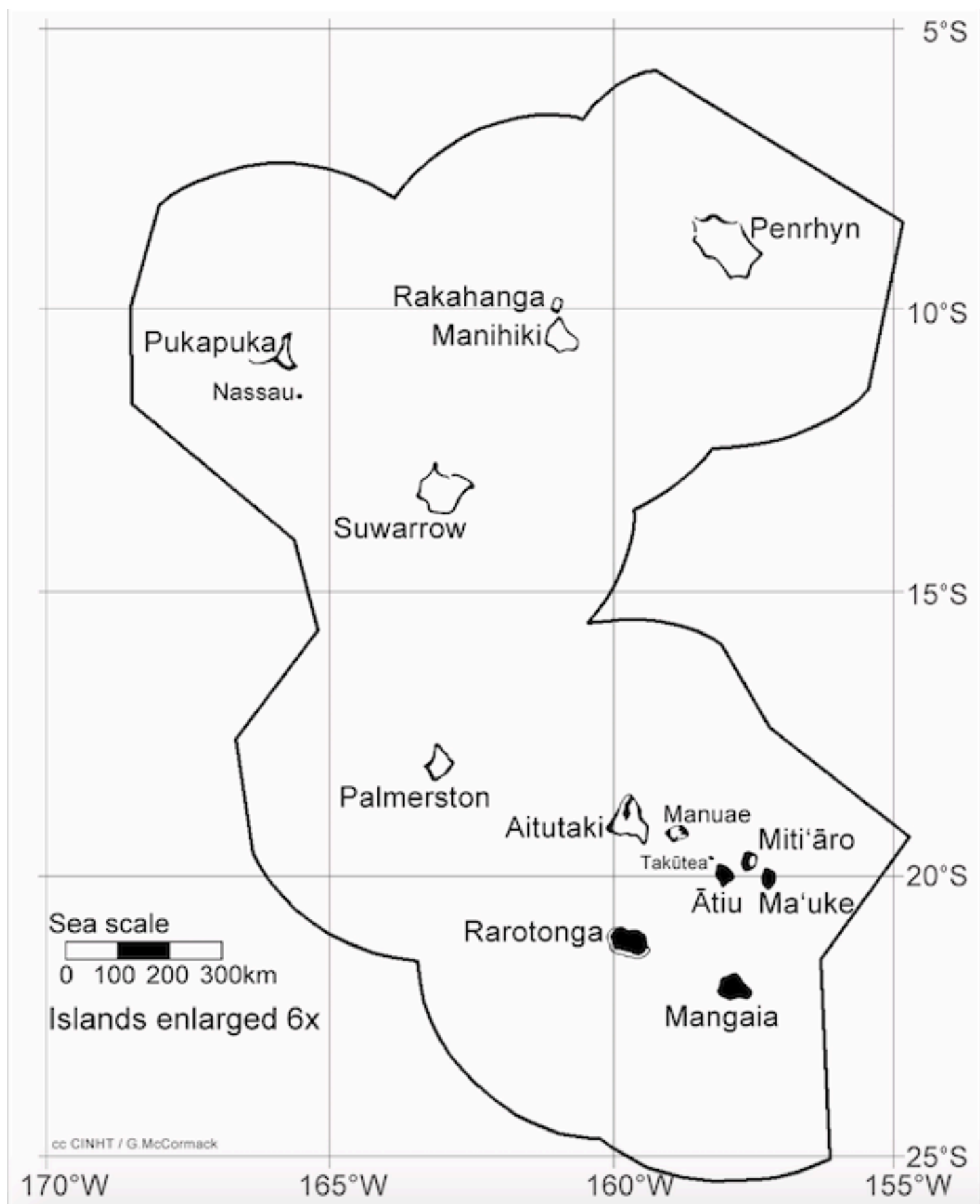
- Annex 1 Map of the Cook Islands*
- Annex 2 Organigram illustrating institutional links in Cook Islands Policy Development*
- Annex 3 Summary of achievements at Mid-term*
- Annex 4 Blank Form 4 for Pre-MTR review by project management of activities*
- Annex 5 Matrix for assessment of Project Progress*
- Annex 6 MTR Terms of Reference*
- Annex 7 List of documents consulted*
- Annex 8 Itinerary and list of people interviewed*
- Annex 9 UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators and Midterm Review Consultants*
- Annex 10 Questionnaire*
- Annex 11 Analysis of Responses to the Questionnaire*
- Annex 12 Mid-term Review Evaluative Matrix Template*
- Annex 13 Indicative interview questions*
- Annex 14 List of participants at Initial Findings Wrap-up Meeting*
- Annex 15 MTR Ratings scales*
- Annex 16 Biodiversity Significance of the Cook Islands*
- Annex 17 Stakeholders listed in the Project Document with Update on status by MTR team*
- Annex 18 UNDP GEF Biodiversity Advisory Note - Indicators*
- Annex 19 Risk Matrix, with Assessment at MTR*
- Annex 20 The project indicators (from Prodoc SRF) with MTR comments on design*
- Annex 21 Form 1: PMU report of status of cofinance at MTR*
- Annex 22 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan from Inception Report, with MTR comments*
- Annex 23 UNDP GEF Advisory Note - Lack of the Solution*
- Annex 24 Notes on Terms of Reference for Experts*

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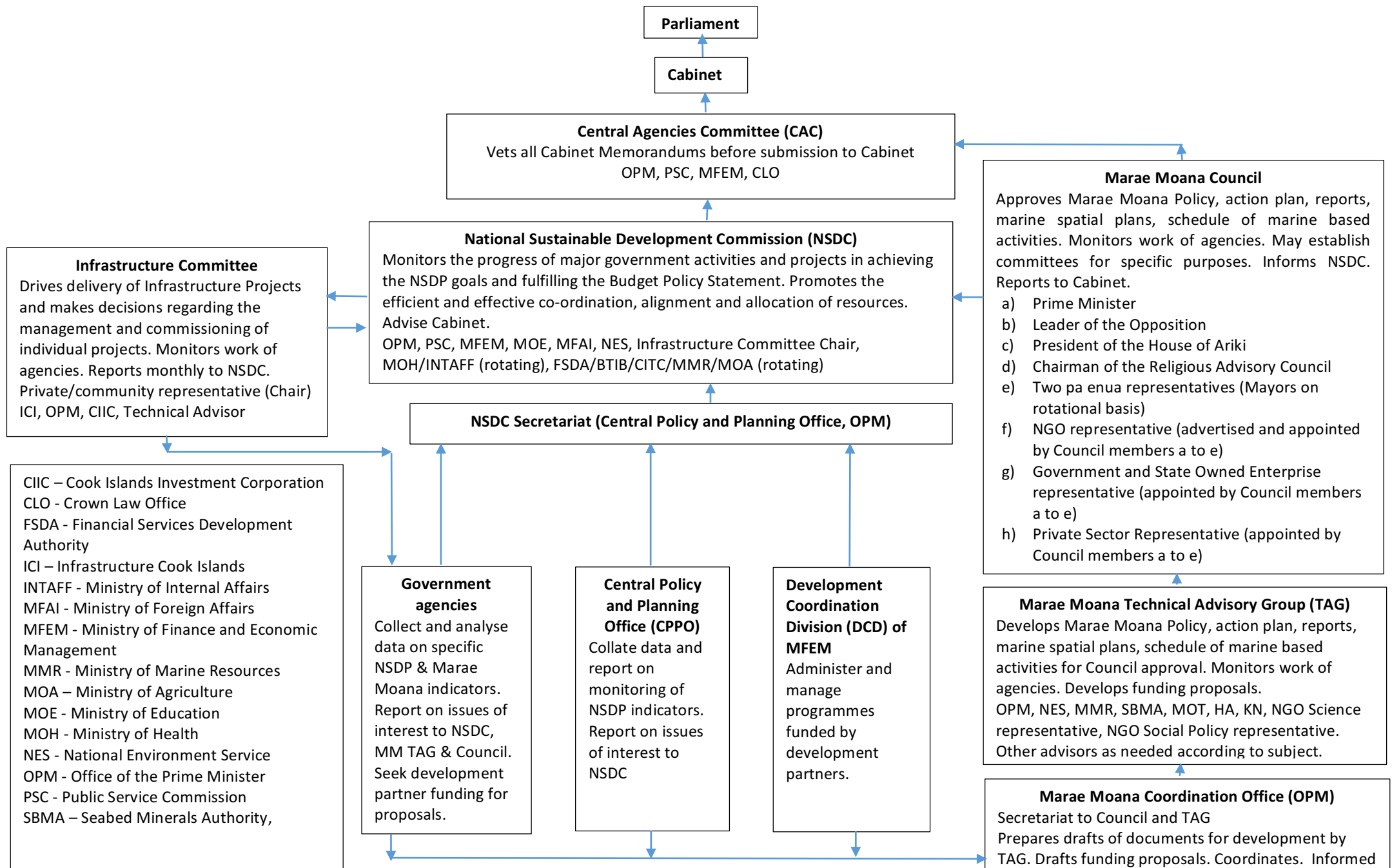
<sup>47</sup> although they have been heavy in recent months



Annex 1. Map of Cook Islands with EEZ. Islands shown at greater scale.



## Annex 2 Organigram illustrating institutional arrangements in Cook Islands Policy Development



Annex 3. Achievements at mid-term based on Project Management's assessment of progress in the PIR and MTR Form 4 (Annex 10) and on observations of MTR consultant

<b>Project Objective:</b> To build national and local capacities and actions to ensure effective conservation of biodiversity, food security and livelihoods and the enhancement of ecosystem functions within the Cook Islands Marine Park	
<b>COMPONENT 1: Strengthening protected areas management</b>	
<b>Output 1.1:</b> Strengthened legal / regulatory and policy frameworks for protected areas	The Marae Moana Act has been passed, and the overarching Marae Moana Policy provides a framework for a comprehensive national protected area system.
<b>Output 1.2:</b> Expanded and strengthened management systems for protected areas	The Cook Islands Marine Park (CIMP) has been expanded to cover the entire EEZ under parallel activities supported by co-finance from Oceans 5. Preliminary surveys, planning and mapping for a) proposed management zones in CIMP and b) selected protected natural areas and the Aitutaki Lagoon c) selected species conservation plans. Public information programmes regarding R2R approach
<b>Output 1.3:</b> Strengthened institutional coordination and capacities at the national and local levels for the participatory management of protected areas	Various training courses for agency and NGO staff, private landowners and traditional leaders Cross-sectoral authority established in the form of the Marae Moana Council Inter-agency Technical Advisory Group established for marine spatial planning under the Marae Moana Act Consultations with traditional leaders and Island Councils and establishment of project officer position in the House of Ariki
<b>Output 1.4:</b> Financial sustainability framework developed for system of protected areas	Sustainable financing established as a policy objective in the Marae Moana Policy Discussions during preparation of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)
<b>COMPONENT 2:</b> Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats within production landscapes	
<b>Output 2.1:</b> Ridge to reef approaches integrated into land use and development planning	Routine environmental impact assessments probably influenced by project presence in NES Consultations with Island Councils on inclusion of biodiversity considerations in Island Development Plans Scrutiny of agricultural plans prepared under SRICCC GIS input to mapping of land cover and land use Surveys to identify important areas for biodiversity Training in GIS and use of drones
<b>Output 2.2:</b> Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into agriculture sector	Soil analyses at Muri Lagoon to measure nitrogen levels Design, demonstration and dissemination of agricultural practices that reduce use of agrochemicals Promotion of and incentives for organic labeling and market premiums
<b>Output 2.3:</b> Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into tourism sector	Information and involvement through videos to publicize risks to BD posed by tourism and how to deal with those risks. Funds for individual tourist companies that undertake/adopt mini-biodiversity conservation projects/ecologically friendly practices.

**Annex 4 Blank Form 4 from MTR Inception Report: Pre-MTR review by project management of activities (24) and actions (131) by project, by others, or in partnership**

**MTR Assessment of progress against Prodoc expectations. Instructions for completion.**

This should be completed in summary form, just a few lines per action It is not intended as a full report, rather to provide a concise assessment of what has been achieved against each of the many actions proposed in the Prodoc. Once completed it will be used by the MTR to assess current status and potential status at project end (July 2019), and it will also inform review of project design. Where actions are duplicated under different outputs or activities please indicate in the final column. Many of the actions listed in the Prodoc (and here) are parallel actions by other actors, and it is important to know their current status in order to look at potential constraints on project outcomes. There are a few comments/questions in red that can be responded to in the final column.

<b>FORM 4: REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES (24) AND ACTIONS (131) BY R2R PROJECT, BY OTHERS, OR IN PARTNERSHIP</b>			
<b>Actions from Prodoc - led by CI R2R project, by others, or in partnership</b>	<b>Status, degree of completion (%) and what remains to be done</b>	<b>Main actors and responsibilities</b>	<b>Requirements for future inputs from project + assessment of priority and feasibility within project timeframe</b>
<b>Component 1: Strengthening Protected Areas Management</b>			
<b>Output 1.1: Strengthened Legal / Regulatory and Policy Frameworks for Protected Areas</b>			
<b>Activity 1.1.1 Update and Strengthen Laws and Regulations for PAs</b>			
1.1.1.1 Development and approval of regulations under the new Protected and Management Areas Act: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles of Marae Moana office</li> <li>• Use of PA financing mechanisms</li> </ul>			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of new PA classification system</li> <li>Empowerment of environmental wardens to enforce local regulations</li> </ul>			
1.1.1.2 Reviews of existing regulations and strengthening where necessary			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fisheries regulations</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marine Resources Act (re voluntary wardens)</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Island by-laws for fisheries, including enforcement processes</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transport of pesticides to Outer Islands</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Banning extremely harmful pesticides</li> </ul>			
1.1.1.3 Community consultations regarding all above laws and regulations			
<b>Activity 1.1.2 Establish Policies for PAs</b>			
1.1.2.1 Participate in CIMP Policy development			
1.1.2.2 Management framework for CIMP and other PNAs			
1.1.2.3 New PA classification system			
1.1.2.4 Institutional coordination mechanisms, including inter-institutional committees			
<b>Output 1.2: Expanded and strengthened management systems for Protected Areas</b>			
<b>Activity 1.2.1 Zonation and system planning</b>			
1.2.1.1 Large-scale zoning plan for offshore CIMP			

1.2.1.2 Zoning system for terrestrial and inshore marine within CIMP			
1.2.1.3 Mapping resource use and habitats			
1.2.1.4 Site assessments of biodiversity and population levels			
1.2.1.5 Threat assessments			
1.2.1.6 Integration of climate change considerations			
1.2.1.7 Review of existing information resources			
1.2.1.8 Precise mapping of KBAs, PNAs			
1.2.1.9 Island-level red lists			
1.2.1.10 Identification of priority sites for PNAs			
1.2.1.11 Criteria and processes to guide establishment of new PNAs			
<b>Activity 1.2.2 Management actions in PNAs and LMAs</b>			
1.2.2.1 Development of CIMP Management Plan			
1.2.2.2 Implementation of Management Plan			
1.2.2.3 Project consultation with and support to local communities regarding PAs			
1.2.2.4 Designation of PAs under new PA classification system			
1.2.2.5 ESIA for proposed PNAs			
1.2.2.6 Management Plans for each of five PNAs			
• Takitumu Conservation Area,			
• Cloud Forest Nature Reserve,			

• Manuae Wildlife Sanctuary / Marine Reserve,			
• Takutea Wildlife Sanctuary / Marine Reserve,			
• Moko Ero Nui Leeward Forest Reserve.			
1.2.2.7 Establish or strengthen LMAs on most of nine CIMP islands			
1.2.2.8 Voluntary wardens appointed for LMAs			
1.2.2.9 Training for community wardens			
1.2.2.10 Training in PA identification and management for			
• Island Councils			
• Traditional leaders			
• Local communities			
1.2.2.11 Training in monitoring and threat assessments			
• Local leaders			
1.2.2.12 Authority of traditional leaders (Koutu Nui) established in Protected and Managed Areas Act			
1.2.2.13 Ra'ui sites identified as conservation zones in CIMP zoning plan			
1.2.2.14 Inshore fisheries management plans			
1.2.2.15 Promotion of sustainable fisheries practices			
1.2.2.16 Standardized surveys with MMR for species assessments. building on ProcFISH results (2007), and training on the job			
1.2.2.17 Enhancing monitoring activities and strengthening island bylaws			



regarding export of marine resources from Outer Islands (eg sea cucumber from Aitutaki).			
1.2.2.18 Capacity building of MMR staff at marine monitoring stations, local officers and community leaders for marine resource management			
1.2.2.19 Regulations developed for all PNAs and LMAs			
<b>Activity 1.2.3 - Aitutaki Lagoon Master Plan</b>			
1.2.3.1 Development, implementation and enforcement of Aitutaki Lagoon Master Plan			
1.2.3.2 Tourism master plan for Aitutaki			
1.2.3.3 Visitor / User fee system for the Aitutaki Lagoon			
1.2.3.4 Visitor education programmes stressing awareness of the impacts on the marine environment from tourism activities			
1.2.3.5 Aitutaki Lagoon Monitoring Project led by PCI, with support from MMR et al			
1.2.3.6 Improve NES and MoH monitoring and enforcement of existing regulations and by-laws for land-based activities with potential impacts on biodiversity			
1.2.3.7 Strengthen by-laws for marine conservation (with Island Councils, MMR and NES)			
1.2.3.8 Strengthen existing water quality monitoring program (MMR) in Aitutaki Lagoon			

1.2.3.9 Increase monitoring and enforcement of bans on certain activities in lagoons (eg sand mining)			
1.2.3.10 Increase awareness of, and community participation in, identifying and reporting problem activities			
1.2.3.11 Develop integrated coastal zone management program for the Muri Lagoon (with ICI, under Regional R2R)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share data and lessons learned, with Regional R2R</li> </ul>			
<b>Activity 1.2.4 - Implement Species Conservation Plans:</b>			
1.2.4.1 Establish Biodiversity Unit (NES) under UNEP-GEF IIB			
1.2.4.2 Develop and implement conservation plans for high priority species			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turtles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conservation Plans for three species on selected islands</li> <li>expert and community based monitoring programmes,</li> <li>models for island wide action</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Species Conservation Plans for two species,</li> <li>Monitoring protocols and baseline estimates,</li> <li>establish and implement regulations re Napoleon Wrasse</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Birds:</li> </ul>			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Species Conservation Plans for three species,</li> <li>○ monitoring protocols and baseline estimates,</li> <li>○ assistance with rat control in Takitimu,</li> <li>○ feasibility assessments for translocations to other islands</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Flora: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Species Conservation Plan for Mitiaro Fan Palm,</li> <li>○ monitoring protocols and baseline estimate,</li> <li>○ fire management plan</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			
<b>Activity 1.2.5 - Communications, Public Outreach &amp; Education re CIMP and other PAs</b>			
1.2.5.1 ? Status of CIMP Information Hub (funding from Conservation International)			
1.2.5.2 Status of CIMP Steering Committee's communications and outreach program			
1.2.5.3 Status of NES/IIB project public awareness programme on BD in general			
1.2.5.4 Promote the extension of the Cook Islands Marine Park to include the entire EEZ			
1.2.5.5 Promote the work of the new Protected Areas Office			
1.2.5.6 Awareness building regarding new PA classification system plus new PAs			
1.2.5.7 Public information and involvement programmes regarding R2R			

• General			
• School based			
• Economic arguments			
<b>Output 1.3: Strengthened institutional coordination and capacities at the national and local levels for the participatory management of Protected Areas</b>			
<b>Activity 1.3.1 - Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) for R2R approaches and PA system and site management:</b>			
1.3.1.1 Carry out the CNA			
1.3.1.2 Apply results of CNA to refine proposed capacity building activities under the project			
<b>Activity 1.3.2 - Capacity strengthening of national institutions for R2R approaches and PA system and site management:</b>			
1.3.2.1 Status of Marae Moana office			
1.3.2.2 Support from NES and MMR to private landowners, traditional leaders, and local officials and communities in establishing and managing PA sites.			
1.3.2.3 Support from MMR to increase capacity of MMR Fisheries Officers in enforcing Ra'ui rules imposed by Island Councils			
1.3.2.4 Project led training and skills development for Marae Moana and NES - based on CNA.			
List of what done to date - topics and mode of training			

1.3.2.5 Embed technical staff in monitoring stations on Aitutaki and Rarotonga to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mentoring to MMR staff on all southern islands,</li> <li>advice to local governments, people</li> <li>daily support on ecological assessments and management planning</li> </ul>			
<b>Activity 1.3.3 - Capacity strengthening of local officials and traditional leaders for R2R approaches and PA site management:</b>			
1.3.3.1 Strengthen capacities of local officials, traditional leaders, (eg House of Ariki, Kotou Nui, Island Councils) to declare and manage LMAs.			
1.3.3.2 Creation of position of Ra'ui Site Coordinator working for the Aronga Mana			
<b>Activity 1.3.4 - Capacity strengthening of private landowners, local communities / organizations for R2R approaches and PA site management:</b>			
1.3.4.1 Strengthen the capacities of Private landowners, local communities, community groups and NGOs to participate in PA management, ecological monitoring, enforcement of regulations			
<b>Activity 1.3.5 - Regional coordination on R2R approaches</b>			
1.3.5.1 Participation in Regional R2R project's			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IWCM post-graduate training programme?</li> </ul>			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community-based certification programme in R2R planning and CC adaptation</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Register of national and regional water, land and coastal management practitioners</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC)</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Scientific Conference on coastal and marine spatial planning in PICs</li> </ul>			
<b>Activity 1.3.6 - Strengthen Knowledge Management Systems</b>			
1.3.6.1 Status of Regional R2R and PacIWRM outputs on knowledge management			
1.3.6.2 Status of R2R approaches reflected in Inter-ministerial Water Committees, national water policies			
1.3.6.3 Build local capacity for Ridge to Reef approaches			
1.3.6.4 Support establishment and management of databases and other information systems for Protected Natural Areas			
1.3.6.5 Incorporate national and regional PA and BD data into Disaster Risk Management Data Portal			
1.3.6.6 Share data regionally			
<b>Output 1.4: Financial sustainability framework developed for system of Protected Areas</b>			
<b>Activity 1.4.1 - PA system financial planning:</b>			

1.4.1.1 Support to CIMP Steering Committee's CIMP Financing Plan			
1.4.1.2 Quantify monetary values of PAs within the CIMP			
1.4.1.3 Communicate results (of above) to national stakeholders ["to generate increased support for protected areas" - ie assuming that the results will show this ?]			
1.4.1.4 Support to Marae Moana in development and implementation of PA System Business Plan			
<b>Activity 1.4.2 - Identify potential sources of PA financing and develop mechanisms to access and utilize funds:</b>			
1.4.2.1 (Under CIMP SC) Status of : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CIMP Sustainable Funding Mechanism Act,</li> <li>• CIMP Trust Fund</li> </ul>			
1.4.2.2 Develop and implement selected PA financing mechanisms			
1.4.2.3 Support advocacy, education and information sharing to encourage policymakers / legislators to increase annual government budget appropriations for PA functions			
1.4.2.4 With Marae Moana, MFEM, CIT Corp (CIT Authority - which is it, or are these two different?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research on potential funding mechanisms</li> <li>• Field testing of selected mechanisms</li> </ul>			

1.4.2.5 Training on securing funding for protected areas from international donor agencies and organizations,			
<b>Component 2: Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats within production landscapes</b>			
<b>Output 2.1: Ridge to Reef approaches integrated into Land Use and Development Planning</b>			
<b>Activity 2.1.1 - Incorporate R2R approaches into island-level planning and resource management</b>			
2.1.1.1 Integrate Ridge to Reef approaches into existing and newly formulated IDPs,			
2.1.1.2 Strengthen effective community management of the Outer Islands as Managed Conservation Areas (MCAs) <i>what are these?.</i>			
2.1.1.3 Development of Island Conservation Strategies (ICSs) for six southern group inhabited islands			
2.1.1.4 Capacity building for local leaders (Island Councils), Island Executive Officers and the Outer Islands Division of the OPM, and local community members in R2R approaches to overall island-level management.			
2.1.1.5 Assist local communities in establishing their own priorities for environmental conservation, which will feed into Island Development Plans and the siting of new protected areas.			
2.1.1.6 After first revision of each IDP			



support a monitoring process for on-going implementation of environmental aspects			
2.1.1.7 Recommendations for integrating R2R approaches into future iterations of the IDPs.			
2.1.1.8 Status of SRICCC island level agricultural plans to make agriculture more resilient to climate change, and to ensure that agriculture does not have negative ecological impacts.			
2.1.1.9 Support the integration of BD conservation and climate change considerations into agricultural plans and coastal protection activities of SRICCC,			
2.1.1.10 Work with SRICCC focal points for each island on ICSs and decisions on siting of PAs			
<b>Activity 2.1.2 - Incorporate R2R approaches into land and resource use planning policies and action</b>			
2.1.2.1 Status of ICI and NES mapping of land cover and land uses			
2.1.2.2 Identify and define areas of important for habitat and species of concern in the productive landscape of the southern islands - in order to provide basis for decision making on infrastructure and agricultural development etc			
2.1.2.2 Status of NES and Cook Islands Tourism Authority (CIT Corp) policies on guiding development in environmentally sensitive areas,			

2.1.2.3 Analysis of potential benefits of restricting certain development activities			
2.1.2.4 Capacity building of EIA staff in the NES for GIS, mapping			
2.1.2.5 Support for independent review process for EIA			
2.1.2.6 Status of MMR's existing water quality monitoring program (WQMP)			
2.1.2.7 Strengthen WQMP to measure potential hazards, to analyse negative impacts on lagoon or reefs, and to test success of sustainable agriculture activities (2.2.2).			
2.1.2.8 Monitor algal cover in the Rarotonga and Aitutaki lagoons annually			
2.1.2.9 Status of Regional R2R Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation plan for Muri			
2.1.2.10 Share information and approaches with the Regional R2R			
<b>Output 2.2: Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into agriculture sector</b>			
<b>Activity 2.2.1 - Baseline studies and monitoring to assess impacts of fertilizer, pesticides, and animal waste on coastal environments:</b>			
2.2.2.1 Status of MoA, NES baseline studies			
2.2.2.2 Status of MoA MMR water quality monitoring downstream of targeted (does this mean project? ) sites			
2.2.2.3 Status of MoA sustainable agriculture policy on pesticide use (FAO inputs)			

2.2.2.4 Project interventions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• banning of certain pesticides</li> <li>• reduced use of fertilizers</li> <li>• increased controls / penalties for animal waste.</li> </ul>			
2.2.2.5 Analyse with MoA impact of sustainable agricultural practices			
<b>Activity 2.2.2 - Implementation of sustainable agricultural practices to reduce negative biodiversity impacts</b>			
2.2.2.1 Support to MoA, farmer associations, local NGOs to get farmers within CIMP to adopt biodiversity friendly agricultural management practices and crops at same time as ensuring sustainable food production and food security: PILOT IN AVANA VALLEY			
2.2.2.2 Status of MoA and partners training for farmers (mainly in AVANA VALLEY but also some on Outer Islands) in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IPFM (Integrated Pest and Fertility Management)</li> <li>• Crops that do not require so much in way of agrochemicals (eg selected banana varieties and Cordyline) [also on MITIARO AND MANGAIA: Banana variety (Lady's Fingers) and Dragon fruit to replace pineapples]</li> <li>• contour planting;</li> <li>• mulching,</li> <li>• weed control without herbicides;</li> <li>• inter-cropping with legumes</li> </ul>			

<b>Activity 2.2.3 – Market promotion of sustainable agricultural production:</b>			
2.2.3.1 Include use of native food crops in criteria for Green Endorsement category of tourism accreditation system for hotels/restaurants			
2.2.3.2 With MoA, CIT Corp, NGOs improve consumer awareness and market access for sustainably produced agricultural products.			
<b>Activity 2.2.4 – Capacity building of agriculture sector stakeholders to implement sustainable practices:</b>			
2.2.4.1 Training for MoA staff, farmers' organizations and individual farmers, including field schools and training of trainers [trainers from where?]: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mulching,</li> <li>• inter-cropping and contour planting;</li> <li>• workshops on agrochemicals</li> <li>• methods to reduce water runoff and settle sediments</li> </ul>			
<b>Output 2.3: Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into tourism sector</b>			
<b>Activity 2.3.1 - Integration of biodiversity considerations into the tourism accreditation process: Develop wide-ranging BD conservation/energy/ ecological health criteria to be included in existing tourism accreditation system administered by TIC</b>			
2.3.1.1 Assist in changes to the accreditation system [What are the criteria developed? ]			

2.3.1.2 Develop and implement monitoring system for performance of tourism operators			
2.3.1.3 Information sharing and outreach to tourism operators - media used?			
2.3.1.4 Research on fiscal incentives			
2.3.1.5 Recognition systems for green compliant tourism operators			
<b>Activity 2.3.2 - Promote ecological tourism activities to reduce human impacts on PNAs and other important sites</b>			
2.3.2.1 Promote eco-tourism to convince tourism operators that looking after the environment is good for business.			
2.3.2.2 Develop and strengthen education/information for visitors in or near PAs			
2.3.2.3 Status of collaboration with partners on promotion of ecotourism			
2.3.2.4 Status of the existing “Go Local” campaign managed by the BTIB			
2.3.2.5 Encourage use of organic local products in the hotel and restaurant industry			
2.3.2.6 Develop and seek approval for fiscal incentives/disincentives to improve ecological footprint of tourism			
2.3.2.7 Include tourism related measures in CIT Corp's Destination Development Strategy			
<b>Activity 2.3.3 - Develop and promote tourism-based projects to support biodiversity conservation:</b>			

2.3.3.1 Increased numbers of BD conservation projects sponsored by tour operators, hotels.			
2.3.3.2 Status of Regional R2R programme to establish public-private partnerships for tourism sector investment in ICM in the Muri area, and to establish an Environmental Investment Board			
2.3.3.3 Technical support and guidance to tourism operators who wish to implement new programs, in particular those that will have direct benefits for PNAs			
<b>Activity 2.3.4 – Capacity building of tourism sector stakeholders to implement sustainable practices:</b>			
2.3.4.1 Capacity building for tourism operators. for example in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wastewater systems</li> <li>• recycling</li> <li>• biodiversity friendly building</li> <li>• guidelines for whale watching, boat anchoring to protect reefs,</li> </ul>			
2.3.4.2 Improving knowledge of environmental issues and impacts of tourism among tourism stakeholders			
2.3.4.3 Assist tourism stakeholders in educating visitors / clients through workshops, seminars, documentaries and tutorials, field study, site visits and case studies.			



Annex 5 Matrix of assessment of Project Progress

	Indicator	Baseline Level (2015)	Level reported in the project's first PIR (July 2017)	Target level at end of project	Mid-term Level and Assessment (November 2017)	Achievement Rating	Justification for rating
OBJECTIVE	Overall framework in place for conservation in the Southern Group of the Cook Islands	Cook Islands Marine Park (CIMP) declared as protected, but with no legal designation or active management	Whole of Cook Islands EEZ is now under CIMP and the Marae Moana Bill 2017 is in parliament waiting to be passed. The CIMP has been expanded to include the entire Cook Islands EEZ of 1.9 million square kilometres. The Marae Moana Park Policy has been completed and endorsed by Cabinet in May 2016.  A 50 nautical mile buffer zone around (all) islands was endorsed in March 2017 for domestic fishing.	1.1 million sq. km. of CIMP legally designated and actively managed, with dedicated staff implementing planning and coordination of the entire CIMP by end of year 2	Surpassed area of legal designation, not zoned yet, nor staffed and managed as a Park	MU	Framework could be in place by end of project, but there are likely to be shortcomings in expectations of areas being "managed for biodiversity", and it is unlikely that water quality can be shown to be
	Area of inhabited Outer Islands in Southern Group managed for BD conservation through Island Development Plans • Terrestrial • Marine	0 0	These targets are still realistic, and achievable, it requires more communication and support to both Outer Island coordinator based at the Office of the Prime Minister and the Pa enua Island Administrators themselves. The ability to have measures for	By end of project: 6 islands totalling 15,110 ha. 6 islands totalling 16,174 ha.	No data seen - Slow progress on protecting KBAs as Managed Conservation Areas through Island Development Plans. Targets if reached would be 67% of terrestrial area and 88% of		



V E			area coverage in targets is still achievable currently but may need some technical expertise to verify these targets.		inshore marine area		significantly improved over the remaining months of the project, although with concerted effort
	Tracking Tool IW1: Innovative solutions implemented for reduced pollution, improved water use efficiency, sustainable fisheries with rights-based management, IWRM, water supply protection in SIDS, and aquifer and catchment protection	Limited local capacity exists for overseeing and monitoring of water quality in lagoons	<p>Water quality testing by MMR and NES is operational only on Rarotonga and Aitutaki on a monthly basis. Water for Rarotonga is currently managed by Infrastructure Cook islands. They have the mandate for this operation. Respective outer islands have their island administration who manage these resources with technical support from ICI.</p> <p>Planning and consultation with the Aitutaki Island Council has proceeded well with agreement reached for NES, MMR and the ADB/GoCI GHD Project to align and collaborate on the development of the Aitutaki Lagoon Master Plan.</p> <p>Many partners are engaged in different activities on different</p>	Water quality improved through small demonstrations and monitoring mechanisms in place for project related indicators	No data. Tracking tool not completed and innovative solutions not detailed		small demonstrations at pilot sites (as in Prodoc) could be established that are properly coordinated across agencies

			islands under this project: it may pay to review this during the MTR.				
	Improved management effectiveness of Cook Islands Marine Park, as measured by GEF BD 1 Tracking Tool (METT)	METT score = 30	<p>Establishing Marae Moana Office within the Office of the Prime Minister would create opportunities for this indicator.</p> <p>Work is progressing, from Marae Moana Policy to the Marae Moana Act 2017: this may need some revision.</p>	METT score > 60 by end of project	No data. METT not measured at mid-term		
	<p>National agencies responsible for PA management are effectively delivering PA management functions (as measured by the Capacity development indicator score for protected area system):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systemic</li> <li>• Institutional</li> <li>• Individual</li> </ul>	<p>50%</p> <p>47%</p> <p>52%</p>	<p>Currently, baseline levels have not changed dramatically but may progress towards the 70% end of project target as the Marae Moana Act is implemented and becomes fully functional.</p> <p>Institutional authority has been considered by the project and Protected Areas coordination is a major undertaking as this is spread across several ministries, NES, MMR, and the House of Ariki, TIS. Some technical support has been</p>	<p>By end of project:</p> <p>70%</p> <p>70%</p> <p>70%</p>	No data. Scorecard not completed at mid-term		

COMPONENT 1			sought to harmonise these activities and better coordinate efforts of all involved. The placement and mandate of Protected Areas has waited on the development and endorsement of the Marae Moana (Cook Islands Marine Park) Policy and Bill. Once this is in place, the need for a Protected Areas Policy and/or necessary regulatory changes will be considered.			MU	<p>Most of the indicators have not been measured, so rating has to be given partly taking into account progress towards expected outputs (And some indicators are flawed and should be dropped or changed)</p> <p>Each of the main responsible partners carrying out activities under their own planning and in some cases to meet their own institutional aims, which are often narrower than the project's aims. Coordinated approach to strengthening protected area management at system and site level lacking, time is</p>
	Updated and consolidated legal framework for management of the Cook Islands Marine Park (CIMP) and all other protected areas in the country	Existing legislation for PAs is out-dated and incomplete: CIMP and Ra'ui systems have no legal standing; detailed regulations are not in place	Marae Moana Policy has been endorsed and awaiting the Marae Moana Bill 2017 to be considered/passed in Parliament. Parliament sitting was much delayed due to reasons beyond agencies' control and did not sit from 2016 until July 2017. Parliament is now currently in session with the Marae Moana Bill 2017 prioritised for consideration.	Protected and Managed Areas Act drafted and enacted by end of year 2; detailed regulations for resource restrictions and PA management enacted by end of project	<p>Well behind schedule. Marae Moana Act has been passed now. Protected and Managed Areas Act no progress so far, so none on regulations either.</p> <p>There are restrictions under other legislation such as the Marine Resources Act that predate the project.</p>		

	Consolidated management authority for protected areas in the Cook Islands	Institutional authority for protected areas is spread among various agencies	Marae Moana Policy has been endorsed and now awaits the Marae Moana Bill 2017 to be passed in Parliament, which is currently in session. Coordination to be strengthened, as called for by the Prime Minister Hon. Henry Puna, within the Marae Moana framework to ensure that all activities and partners involved participate actively in the process and its implementation.	Marae Moana Office undertaking coordinated management of protected areas by end of project	Nothing firm yet on institutional authority		getting short. Surveys should be directed at specific questions. There has been a tendency to regard new surveys ("assessments") as an obligatory step in preparing management plans even though some information is already available. Each new survey should be targeted carefully. Best to get on with management planning and include further surveys in the plans as required.
	Management of protected area sites on islands in the Southern Group	1 existing protected area site (Takitumu Conservation Area) is actively managed	TOR's are currently being developed for TA's to be able to meet this target. Capacity has been sought for this key indicator and target should be met in time or by end of project.	Management plans for at least 15 protected area sites under implementation by end of project	No management plans prepared under the project.		Under current management and technical direction the project is not on target to achieve end-of-project targets without major shortcomings
	% Area of Southern Group islands managed as Protected Areas (protected natural areas, community conservation areas, ra'ui sites) • Terrestrial • Marine (to the outer reef)	2.8% 9.7%	This indicator and target should be met as there have been some new terrestrial and marine protected areas and Raui sites. Consolidating of all terrestrial and marine information will need to be done by the R2R team during 2017.	By end of project: 6.7% 12.3%	Data not available.		

	<p>Improved management effectiveness of priority conservation zones, as measured by the GEF BD 1 Tracking Tool (METT):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takitumu Conservation Area (Rarotonga)</li> <li>• Cloud Forest Nature Reserve (Rarotonga)</li> <li>• Manuae Wildlife Sanctuary / Marine Reserve (Manuae)</li> <li>• Moko Ero Nui Leeward Forest Reserve (Atiu)</li> <li>• Takutea Wildlife Sanctuary / Marine Reserve (Takutea)</li> </ul>	<p>64 26 12 26 29</p>	<p>Work to be done for these priority conservation zones are in progress with management plans to be developed first. Technical assistance is required for this to be completed.</p> <p>TCA is on track with targets that should be met by end of project.</p> <p>Mokoero Nui has been declared as a Forest Reserve and plans are in place to support this PNA.</p> <p>Consultations with Island councils and landowners for Manuae and Takutea have been carried out with plans in place to carry out terrestrial and marine assessments in late 2017, in order to inform management plans.,</p> <p>Cloud Forest work will progress based on the outcomes of the IIB Project Cloud Forest report.</p>	<p>By end of project: METT score &gt;70 METT score &gt;50 METT score &gt;40 METT score &gt;50 METT score &gt;50</p>	<p>METT not done at MTR so no data</p> <p>Some of these areas are no under management</p>		
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	Lagoon ecosystems are managed in a coordinated manner and with clear ecological conservation objective	Lagoons in the Cook Islands are not actively managed for conservation	The Aitutaki Island Council are fully supportive of the ALMP and a coordinated approach between R2R (NES, MMR), Mei te vai ki te Vai (GHD) looking at sanitation in Aitutaki to be conducted in this process. The passing of the Marae Moana Bill will also provide some guidance from this work and vice versa. It is hoped that this effort in Aitutaki can be replicated for the Muri Lagoon Area also.	Aitutaki Lagoon Master Plan in place, with conservation zoning, goals and targets	Not done. It should be done immediately - there is no reason to delay.		
	Funds available for management of Protected Areas, as reported in the GEF BD1 Tracking Tool – Financial Scorecard: • Non-governmental financing mechanisms • Government budget allocations	US\$23,800 US\$63,750	It is envisaged that the target will be met if all partners maintain their support to protected areas within their current budget allocation. With Marae Moana Bill to be passed also provides opportunity for stakeholders to better coordinate funding and efforts. Some technical advice is required for this financial scorecard to ensure that the Cook islands meet its	By end of project: US\$523,800 US\$148,750	BD1 Tracking Tool - Financial Scorecard not completed at MTR Unlikely to have reached targets		

		financial obligations to this indicator.				
Conservation of critical coral reef habitat within the CIMP, as measured by finfish populations at coral reefs around Rarotonga and Aitutaki	Baseline TBD in year 1 of project	<p>The baseline for this indicator is yet to be determined. Living Oceans Foundation has completed surveys on Aitutaki and Rarotonga but their full report is awaited.</p> <p>Finfish surveys were planned by MMR in this reporting term; however due to loss of staff, capacity to implement these surveys was affected with delays in recruiting replacements. This has been reprogrammed to commence in late 2017.</p> <p>Planned surveys for Aitutaki Lagoon Master Plan starting in 2nd half of 2017 will provide information for this indicator as team is planning to carry out reef surveys to inform the plan.</p>	No decrease in finfish populations by end of project	<p><i>No baseline so cannot measure change.</i></p> <p><i>Living Oceans Foundation surveyed the reefs in 2013. Report available here. CIMP survey report also available. MMR surveys underway but there is a question about whether these surveys are required for the purposes of this component. Surely enough information is available to continue with planning. Further surveys can be included in the management plans</i></p>		
<p>Conservation of priority species at selected sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Turtle (Takutea and Manuae)</li> <li>• Hawksbill turtle (Takutea and Manuae)</li> </ul>	Baseline TBD in year 1 of project	Surveys to determine baseline levels for the Green turtle ( <i>Chelonia mydas</i> ) and hawksbill turtle ( <i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i> ) on Takutea	<p>By end of project:</p> <p>No net decline in population</p> <p>No net decline in population</p>	<p>No baseline for turtles, humphead wrasse</p>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loggerhead Turtle (Palmerston)</li> <li>• Napoleon (Humphead) Wrasse (Rarotonga &amp; Aitutaki)</li> <li>• Atiu Swiftlet (Atiu)</li> </ul>	Baseline TBD in year 1 of project	and Manuae and the loggerhead turtle ( <i>Caretta caretta</i> ) have yet to completed.	No net decline in population No net decline in population No net decline in population No net decline in population No net decline in population No net decline in population No net decline in forested area	Little point in measuring absolute population sizes for animals that are difficult to count.  Must use same methodology as baseline surveys		
	Mangaian Kingfisher (Mangaia) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rarotongan Monarch (Rarotonga &amp; Atiu)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mitiaro Tree Palm (Mitiaro)</li> </ul>	Baseline TBD in year 1 of project Baseline TBD in year 1 of project  420 individuals 1,000 individuals  428 individuals (Rarotonga); 125 individuals (Atiu) 375 mature trees	The baseline level for the Humphead wrasse ( <i>Chelinus undulatus</i> ) is yet to be determined but the survey by Living Oceans Foundation on Aitutaki and Rarotonga have been completed but only a summary of report is available. Project will work with MMR to source information for Rarotonga.  MMR and NES are planning joint terrestrial/marine assessments for Takutea and Manuae late 2017 and surveys will inform this indicator. Follow up surveys for the birds (Mangaian kingfisher and Rarotonga monarch) and mitiaro tree palm are forthcoming.				
	Landscape/seascape area covered by the project (ha), as measured by GEF BD 2 Tracking Tool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directly covered</li> <li>• Indirectly covered</li> </ul>	0 0	Due to the scope of the CIMP being the entire Cook Islands EEZ of 1.9 million square kilometres, it is safe to	1.1 million sq. km. (CIMP) 0.83 million sq. km. (Northern Group)	Difficult to define "covered". I would say whole EEZ could be said to be		



			say that this meets if not exceeds the target. The entire EEZ was put in as a consideration for the CIMP. This will now receive more attention in terms of managing pockets of different activities within the EEZ whether it be for pure conservation, seabed mining and fisheries.		indirectly covered in terms of policy. But direct coverage is difficult to define. A poor indicator as not enough information given		
	Pressures from resources uses in the land- and seascape are reduced through Ridge to Reef management approaches, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduced use of agricultural chemicals, based on value of annual imports</li><li>• Fertilizers</li><li>• Pesticides</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NZ\$339,554</li><li>• NZ\$406,701</li></ul>	The Ministry of Agriculture is still compiling information pertaining to this indicator and target. Some technical expertise may be required for this purpose specifically either from the National Statistics office as well as the Ministry's market survey activities. This is a key area that needs strengthening within the Ministry as it is, National statistics collect data on this as well as customs, there needs to be some agreement between agencies to be able to access this information to meet their targets.	At least 15% reduction in value of imports of agricultural chemicals by the end of the project	No data available, and when available may not give reliable picture of impact of project		Progress is behind schedule and indicators not useful in assessing progress so have considered expected outputs too.

n e n t 2	Planning approval process for infrastructure and other development	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process depends on self reporting by developers	<p>Activities have been carried out to help strengthen the EIA process in the Cook Islands, including through cost shared delivery of a SPREP organised training workshop to all NES Advisory and Compliance officers and capacity development of the Division.</p> <p>Information on EIA applications is currently being inputted into a database within NES. However, further work is needed to develop a policy or make necessary changes to regulations to support additional considerations, such as independent review being given to applications in or around PAs.</p> <p>Further support to the EIA process from the project is planned.</p>	EIAs for infrastructure development in or around PAs are subject to independent review, and development plans are adapted as necessary to conserve biodiversity	No independent review yet, No biodiversity criteria included in standard EIA	MU	<p>There are clear ways in which progress can be speeded up - by concerted efforts on biodiversity criteria for tourism accreditation and for EIA, by choosing and concentrating on pilot demonstration areas for changes in agricultural practices.</p> <p>Coordination lacking. Was there planning input from PMU to the videos produced by CITC? Better impact on project aims will follow if project brings sectors together under the biodiversity/protected area umbrella more substantially and effectively than through quarterly steering committee meetings that deal with the administration and finance of three or more projects at one sitting.</p>
	Forest cover on the 9 islands within the Cook Islands Marine Park	13,245 hectares of natural forested area	This baseline may need to be verified again before end of 2017 to confirm forest cover and the methodology for this	No decline in forest cover by the end of the project	Needs more nuanced approach. PIR assessment makes valid point.		

			assessment. Many of the natural forested areas in the Cook Islands also contain a significant number of invasive species plants and trees which could possibly skew our baselines - as any activity outside the project that positively tackles invasive species will have a negative impact on this indicator.		Baseline not believable - what is meant by "natural forest area"? [13,000 ha is well over half of entire terrestrial area of southern islands]		
	Sedimentation and pollution of aquatic and marine habitats	Sedimentation and pollution (pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, waste) have significant negative impacts on streams and lagoons in the country	Currently only Rarotonga and Aitutaki have consistent water quality testing with monthly reports available upon request from MMR. NES is the only other partner supporting this activity. Ministry of Agriculture is also working in tandem with MMR for testing of both soil and water runoff on Rarotonga to test for effects of pesticides and fertilizers if any. There is an opportunity to strengthen water quality testing under the national water policy 2015 for more tests to be done by other agencies. Ministry of	At least 10 sites within CIMP where water quality will be improved through measures to control water pollution and sedimentation (from agriculture or other sources)	None so far		

		Health carry out water testing to be safe enough to drink but only on Rarotonga at this time. Project will endeavor to coordinate with responsible agencies to conduct testing and identify/implement control measures in other sites in the coming year.				
Reduced impacts of human activities on land on the health of inshore marine ecosystems, as measured by algal levels (coralline algae, turf algae, and macro-algae) on coral reefs around Rarotonga and Aitutaki	Baseline TBD during year 1 of project	This is an outstanding indicator and one that may need some further technical support or advice, particularly in accurately measuring algal levels within lagoons. There is opportunity that the Aitutaki Lagoon Master plan will also be able to inform this indicator for the project. Project will collaborate with responsible agencies to collate/collect information on algal levels around Rarotonga	No increase in algal levels on coral reefs by end of project	Apparently no baseline data available, but I suspect that there is a way to get at an indication of trend, through the various surveys that have been done in the past and up to now, which is all that is needed		
Impact of tourism businesses on biodiversity and ecosystem functioning in targeted KBAs	Less than 5 tourism businesses in the Cook Islands actively implement environmental	This target may need to be reviewed and/or the Tourism Council needs to be provided support to identify 20 tourism	At least 20 tourism businesses are implementing BD management programs that comply	No conservation guidelines developed.		

		management programs	<p>businesses that are implementing BD management programs and provide some support to them. Currently, two local businesses have applied through Cook Islands Tourism for support to their biodiversity conservation projects, which has been approved by the NBSC for 3rd Q 2017. It is hoped that these two projects can be demonstration models for other tourism operators in country.</p> <p>Work on the national accreditation system has not commenced and technical advice in this area to progress this activity may be necessary as well as in engaging businesses in biodiversity conservation.</p>	with conservation guidelines developed through the project and included in national accreditation system			
	# of projects by tourism operators that support biodiversity conservation (e.g. creating Ra'ui sites / CCAs; coral gardens; beach clean-up; sponsored species conservation)	6 on-going projects in the Southern Group	This is an ideal target and one that can easily be met if the industry can better coordinate their stakeholders to	At least 15 projects operating by the end of the project	Perhaps two, and they have only just been approved.		

			<p>provide information soon.</p> <p>Two projects are identified but may need support to be able to successfully implement and sustain their activities.</p> <p>Support will be provided to CITC to be able to pull this information out so that they can meet the targets they set out in the R2R Prodoc.</p> <p>Capacity is limited so there should be more effort put to supporting the tourism team.</p>		<p>What is the procedure for assessment of proposals? And for assessment of impact after implementation. Are they aimed at direct impact on BD or through changing public attitudes to BD?</p> <p>How can tourism operators create Ra'ui sites so easily?</p>		
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## Annex 6 MTR Terms of Reference

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY AND ENHANCING ECOSYSTEM FUNCTION THROUGH A "RIDGE TO REEF" APPROACH IN THE COOK ISLANDS PROJECT**

### **A. Introduction:**

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the UNDP-GEF Midterm Review (MTR) of the full-sized project titled *Conserving biodiversity and Enhancing Ecosystem Function through a "Ridge to Reef" Approach in the Cook Islands* (PIMS 5168) implemented through the National Environment Service, which is to be undertaken in 2017. The project started on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2015 and is in its third year of implementation. In line with the UNDP-GEF Guidance on MTRs, this MTR process was initiated before the submission of the second Project Implementation Report (PIR). This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document [Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed](#) Projects.

### **B. Project Description or Context and Background:**

The project was designed to enhance Cook Islands' capacities to effectively manage its protected areas (PAs) and sustainably manage its productive landscapes at local scales while considering food security and livelihoods. This will include the operationalization of the Cook Island Marine Park (covering approximately 1.1 million km<sup>2</sup> of Cook Islands southern exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and the establishment and strengthening of various forms of protected and locally managed areas within the CIMP, including Protected Natural Areas, Community Conservation Areas, and Ra'ui Sites.

In so doing, the project will support the Cook Islands in maintaining traditional resource management and conservation systems and approaches, including a leading role for traditional and local leaders and the local communities that they represent in the declaration and management of protected areas, while also integrating these traditional systems into a formal legal and institutional system of protected areas.

The project will support the Government in tailoring policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks to suit the specific characteristics of the Cook Islands and of the new CIMP, recognizing that protection and sustainable use will need to be zoned and planned carefully, and that tenure over most land areas is vested in local communities through a traditional tenure system.

Finally, the project has been designed to engineer a paradigm shift in the management of marine and terrestrial PAs from a site centric approach to a holistic "ridge to reef" land and seascape approach, whereby activities in the immediate production areas adjacent to marine and terrestrial PAs will be managed to reduce threats to biodiversity stemming from key production activities (tourism and agriculture). The project has 2 components, concerned with (1) strengthening PAs management and (2) mainstreaming biodiversity across productions land and seascapes; and 7 outputs as follows:

Output 1.1: Strengthened Legal / Regulatory and Policy Frameworks for Protected Areas

Output 1.2: Expanded and strengthened management systems for Protected Areas

Output 1.3: Strengthened institutional coordination and capacities at the national and local levels for the



participatory management of Protected Areas

Output 1.4: Financial sustainability framework developed for system of Protected Areas

Output 2.1: Ridge to Reef approaches integrated into Land Use and Development Planning

Output 2.2: Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into agriculture sector

Output 2.3: Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into tourism sector

The total GEF trust funds for this project is US\$4,267,431 with in-kind co-financing of US\$14,950,000. The project document was signed in July 2015. The executing agency for this project is the National Environment Service and responsible parties are the Ministry of Marine Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, and Cook Islands Tourism Corporation.

### **C. Scope of Work:**

The objective of this consultancy is to undertake the mid-term review of the Cook Islands R2R project.

#### **1. OBJECTIVES OF THE MTR**

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy, and its risks to sustainability.

#### **2. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY**

The MTR must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The MTR team will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Environmental & Social Safeguard Policy, the Project Document, project reports including Annual Project Review/PIRs, project budget revisions, lesson learned reports, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review). The MTR team will review the baseline GEF focal area Tracking Tool submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Tracking Tool that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach<sup>1</sup> ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Adviser, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR.<sup>2</sup> Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to the *National Environment Service, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (Development Coordination Division), Ministry of Marine Resources*

<sup>1</sup> For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see [UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results](#), 05 Nov 2013.

<sup>2</sup> For more stakeholder engagement in the M&E process, see the [UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](#), Chapter 3, pg. 93.

*Ministry of Agriculture, Cook Island Tourism Corporations, Ministry of Culture, House of Ariki, Marae Moana, Climate Change Division of the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Education, Te Ipukarea Society, Cook Islands Natural Heritage Trust, executing agencies, senior officials and task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project stakeholders, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field missions to the Cook Islands including a selection of the project sites on Rarotonga and the Pa Enua.*

The final MTR report should describe the full MTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review.

### **3. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR**

The MTR team will assess the following four categories of project progress. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for extended descriptions.

#### **i. Project Strategy**

##### Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

##### Results Framework/Logframe:

- Undertake a critical analysis of the project's logframe indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.
- Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?
- Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyse beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.

- Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART 'development' indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

## ii. Progress Towards Results

### Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

- Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix and following the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*; colour code progress in a "traffic light system" based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as "Not on target to be achieved" (red).

**Table. Progress Towards Results Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against End-of-project Targets)**

Project Strategy	Indicator <sup>3</sup>	Baseline Level <sup>4</sup>	Level in 1 <sup>st</sup> PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target <sup>5</sup>	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment <sup>6</sup>	Achievement Rating <sup>7</sup>	Justification for Rating
Objective:	Indicator (if applicable):							
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							
Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
	Etc.							
Etc.								

### Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved
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In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

- Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

<sup>3</sup> Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards

<sup>4</sup> Populate with data from the Project Document

<sup>5</sup> If available

<sup>6</sup> Colour code this column only

<sup>7</sup> Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

### iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

#### Management Arrangements:

- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.

#### Work Planning:

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.
- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
- Examine the use of the project's results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

#### Finance and co-finance:

- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

#### Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

- Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?

#### Stakeholder Engagement:

- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?

- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?

Reporting:

- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.
- Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly-rated PIRs, if applicable?)
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Communications:

- Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?
- Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?)
- For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project's progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits.

**iv. Sustainability**

- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Management Module are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.
- In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:

Financial risks to sustainability:

- What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes)?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders)

will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

- Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems/ mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer are in place.

Environmental risks to sustainability:

- Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?

## Conclusions & Recommendations

The MTR team will include a section of the report setting out the MTR's evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.<sup>8</sup>

Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report's executive summary. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table.

The MTR team should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

## Ratings

The MTR team will include its ratings of the project's results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements in a *MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table* in the Executive Summary of the MTR report. See Annex E for ratings scales. No rating on Project Strategy and no overall project rating is required.

**Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for Cook Islands R2R**

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	

<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, MTR conclusions may be integrated into the body of the report.

Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Sustainability	(rate 4 pt. scale)	

#### 4. Expected Outcomes and Deliverables:

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	MTR Inception Report	MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	No later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission: 23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2017	MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management
2	Presentation	Initial Findings	End of MTR mission: 21 <sup>st</sup> July 2017	MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit
3	Draft Final Report	Full report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the MTR mission	Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP
4	Final Report*	Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have	Within 2 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft:	Sent to the Commissioning Unit

		(and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	18 <sup>th</sup> August 2017	
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**5. Institutional Arrangement:**

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is the UNDP Samoa Multi-country office for Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau based in Samoa.

The commissioning unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the MTR team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

**6. Duration of the Work:**

The total duration of the MTR will be 25 *working days* over a time period of 18 *weeks* starting 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017, and shall not exceed five months from when the consultant(s) are hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

COMPLETION DATE	NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS	ACTIVITY
19 <sup>th</sup> May 2017		Application closes
9 <sup>th</sup> June 2017		Select MTR Team
16 <sup>th</sup> June 2017		Prep the MTR Team (handover of Project Documents)
22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2017	4 working days	Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report
30 <sup>th</sup> June 2017		Finalization and Validation of MTR Inception Report- latest start of MTR mission
17 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup> July 2017	5 working days	MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits
21 <sup>st</sup> July 2017	1 working days	Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings- earliest end of MTR mission



4 <sup>th</sup> August 2017	10 working days	Preparing draft report
18 <sup>th</sup> August 2017	5 working days	Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report/Finalization of MTR report (note: accommodate time delay in dates for circulation and review of the draft report)
1 <sup>st</sup> September 2017		Preparation & Issue of Management Response
30 <sup>th</sup> September 2017		Expected date of full MTR completion

Options for site visits should be provided in the Inception Report.

#### **7. Duty Station:**

Home-based with travel to Cook Islands. It is expected that the consultant will spend 5 (working) days on mission in Cook Islands.

#### **8. Competencies:**

- Demonstrates commitment to the Government of Cook Islands mission, vision and values.
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability
- Focuses on result for the client and responds positively to feedback
- Consistently approaches work with energy and a positive, constructive attitude
- Demonstrates openness to change and ability to manage complexities
- Good inter-personal and teamwork skills, networking aptitude, ability to work in multicultural environment

#### **Qualifications of the Successful Contractor:**

- Post-graduate degree in environmental science or natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, or other closely related field
- Minimum of 10 years of relevant professional experience in natural resource management/biodiversity conservation, including land and/or seascape scales involving multiple sectors
- Minimum of 5 years' experience in project evaluations, results-based monitoring, and/or evaluation methodologies
- Experience of working with the GEF/GEF-LDCF programs and in the targeted focal areas: biodiversity and

international waters preferred

- Experience working in the Pacific region preferred
- Fluency in English (oral and written) is a requirement, with excellent written and presentation skills

**Evaluation criteria: 70% Technical, 30% financial combined weight:**

Technical Evaluation Criteria (based on the information provided in the CV and the relevant documents must be submitted as evidence to support possession of below required criteria):

- Post-graduate degree in environmental science or natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, or other closely related field (25%)
- Minimum of 10 years of relevant professional experience in natural resource management/biodiversity conservation, including land and/or seascape scales involving multiple sectors (30%)
- Minimum of 5 years' experience in project evaluations, results-based monitoring, and/or evaluation methodologies (20%)
- Experience of working with the GEF/GEF-LDCF programs and in the targeted focal areas: biodiversity and international waters preferred (5%)
- Experience working in the Pacific region (5%)
- Fluency in English (oral and written) is a requirement, with excellent written and presentation skills (15%)

**9. Scope of Bid Price & Schedule of Payments:**

DELIVERABLES	DUE DATE (%)	AMOUNT IN USD TO BE PAID AFTER CERTIFICATION BY UNDP OF SATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE OF DELIVERABLES
Upon approval and certification by UNDP/NES of the final MTR Inception Report	30 <sup>rd</sup> June 2017 (20%)	\$xxx
Upon approval and certification by UNDP/NES of the draft MTR report	4 <sup>th</sup> August 2017 (40%)	\$xxx
Upon approval and certification by UNDP/NES of the final MTR report	18 <sup>th</sup> August 2017 (40%)	\$xxx
TOTAL		\$xxx

**10. Recommended Presentation of Proposal:**

Given below is the recommended format for submitting your proposal. The following headings with the required details are important. Please use the template available (Letter of Offer to complete financial proposal)

CVs with a proposed methodology addressing the elements mentioned under deliverables must be submitted by **2<sup>nd</sup> June 2017** electronically via email: [procurement.ws@undp.org](mailto:procurement.ws@undp.org). Incomplete applications will not be considered and only candidates for whom there is further interest will be contacted. Proposals must include:

- **CV** or P11 form addressing the evaluation criteria and why you consider yourself the most suitable for this assignment. The selected candidate must submit a signed P11 prior to contract award.
- **3 professional references (including one from most recent job/assignment)**
- **A brief methodology** on how you will approach and conduct the work (2 pages maximum),
- **Financial Proposal** specifying the daily rate and other expenses, if any
- **Letter of interest and availability specifying the available date to start and other details**

Queries about the consultancy can be directed to the UNDP Procurement Unit [procurement.ws@undp.org](mailto:procurement.ws@undp.org)

**ToR ANNEX A: List of Documents to be reviewed by the MTR Team**

1. PIF
2. UNDP Initiation Plan
3. UNDP Project Document
4. UNDP Environmental and Social Screening results
5. Project Inception Report
6. All Project Implementation Reports (PIR's)
7. Quarterly progress reports and work plans of the various implementation task teams
8. Audit reports
9. Finalized GEF focal area Tracking Tools at CEO endorsement and midterm (*fill in specific TTs for this project's focal area*)
10. Mission reports
11. All monitoring reports prepared by the project
12. Financial and Administration guidelines used by Project Team

The following documents will also be available:

13. Project operational guidelines, manuals and systems
14. UNDP country/countries programme document(s)
15. Minutes of the (*Project Title*) Board Meetings and other meetings (i.e. Project Appraisal Committee meetings)
16. Project site location maps

**ToR ANNEX B: Guidelines on Contents for the Midterm Review Report<sup>9</sup>**

- i. **Basic Report Information (for opening page or title page)**
  - Title of UNDP supported GEF financed project
  - UNDP PIMS# and GEF project ID#
  - MTR time frame and date of MTR report
  - Region and countries included in the project
  - GEF Operational Focal Area/Strategic Program
  - Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and other project partners
  - MTR team members
  - Acknowledgements
- ii. **Table of Contents**
- iii. **Acronyms and Abbreviations**
1. **Executive Summary (3-5 pages)**
  - Project Information Table
  - Project Description (brief)
  - Project Progress Summary (between 200-500 words)
  - MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table
  - Concise summary of conclusions
  - Recommendation Summary Table
2. **Introduction (2-3 pages)**
  - Purpose of the MTR and objectives
  - Scope & Methodology: principles of design and execution of the MTR, MTR approach and data collection methods, limitations to the MTR
  - Structure of the MTR report

<sup>9</sup> The Report length should not exceed 40 pages in total (not including annexes).

**3. Project Description and Background Context (3-5 pages)**

- Development context: environmental, socio-economic, institutional, and policy factors relevant to the project objective and scope
- Problems that the project sought to address: threats and barriers targeted
- Project Description and Strategy: objective, outcomes and expected results, description of field sites (if any)
- Project Implementation Arrangements: short description of the Project Board, key implementing partner arrangements, etc.
- Project timing and milestones
- Main stakeholders: summary list

**4. Findings (12-14 pages)**

**4.1 Project Strategy**

- Project Design
- Results Framework/Logframe

**4.2 Progress Towards Results**

- Progress towards outcomes analysis
- Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective

**4.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management**

- Management Arrangements
- Work planning
- Finance and co-finance
- Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems
- Stakeholder engagement
- Reporting
- Communications

**4.4 Sustainability**

- Financial risks to sustainability
- Socio-economic to sustainability
- Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability
- Environmental risks to sustainability

**5. Conclusions and Recommendations (4-6 pages)**

**5.1 Conclusions**

- Comprehensive and balanced statements (that are evidence-based and connected to the MTR's findings) which highlight the strengths, weaknesses and results of the project

**5.2 Recommendations**

- Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project
- Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project
- Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

**6. Annexes**

- MTR ToR (excluding ToR annexes)
- MTR evaluative matrix (evaluation criteria with key questions, indicators, sources of data, and methodology)
- Example Questionnaire or Interview Guide used for data collection
- Ratings Scales
- MTR mission itinerary
- List of persons interviewed
- List of documents reviewed
- Co-financing table (if not previously included in the body of the report)
- Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form
- Signed MTR final report clearance form
- *Annexed in a separate file:* Audit trail from received comments on draft MTR report
- *Annexed in a separate file:* Relevant midterm tracking tools (*METT, FSC, Capacity scorecard, etc.*)

**ToR ANNEX C: Midterm Review Evaluative Matrix Template**

Evaluative Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
<b>Project Strategy: To what extent is the project strategy relevant to country priorities, country ownership, and the best route towards expected results?</b>			
(include evaluative question(s))	(i.e. relationships established, level of coherence between project design and implementation approach, specific activities conducted, quality of risk mitigation strategies, etc.)	(i.e. project documents, national policies or strategies, websites, project staff, project partners, data collected throughout the MTR mission, etc.)	(i.e. document analysis, data analysis, interviews with project staff, interviews with stakeholders, etc.)
<b>Progress Towards Results: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?</b>			

<b>Project Implementation and Adaptive Management: Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and been able to adapt to any changing conditions thus far? To what extent are project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, reporting, and project communications supporting the project's implementation?</b>				
<b>Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?</b>				

▶ **ANNEX 7 LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED**

▼ **annual workplans**

- 17 05 2016 FINAL WORKPLAN ICE R2R CKI - FF 2QT 2016 REVISED.PDF
- 2015 12 09 AWP R2R CKI FINAL.pdf
- 2017 01 12 - AWP R2R CKI 2016 FINAL.pdf
- 20170131 - R2R Cook islands Annual workplan 2017.pdf

▼ **Back to Office / Progress Reports**

- BTOR CKI\_NBSAP [1][1].docx
- BTOR Mangaia Unga Report 2016 3 .pdf
- BTOR Sept 2015.pdf
- BTOR\_CKI Mission 9-13May 2016[1].doc
- BTOR\_Cook Islands\_27.06.17.pdf
- BTOR\_Mauke\_Nga-Pu-Toru\_Pandanus Survey.pdf

▼ **BSC meeting minutes**

- BSC Minutes - 2015 30th Sept FINAL.pdf
- BSC Minutes - 2016 5th Oct FINAL.pdf
- BSC Minutes - 2016 5th July FINAL.pdf
- BSC Minutes - 2016 8th April FINAL.pdf
- BSC Minutes - 2016 15th Dec FINAL.pdf
- BSC Minutes - 2017 5th April FINAL.pdf

▼ **CDRs**

- 2017.04.06 - R2R Cook Islands CDR 2016 endorsed.pdf
- CKI R2R CDR 2015 signed.pdf

▼ **GEF tracking tools\_project inception**

- 12-18-14\_Copy\_of\_5168\_BD1\_Tracking\_Tool\_Final\_0.xls
- 12-18-14\_Copy\_of\_5168\_IW\_Tracking\_Tool\_Final\_0.xls
- 5168\_BD1 Tracking Tool\_Final at project inception.xls
- 5168\_BD1 Tracking Tool\_Obj1\_sect2\_CIMP.pdf
- 5168\_BD1 Tracking Tool\_Obj1\_sect2\_CloudForest.pdf
- 5168\_BD1 Tracking Tool\_Obj1\_sect2\_Manuae.pdf
- 5168\_BD1 Tracking Tool\_Obj1\_sect2\_MokoOroNui.pdf
- 5168\_BD1 Tracking Tool\_Obj1\_sect2\_Takitumu.pdf
- 5168\_BD1 Tracking Tool\_Obj1\_sect2\_Takutea.pdf
- 5168\_BD1 Tracking Tool\_Obj1\_sect3.pdf
- 5168\_BD1 Tracking Tool\_Obj1\_section1.pdf
- 5168\_BD2 Tracking Tool.pdf
- 5168\_IW\_Tracking\_Tool\_Final.xls

▼ **Multi Year Workplans**

- 201701121044 - MYP Revision FINAL.pdf

▼ **National Plans**

- JNAP REPORT lo-res.pdf
- NBSAP DRAFT 23 Oct.docx
- NSDP 2016-2020 - Final.pdf



- PIF\_Prodoc\_inception report
  - 3\_CKI R2R Project Doc signed Final.pdf
  - 5168\_ Cook\_Island\_Initiation Plan\_28August2013.docx.doc
  - 5168\_CI R2R\_PIF\_re-submission final version 23 Apr13.docx.doc
  - Annex3ProjectSites.pdf
  - Council\_letter\_4.pdf
  - GEFReview.pdf
  - Inception Report.pdf
  - PIF COOK ISLANDS.pdf
  - STAPReview.pdf
  - UNDP Social & Environmental Screening.pdf
  - website.docx
- Progress reports
  - 2015 4th QPR\_R2R FINAL.doc
  - 2016 Q1 QPR R2R CKI .pdf
  - 2016 Q2 PR-R2R.pdf
  - 2016 Q3 PR-R2R.pdf
  - 2016 Q4 PR.pdf
  - 2017 2nd QPR R2R FINAL.pdf
  - 170403 OPM MMET report to BSC.docx
  - CKI R2R 2017 1st QPR FINAL comments AnneT.docx
  - MMR Q1 JanMarch\_300317.pdf
  - Q1\_qpr\_report\_2017 NES.docx
  - Q2 JanJune\_300617 MMR FINAL.pdf
  - QPRQ3 Jul\_Sept\_200917.pdf
  - R2R - NES QPR\_Q3 Draft 1.docx
  - R2R - NES\_QPR\_Q2 472017 FINAL.pdf
  - R2R 3QPR 2015.pdf
  - R2R MoA Quaterly Report (Jan - March) 2103 (002)[2].pdf
  - R2R Qtr2 Report MoA 270617.pdf
- Project implementation reports
  - 2017-PIR-PIMS5168-GEFID5348 2.docx
- quarterly workplans
  - 2016 05 17 - ICE Q2 PART2.pdf
  - 2016 R2R CKI Workplan - 1QT2016.pdf
  - 2017 Q3 Workplan R2R - Cook Islands signed.pdf
  - 20170131 - R2R Cook Islands Q1 Plan 2017.pdf
  - AWP R2R 4th QT 2015.pdf
  - R2R - Cook Islands - Q3 2017 - Final.xlsx
  - R2R Qtr3 Report MoA.pdf
- Related Reports and Documents
  - Balloon vine agents EIA Final.pdf
  - Brook landsnails.pdf
  - Mitiaro land snails.pdf
  - Niue\_Revised\_Final\_Bugged.mov
  - OPM marine-park-reef surveys southern islands.pdf
  - Purcelletal2016post-print-Ecologicalrolesofexploitedseacucumbers-OMBAR.pdf
  - R2R Eco-tourism concept.pdf
  - Takitumu 1996 Project Proposal.pdf
  - The IIB Project - 3567 Rarotonga Cloud Forest Management Plan FINAL 23-2-16.pdf
  - The nutrient content of different soil types from Avana to Paringaru.pdf
  - tongan\_flying\_fox\_pteropod\_status\_public\_attitudes\_and\_conservation\_in\_the\_cook\_islands.pdf
  - Tourism Accreditation Form.xlsx

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- 5168\_BD1 Tracking Tool\_Obj1\_sect2\_Takitumu.pdf
- 5168\_BD1 Tracking Tool\_Obj1\_sect2\_Takutea.pdf
- 5168\_BD1 Tracking Tool\_Obj1\_sect3.pdf
- 5168\_BD1 Tracking Tool\_Obj1\_section1.pdf
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▼ Multi Year Workplans

- 201701121044 - MYP Revision FINAL.pdf

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Inception Report.pdf
PIF COOK ISLANDS.pdf
STAPReview.pdf
UNDP Social & Environmental Screening.pdf
website.docx
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Mitiaro land snails.pdf
Niue_Revised_Final_Bugged.mov
OPM marine-park-reef surveys southern islands.pdf
Purcelletal2016post-print-Ecologicalrolesofexploitedseacucumbers-OMBAR.pdf
R2R Eco-tourism concept.pdf
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The nutrient content of different soil types from Avana to Paringaru.pdf
tongan_flying_fox_pteropod_status_public_attitudes_and_conservation_in_the_cook_islands.pdf
Tourism Accreditation Form.xlsx

ANNEX 8 Itinerary and list of people interviewed

Date	Time	Institution	Person or persons	Venue
12/11	1600	PMU	Maria Tuoro	Central Motel
13/11	9.30	PMU	Most of PMU staff: Louisa Karika (Manager), Maria Tuoro (Coordinator), Tatiana Paolo (Finance and Admin Asst). Olaf Rasmussen (NES R2R Project Officer), Grace Rau (Ra'ui Coordinator)	NES
	1330	MMR	MMR R2R Project Officer (Teariki Rongo), Koroa Raumea (Director, Inshore Fisheries and Aquaculture)	MMR
	1500	MoA	Mat Pura (Secretary), Puna Kitai (IT), Taeke (Project Officer), Takili Tairi (R2R Focal Point)	MoA
14/11	0830	CITC, Destination Development	Metua Vaimene (Director,), Sieni Tiraa (Coordinator)	CITC
	1100	NES	Ben Maxwell (Compliance), Olaf Rasmussen (as above)	Takitumu Conservatoin Area - field trip
15/11	0830	NES	Joseph Brider (Director, also GEF Operational Focal Point)	NES
	0930	MMR	Lara Ainley (Senior Marine Ecologist)	NES
	1030	Marae Moana/Office of the Prime Minister	Chief of Staff - Jacqui Evans	OPM
	1330	Climate Change Cook Islands	William Tuivaga (SRICC Manager)	OPM
	1430	Consultant on NBSAP, IIB, IAS projects	Maureen Hilyard	NES
	1600	NES	Joseph Brider (as above)	NES
16/11	1100	Aitutaki Island Council	Tutai (Chief), Tereepi (Deputy Mayor), Tukua (Police Chief), Tapaeru (Secretary), Henry Strickland (Member), Ichi (Member), Tekura Bishop (Mayor)	Aitutaki Island Council Building
	1230	MMR	Richard Story (Fisheries Officer, Aitutaki), No'oro (Assistant), Maria Tuoro (as above)	Aitutaki - Research Station
	1900	MMR	Kirby Morejohn, James Kora (Marine Research Scientists)	Aitutaki - Boatshed
17/11	0700	MMR	Richard Story (as above)	Aitutaki Lagoon boat trip (all morning)
	1330	NES	Vaviya (NES Island Officer) Bobby Bishop (Wetland Assessor)	Aitutaki Dock
	1530	CITC	Misepa Isamael (Manager, Aitutaki)	CITC Aitutaki
	1630	-	Neil Mitchell (Tour dive and boat operator)	Aitutaki Research Station
18/11	1100	-	Teremuana (Market gardener)	Avarua Market
	1500	Natural Heritage Trust	Gerald McCormack (Director)	NHT
	1700	-	Ed Saul (Biologist)	Central Motel
19/11	1300	ICI	Noroa Tupa	Tauae Shop
20/11	0700	UNDP	Michael Green (RTA)	by Skype - UK
	0800	CITC	Metua Vaimene (as above)	Muri Lagoon Cruise - field trip
	1900	-	Kyle Matheson (ABS implementer)	Restaurant
21/11	0800	MoA	Patrick Arioka (Director, Policy, Planning and Projects)	Central Motel
	0830	Takitumu Cons Area	Ian Karika (Landowner and conservation practitioner)	NES
	0930	DCD - MFEM	Lavinia Tama (Manager), Melinda Pierre (Development Programme Manager)	DCD

	1040	House of Ariki	Puna Rakanui Grace Rau (as above)	HOA
	1300	Oceans 5	Jess Clamp (Representative, CI) Kirby Morejohn (as above)	Restaurant
	1430	UNCO	Patricia Tuara (UN Coordination Officer)	UNCO
	1530	-	Elizabeth Koteka (formerly head of OPM)	NES
	1630	TIS	Liam Kokaua (Project Officer)	Central Motel
22/11	1030	UNDP MCO	Anne Trevor (Programme Officer Environment & Climate Change)	by Skype - Samoa
23/11	0930	Multiple agencies	Wrap Up Meeting to present initial findings (see Annex 11 for list of people who attended) Talked with many of the participants after the meeting. Met Helen Grieg and Ben Ponia for first time	NES
24/11	0800	NHT	Gerald McCormack (as above)	Field Trip to the Needle
	1500	TIS	Kelvin Passfield (Technical Director) Liam Kokaua (as above)	Central Motel
12/12	1400	Living Oceans Foundation	Renee Carlton and Philip Renaud (Director)	By Skype -USA
15/12	1100	University of Kent	Michael Fischer (Professor of Anthropological Sciences) re CIBED	By telephone

## Annex 9 UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators and Mid term Review Consultants



**Evaluators/Consultants:**

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

**MTR Consultant Agreement Form**

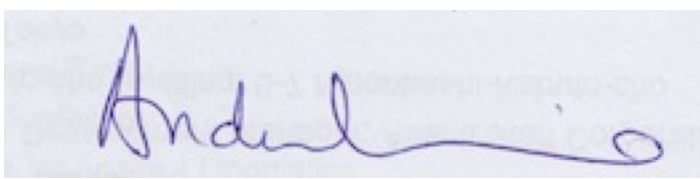
Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Consultant: William Andrew Laurie

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): \_\_\_\_\_

**I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.**

Signed at Cambridge, United Kingdom (Place) 19th September 2017 (Date)

Signature:  \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>1</sup> [www.undp.org/uneocodeofconduct](http://www.undp.org/uneocodeofconduct)

**Questionnaire for the Mid Term Review UNDP/GEF/Cook Islands Government Project**  
**"Conserving biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem function through a "Ridge to Reef" approach**  
**in the Cook Islands" (November 2017)**

*(IMPORTANT: The information you provide in this questionnaire will be treated in confidence by the consultant undertaking the Mid-term Review. Please hand your completed questionnaire directly to the MTR consultant, Andrew Laurie)*

1. What do you understand by a "Ridge to Reef" approach?
2. What has caused decline in biodiversity and ecosystem function in the Cook Islands and how has the project contributed so far to removing threats?
3. How has the project contributed to changing policy and practice in agriculture, fisheries, tourism, and land use planning and decision making?
4. What capacity improvements - human and infrastructure - have been achieved by the project? Are these improvements firmly established, or are they temporary and likely to require further project type inputs to be maintained?
5. What categories of protected areas have been established in the Cook Islands?



6. What do you think have been the most successful aspects of the Cook Islands R2R project until now?

7. Do you think that the project is facing problems or barriers that will prevent it from achieving its objective, and if so what are these problems?

a) external problems/barriers that are not under the direct control of the project

b) internal problems linked to project management or institutional setting that are directly controllable by the project)

8. What do you think that the project should focus on mainly from now until it ends in July 2019?

9. Do have any other comments, suggestions or recommendations for changes in either project activities or project management approach?

Your Name:	Your organization:
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Thank you for your support to the Mid-term Review

## Annex 11 Analysis of the responses to the Questionnaire (see Annex 3)

35 Questionnaires were given out and 15 were completed and returned to AL

Question	Summarized responses (Numbers of either cases, or mentions. May add up to more than 15)
1. What do you understand by a "Ridge to Reef" approach?	Responded more or less according to widespread understanding of holistic approach to ecosystem management (14) and pointed out that this is nothing new in the Cook Islands (2). Community level only, not top-down governmental (1)
2. a) What has caused decline in biodiversity and ecosystem function in the Cook Islands and b) how has the project contributed so far to removing threats?	<p>a) Approximately as the assessment in Prodoc (7); Mentioned only one or two of the Prodoc threats (4); Threats were exaggerated and state of BD not that bad (Ciguatera reduced one threat) (1); Mentioned only climate change (2); Overfishing taking place at sea because overseas fishing vessels not controlled sufficiently, licences too easy to get, and income from licences does not compensate for loss of incomes and less availability of fish locally (1) Clams and other inshore resources overfished/collected because enforcement not enough - people ignore ra'ui, including overseas resident Cook Islanders returning for holidays (1)</p> <p>b) Has not done anything to date (4); Don't know (1) Started Aitutaki Lagoon MP (1); Raised awareness of threats (2) Education programmes (1) Baseline surveys (1) Organic agriculture demonstrations (1) Listed main outputs from Components 1 and 2 (1) Blank - no response (5)</p>
3. How has the project contributed to changing policy and practice in agriculture, fisheries, tourism, and land use planning and decision making?	<p>Started Island Development Plans (2) Workshops (1) Nothing or Not a lot (5); Don't know (2) GIS training (2) James Cook Distance Learning (1) Started Aitutaki Lagoon MP (1); Raised awareness of threats in productive sectors and the general public (2) Bonefish protection and low input agriculture practices (1) Sand mining guidelines (1) EIA training, including on Pa Enua for permitting authorities (2) Tourism environmental videos (2) Biodiversity Assessment Surveys (1)<sup>1</sup></p>
4. a) What capacity improvements - human and infrastructure - have been achieved by the project? b) Are these improvements firmly established, or are they temporary and likely to require further project type inputs to be maintained?	<p>Students doing James Cook University distance learning (1) Survey techniques through participation (1) EIA training on pa enua (2) GIS training (2) None or not enough (3) Awareness only (1) School children involved (2) Platform provided for cross-sectoral collaboration but no impact yet (1) Computers for MMR in Pa Enua to strengthen MMR capacity in general [not for project results in particular] (1) No response (1)</p>

<sup>1</sup> ie mostly actions that might or might not eventually contribute to having impact on policy and practice

	<p>No - look at the big picture, with people leaving the Pa Enua and projects relying on expatriate experts (1)</p> <p>Not on the Pa Enua - GIS for example not appropriate at this stage, sometimes GIS and computers imposed on people who are not ready for them (1)</p>
5. What categories of protected areas have been established in the Cook Islands?	<p>A total of 24 categories were given:</p> <p>Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area (1)</p> <p>Particularly Sensitive Marine Area (1)</p> <p>Key Biodiversity Area (2)</p> <p>Important Bird Area (1)</p> <p>Ra-ui - including up to five different types (7)</p> <p>Community Conservation Area (1)</p> <p>National Park (5)</p> <p>Nature Reserve (1)</p> <p>Sanctuary (3)</p> <p>Proposed Area (1)</p> <p>Marae Moana Reserve (4)</p> <p>Fish (1)</p> <p>Medicinal Plant (1)</p> <p>Shark Sanctuary (2)</p> <p>Nature Sanctuary (1)</p> <p>Protected Area (1)</p> <p>Managed Area (1)</p> <p>Fisheries Managed Area (1)</p> <p>Wildlife Sanctuary (1)</p> <p>Water Collection Area (1)</p> <p>Numbers of categories given by each respondent were</p> <p>one (4)</p> <p>two (2)</p> <p>three (4)</p> <p>four (1)</p> <p>six (1) and</p> <p>16 (1).</p>
6. What do you think have been the most successful aspects of the Cook Islands R2R project until now?	<p>James Cook University distance learning course (1)</p> <p>Pa Enua consultations about R2R approach (2)</p> <p>Networking and platform for cross-sectoral collaboration (5)</p> <p>Bringing staff from Pa Enua to Rarotonga for training (1)</p> <p>GIS and Biodiversity Assessment Training (4)</p> <p>Identification of wetlands and other sensitive areas (1)</p> <p>Don't know (2)</p> <p>Nothing of importance as not yet organized - could be taking on parts of NBSAP that coincide with the project but not doing this (1)</p>
7. Do you think that the project is facing problems or barriers that will prevent it from achieving its objective, and if so what are these problems? a) external problems/barriers that are not under the direct control of the project b) internal problems linked to project management or institutional setting that are directly controllable by the project)	<p>(a) Absorptive capacity of government not enough (1) Can't find good to work on such projects (1) local people do not care about BD (1)</p> <p>(b) Lack of project vision (1);</p> <p>Blocking of proposed activities by PMU (1);</p> <p>Split advance quarterly payments (3)<sup>2</sup>;</p> <p>PMU under strength both technically and administratively (4)<sup>3</sup>;</p> <p>PMU does not accept that other agencies can manage their own activities themselves<sup>4</sup> (1)</p> <p>Lack of leadership - no imagination (3)</p> <p>Administrative procedures of both government (tendering for example) and UNDP MCO (sticking unreasonably to budget lines and budgets set up three years ago) slow things down and lead to roll-over (3);</p> <p>Lack of understanding of R2R (1);</p>

<sup>2</sup> Two respondents said this was not a problem - should be solvable by strong project management

<sup>3</sup> PMU more concerned with reporting requirements than the substance of the project

<sup>4</sup> This comment shows that respondent does not understand the need for oversight and an overarching project vision

	<p>Too many overseas visits for project staff/counterparts and nothing done while they are traveling (1)</p> <p>Poor communication and disagreements between partner agencies (4); Not enough visibility of the project (1)</p> <p>No problems (1)</p> <p>Scope too broad, ambitious work plans unrealistic (2) PSC is rubberstamping only - who is steering if all approve each other's workplans? No objective analysis of requests (1)</p> <p>Reluctance to use internet for publicity (1)</p> <p>Bad public image of NES as linked primarily to compliance and an adversarial function (1)</p> <p>Opportunities ignored (eg for working with NHT, TIS) (1)</p> <p>Quality of outputs not good enough (2)</p>
8. What do you think that the project should focus on mainly from now until it ends in July 2019?	<p>Collaborate with NHT and TIS (1)</p> <p>PA Act+Management Plans and+classification system+PA finance+Capacity building for PA management+Revision of Environment Act (1);</p> <p>Review and revise the project, simplify it taking into account other projects' activities past and present and building on things where possible (9);</p> <p>Pa Enua Biodiversity Assessments+PA Management Plans+changes to Environment Act (1)</p> <p>Focus on children, young people and education (1)</p> <p>Strengthen Project Management (2)</p> <p>Loosen up on attitude to budgets - must be more flexible, PMU <i>and</i> UNDP MCO (2)</p> <p>Work closely with stakeholders so that PSC meetings come after period of regular interaction through "stakeholder committee" (1)</p> <p>No response (2)</p>
9. Do have any other comments, suggestions or recommendations for changes in either project activities or project management approach?	<p>Tourism need to go beyond comedy videos - useful but not enough and probably of limited value in the long term (1)</p> <p>House of Ariki - not sure what they have done (1)</p> <p>UNDP Samoa is too hands-off (2)</p> <p>Perhaps UNDP could be involved more through UNCO (1)</p> <p>Must revise Prodoc (3)</p> <p>Look at sustainability of results (1)</p> <p>Extend project (4)</p> <p>Need a mentor for the Project Coordinator (1)</p> <p>Need a CTA (1)</p>

Annex 12: Midterm Review Evaluative Matrix Template

Evaluative Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
<b>Project Strategy: To what extent is the project strategy relevant to country priorities, country ownership, and the best route towards expected results?</b>			
How has the project combined biological, socio-economic, political, cultural and institutional realities, and how well has it included international best practice in design and later adaptive management?	Level of cross-sectoral collaboration and expressed willingness and practical feasibility of collaboration and granting power and funding to the new institutional body (Marae Moana) and implementing mechanisms	Project reports Project and UNDP staff Other interlocutors	Document review Interviews Observations
<b>Progress Towards Results: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?</b>			
What is the change achieved against each output <i>and</i> attributable to the project?	Level of correspondence between the project design and results to date, and results expected by July 2019 under current plans and based on current performance	Project reports Government and other stakeholder (including parallel projects) reports and publications Project staff Other interlocutors Data collected during the MTR mission	Document review Interviews Direct observations
<b>Project Implementation and Adaptive Management: Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and been able to adapt to any changing conditions thus far? To what extent are project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, reporting, and project communications supporting the project's implementation?</b>			
What changes in conditions have taken place since the Prodoc was written? Were risks adequately assessed in the Prodoc? What steps have been taken to respond to any changes or miscalculations of risk, to make adjustments to the project design? How have monitoring and reporting facilitated any adaptive management?	Demonstrated adaptive management measures Use of indicators Feedback from specific stakeholders and the general public	Project reports Project and UNDP staff Other interlocutors	Document review Interviews and conversations Observations

Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?			
Are the changes proposed under the project in protected area policy and its implementation sustainable after the project?	Funding guaranteed Legal measures passed Institutional fabric confirmed Executive powers confirmed Training institutionalized	Project reports Project staff Other interlocutors Data collected during the MTR mission	Document Review Interviews Direct observations

Annex 13 Basic Project Framework with some indicative questions

Project Objective, Components and Outputs	Indicative questions/themes to explore
<p><b>Project Objective:</b> To build national and local capacities and actions to ensure effective conservation of biodiversity, food security and livelihoods and the enhancement of ecosystem functions within the Cook Islands Marine Park</p>	<p>V.1 Breaking down by sector, what capacity improvements - human and infrastructure - have been achieved?</p> <p>V.2 Breaking down by sector, what actions have been taken to ensure effective conservation of biodiversity and enhancement of ecosystem functions within the Cook Islands Marine Park</p> <p>V.3 List three changes in either species status, ecosystem function or biodiversity management practices attributable to the project.</p> <p>V.4 How have food security and livelihoods been affected by actions taken under the project?</p> <p>V.5 What additional changes do you expect to see beyond your answers to PO.1, PO.2. PO.3 and PO.4 by the end of the project?</p> <p>V.6 Are improvements in capacity likely to be permanent, i.e. self-renewing (through institutionalization for example), or are they temporary and likely to require further project type inputs to be sustained into the future?</p> <p>V.7 What is the potential extent of influence of the general public on government in terms of BDC and PAs?</p> <p>V.8 One-off training can be important, but what steps are being taken to ensure that training is institutionalized? Training of trainers, and embedding of trainers, is specified in the Prodoc but is there funding for this and commitment to repeating it in the future?</p> <p>V.9 Is there an intention to measure changes in attitudes to PAs and BD?</p>

<p><b>Component 1:</b> Strengthening protected areas management</p>	<p>C1.1 In the Inception report it says that "Components" were renamed as "Outcomes" yet I have seen no change in subsequent reporting. Are Components 1 and 2 referred to anywhere as Outcomes 1 and 2, and if so in what context?</p> <p>C1.2 Do you need to consider mainstreaming (ie Component 2) in strengthening PA management (Component 1)?</p> <p>C1.3 Are there identifiable constraints that will hinder implementation of the Marae Moana Bill once it is passed?</p>				
	<table> <tr> <td data-bbox="293 576 651 1211"> <p><b>Output 1.1:</b> Strengthened legal / regulatory and policy frameworks for protected areas</p> </td><td data-bbox="651 576 2130 1211"> <p>T1.1.1 What are the changes in legal, regulatory and policy frameworks that you expect to arise before the end of the project and be attributable to the project?</p> <p>T1.1.2 Was/Is there sufficient time remaining under the project to get the policy, legal and regulatory changes established?</p> <p>T1.1.3 Do you expect some changes attributable to the project to occur after project termination? Give time frames and mechanisms.</p> <p>T1.1.4 How has international best practice been reflected in the draft regulatory framework?</p> <p>T1.1.5 Is there a comprehensive list available of current protected area categories with objectives (or equivalent) and their basis in governmental or customary law?</p> <p>T1.1.6 Are the approvals necessary from government, traditional/community groups and other stakeholders within the power of the R2R project to secure?</p> </td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="293 1211 651 1370"> <p><b>Output 1.2:</b> Expanded and strengthened</p> </td><td data-bbox="651 1211 2130 1370"> <p>T1.2.1 What is the expansion so far, according to protected area category and attributable to the project?</p> <p>T1.2.2 Is the planned expansion within the power of the project to secure?</p> </td></tr> </table>	<p><b>Output 1.1:</b> Strengthened legal / regulatory and policy frameworks for protected areas</p>	<p>T1.1.1 What are the changes in legal, regulatory and policy frameworks that you expect to arise before the end of the project and be attributable to the project?</p> <p>T1.1.2 Was/Is there sufficient time remaining under the project to get the policy, legal and regulatory changes established?</p> <p>T1.1.3 Do you expect some changes attributable to the project to occur after project termination? Give time frames and mechanisms.</p> <p>T1.1.4 How has international best practice been reflected in the draft regulatory framework?</p> <p>T1.1.5 Is there a comprehensive list available of current protected area categories with objectives (or equivalent) and their basis in governmental or customary law?</p> <p>T1.1.6 Are the approvals necessary from government, traditional/community groups and other stakeholders within the power of the R2R project to secure?</p>	<p><b>Output 1.2:</b> Expanded and strengthened</p>	<p>T1.2.1 What is the expansion so far, according to protected area category and attributable to the project?</p> <p>T1.2.2 Is the planned expansion within the power of the project to secure?</p>
<p><b>Output 1.1:</b> Strengthened legal / regulatory and policy frameworks for protected areas</p>	<p>T1.1.1 What are the changes in legal, regulatory and policy frameworks that you expect to arise before the end of the project and be attributable to the project?</p> <p>T1.1.2 Was/Is there sufficient time remaining under the project to get the policy, legal and regulatory changes established?</p> <p>T1.1.3 Do you expect some changes attributable to the project to occur after project termination? Give time frames and mechanisms.</p> <p>T1.1.4 How has international best practice been reflected in the draft regulatory framework?</p> <p>T1.1.5 Is there a comprehensive list available of current protected area categories with objectives (or equivalent) and their basis in governmental or customary law?</p> <p>T1.1.6 Are the approvals necessary from government, traditional/community groups and other stakeholders within the power of the R2R project to secure?</p>				
<p><b>Output 1.2:</b> Expanded and strengthened</p>	<p>T1.2.1 What is the expansion so far, according to protected area category and attributable to the project?</p> <p>T1.2.2 Is the planned expansion within the power of the project to secure?</p>				



	management systems for protected areas	<p>T1.2.3 Are there clear objectives for each category of PA on which to base the many management plans proposed under the project?</p> <p>T1.2.4 Do you expect some changes attributable to the project to occur after project termination? Give time frames and mechanisms.</p>
	<b>Output 1.3:</b> Strengthened institutional coordination and capacities at the national and local levels for the participatory management of protected areas	<p>T1.3.1 Give an example of institutional coordination strengthened by the project</p> <p>T1.3.2 What is the most important capacity strengthening undertaken so far under the project under a) training b) equipment or similar ?</p> <p>T1.3.3 Is the position of the Ra'ui site coordinator (Aronga Mana) secure into the future - funding, commitment?</p> <p>T1.3.4 Please show how training has been based on the Capacity Needs Analysis.</p>
	<b>Output 1.4:</b> Financial sustainability framework developed for system of protected areas	<p>T1.4.1 How much has government committed to funding a protected area system?</p> <p>T1.4.2 What is the status of the CIMP Steering Committee's CIMP financing plan?</p> <p>T1.4.3 What are the main items to be funded by government?</p> <p>T1.4.4 What is the commitment from communities/ leaders?</p>
<b>Component 2:</b> Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats within production landscapes		<p>C2.1 How well do existing institutional mechanisms for cross-sectoral consultation allow for incorporation of biodiversity and PA considerations into decision making and action?</p> <p>C2.2 How well is it accepted that cost-effectiveness in the long term will involve sacrifices and costs in the short term?</p> <p>C2.3 Is mainstreaming integrated into the fabric of government and thus funded sustainably?</p> <p>C2.4 Has training been based on a Capacity Needs Analysis as under Component 1?</p>

	<b>Output 2.1:</b> Ridge to reef approaches integrated into land use and development planning	<p>T2.1.1 Are there guidelines and criteria ready to be incorporated into decision making on land use and development planning?</p> <p>T2.1.2 Is Marae Moana institutionalized and consulted routinely and is its policy followed in decision making and action?</p> <p>T2.1.3 Once BD and PA considerations are integrated well into government decision making and actions what is the extent of any additional work required to integrate into decision making and action of private individuals and community groups?</p> <p>T2.1.4 Is government adequately responsive to arguments based on scientific research?</p> <p>T2.1.5 Does desired change to increase independence of EIA process require a change in the law and if so does the project have power to achieve this change?</p>
	<b>Output 2.2:</b> Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into agriculture sector	<p>T2.2.1 Is Marae Moana expected to exert influence on MoA in order to achieve mainstreaming of BD, or is it to be done by the MoA self motivated?</p> <p>T2.2.2 Will there be legal requirement for mainstreaming?</p> <p>T2.2.3 What is the sustainability of predicted changes in agricultural practice?</p> <p>T2.2.4 What additional funds will be necessary and what change will be required in the work load for government officers?</p>
	<b>Output 2.3:</b> Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into tourism sector	<p>T2.3.1 Is Marae Moana expected to exert influence on CITC in order to achieve mainstreaming of BD, or is it to be done by the CITC self motivated?</p> <p>T2.3.2 Will there be legal requirement for mainstreaming?</p> <p>T2.3.3 What is the status of the a) the accreditation system and b) BD and PA criteria within the system?</p> <p>T2.3.4 What reference/use has been made of international best practice?</p>

<b>PROJECT DESIGN</b>	<p>Will investigate (among other things):</p> <p><i>Feasibility</i></p> <p><i>Sustainability</i></p> <p><i>Environmental assessment</i></p> <p><i>Quality of indicators</i></p> <p><i>Logical reasoning in the SRF</i></p> <p><i>Cost effectiveness</i></p> <p><i>Scope for incorporation of international best practice</i></p>
<b>PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<p>Will investigate (among other things):</p> <p><i>Smoothness of administrative and financial support</i></p> <p><i>Coordination between government agencies on this fine example of inter-sectoral collaboration - a ridge to reef approach</i></p> <p><i>Level of disbursement of project funds</i></p> <p><i>Cofinance disbursement</i></p> <p><i>Reasons for delays</i></p> <p><i>Use of technical assistance</i></p> <p><i>International best practice incorporated</i></p> <p><i>Monitoring of pilot projects and research</i></p> <p><i>Strategic allocation of effort between PA and mainstreaming components</i></p> <p><i>Attention to the need for sustainability of policy/institutional/legal changes</i></p> <p><i>Concentration on the aims of the project and ensuring that prioritization of activities/actions supports the immediate outputs and the ultimate objective.</i></p> <p><i>Progress on measurement of indicators, including problems with indicators for which baselines still not determined.</i></p>

## Annex 14 List of Participants at MTR Feedback Meeting



**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT SERVICE**  
TU'ANGA TAPOROPORO  
COOK ISLANDS

**Date:** Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2017

**Place:** National Environment Service – meeting room

**Time:** 9 am – 11 am

### AGENDA:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Welcome from Project Coordinator – Maria Tuoro
3. Presentation of MTR Initial Findings – Andrew Laurie
4. Open discussion and comments
5. Closing Prayer

### Stakeholders Present:

NAME	ORGANISATION	CONTACT
Patricia Tuara	UN Coordination Officer	<a href="mailto:patricia.tuara@one.un.org">patricia.tuara@one.un.org</a>
Liam Kokaua	Te Ipukarea Society (TIS)	<a href="mailto:l.kokaua@tiscookislands.org">l.kokaua@tiscookislands.org</a>
Melinda Pierre	MFEM – Development Coordination Division	<a href="mailto:melinda.pierre@cookislands.gov.ck">melinda.pierre@cookislands.gov.ck</a>
Jacqui Evans	Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) - Marae Moana Director	<a href="mailto:jacqui.evans@cookislands.gov.ck">jacqui.evans@cookislands.gov.ck</a>
William Tuivaga	OPM – Climate Change Division SRICC Project Manager	<a href="mailto:william.tuivaga@cookislands.gov.ck">william.tuivaga@cookislands.gov.ck</a>
Ben Ponia	Ministry of Marine Resources (MMR) – Head of Ministry	<a href="mailto:B.Ponia@mmr.gov.ck">B.Ponia@mmr.gov.ck</a>
Koroa Raumea	MMR – Director of Inshore Fisheries & Aquaculture	<a href="mailto:K.Raumea@mmr.gov.ck">K.Raumea@mmr.gov.ck</a>
Lara Ainley	MMR – Senior Marine Ecologist	<a href="mailto:L.Ainley@mmr.gov.ck">L.Ainley@mmr.gov.ck</a>
Kirby Morejohn	MMR – Marine Scientist	<a href="mailto:K.Morejohn@mmr.gov.ck">K.Morejohn@mmr.gov.ck</a>
Helen Greig	MMR – Communications Officer	<a href="mailto:H.Greig@mmr.gov.ck">H.Greig@mmr.gov.ck</a>
Grace Rau	House of Ariki – Ra'ui Coordinator	<a href="mailto:uiariki@oyster.net.ck">uiariki@oyster.net.ck</a>
Teariki Rongo	Ministry of Marine Resources – R2R Officer	<a href="mailto:T.Rongo@mmr.gov.ck">T.Rongo@mmr.gov.ck</a>
Sieni Tiraa	Cook Islands Tourism Corp. – Destination Development Coordinator	<a href="mailto:sieni.tiraa@cookislands.gov.ck">sieni.tiraa@cookislands.gov.ck</a>
Maureen Hilyard	Private Consultant	<a href="mailto:maureen.hilyard@gmail.com">maureen.hilyard@gmail.com</a>
Louisa Karika	National Environment Service (NES) IFD Manager/R2R Project Manager	<a href="mailto:louisa.karika@cookislands.gov.ck">louisa.karika@cookislands.gov.ck</a>
Maria Tuoro	NES – R2R Project Coordinator	<a href="mailto:maria.tuoro@cookislands.gov.ck">maria.tuoro@cookislands.gov.ck</a>
Olaf Rasmussen	NES – R2R Project Officer	<a href="mailto:olaf.rasmussen@cookislands.gov.ck">olaf.rasmussen@cookislands.gov.ck</a>
Tatiana Paolo	NES – R2R Finance and Administration Assistant	<a href="mailto:tatiana.paolo@cookislands.gov.ck">tatiana.paolo@cookislands.gov.ck</a>
Ian Karika	Takitumu Conservation Area/TIS	<a href="mailto:birds@oyster.net.ck">birds@oyster.net.ck</a>

## Annex 15: MTR Ratings scales

Ratings for Progress Towards Results: (one rating for each outcome and for the objective)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as “good practice”.
5	Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.

Ratings for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management: (one overall rating)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be presented as “good practice”.
5	Satisfactory (S)	Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.

Ratings for Sustainability: (one overall rating)		
4	Likely (L)	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by the project's closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future
3	Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm Review
2	Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on

1	Unlikely (U)	Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained
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# Annex 16 Biodiversity Significance of the Cook Islands

## Global 200 Ecoregion

### Pacific Ocean: Cook Islands

The southern Cook Islands extend 450 km from north to south, and encompass a diversity of terrain ranging from the ancient, steep volcanic cone of Rarotonga to the "almost-atoll" of Aitutake. Although little native vegetation remains in the accessible lowland zones, significant areas of fairly intact montane rain and cloud forest can still be found on the upper slopes of Rarotonga. These forests are some of the best remaining examples of primary montane rain and cloud forest in Eastern Polynesia.

- **SCIENTIFIC CODE**

(OC0103)

- **ECOREGION CATEGORY**

Oceania

- **SIZE**

100 square miles

- **STATUS**

Critical/Endangered

- **HABITATS**

#### Description

##### Location and General Description

Located in the South Pacific Ocean, about 1,000 km east of Niue, the southern Cooks include nine main islands: Palmerston Atoll, Aitutake, Manuae (Hervey), Takutea, Miti'aro, Atiu, Ma'uke, Rarotonga, and Mangaia. The islands are in the southeast trade wind belt, and the climate is tropical, with the wettest months being November and December. The larger, high islands have wet summits and somewhat drier leeward sides.

Rarotonga, the largest and highest of the islands, is a deeply eroded, long-extinct volcanic cone with steep sides. Four of the other principal islands--Miti'aro, Atiu, Ma'uke, and Mangaia--are the remains of ancient volcanoes. After undergoing subsidence and submergence, they were uplifted during the Tertiary to heights of approximately 100 m above sea level. They have central volcanic hills surrounded by makatea: broad uplifted ancient coral reefs, as much as 2 km wide. Palmerston and Manuae are atolls, while Takutea is a small table reef. Aitutake is an "almost-atoll"--a central volcanic island surrounded by a barrier reef (Mueller-Dombois & Fosberg 1998).

The lowland forests have been converted through human use. The forests on the upper slopes of Rarotonga may be representative of the original montane forests of the Cook Islands. Merlin (1985) divided these forests into three principal forest types. The first two are classified as montane rain forest, and the third as cloud forest (Mueller-Dombois & Fosberg 1998).

- Homalium forest is found on the inland mountain slopes above an irregular contour line that ranges from 50 to 200 meters. This closed canopy forest is dominated by *Homalium acuminatum*, with other common species including *Canthium barbatum*, *Elaeocarpus tonganus*, and *Ixora bracteata*. A giant liana *Entada phaseoloides* is also prominent.
- Fagraea-Fitchia* forest occurs on knife-edge ridges at mid-elevations. The dominant trees, *Fagraea berteriana* and *Fitchia speciosa*, both have massive and extensive root systems which help stabilize the ridges by holding the broken rocks together. Other common tree genera here include *Homalium*, *Canthium*, *Alyxia*, *Coprosma*, *Meryta*, and *Metrosideros*.
- On the cloud-covered peaks and ridges above 400 m elevation is the *Metrosideros* cloud forest, which comprises about 3 percent of the total inland forest. A low-stature (8 m or less) krumholz form of *Metrosideros collina* is the dominant tree in this forest, but in higher and wetter places it may share dominance with, or be replaced by, *Ascarina diffusa*. Also common is *Elaeocarpus tonganus* (the only *Elaeocarpus* species found on Rarotonga, though there are about 200 species throughout the Pacific), *Weinmannia samoensis*, and *Pittosporum arborescens*. An indigenous woody liana, *Freycinetia arborea*, is also commonly seen, as well as numerous epiphytic mosses and ferns. The understory is dominated by an endemic woody shrub, *Fitchia speciosa*, whose genus is restricted to French Polynesia and Rarotonga. Nine species of flowering plants are found only in tropical moist cloud forest of Rarotonga. (Merlin & Juvik, 1993).

The makatea islands have similar flora to Rarotonga, with differences related to their structural variability (volcanic vs. makatea (limestone) substrates). Vegetation in the volcanic inner hills of the makatea islands has been almost completely introduced, with the area mostly given over to cultivation. In the makatea zones, however, most species are indigenous, and have been preserved because of the rough, almost inaccessible terrain (Merlin, 1991). Makatea forest zones include a mixed-species forest dominated by *Elaeocarpus tonganus* and *Hernandia moerenhoutiana*, a *Pandanus tectorius* scrub forest, and a *Barringtonia asiatica* forest.

Palmerston Atoll, and other small atolls in the Southern Cooks, are covered with typical atoll vegetation (*Heliotropium anomalum* on the beach and inland, *Scaevola*, *Suriana*, and *Pemphis* behind the beach, and forest patches of *Pisonia*, *Guettarda*, and *Pandanus*, or planted coconuts (*Cocos nucifera*) inland (Mueller-Dombois & Fosberg 1998).

### **Biodiversity Features**

Of the 538 known angiosperm species in the southern Cook Islands, approximately 4 percent are endemic; however, there are no endemic genera. About 130 plant species are native. It is thought that about 12 percent of the current flora was probably introduced by the early Polynesians, and another 60 percent brought in after European contact. There are also ten native terrestrial reptiles, none of which are endemic. Thirteen endemic species of endodontid snails and 11 species of charopid snails were found, but most are now extinct, and others are threatened, especially on Rarotonga (Pearsall, 1990).

The herpetofauna of the Cook Islands, as well as that of the Societies, Tuamotus, and Marquesas consists mainly of species found throughout the tropical Pacific, and generally includes species transported by humans. Only one species, *Emoia trossula*, is restricted in its range (Cooks, Fiji, Tonga) within Central Polynesia (Allison 1996).



There are eight species of range-restricted birds in the Southern Cook Islands (which includes Aitutaki), six of which are strictly endemic. A reed-warbler (*Acrocephalus kerearako*), fruit dove (*Ptilonopus rarotongensis*), and kingfisher (*Todiramphus ruficollaris*) are shared between at least two islands. The fruit dove and kingfisher are considered Vulnerable. Of the three single island endemics, the Atiu swiftlet (*Collocalia sawtelli*), Rarotonga starling (*Aplonis cinerascens*), and Mangaia kingfisher (*Todiramphus ruficollis*) are considered Vulnerable (Hilton-Taylor 2000). The Vulnerable restricted-range blue lorikeet (*Vini peruviana*) is found on Aitutaki, and the island is delineated as a Secondary Endemic Bird Area for that reason, but it is unclear whether the species is actually native to the island. Once considered one of the rarest birds in the world and believed to be extinct in 1900, only 21 birds and two nests of the Rarotonga monarch (*Pomarea dimidiata*) were found 1983. In 1987, 35 birds were found in southeastern Rarotonga in mid-elevation montane forest. An intensive conservation program was begun in 1987 which included predator control (*Rattus rattus*) has improved this birds situation to Endangered. The bird's habitat has been given protection as the Takitumu Conservation Area, which is now being managed for ecotourism. (Stattersfield et al. 1998, Birdlife International 2000, Hilton-Taylor 2000, IUCN, 1991).

The mountains of central Rarotonga, in the area of the proposed Te Manga Roa Reserve, are also one of the few known breeding grounds of the herald petrel (*Peterodroma arminjoniana*). Considered extinct in 1899, it is now relatively common in this part of Rarotonga. Also of conservation interest is the mist landsnail (*Tekoulina* sp.). This gastropod is unique because it is viviparous (bears live young), and is endemic to the proposed reserve (IUCN 1991).

The Pacific flying fox (*Pteropus tonganus*) is the most common flying-fox in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, and the Cook Islands – it is among the most widespread of the flying foxes. The Cooks represent the easternmost range of *Pteropus* spp. in the Pacific (Flannery 1995). The bat is the only native mammal in the Cook Islands.

### **Current Status**

The Cook Islands have long been settled by Polynesians. At low elevations, little native vegetation remains, and the lowlands are dominated by coconut palms. However, on the upper slopes of Rarotonga there remains relatively undisturbed montane rain forest and, higher still, cloud forest. The forests of Rarotonga's upper slopes are some of the best remaining examples of primary montane rain and cloud forest in Eastern Polynesia. In 1969, official protection status was proposed for a 0.118 km<sup>2</sup> reserve in the central mountains of Rarotonga (Te Manga Nature Reserve), but it had not been ratified as of 1993. The reserve would include 80 percent of the island's cloud forest above 400 m, and would serve as a good illustration of Eastern Polynesian montane rain and cloud forest, that provides habitat for many endemic species.

### **Types and Severity of Threats**

Rats and other introduced animal species such as the common myna (*Acridotheres tristis*), which was brought in to control insects in the early twentieth century, may be interfering with the nesting of the endemic Mangaia kingfisher (*Todiramphus ruficollaris*). Cats and rodents are also potentially dangerous predators. Between 1870 and 1965, the African ant (*Pheidole megacephala*) caused extinction of 11 of the 13 endemic snail species on Rarotonga (Fitter 1986).

### **Justification of Ecoregion Delineation**

This ecoregion contains the Southern Cook Islands (Rarotonga, Mangaia, Mauke, Mitiaro, Hervey Islands, Atiu, Takute, Manuae, Aitutaki Atoll) and Palmerston Atoll. Mueller-Dombois & Fosberg (1998) consider the Northern Cook Islands to be part of Central Polynesia. Allison (1996) treats the Cooks, Societies, Tuamotus, and Marquesas as a unit herpetologically as they share a similar reptile assemblage. Van Balgooy also lumps the Cooks, Niue, Societies, Tuamotus, Tubau, and Marquesas based on floristic affinities. However, Birdlife International (Stattersfield et al. 1998) separates the Southern Cook Islands from the other island groups due to the presence of 6 endemic bird species. Aitutaki is delineated as a Secondary Endemic Bird Area because the restricted-range blue lorikeet (*Vini peruviana*). While this species is also found in the Society Islands, it is unclear if its presence on Aitutaki is the result of captives transported by Polynesians. In addition, prehistoric fossil evidence indicates that Aitutaki shared affinities with the rest of the Southern Cook Islands, and is thus included in the Cook Islands ecoregion.

### **References**

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Prepared by: Sandra Zicus

Reviewed by: In process

### Annex 17 Stakeholder Participation in Project Implementation

Stakeholders	Anticipated Roles and Responsibilities in Project Implementation as in PRODOC	Update at MTR
<b>National Government</b>		
<b>National Environment Service (NES)</b>	Lead Executing Agency Primary agency responsible for coordination and management of the project Facilitate linkages with other related national and regional projects under implementation in the Cook Islands.	No change
<b>Cook Islands Marine Park Steering Committee (CIMP SC)</b>	Ensure coordination among key stakeholders involved in the Cook Islands Marine Park and any other stakeholders involved in the wider Protected Areas system.	No meeting for last 12 months
<b>Ministry of Marine Resources (MMR)</b>	Implementation of the project's activities related to marine and coastal area conservation:	No change
<b>Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)</b>	Implement activities to reduce the levels of agro-chemicals, sediments and nutrients coming from agricultural areas into aquatic and inshore marine environments	No change
<b>Cook Islands Tourism Corporation (CIT Corp)</b>	Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into the operations and practices of the tourism industry	No change
<b>Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)</b>	Marae Moana Office as the coordinating hub for protected areas activities throughout the Southern Group of islands. Outer Islands Governance Unit to have key role in supporting the integration of R2R approaches and biodiversity conservation into Island Development Plans.	Active part in Steering Committee and some project activities. Potential here of project to strengthen relationship and involve more, possibly in cross-sectoral coordination
<b>Climate Change Cook Islands (CCCI)</b>	Through the SRICCC project work with the R2R project to strengthen resilience to climate change in the protected areas system.	SRICCC Project is completing soon, but relationship will continue
<b>Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM)</b>	Development Cooperation Division (DCD) will manage the disbursement of project funds within the country, oversee the managing, reporting and auditing of financial accounts	Disbursement now done by NES and MMR
<b>Infrastructure Cook Islands (ICI)</b>	The Water, Waste and Sanitation Unit (WATSAN) through its national waste and sanitation improvement programme on Rarotonga and Aitutaki aimed at reducing the flow of pollution, nutrients and sediments into freshwater and marine ecosystems	Less involvement - not attending PSC. Important partner
<b>Natural Heritage Trust (NHT)</b>	Responsible for the national biodiversity database, and will be a repository for new biodiversity related information as it becomes available, participate in species conservation programs for endemic birds and flora.	Database being developed and could be speeded up with project assistance. Collaborated on plant surveys on outer islands
<b>Seabed Minerals Authority (SMA)</b>	Consultations with project as part of the zoning process and management planning for the CIMP. Project will facilitate consultations between the CIMP Steering Committee and the SMA to determine whether to allow any seabed exploration, pilot operations and mining, and under what conditions, within the CIMP.	Not involved much at this stage
<b>Local &amp; Traditional Leaders</b>		
<b>Island Councils</b>	Key partners in Island Conservation Strategies integrated into each Island Development Plan, facilitating management of inhabited outer islands as Managed Conservation Areas, declaring/strengthening Community Conservation Areas	Meetings to discuss but actual progress slow INCEPTION REPORT LISTED 5 OUTER ISLAND

<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Anticipated Roles and Responsibilities in Project Implementation as in PRODOC</b>	<b>Update at MTR</b>
		ENUA SPECIFICALLY AS STAKEHOLDERS
<b>Island Executives</b>	Support coordination between national government agencies (e.g. NES, MMR, MoA) and the Island Councils and local communities for implementation of project activities.	As above
<b>House of Ariki and Koutu Nui</b>	Support in establishing and managing Community Conservation Areas and Ra'ui sites	Meetings to discuss but actual progress slow
<b>Environmental NGOs</b>		
<b>Te Ipukarea Society (TIS)</b>	Important partner in implementation of the Marae Moana Programme for the operationalization of the CIMP. Support throughout on biodiversity and biosecurity issues.	Co-chairs the PSC, but only marginally involved in project activities. Much expertise in TIS and associated agencies and should be brought in to implementation more
<b>Muri Environment Care</b>	Potential partner in application of R2R approaches to wastewater management and marine protection in the Muri lagoon area	?
<b>Local Stakeholder Groups &amp; Private Sector</b>		
<b>Tourism Industry Council</b>	Participate in all work under the tourism sector related to accreditation, education and awareness, use of organic products, sponsoring of biodiversity conservation projects undertaken by tour operators.	Has attended PSC. Slow on biodiversity criteria for green accreditation.
<b>Private Tourism Operators</b>	As above	Some conservation projects, but what are the criteria for approval
<b>Titikaveka Growers Association (TGA)</b>	Provide assistance to MoA in promoting sustainable agricultural practices	? No particular focus on that area
<b>Cook Islands National Council of Women (CINCW)</b>	Key role in ensuring participation of women in project activities and in the sharing of benefits produced by the project	?
<b>Local communities</b>	Will be deeply involved during and post project in community conservation areas and Ra'ui sites, biodiversity friendly agricultural practices, sustainable fisheries systems and developing and implementing a vision for the Cook Islands Marine Park and protected areas within it	Consulted
<b>Added during Inception Phase (IR p10)</b>		
<b>Ministry of Health</b>	Not specified	
<b>Pacific Islands Conservation Initiative</b>	Not specified	

## Annex 18 UNDP GEF Biodiversity Advisory Note - Indicators

## UNDP-GEF Biodiversity Advisory Note

### INDICATORS

#### Summary

During GEF2 there was an increasing emphasis placed on monitoring for impact. OPS2 (Overall Performance Study 2) nevertheless concluded that most GEF projects had failed to establish an effective process of monitoring to demonstrate impact. Consequently, during GEF3 there will be a strong focus on “monitoring for results”, and the Council has already blocked projects that do not have adequate monitoring plans proposed. It is also important, in terms of demonstrating impact for future OPS that UNDP/GEF support a process of retrofitting appropriate indicators to those projects that lack them.

This note clarifies some key concepts to guide the design of monitoring systems in pipeline projects and the retrofitting of projects already in the portfolio, with the aim of establishing effective systems of monitoring within projects and being able to demonstrate results. The attached annex provides a “menu” of good indicators, almost all of which are real examples taken from existing project documents, which may help to guide identification of appropriate indicators.

#### 1. Monitoring against the log-frame

The logical framework approach used in the design of all GEF projects incorporates a conceptual hierarchy of objectives. A complicating factor is that multiple terms have been used to refer to similar concepts, but the UNDP/GEF M&E recognizes four hierarchical levels:

- a) **Goal** (equivalent to “Development Objective”). The overall result to which the project will contribute, along with various other, external interventions.
- b) **Objective** (equivalent to “Immediate Objective”). The overall result that the project itself will achieve, independent of other interventions. There should be only one Objective per project
- c) **Outcomes**. The results of individual project components that achieve changes in conditions that affect the Objective.
- d) **Outputs**. The direct results of project **Inputs**, achieved through the completion of project activities.

In the past, most UNDP/GEF projects have monitored for Inputs (which is basically financial accounting) and Outputs. Output indicators, sometimes thought of as “process indicators”, are simply an accounting of the results of individual project activities. No further guidance is provided for Output monitoring since these only tell us what “has been done”. Not whether any impact has been achieved.

Monitoring for Outcomes, and against the Objective is less simple. At both levels, indicators can be thought of as “impact indicators”.

- As the Objective of GEF-funded projects in the biodiversity focal area is, by definition, related to globally significant biodiversity, indicators against the Objective are best expressed in terms of impact indicators affecting the state of biodiversity. Where such indicators are difficult to define, surrogate impact indicators focusing on changes in threats to biodiversity may substitute.

- Individual Outcomes rarely have a direct impact on biodiversity, since the Outcomes are usually defined in terms of the conditions necessary to conserve biodiversity. Therefore, impact indicators at the Outcome level will usually focus on impacts on responses or impacts on threats.

The distinction between impact indicators for these two different hierarchical levels in the logframe is reflected in the annex which gives specific examples.

UNDP/GEF projects do not generally monitor against the Goal, since this requires monitoring of external interventions over which neither the project team nor UNDP/GEF has control. However, noting that the successful completion of these external interventions are essentially "Assumptions" in the definition of the Goal, it may be possible in specific projects to identify indicators of these Assumptions, which can be monitored. However, no further guidance is provided on this issue.

## 2. What makes a good indicator?

An indicator is a quantitative or qualitative variable or parameter that provides a **simple** and **reliable** basis for assessing change or performance. It reduces data and information on a particular phenomenon to its simplest form while retaining their essential meaning. Indicators are used in different disciplines to measure a variety of issues such as country economic "health", company management effectiveness, regional social conditions, or project performance.

In the project management context, project indicators are used to measure project performance, i.e. "how" and "whether" an intervention is progressing towards its objectives. They also allow comparisons between actual and expected results. Defining indicators that include appropriate verifiers and qualifiers and also are complemented by targets and baselines ensures this performance measurement function. An effective indicator "package" should include:

➤ **Indicator**, including:

- **Verifier.** Variable or parameter that retains the essential meaning of the objective and that *can be measured on the ground.*  
**Qualifiers.** Contribute to describe the verifier allowing to respond to: *what, when, where, who*

**Targets/ Baseline-** Values associated to the verifiers that define *how much* the objective is planned/expected to be achieved compared to the situation prior to project start. Intermediate targets (milestones) allow assessment of progress.

Project indicators therefore describe and translate the strategy objectives in the Project Planning Matrix (PPM) (Goal, Objective, Outcome) in terms of its concrete meaning, its quantity, quality, time frame, and location so that it can be measured and verified objectively.

An example of a good indicator is:

Objective: "Conservation of keystone species"  
Indicator: At the end of the fifth year (**qualifier: when**)  
the population sizes (**qualifier: what**)  
of species A, B and C (**verifier**)  
within the boundaries of the park (**qualifier: where**)  
have remained constant (**target**)  
compared to X number at project-start level (**baseline**)



For clarity of presentation the indicator, baseline and target are placed in three adjacent columns in the Project Planning Matrix (PPM).

Project Strategy	Key Impact Indicator	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Goal					
Objective					
Outcomes					
Outputs					

A good indicator should have the following characteristics. It:

- **Closely tracks** the objective/result that is intended to measure
- Must allow general agreement over interpretation of the results (assessment by different stakeholders will reach same conclusion). This means the indicator should be **operationally precise (qualifiers)** - no ambiguity about:
  - *What* is being measured. Avoid reference to “adequate partnerships” - what type of partnership, who with, what is adequate, and who decides what is adequate?;
  - The *extent* of change intended. Avoid reference to “significant increase”, “to strengthen”, “to improve” unless these terms are explicitly defined;
  - *Where* are we measuring
  - *Who* are the stakeholders/ beneficiaries
- Is **unidimensional** - measures only one phenomenon at a time. Example. Community has access to and use of a certain technology
- Is **dissaggregated**, where appropriate, by gender, location, or some other dimension important for managers.
- Is **quantitative**, where possible;
- Is **practical**. Data must be:
  - *Obtainable* in a timely way and at reasonable cost (both human and financial resources).
  - *Available* on a frequent enough basis to inform management decisions.
  - *Reasonable and appropriate* as compared to the utility of the data
- Should be **adequate**. As a group, the indicator should adequately measure the phenomenon in question. Do not repeat indicators. Do not use process/activities indicators to measure results.
- Must be **owned**. Stakeholders need to agree that the indicator is useful (need to reconcile different interests). Indicators created in government (or UNDP) offices are not appropriate.

How many indicators are needed? That depends on the complexity of the project strategy and level of resources available. Strike a balance between resources available and information

needed to make well-informed decisions. In general, **a few good indicators are more useful than many weak indicators.**

### **3. Process**

Formulation of indicators is an iterative process that extends throughout project development and ought to begin **as early as possible**. Tentative indicators should be identified as part of the analysis and development of objectives stage during the planning phase. Thinking simultaneously about indicators and objectives at this early stage contributes to more precise and focused objectives. Moreover, this early attempt to define targets and milestones will result in a more realistic project strategy in terms of time frame and expected impact.

### **4. Implications for work-plans**

Monitoring does not occur spontaneously, or at no cost. An effective monitoring system requires a specific and adequately costed monitoring plan. The plan needs to identify **what** data is available from existing reliable sources and which data will be collected. For the data to be collected, the plan will identify by **whom**, at **which** locations, at **what** times, using **which** methods. Similarly, the subsequent use of the data needs to be described – **who** will be responsible for analyzing and reporting, against **what** deadlines? The costs of data collection, analysis and reporting need to be accurately calculated, and subsequent budget revisions should not reduce these costs (for example, if other project components are over cost), unless there is clear evidence that the original costs were over-estimated.

The process of **retrofitting** indicators for projects already under implementation is not complete without an associated revision of the work plan and budget revisions that address the issues described in the preceding paragraph.

*Please send any comments or suggestions for improving this note to Tim Boyle –  
tim.boyle@undp.org*

## ANNEX: Menu of real indicators from existing projects (sometimes modified)

### Overall Impact (Applies to the Objective level of the PPM)

Project Outcome	Impact on Biodiversity	Impact on Pressures	Impact on Response Measures
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Populations of indicator species native to project sites remain at viable levels – no decline compared with baseline surveys (6 species specified).</li> <li>➤ Populations of rare and endangered fauna and flora remain at current levels (5 species specified).</li> <li>➤ Biological monitoring in 2006 indicates that the integrity of the project site remains secure with no significant change in habitat block size</li> <li>➤ Biological assessment in year 3 shows no decline in number of species collected per unit of collection effort in 8 transect plots (baseline to be determined following biological assessment in yr. 1, and verified through field surveys)</li> <li>➤ 20% increase in the area of natural regeneration of [endangered plant species specified] within the project area, compared with baseline level, based on annual ground surveys</li> <li>➤ Habitat monitoring in yr. 5 indicates that there has been no reduction in the total area of primary forest from 1999 baseline (lowland forest: 119, 248 ha; mossy forest: 1,650 ha)</li> <li>➤ Connectivity maintained between 2 largest primary forest block with no net reduction in biological corridor beyond yr. 1999 baseline (distance between blocks 18 kilometers; corridor area 15,700 ha)</li> <li>➤ No decrease in canopy cover of secondary forest beyond yr 2002 baseline</li> <li>➤ By Dec. 2004 the [ecosystem] will show: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Equal to 1998 or increased natural vegetation cover</li> <li>2. Equal to 1998 or increased species diversity (plant and animals)</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ At the end of the project the number and extent of human-caused fires (not part of a fire management plan) will be reduced by 50% compared to the average from 1995-1999</li> <li>➤ No illegal new settlement occurs within project site beyond 1998 baseline</li> <li>➤ No illegal resource extraction occurs in the project site after June 2003</li> <li>➤ Illegal activities (grazing, hunting, settling, plant collecting, etc.) in protected areas will be reduced by 50% by year 4, compared with baseline levels.</li> <li>➤ Annual (or periodic) assessment using “Threats Reduction Analysis” (TRA) shows positive trends throughout life of project</li> </ul>	<p>Note: Impact indicators at the Objective level should ideally cover impact on biodiversity (2 and/or impact on threats (3<sup>rd</sup> responses is of limited value. However, the GEF has introduced some generalized indicators for obligatory use. These are:</p> <p>For SP1 projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Annual application of WB/WWF “tracking tool” shows increased scores throughout life of project</li> </ul> <p>For SP2 projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Annual application of GEF “tracking tool” shows increased scores throughout life of project</li> </ul>

**Components of project strategy (Applies to the Outcomes level of the PPM)**

**1. Improved resource management outcomes**

<b>Project Outcome</b>	<b>Impact on Biodiversity</b>	<b>Impact on Pressures</b>	<b>Impact on Response Measures</b>
Improvement of protected area management systems	Note: This column is largely empty because individual outcomes rarely have direct impacts on biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Area of new encroachment within the protected area declines to zero by year 4</li> <li>➤ Incidence of fires (number) spreading into protected area from surrounding farmland in years 3-5 declines by 50%, compared with annual average from 5 previous years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Legislative approval of PA status approved by yr. 2003 Q4</li> <li>➤ Full complement of PA staff recruited by 2003, Q4</li> <li>➤ PA boundaries fully delineated by 2004, Q4</li> <li>➤ Management plan produced by end of year 1</li> <li>➤ Endorsement of management zoning proposals by communities by end of year 2</li> </ul>
Establishment of sustainable management systems		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of livestock grazing within the protected area boundary declines by 90% by the end of year 3, compared with average numbers recorded in two years before beginning of project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By the end of year 5, all local fishermen are observing no-take zones</li> <li>➤ By the end of year 3, at least 70% of all farmers within the project site have voluntarily adopted stall feeding.</li> </ul>
Establishment of community management		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of incidents reported per unit monitoring effort declines by 50% by year 4, compared with year of initial monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Community-based natural resource management program implemented in 50% of communities by 2004, Q4</li> </ul>
Effective enforcement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of incidents reported per unit patrolling effort declines by 50% by year 4, compared with year of initial patrolling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Community forestry guards designated by 2003, Q3</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>

## 2. Economic and financial outcomes

Project Outcome	Impact on Biodiversity	Impact on Pressures	Impact on Response Measures
Improved livelihoods	➤ No net decrease in forest cover of local farmers' land holdings in years 3 and 5, compared with baseline levels	➤ Number of livestock grazing within the protected area boundary declines by 90% by the end of year 3, compared with average numbers recorded in two years before beginning of project.	➤ Provisional harvest quotas for sustainable use of NTFP's established by 2004, Q1 ➤ Livelihoods of beneficiaries of project's small grants programme improved over 1999 baseline, as measured by income levels
Alternative livelihoods		➤ Annual monitoring of regeneration of [4 important NTFP species] shows an increase of at least 30% in years 4-6 compared with the average for years 1 and 2 ➤ Frequency of incidents of hunting for bushmeat in project area declines by 70% by year 4, compared with baseline levels.	➤ At least [number] of examples of sustainable traditional resource use practices revived by yr. 4.5 ➤ Alternative income generation plans for all affected [sub-districts] produced by end of year 1 ➤ Specific alternative income initiatives under implementation in all affected [sub-districts] by end of year 2 ➤ Quantifiable changes in livelihoods of local communities, reducing the frequency of environmentally damaging activities, by year 5
Sustainable financing and financial instruments			➤ 50% of additional staff salaries absorbed into [Ministry of Environment] budget by 2004 ➤ Endowment Fund is fully capitalized and is providing funds for biodiversity by year 6 ➤ Annual recurrent costs for management of [project area] do not require additional donor support from year 5 onwards ➤ Park budget benefiting from income flows through ecotourism by year 5
Engagement of private sector in conservation goals		➤ By the end of year 4, monitoring of dive sites shows no new anchor or trampling damage	➤ Number of privately owned reserves established under national regulations reaches 4 within project area by year 4. ➤ Funding of community patrolling by local hotels supports at least 10 rangers by end of year 3

### 3. Capacity Development outcomes

Project Outcome	Impact on Biodiversity	Impact on Pressures	Impact on Response Measures
Strengthen institutions		➤ At least 80% of incidents of illegal logging successfully prosecuted from year 4 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The number of land-use requests per year, approved after 1999 that are inconsistent with the Project's biodiversity criteria will decrease to zero in the final year of the Project</li> <li>➤ [PA Agency] staff equipped and able to enforce corridor regulations from year 3 onwards</li> </ul>
Mobilization of communities for enforcement, monitoring, etc.		➤ Number of incidents reported per unit monitoring effort declines by 50% by year 4, compared with year of initial monitoring	➤ By the end of year 4, at least 10 villages within project area either voluntarily establish community monitoring, following model of pilot villages, or approach project for assistance in establishing community monitoring
Training & interpretation		➤ Incidence of fires spreading into protected area from surrounding farms decreases by 90% by year 4 (compared with baseline level)	➤ During the nesting season, at least 80% of all farmers avoid grazing livestock in areas used for nesting
Policies, legislation for conservation and sustainable livelihoods		➤ Three proposed protected areas and three proposed extensions to existing protected areas remain free from mining and other activities inconsistent with EIAs	➤ Game Law amended by 2003
Mainstreaming protected area management, including zoning			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Endorsement of management zoning proposals by communities by end of year 2</li> <li>➤ Corridor boundaries physically demarcated by end of year 3</li> <li>➤ All stakeholders, including local communities have clear understanding by year 5 of roles and responsibilities in land management of corridors</li> </ul>

<b>Project Outcome</b>	<b>Impact on Biodiversity</b>	<b>Impact on Pressures</b>	<b>Impact on Response Measures</b>
Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in production sectors (agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Pesticide levels in water samples [from 3 specified stream locations] decrease by 90% by end of year 5, compared with levels in year 1</li> <li>➤ Incidents of turtle by-catch decline by 90% by end of year 3, compared with baseline levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ No-takes zones endorsed by local fishermen by end of year 2</li> <li>➤ At least 75% of all farmers within project site utilizing IPM by the end of year 4</li> <li>➤ All forest enterprises operating in the buffer zone adopt revised logging regulations that incorporate biodiversity-friendly practices by end of year 3</li> <li>➤ Total road length constructed per 1000m by year 4, compared with year 1</li> </ul>

#### 4. Management of Information and Knowledge outcomes

Project Outcome	Impact on Biodiversity	Impact on Pressures	Impact on Response Measures
Environmental education and awareness building		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Support for commercial hunting among villagers within project site declines by at least 80%, based on targeted surveys conducted in year 1 and year 5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increased understanding and commitment of local authorities and communities to objectives of the Biosphere Reserve measured by tangible contributions (buildings, personnel, finances, administrative support) by year 3</li> <li>➤ Biodiversity conservation measures developed by the Project are included in the 2008 Central and local government's Four-year plans</li> <li>➤ Awareness of park boundaries and regulations established in 100% of adult community members surveyed by year 5</li> </ul>
Support for indigenous knowledge		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Incidents of grazing and fire in [specified areas where NTFP's are collected] decline to zero by year 4.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Re-established traditional medicine clinics provide employment for at least 30 local farmers in sustainable harvesting (and processing) of NTFP's by end of year 4</li> </ul>
Replication			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Management model extended to at least 1 other PA by 2004</li> <li>➤ The number of replicates within other national and regionally protected areas, of approaches demonstrated and lessons learned by the project</li> <li>➤ Protected areas and buffer zone principles are applied to other protected areas and buffer zones in [target country], as indicated by reference to this Project</li> </ul>



## 5. Scientific and Technical Outcomes

Project Outcome	Impact on Biodiversity	Impact on Pressures	Impact on Response Measures
Biological and socio-economic surveys			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Biological and socio-economic data for corridors input into existing [PA Agency] GIS unit by end of year 1</li> <li>➤ Most intensively utilized grazing lands identified by end of year 1 and ecological impacts of grazing documented</li> </ul>
Ecological restoration, including species recovery plans		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Sales of endangered animals or animal parts in local markets declines by 90% in year 5 compared with year 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Basal area of woody species within [specified degraded areas] shows a 20% increase in survey conducted in year 5, compared with year 1</li> <li>➤ Number of juveniles recorded by camera trapping in year 5 shows a 30% increase (per unit trapping effort) compared with year 1.</li> </ul>
Research in support of conservation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Adoption of alternative grazing systems reduces the number of livestock grazing in natural forest within project site by 70% by end of year 4, compared with baseline levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Viable IPM systems providing alternatives to chemical pesticides successfully tested in project area by end of year 4</li> </ul>

### Annex 19. Risk Matrix with Assessment at MTR

IDENTIFIED RISKS AND CATEGORY	IMPACT	LIKELIHOOD	RISK ASSESSMENT IN PRODOC	MTR ASSESSMENT
ORGANIZATIONAL: Poor collaboration between programme partners leads to fragmented approach to protected areas management	High	Moderately likely	<b>Medium</b>	Risk underestimated, and looking at previous reports on the sector, it seems as though the risk should have been assessed higher
STRATEGIC: Stakeholders, particularly local communities, are not able to perceive benefits from conservation during programme duration	Medium	Moderately Likely	<b>Low</b>	Fair assessment
OPERATIONAL: Poor accessibility to the Outer Islands from Rarotonga will make it difficult to generate equitable benefits to the Outer Islands from the project	Medium	Unlikely	<b>Negligible</b>	Equitable benefits is an odd way to refer to project impacts. Fair assessment of risk. If anything the work on outer islands (Southern Group) has been more than on Rarotonga.
ENVIRONMENTAL: Climate change related impacts could undermine conservation efforts	Medium	Moderately Likely	<b>Low</b>	An important risk to the Cook Islands and has to be taken into account in planning and implementation but not undermining conservation efforts under the project.
FINANCIAL: Financial resources are not sufficient to support effective protected area planning and operations over the long-term	Medium	Very Likely	<b>High</b>	So far financial resources have not been the limiting factor - there has been low delivery under the project. This risk refers to sustainable funding after the project and the risk is probably well assessed and is all the more reason for addressing Output 1.4 with urgency.

### Risk Assessment Guiding Matrix

	Impact					
		CRITICAL	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
Likelihood	CERTAIN / IMMINENT	Critical	Critical	High	Medium	Low
	VERY LIKELY	Critical	High	High	Medium	Low
	LIKELY	High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
	MODERATELY LIKELY	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Negligible
	UNLIKELY	Low	Low	Negligible	Negligible	Considered to pose no determinable risk

### **Comments on revisions to SRF:**

1. The Objective (To build national and local capacities and actions to ensure effective conservation of biodiversity, food security and livelihoods and the enhancement of ecosystem functions within the Cook Islands Marine Park) cannot and should not change. It is a sound objective and gives the idea of the project being part of a long term approach to establishing biodiversity and protected area management in the Cook Islands

2. The Components (1. **Strengthening protected areas management** and 2. **Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats within production landscapes**) well define the area of work but, in the formal setting of a Strategic Results Framework, a clear "end state" condition is required here, normally termed an "Outcome".

Examples of possible "Outcomes" to stand in for these two Components Components could be changed to "end state" Outcomes officially but this may not be necessary or desirably if it entails delay.

New Outcomes should be useful conceptually regardless of whether there is an official change at HQ. Internal planning should benefit and the indicators will be easier to draft and understand, if the vision and expected impacts of the project are more clearly expressed than at present Note that they apply to the whole archipelago.

3. The outputs are worded more like outcomes (end states) than outputs. A typical output would be a specific policy document, or a protected area system plan. A choice has to be made between retaining the existing outputs or revising them to provide more detail. The problem with the second option is that the number of outputs would increase too much. The project could function well using the current output wording with the detail provided by sub-outputs which can be identified from the current (Prodoc) activities. However, there is a case to be made for adding a fourth output to Component (to become Outcome) 2. The MTR report note that Component 2 covers biodiversity ibeing mainstreamed into production *landscapes* but not explicitly *seascapes*. In order to visualize better what the project is trying to achieve, a fourth output regarding the fisheries sector should be added to Component 2 and adjustments made to activities to match that.

<b>COMPONENT 1: A national protected area system with defined management categories is in operation across the Cook Islands</b>
<b>Output 1.1:</b> Strengthened legal / regulatory and policy frameworks for protected areas <b>Output 1.2:</b> Expanded and strengthened management systems for protected areas <b>Output 1.3:</b> Strengthened institutional coordination and capacities at the national and local levels for the participatory management of protected areas <b>Output 1.4:</b> Financial sustainability framework developed for system of protected areas
<b>COMPONENT 2: Biodiversity is a mandatory routine consideration in policy, planning and action in Cook Island Government Agencies</b>
<b>Output 2.1:</b> Ridge to reef approaches integrated into land use and development planning <b>Output 2.2:</b> Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into agriculture sector <b>Output 2.3:</b> Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into tourism sector is developed and continuously updated <b>Output 2.4: Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into fisheries sector</b>

#### 4. The indicators

INDICATOR	MTR COMMENTS ON INDICATOR DESIGN	SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVES
<b>Project Objective: To build national and local capacities and actions to ensure effective conservation of biodiversity, food security and livelihoods and the enhancement of ecosystem functions within the Cook Islands Marine Park</b>		
P1 Overall framework in place for conservation in the Southern Group of the Cook Islands	Is this part of the objective rather than an indicator of impact? And you do in fact have targets beyond a framework, including active management with dedicated trained staff.	Number of full time government staff allocated for protected area systems and site management
P2 Area of inhabited Outer Islands in Southern Group managed for BD conservation through Island Development Plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terrestrial</li> <li>• Marine</li> </ul>	Good numerical indicator. Only slight drawback is that it measures conservation commitment and effort rather than the impact of that effort. Do you have criteria for what "managed for conservation" means? Declaration of areas is one thing: can you assess implementation of the declaration too? How does areas management for BD conservation differ from areas managed as Protected Areas (see indicator 1. 6). Is the only difference between these indicators inhabited islands vs all islands?	Number of Island Development Plans that include chapters on a) protected area establishment and management, and b) mainstreaming of biodiversity
P3 Tracking Tool IW1: Innovative solutions implemented for reduced pollution, improved water use efficiency, sustainable fisheries with rights-based management, IWRM, water supply protection in SIDS, and aquifer and catchment protection	Complex as an indicator. No score given as target. No quantitative impact indicators. These are milestones towards building capacity, but are they suitable as they stand as indicators?  What determines which indicators go under project objective and which under Components 1 and 2?	X
<b>Component 1: Strengthening Protected Areas Management</b>		
1.1 Improved management effectiveness of Cook Islands Marine Park, as measured by GEF BD 1 Tracking Tool (METT)	What is the consistency of METT scores when the measurement is done by different individuals/teams? Who has done your measurements at inception and mid-term?	The Score as the indicator, but can only be used if the assessment is done and done properly
1.2 National agencies responsible for PA management are effectively delivering PA management functions (as measured by the Capacity development <sup>1</sup> indicator score for protected area system): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systemic</li> <li>• Institutional</li> <li>• Individual</li> </ul>	What is the consistency of Capacity Development Assessment Scorecard scores when the measurement is done by different individuals/teams? Who has done your measurements at inception and mid-term?	The Scores as the indicator, but can only be used if the assessment is done and done properly
1.3 Updated and consolidated legal framework for management of the Cook Islands Marine Park (CIMP) and all other protected areas in the country	This reads like part of Output 1.1. rather than an indicator. Does it overlap with P1?	Number of individual CI protected areas recognized under the law as one of established list of PA categories
1.4 Consolidated management authority for protected areas in the Cook Islands	This also reads like part of Output 1.1. rather than an indicator, but the targets indicate a different approach possible. Could you not	Percentage of protected areas under each established category for which there is a new and

<sup>1</sup> Project will work to ensure that gender equality is promoted in the selection of persons to participate in capacity development activities (PRODOC FOOTNOTE)

INDICATOR	MTR COMMENTS ON INDICATOR DESIGN	SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVES
	take institutional coordination as the theme here and measure the impact of the project by degree of cross-sectoral collaboration on PAs in some way?	authoritative description of location, biodiversity importance, threats, constraints and management measures
1.5 Management of protected area sites on islands in the Southern Group	The target seems to be focused on management plans but management plans not mentioned in the indicator itself. It does not read like an indicator. Numbers of staff active, numbers of management plans approved - would be possible. Can you make these indicators quantitative ?	Number of protected areas that have begun to implement management plans
1.6 % Area of Southern Group islands managed as Protected Areas (protected natural areas, community conservation areas, ra'ui sites) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terrestrial</li> <li>• Marine (to the outer reef)</li> </ul>	Can you separate the different categories? Is this too similar to P2 under the Objective?	% of terrestrial and marine areas (following marine guidelines) that satisfy criteria for IUCN PA categories Ia, Ib and II
1.7 Improved management effectiveness of priority conservation zones, as measured by the GEF BD 1 Tracking Tool (METT): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takitumu Conservation Area (Rarotonga)</li> <li>• Cloud Forest Nature Reserve (Rarotonga)</li> <li>• Manuae Wildlife Sanctuary / Marine Reserve (Manuae)</li> <li>• Moko Ero<sup>2</sup> Nui Leeward Forest Reserve (Atiu)</li> <li>• Takutea Wildlife Sanctuary / Marine Reserve (Takutea)</li> </ul>	What is the consistency of METT scores when the measurement is done by different individuals/teams? Who has done your measurements at inception and mid-term?	The Scores as the indicator, but can only be used if the assessment is done and done properly
1.8 Lagoon ecosystems are managed in a coordinated manner and with clear ecological conservation objectives	Again not an indicator but a result or <i>outcome</i> . What is the definition of "coordinated". It is either no or yes, so not suitable as a quantitative impact indicator.	Score on standard lagoon water quality test
1.9 Funds available for management of Protected Areas, as reported in the GEF BD1 Tracking Tool – Financial Scorecard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-governmental financing mechanisms</li> <li>• Government budget allocations</li> </ul>	Should you not use the scoring system of the Financial Scorecard as an indicator, rather than the actual amount of money?	The Scores as the indicator, but can only be used if the assessment is done and done properly
1.10 Conservation of critical coral reef habitat within the CIMP, as measured by finfish populations at coral reefs around Rarotonga and Aitutaki	How reliable are the baseline population estimates for each of these species? It is notoriously difficult to determine population size: could you not devise an indicator that tells you something about abundance but is not actual population size? That might be more reliable. And could any changes or even no change be attributed reliably to the project?  Wouldn't measurements of damage to coral reefs get at this well?	Select a simple diversity index such as the number of species seen on a standard transect repeated daily for three days by an expert, and use the score for that
1.11 Conservation of priority species at selected sites:	How reliable are the baseline population estimates for each of these species? It is notoriously difficult to determine population	X

<sup>2</sup> Should be Moko'ero (MTR FOOTNOTE)

INDICATOR	MTR COMMENTS ON INDICATOR DESIGN	SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Turtle (Takutea and Manuae)</li> <li>• Hawksbill turtle (Takutea and Manuae)</li> <li>• Loggerhead Turtle (Palmerston)</li> <li>• Napoleon (Humphead) Wrasse (Rarotonga &amp; Aitutaki)</li> <li>• Atiu Swiftlet (Atiu)</li> <li>• Mangaian Kingfisher (Mangaia)</li> <li>• Rarotongan Monarch (Rarotonga &amp; Atiu)</li> <li>• Mitiaro Tree Palm (Mitiaro)<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>	<p>size: could you not devise an indicator that tells you something about abundance but is not actual population size? That might be more reliable. And could any changes or even no change be attributed reliably to the project?</p> <p>Could any changes or even no change be attributed reliably to the project?</p>	
<b>Component 2: Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats within production landscapes</b>		
<p>2.1 Landscape/seascape area covered by the project (ha), as measured by GEF BD 2 Tracking Tool</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directly covered</li> <li>• Indirectly covered</li> </ul>	<p>The "area covered by the project" is not measured by the tracking tool - it is determined by the project document and subsequent adjustments. So what is being measured with this indicator?</p>	X
<p>2.2 Pressures from resources uses in the land- and seascape are reduced through Ridge to Reef management approaches, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced use of agricultural chemicals, based on value of annual imports<sup>4</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fertilizers</li> <li>• Pesticides</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Planning approval process for infrastructure and other development</li> </ul>	<p>This is in principle an excellent numerical indicator. Whether changes can be made quickly enough to show impacts during the project remains to be seen, but there could be post project monitoring too. There are snags indicated in the footnote.</p> <p>Not worded as an indicator and the result described in the target is a valuable result (but not an impact indicator)</p>	<p>Quantity of chemical fertilizers and pesticides imported</p> <p>Sales of agrochemicals in main local outlets</p> <p>Number of EIA that cite biodiversity concerns</p>
<p>2.3 Forest cover on the 9 islands within the Cook Islands Marine Park</p>	<p>Will you distinguish between quality of forest? That will be important. Poor quality forest replacing good quality forest destroyed, would be a snag in this indicator. Also poor quality forest destroyed in the interests of conservation would be a benefit. [I see that this has been raised in the draft PIR] Could refine the indicator to focus on important forest for BD conservation.</p>	<p>Number of hectares of forest destroyed per year</p>
<p>2.4 Sedimentation and pollution of aquatic and marine habitats</p>	<p>What is the numerical baseline? How will you show attribution to project activities in/with MoA</p>	<p>Select a water quality/turbidity index and use the score at selected sites where the project is active</p>
<p>2.5 Reduced impacts of human activities on land on the health of inshore marine ecosystems, as measured by algal levels (coralline algae, turf algae, and macro-algae) on coral reefs around Rarotonga and Aitutaki</p>	<p>What are the numerical baselines? How will you show attribution to project activities in/with MoA and CIT Corp? Is the link with health of inshore marine ecosystems demonstrated?</p>	<p>YES but define the actual measurements to be taken</p>

<sup>3</sup> Should be Mitiaro Fan Palm (MTR FOOTNOTE)

<sup>4</sup> ORIGINAL DOCUMENT FOOTNOTE Because annual import levels vary substantially, the baseline values are based on 5-year average (2008-2012) spending on imported fertilizers and pesticides (including insecticides, fungicides, herbicides and rodenticides), and the end of project targets will be based on 4-year average (2015-2018) of the project implementation period

INDICATOR	MTR COMMENTS ON INDICATOR DESIGN	SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVES
2.6 Impact of tourism businesses on biodiversity and ecosystem functioning in targeted KBAs	This is a topic - not an indicator. The indicator should be number of businesses meeting defined criteria (and you have good criteria in your target column).	Score against the biodiversity criteria to be designed for the tourism accreditation scheme
2.7 # of projects by tourism operators that support biodiversity conservation (e.g. creating Ra'ui sites / CCAs; coral gardens; beach clean-up; sponsored species conservation)	Do you have tighter criteria for what supporting biodiversity conservation means here and how long such projects have to continue - ie sustainability?	<p>Number of tourist operators that make biodiversity conservation a key part of their tour spiel on day trips</p> <p>Number of brochures and billboards that demonstrate a negative or ignorant attitude to biodiversity conservation</p>

# Annex 21 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan from Inception Report (Section 9) with MTR comments

Type of M&E activity	Time frame	MTR Consultant's omments
Inception Workshop and Report	Within first two months of project start up	Inception Workshop 20-21 October 2015). Did some useful review of stakeholders, steering committee members, monitoring and evaluation plan. But missed opportunity to fine tune indicators, strategic results framework and activities, and prepare detailed project work plan. Inception Report is dated November 2015 but appears not to have been produced until after May 2016 <sup>1</sup> includes far too much duplication. 40 out of 60 pages are straight from Prodoc with little or no modification
Project Steering Committee	Immediately following the Inception Workshop and quarterly thereafter	Meetings held quarterly but attendance by some participants poor.
Measurement of Means of Verification of project results.	Start, mid and end of project (during evaluation cycle) and annually when required.	Many indicators not measured and <u>Sources</u> of Verification in SRF not yet available
Measurement of Means of Verification for Project Progress on <i>output and implementation</i>	Annually prior to ARR/PIR and to the definition of annual work plans	Not clear. As above.
ARR/PIR	Annually	Done 2017. Pretty frank assessments in text of problems and responses, but blinkered approach to assessment of progress against indicators, and possibly overoptimistic estimates of what can be achieved without fundamental change in management.
Quarterly progress reports	Quarterly	Reports are good, and they present the implementation problems clearly. The puzzle is why nothing was done about them. Progress Reports give a succinct accounts of recent activities but do not take an overarching approach looking at the progress towards the outputs. Again, much time has gone into writing text against indicators and this has not been useful. The reports against outputs, often in the same reports are much more useful and give a much better picture of project progress.
Combined Delivery Reports	Quarterly	Done annually. Stick too closely to Prodoc "Activities" when should by now have developed proper objective oriented SRF
Issues Log	Quarterly	Not seen
Risks Log	Quarterly	Not seen
Lessons Learned Log	Quarterly	Not seen
Mid-term Review	At the mid-point of project implementation.	MTR mission was November 2017 just over two years after the Inception Workshop (28 months after project signature). Within normal practice in projects such as this.
Final Evaluation	At least three months before the end of project implementation	Due, on current schedule by April 2019

<sup>1</sup> Inception Report p11 refers to 8 April 2016 SC meeting and UNDP MCO reports on 19 May 2016

"The draft inception report following the inception workshop in October 2015 must be finalised as soon as possible." From BTOR 19 May 2016



Type of M&E activity	Time frame	MTR Consultant's omments
Project Terminal Report	At least three months before the end of the project	Due, on current schedule by April 2019
Audit	Yearly	No project-dedicated audit reports available yet. Audit was done in mid-November 2017
Visits to field sites	Yearly	UNDP MCO have visited Cook Islands annually. MTR saw back to office reports for each of 2015, 2016 and 2017

## Annex 22 Form 1: Report by Project Management on status of cofinance at MTR

Add rows where necessary, and complete all empty cells

<b>Sources of Co-financing</b>	Name of Cofinancer	Type of Cofinancing	Amount Confirmed at CEO Endorsement (US\$)Million	Actual Amount Contributed at stage of Midterm Review (US\$)Million	Actual % of Expected Amount
Government	National Environment Service	Cash	2.50	1.126	45.04%
Government	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management	Cash	11.00	5.00 (Estimation TBA)	45.45%
NGO	Oceans 5	Cash	1.20	1.20 (as project is completed)TBA	100%
NGO	Te Ipukarea	Cash In kind	0.15 0.05	0.07 TBA 0.25 TBA	46.67% 50%
UNDP	UNDP Samoa	Cash	0.05	TBA	
		TOTALS	14.95		

## Annex 23. UNDP GEF Biodiversity Advisory Note: Lack of the Solution is not the Problem



## UNDP GEF Biodiversity Advisory Note

### Lack of the Solution is not the Problem



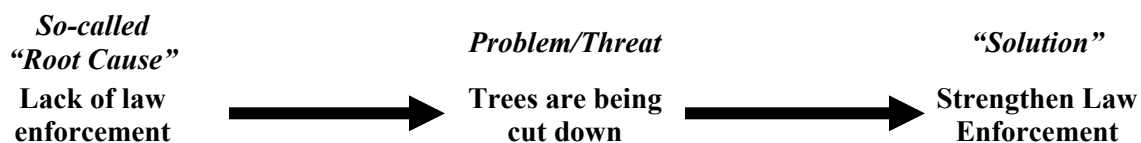
*Normally it is easier to solve a problem if we know what the problem is.*

Developing a coherent problem tree is one of the most difficult and time consuming parts of project development, yet it is often given little attention. Rather than starting with a clearly diagnosed problem, many proponents of biodiversity project proposals start with the solution, something they want to do – a set of “activities” – and then spend significant amounts of time and effort laying out a project that will carry out these activities. Only once they have done this do they turn to “retrofitting” a problem analysis. Not surprisingly, in most cases the so-called “root cause” of the problem turns out to be the “lack of the solution” they have so carefully designed. The consequence is generally a poorly designed project that does not effectively or efficiently solve a biodiversity problem. Instead it leaves parts of the problem unsolved and it includes activities that are not really necessary to solve the problem.

A key indicator of a “solution driven analysis” is that the identified problem or problems that the project is supposed to solve are articulated as something that there is a “lack of”, or is “inadequate” or “insufficient”. The “something” is normally the intended project “solution”.

The problem with a “solution driven analysis” is that it often obscures the true cause of the problem, and worse, potentially points to the wrong solution. For example, the statement “trees are being cut down because of a lack of enforcement,” is not a statement of cause and effect.

If the logic is laid out in a cause and effect chain the problems become clearer:



Obviously this is a circular argument. If the “root cause” is stated as a “lack of law enforcement” the only logical solution is to “strengthen law enforcement”. Consideration of alternative solutions is eliminated. The real “cause” of the problematic behaviour (cutting down trees) remains unknown. Instead, attention is focused on the proposed solution – increasing law enforcement. The real cause of tree cutting might be that people need trees in order to build houses, or cutting trees and selling the timber is perceived as the only way of generating cash income to pay school fees, and so on. The possibility of finding alternative ways for people to build houses, or finding alternative sources of trees or ways of getting children schooled, are not investigated. If the problem is actually that people have a fairly basic “need” for trees and have no real alternatives, strengthening law enforcement is only going to heighten conflict and not lead to a lasting solution of the problem.

While a “lack of something” argument is obviously circular, it is one of the most commonly used arguments in biodiversity projects. Similar common examples (and their solutions) include:

- lack of awareness (inform or educate people)
- poor land use planning (improve land use planning)
- insufficient financial resources (send more money / set up a trust fund)

Unfortunately much of the published log frame guidance, while providing step by step instructions for preparing a problem analysis, still uses the “lack of the solution” shorthand in its problem trees.

Avoiding “lack of” problem statements is much more likely to lead to an accurate diagnosis of the problem from which alternative solutions can be developed, feasible ones can be compared, and the “best” solutions chosen. The “best solution” may in fact be the one originally proposed, but if we get there by logical analysis rather than “assumption” we will have considered, and discarded, other alternatives and we will be confident that this is in fact the best solution. We will also be aware of the full extent of the problem and while the project itself may not be able to address all aspects of the problem, the parameters or assumptions within which the project operates will be clear.

*Please send any comments or suggestions for improving this note to: [john.hough@undp.org](mailto:john.hough@undp.org)*

## Annex 24: Notes on Terms of Reference for experts

Capacity development should be based on learning by doing with the aim of developing skills. Consultants should be used to support, guide and introduce new methods and approaches but not to do the work. So the consultant recently recruited to carry out a stakeholder analysis for the Aitutaki Lagoon Management Plan should be leading a team to do that, demonstrating her methods and skills, and developing capacities in the team as the team members themselves carry out the analysis. TOR for experts often assign project outputs or activities to the consultants and this leaves no capacity behind.

A fundamental problem in TOR for advisors, especially long term advisors, on projects such as these is that the advisor is usually not given any executive decision making powers and yet is expected, implicitly and sometimes explicitly, to take responsibility for the success of the project. Such a position can be frustrating. Influence must come through persuasion and two-way learning. Sometimes the advisor has to be patient in repeating advice if it is not taken up immediately, and sometimes the advisor has to change his or her stance in the light of local knowledge and insights gained through team work and stakeholder interactions.

The expert's role should be portrayed as forming part of a team with collective responsibility for, and pride in, the project's results. So, working together and helping where his or her experience is relevant, but NOT being relied upon to write a whole slew of administrative and technical reports that the Project Coordinator and or Manager are responsible for and should be quite capable of doing themselves. Very often TOR portray a rather stand-offish, one-way process of *providing* advice, supervision, guidance, technical inputs etc., *supporting* the Project Coordinator, *developing* (meaning writing) Terms of Reference etc.

In the case of the R2R project the MTR report makes clear that there has been too much a prescriptive approach to project implementation, following the project document without question. One of the functions of the R2R CTA will be to make PMU staff and partners feel comfortable with departing from the details of the project document and focusing instead on the results expected, which should have been clearly expressed by the time the CTA arrives, through modifications agreed during the Consolidation Phase. Following a rigid and prescriptive project document is no way to develop innovative models and approaches for protected areas and the consideration of biodiversity in productive land/seascapes in the Cook Islands. The MTR report advocates a more flexible approach to work planning: activities should not be "set in stone" years in advance in the project document, instead they should be developed annually on the basis of what has been learned the previous year. Getting that message across and getting PMU staff and partners not only comfortable but confident with that approach will be a big part of the CTA's work.

The TOR too should not be a long list of predetermined tasks. I have drafted here some of the main items for inclusion. Don't go over one page for list of duties. The kind of candidate required is one who understands the breadth of the impacts expected of the CTA; someone who does not need to have each and every little reporting requirement itemized in the TOR; someone who is ready to advise anyone on their specific duties and to do what is necessary to make the project work; someone who is ready to "live the project" for however long he or she is appointed, and to work with others towards establishing the PMU as a centre of excellence to which the public, government, journalists and students come to for information and inspiration; and to maintaining through constant one on one and small group meetings the cross-sectoral vision of the project that should be accepted by partners and stakeholders during the CP.

The draft TOR prepared by UNDP MCO are for about 100 working days per year, which is not even half time, split into up to five periods of at least 15 days each per year. That would not work in the case of rescuing the R2R project. The post has to be full time. And remuneration should not depend on approval of bimonthly reports - that is far too time-consuming (both CTA's time and UNDP MCO's time) and is unnecessary if the right person is appointed. A monthly salary should be paid and a contract issued for one year renewable for a second year on assessment after the first year.

CTA duties - following more or less the MTR recommendations

Duty Station - Avarua, Rarotonga with frequent fieldwork on Rarotonga and other islands

#### General

Prepare to build on the Consolidation Phase by reading project documentation including the MTR and Consolidation Reports and meeting with at least one and if possible both of the Consolidation consultants.

Advise on and guide, *through engagement*, the entire project programme, working alongside PMU staff, partners and other stakeholders.

Design and establish a system of scrutiny of the likely or actual impacts (positive and negative) of each project activity at the planning stage

Track and assess assignments and impacts of activities of partners and technical consultants, discuss feedback and work together to improve where necessary.

With the Project Coordinator and the Project Manager hold a series of individual and small group meetings with partners and other stakeholders (including expanded group of active core partners: MoA, MMR, HoA, CITC, NHT, MMCO) to confirm the shared vision established during the Consolidation Phase and establish working relationships. Ensure that the appropriate partners are engaged for the cross-sectoral results expected under the project.

Work to establish the project office as a centre of excellence in biodiversity conservation to which government officials, journalists, teachers, students and other members of the public come to for information and inspiration

With the PC and PM introduce and operate a more pro-active, R2R project-centred, inclusive routine approach to quarterly work-planning so that that workplans reflect overarching project priorities in addition to activity-level logistical detail. This to be achieved through routine and regular one-to-one and small group engagement with partners and other stakeholders. [If the system does not work then consider with PMU alternatives so that core partners do not prepare their own quarterly plans at all.]

Seek international assistance through networking to identify consultants, to exchange information and experiences about best practices, and to interest overseas institutions in research and conservation activities that will contribute to project aims. Work with TIS in this respect.

Select a small number of activities that are almost ready for implementation as pilots to a high standard and "fast-tracking" to demonstrate good practice in application of the R2R approach and to produce lasting tangible products. Three activities (Aitutaki Lagoon Management Plan, Cook Islands Biodiversity and Ethnology Database, and Biodiversity Criteria for Tourism Accrediation) are recommended in the MTR report

Participate in needs assessments for capacity development and communication followed by preparation of necessary training, procurement and communication plans.

Engage with government and NGOs in planning for institutional and financial measures that will sustain project outcomes after the project has been completed

Comment on and help with revisions to the substance of reports and other documents produced under the project, including an application for a no-cost extension

Submit quarterly progress reports and quarterly work plans to fit with the project plans