

# Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP-GEF Project “Advancing Sustainable Resource Management to Improve Livelihoods and Protect Biodiversity in Palau” (GEF ID 5208) 2016 – 2023



Evaluation Office of the United Nations Environment Programme

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Advancing Sustainable Resource Management to Improve Livelihoods and Protect  
Biodiversity in Palau/Palau 5208

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The evaluator would like to express her gratitude to all persons met and who contributed to this evaluation, these persons are listed in Annex 2.

The evaluator would like to thank the UNEP Task Manager Sang Jin Lee for his contribution, collaboration and facilitation throughout the evaluation process. Dolmii Remeliik is thanked in particular for her facilitation and her time spent logistically supporting the evaluation mission.

The evaluating consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to the improvement and advancement of protected areas management and sustainable land management in Palau.

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## ABOUT THE EVALUATION

**Joint Evaluation:** No

**Report Language(s):** English.

**Evaluation Type:** Terminal Evaluation

**Brief Description:** This report is a terminal evaluation of a UNEP/GEF Full-Sized Project (GEF ID 5208) implemented between Q4 2016 and Q3 2023, entitled “Advancing Sustainable Resource Management to Improve Livelihoods and Protect Biodiversity in Palau”. The project’s goal was to effectively and sustainably use biodiversity and maintain ecosystem goods and services in Palau by building institutional capacity to integrate the Palau Protected Area Network (PAN) with the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) initiative, and fostering a ridge-to-reef approach across and within these initiatives. The evaluation sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, the GEF, the MAFE, PAN Office and PAN Fund, BOA, BOT, BOE, PICRC, PCS, BNM, EQBP, PCC, PALARIS, NEPC, all state governments involved, and other project partners.

**Key words:** PAN, sustainable land management, conservation, management effectiveness, best practices, agriculture, forestry, tourism, land use planning

**Primary data collection period:** September - November 2023

**Field mission dates:** 1 November - 10 November 2023

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADB	Asia Development Bank
BLS	Bureau of Land and Survey
BNM	Belau National Museum
BoA	Bureau of Agriculture
BoT	Bureau of Tourism
BWA	Belau Water Alliance
CBNRM	Community-based Natural Resource Management
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCM	Climate Change Mitigation
EQPB	Environmental Quality Protection Board
GIZ	German Development Agency
INFORM	Environmental Information for Decision-making
IPP	Investment Partnership Programme
IUCN BIOPAMA	International Union for the Conservation of Nature Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Programme
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MAFE	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NEPC	National Environmental Protection Council
NISSAP	National Invasive Species Strategic Action Plan
NRFC	Northern Reef Fisheries Cooperative
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PALARIS	Office of the Palau Automated Land and Resources Information Systems
PAME	Protected Areas Management Effectiveness
PAN	Protected Areas Network
PCC	Palau Community College
PCS	Palau Conservation Society
PICRC	Palau International Coral Reef Center
PM	Project Manager
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPLA	Palau Public Lands Authority
PREL	(hawaii education)
PVA	Palau Visitors Authority
R2R	Reef to Ridge
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SIDS	Small Island Developing State
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant/Realistic, and Time-bound indicators
Tri-Org	A collaboration between PVA, BTA and Palau Chamber of Commerce
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

## PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

**Table 1: Project summary**

GEF Project ID:	5208		
Implementing Agency:	UNEP	Executing Agency:	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment, formerly known as Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism (MNRET).
Relevant SDG(s):	SDG1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 8, SDG 12, SDG13 and SDG15		
Sub-programme:	<p>PoW 2014-2015 SP3 Ecosystem Management</p> <p>PoW 2016-2017 SP3 Ecosystem Management</p> <p>PoW 2018-2019 Healthy and Productive Ecosystems (SP3)</p> <p>PoW 2020-2021 Healthy and Productive Ecosystems (SP3)</p> <p>PoW 2022-2023 Nature Action</p>	Expected Accomplishment(s):	<p>PoW 2014-2015 EA(a): Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased. Indicator: (i) Increase in the number of countries integrating the ecosystem approach with traditional sector-based natural resource management.</p> <p>PoW 2016-2017 EA(a): Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased. Indicators: (i) Increased percentage of countries integrating the ecosystem approach into sector-based natural resource management, with the assistance of UNEP (iv) Increased percentage of area managed using an ecosystem approach out of the total area covered by countries, with the assistance of UNEP</p> <p>PoW 2018-2019 EA(a) The health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sector and transboundary collaboration frameworks<sup>33</sup> at the national and international levels(i) Increase in the number of countries and transboundary collaboration frameworks that have made progress to monitor and maintain the health and productivity of marine and terrestrial ecosystems<sup>34</sup> Unit of measure: Number of countries and transboundary collaboration frameworks (iv) Increase in the number of education institutions that</p>

			<p>integrate the ecosystem approach in education frameworks</p> <p>PoW 2020-2021 EA(a) The health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sectoral and transboundary collaboration frameworks<sup>47</sup> at the national and international levels (i) The number of countries and transboundary collaboration frameworks that have made progress in monitoring and maintaining the health and productivity of marine and terrestrial ecosystems with the assistance of UNEP (iv) The number of education institutions that integrate the ecosystem approach into education frameworks with the assistance of UNEP</p> <p>PoW 2022-2023 (2.3) Productive land- and seascapes and freshwater are sustainably managed. (2.7) Nature assets are valued, monitored and sustainably managed.</p>
UNEP approval date:	15 September 2016	Programme of Work Output(s):	See cell above
GEF approval date:	28 April 2016	Project type:	FSP
GEF Operational Programme #:	5	Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity, Land Degradation, Sustainable Forest Management (REDD), International Waters
GEF Strategic Priority:	<p>BD-1: Improve sustainability of PA systems BD-2: Mainstream BD conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes, seascapes and sectors LD-3: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape SFM/REDD-1: Reduce pressures on forest resources and generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services IW-1: strengthening national blue economy opportunities to reduce threats to marine and coastal environment</p>		
<i>Expected</i> start date:	January 2016	Actual start date:	15 September 2016
<i>Planned</i> completion date:	September 2020	Actual operational completion date:	September 2023
<i>Planned</i> project budget at approval:	USD 19,547,706	Actual total expenditures reported as of 12 July 2023:	USD 3,652,268
GEF grant allocation:	USD 3,747,706	GEF grant expenditures reported as of 12 July 2023:	USD 3,652,268

Project Preparation Grant - GEF financing:	USD 110,100	Project Preparation Grant - co-financing:	0
<i>Expected</i> Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:	USD 15,800,000	Secured Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing as of Q2 2021:	USD 13,779,427
First disbursement:	25 October 2016	Planned date of financial closure:	September 2023
No. of formal project revisions:	3	Date of last approved project revision:	March 2023
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	2	Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:	Last: August 2023
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation ( <i>planned date</i> ):	January 2018	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	March 2022
Terminal Evaluation ( <i>planned date</i> ):	December 2019	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	December 2023
Coverage - Country(ies):	Palau	Coverage - Region(s):	Asia Pacific
Dates of previous project phases:	N/A	Status of future project phases:	N/A

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Project Background

1. The GEF/UNEP project “Advancing sustainable resource management to improve livelihoods and protect biodiversity in Palau” (GEF ID 5208) was a Full-sized Project (FSP) with a total budget of USD 19,547,706, with a GEF contribution of USD 3,747,706 and co-financing from Government and partners of USD 15,800,000. The project ran from 15 September 2016 until end September 2023 (a total of seven years, with an extension of three years).
2. The project was implemented by the UNEP Ecosystems Division, executed by the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism (which changed to Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment in 2021), together with a multitude of governmental and non-governmental partners.
3. The project objective was to *effectively and sustainably use biodiversity and maintain ecosystem goods and services in Palau by building institutional capacity to integrate the Palau Protected Area Network (PAN) with the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) initiative, and fostering a ridge-to-reef approach across and within these initiatives.*
4. A Theory of Change (TOC) was reconstructed for the purposes of the evaluation (Section IV in the main report) which shows the causal pathways from outputs to project outcomes to intermediate states, and finally the project long-term impact, on the basis that key drivers and assumptions outlined in the TOC would be maintained. The broader impact for the project was to move toward healthy ecosystems and improved livelihoods in the country.
5. In line with UNEP’s Evaluation Policy, the Terminal Evaluation was conducted with two main purposes: (1) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (2) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and its key partners toward moving the results towards impact for the country.
6. An external evaluator was commissioned by the UNEP Evaluation Office to conduct the Terminal Evaluation between September 2023 and January 2024. This was done through extensive document studies, online interviews in anticipation of the country visit as well as site visits and country-level interviews during the country mission 1 to 10 November 2023.
7. This report encompasses the terminal evaluation of the project (abbreviated to “GEF-5 Palau Project” for the purposes of the report).

### Key Findings

8. The project partially achieved its outputs and outcomes, largely due to ineffective overall management resulted in the project not delivering fully on its envisaged results framework and some restrictions and limitations from COVID-19. Government administrations impacted on some aspects of sustainability.
9. Key deliverables under Component 1 were of good quality, and the country has benefitted from a strong institutional PAN Office strategy, a PAN network strategy, a PAN finance plan, 8 site management plans, multiple monitoring protocols (including a forest inventory assessment), a myriad of baseline studies both ecological and socio-economic, a taxonomic needs assessment, and a new curriculum framework for school that includes conservation, as well as a communications plan for PAN awareness and support.
10. While a lot of effort was placed on capacity development towards improved management effectiveness, the evaluation could not find enough evidence that shows this capacity has

been fully applied. Overall, PAN has been strengthened in terms of additional ha under conservation.

11. For Component 2, some really impressive work has been done on best practice development and use for eco-agriculture, reforestation, water management and use, watershed and erosion management, wildlife protocols, and tourism. Tourism and agriculture sectors really benefited from improved SLM and sustainable use integration into planning and practice. Land use in general did not pan out as planned and had to be subsumed into the follow-on GEF-6 project, however this work has not only been fully taken on board, but has resulted in further upscaling.
12. For Component 3, the coordination work was not achieved. Some elements of this component were partially achieved (e.g. the nurseries, the forest management work, development of alien invasives policy) some work has not been endorsed yet due to administration changes in Government (e.g. the alien invasives policy, the endangered species regulations).
13. Answers to the strategic questions<sup>1</sup> were mainstreamed across the findings of the report. The needs and interests of differentiated groups were considered in terms of communications and outreach and in terms of benefits (particularly in community-level protected areas management, tourism and agriculture, as well as fisheries), although the Terminal Evaluation found that marginalised groups were not as considered in either implementation nor monitoring as the project had planned. This said, gender equality seemed to be, in general, strong in terms of implementation but not well monitored. The evaluator has recommended that gender and marginalised groups be discussed in terms of project results at the closing workshop to better document gender-mainstreaming and inclusion as well as human rights inclusion. The recommendations from the MTR were mostly not actioned upon. COVID-19 impacted the project mostly indirectly due to economic shortages and the collapse of the tourism industry; the project adapted only in that it delayed its meetings and trainings (no online equivalents were done, for instance), but some aspects supported the project e.g. sustainable farming increased as a result of Government encouraging food security enhancing options like household farming.
14. The project could have had a stronger project management structure if the design had considered effective capacity assessment and acted on any gaps in this capacity with e.g. a chief technical advisor and a fuller project team, especially as this weakness had already been picked up in the terminal evaluation of a previous GEF project. The project also did not take into proper account any learnings from the same project on how to improve on coordination, and coordination overall, despite being one of the primary goals of the project, was ultimately not achieved.
15. Despite shortcomings in the achievement of outputs and outcomes, there has been significant enough achievement, upscaling and uptake, for the overall possibility of achieving longer-lasting project impact as per the Theory of Change (i.e. ecosystems are

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<sup>1</sup> **Q1:** In what ways, and to what extent, have the needs and interests of differentiated groups been considered in the implementation and monitoring of the project?

**Q2:** In what ways, and to what extent, were the recommendations from the Mid Term Review actioned upon?

**Q3:** What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?

**Q4:** What opportunities has the evaluation identified to improve the integration of gender and human rights considerations in the sustainable management of resources and to maintain ecosystem goods and services in Palau, and with what foreseeable benefits to the sustainability of results?

**Q5:** In what ways and to what extent can the project management capacity/PMU be identified prior to the project implementation?

**Q6:** How did the project learn from previous interventions on coordination to improve coordination and sustain coordination-related results in the project (for strengthened PAN and SLM)?

healthy, resilient and providing services for improved livelihoods and economic development through sustainable and careful use and appropriate protection) to be likely.

## **Conclusions**

16. The project performance is assessed as Moderately Satisfactory overall. A full table of ratings is presented in the conclusions section of the main report (Table 8).
17. The project had to face two external challenges that affected its ability to implement and sustain project results (COVID-19 and elections causing large administrative changes). This said, the project effectiveness was also influenced internally.
18. The project only partially delivered on its many outputs and only partially achieved its outcomes, however those that were delivered and achieved were the ones significant in setting the country on a path towards the intended long-term impact.
19. Management capacity was severely lacking in this project, as was overall coordination (improvement of which happened to also be a primary goal that was ultimately not achieved by the project). There is also a serious lack of proper reporting, both in terms of project achievements and in terms of financial expenditure reporting.
20. The project has laid some strong foundations and major milestones in terms of PAN and SLM which has resulted in partners and other projects taking on board the significant achievements in way that sustainability of project results is likely. Some policy frameworks have not gained traction due to the administrative change, but the GEF-6 project and partners in general are carrying on their work on engaging leadership and putting pressure on endorsement of these to support more effective management and protection of species and ecosystems.
21. In summary, this ambitious project laid a very strong foundation towards impact despite the many external and internal challenges it faced. The country is well set up and committed to a holistic and systems-oriented approach to conservation that can be seen in future project and programmes development and strategies for natural resource management in Palau. This said, several recommendations are made for the country to improve on its management and capturing of project design and implementation.

## **Lessons learnt**

22. **Lesson #1:** Oversight is extremely important: clear and consistent IA oversight and support is integral to a country implementing a GEF FSP for the first time, and the value of an effective Steering Committee should not be underestimated.
23. **Lesson #2:** Effective project reporting and coordination can eliminate overlap and inefficient use of funding and time.
24. **Lesson #3:** Effective use of the inception meeting can realign the project to priorities and adjust any results framework issues.
25. **Lesson #4:** Despite lack of management, champions and overall culture of values of nature can still lead to impact.

## **Recommendations**

26. Recommendations are provided in detail in the main report, but are summarised briefly below:
27. **Recommendation #1:** EA to hold a final closing workshop for all partners that include discussions around final delivery or project results and sustainability/next steps, how to improve overall coordination on conservation and SLM efforts in Palau, improvements on the practicality of gender and vulnerable groups inclusion.

28. **Recommendation #2:** EA to urgently close off financial reporting and submit final technical reporting (final technical report and be the workshop report as per recommendation #1).
29. **Recommendation #3:** Set up stronger PMU structure for future project implementation in Palau.
30. **Recommendation #4:** Conduct a full independent audit<sup>2</sup>.
31. **Recommendation #5:** Improve oversight and guidance to projects both in design and implementation.

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<sup>2</sup> Note: on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2024, the UNEP Evaluation Office was informed by the project team that the Executing Agency (MAFE) contracted the firm Ernst & Young to conduct the audits for the missing years. The audits should be ready by June 2024. Upon receipt of the audits, the UNEP Evaluation Office will assess whether the issue raised by this recommendation (i.e., lack of financial expenditure reporting from the implementing partners) was adequately addressed.

## I. INTRODUCTION

32. The GEF/UNEP Project “Advancing sustainable resource management to improve livelihoods and protect biodiversity in Palau” (GEF ID 5208) was a Full-sized Project (FSP) with GEF contributions coming from the GEF Trust Fund Account from various Focal Areas (BD-1 USD 1,405,595; BD-2 USD 1,071,108; LD-3 USD 396,782; SFM/REDD+-1 USD 743,119; IW-1 USD 131,102) to UNEP as the GEF Implementing Agency. The project was executed through the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment (MAFE)<sup>3</sup>.
33. As outlined in the Project Document and the GEF CEO Endorsement Request, the project was situated under the Parent Programme (GEF ID 5395) entitled “UNDP 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”.
34. The project aligns with the Ecosystem Management Subprogramme of the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2017, most notably, as planned, was connected to the associated Programmes of Work 2014-2015 and 2016-2017. The project also aligns to the Healthy and Productive Ecosystems Subprogramme of the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2021, and their associated Programmes of Work between 2018 and 2021.
35. The project was approved by GEF on 28 April 2016, started on 15 September 2016 and was planned to end in September 2020 (48 months). The project was ultimately extended by an additional 3 years with final operational completion in September 2023. A Mid-Term Review was planned for January 2018, but was ultimately conducted in March 2022.
36. The total project budget was USD 19,547,706, of which USD 3,747,706 was from the GEF, and USD 15,800,000 was from co-financing contributions. The project preparation budget was USD 110,000 from the GEF (no co-financing reported).
37. In line with UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme Manual, as well as the updated guidance<sup>4</sup> for evaluators (developed by the Evaluation Office), the Terminal Evaluation of the GEF-5 Palau Project was undertaken to assess performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. As per the TOR, the evaluation has two primary purposes:
- i. To provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and
  - ii. To promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and its project partners (including MAFE, Protected Areas Network Fund, Protected Areas Network Office, Palau Conservation Society, and other project partners).
38. The main target audiences for the evaluation findings are:
- GEF Secretariat (as the funding entity)
  - Implementing Agency (UNEP): GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit of the Biodiversity and Land Branch of the Ecosystems Division
  - Executing Agency (Government of Palau): MAFE
  - Executing Partners: PAN Office, PCS

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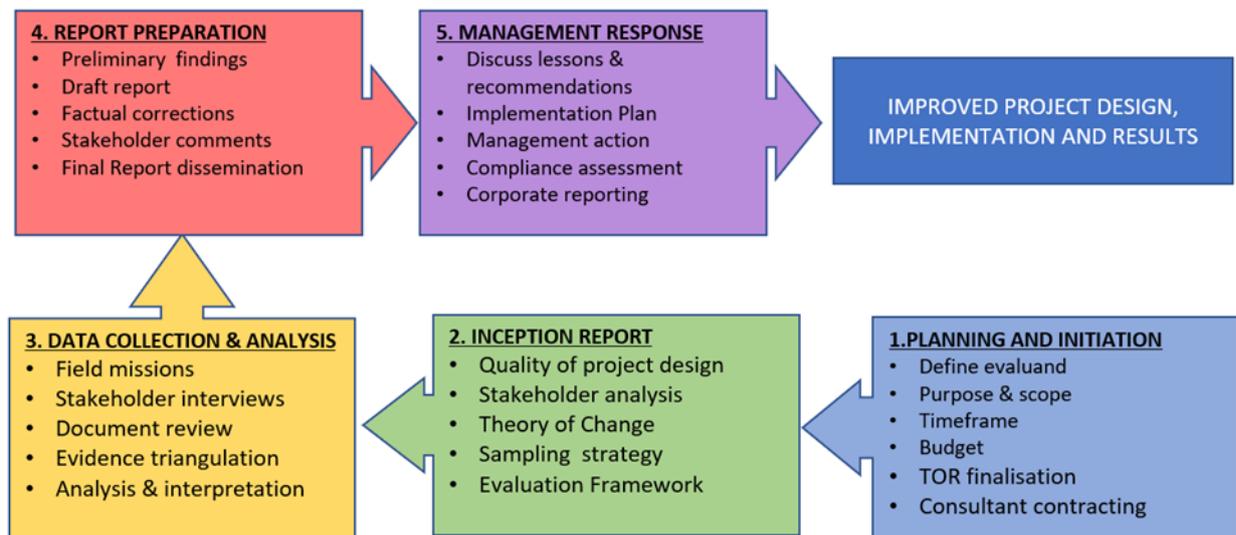
<sup>3</sup> At Project Design, the project Executing Agency was planned to be the Office of Environmental Response and Coordination (OERC). This agency was disbanded after the last elections (2021) and its functions were subsumed under MAFE, as such, MAFE took over the role of project execution.

<sup>4</sup> Most of which has been updated in 2023.

- Other partners in implementation: Belau National Museum, Palau International Coral Reef Center, Environmental Quality Protection Board, Bureau of Tourism, Bureau of Agriculture, Belau Water Alliance, Office of the Palau Automated Land and Resources Information Systems, State Governments
- Other key project partners
- Other UN agencies and bi-lateral partners to the country interested in protected areas conservation and sustainable land management.

## II. EVALUATION METHODS

39. The GEF-5 Palau Project Terminal Evaluation was conducted by an external consultant (herein after referred to as the 'evaluator'). The evaluation took place between September and January 2024 under the management and oversight of the Evaluation Office of UNEP, based in Nairobi.
40. The evaluation employed a participatory approach with the UNEP Task Manager during which the EA (MAFE) were kept informed of progress; other project stakeholders were provided with an opportunity to comment at the presentation of preliminary findings and the evaluation findings in the draft Terminal Evaluation Report. This process is illustrated in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1.** UNEP Evaluation Process

41. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Guidelines, the project was assessed with respect to a minimum set of evaluation criteria grouped into the following 9 categories: Strategic Relevance, Quality of Project Design, Nature of External Context, Effectiveness (availability of outputs, achievement of project outcomes and likelihood of impact), Financial Management, Efficiency, Monitoring and Reporting, Sustainability and the Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-cutting Issues. As per UNEP guidance, the evaluation ratings are on a six-point scale.<sup>5</sup> The UNEP Evaluation Office has developed detailed descriptions of the main elements required to be demonstrated at each level (i.e. Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory) for each evaluation criterion. The evaluator has considered all the evidence gathered during the evaluation in relation to this matrix in order to generate evaluation criteria performance ratings.
42. The quality at project design was assessed in detail during the Inception Phase of the Evaluation and can be found in the Inception Evaluation Report, available from the UNEP Evaluation Office.
43. A Theory of Change was reconstructed during the Inception Phase of the Evaluation based on an extensive desktop review of all project documentation, and initial interviews with key project partners. This Theory of Change was then presented and discussed with key

<sup>5</sup> Most criteria are rated against the following points on the scale: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU); Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) down to Highly Unfavourable (HU); Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU).

project partners involved in the evaluation, inputs and suggestions for improvement were sought, the version did not need revision and can be found section IV of this report.

44. The project-context key strategic questions for the evaluation as provided in the TOR are as follows, these were answered in various sections of the evaluation findings:

**Q1:** In what ways, and to what extent, have the needs and interests of differentiated groups been considered in the implementation and monitoring of the project?

**Q2:** In what ways, and to what extent, were the recommendations from the Mid-Term Review actioned upon?

**Q3:** What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?

**Q4:** What opportunities has the evaluation identified to improve the integration of gender and human rights considerations in the sustainable management of resources and to maintain ecosystem goods and services in Palau, and with what foreseeable benefits to the sustainability of results?

**Q5:** In what ways and to what extent can the project management capacity/PMU be identified prior to the project implementation?

**Q6:** How did the project learn from previous interventions on coordination to improve coordination and sustain coordination-related results in the project (for strengthened PAN and SLM)?

45. In addition, the Theory of Change provided the framing for the project-outcome related questions, as well as those related to the overall project impact, these are provided below:

**Q7:** What evidence is available to show that the project strengthened the PAN network through enhanced capacity and overall improved management (Outcomes 1.1. and 1.2, investigate assumptions/drivers a, c, d, g)?

**Q8:** To what extent has the SLM policy been improved and effectively implemented, how has the coordination mechanism improved the implementation across sectors? (Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2, investigate assumptions/drivers a, b, e, h)

**Q9:** To what extent has MAFE improved on its capacity to coordinate and how has cross-sector coordination improved through project interventions? (Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2, investigate assumptions/drivers a, e, g)

46. During the inception stage, the evaluator developed an evaluation matrix (found in Annex 8) which consisted of an extended set of questions based on the above questions, questions coming from the Theory of Change (as above), as well as the evaluation criteria set out in the TOR.

47. For projects funded by the GEF, findings from the evaluation are to be uploaded in the GEF Portal.<sup>6</sup> To support this process, evaluation findings related to the 5 topics of interest to the GEF are summarised in Annex 5. The intended action/results on the 5 topics were described in the GEF CEO Endorsement and Approval documents. The 5 topics are: i) performance against GEF's Core Indicator Targets; ii) engagement of stakeholders; iii) gender-responsive measures and gender result areas; iv) implementation of management measures taken against the Safeguards Plan and v) challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach.

48. A combination of methods and tools were applied during the evaluation to collect information necessary to answer all evaluation questions in an evidence-based manner. These are explained below in six stages:

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<sup>6</sup> The GEF Portal is an online platform for accessing information about all projects funded by the GEF Trust Fund.

- a. Inception Stage and Document Review: This included planning of the evaluation, development of the questions, Annex 8), the review of project design, and the reconstruction of the Theory of Change. Generally, the IA and EA provide the majority of the documentation during the Inception Stage, but this was not the case in this project because project documentation was not organised and in some cases missing. The evaluator had to spend a lot of additional effort and time searching for project documentation in various different places. The evaluator undertook a review of the documentation received at inception but documentation review continued well into other data collection phases. The full list of documents finally collected and reviewed can be found in Annex 4. The inception stage also included a few key interviews with the IA and the EA. The Inception Report was developed, and included the evaluation matrix (Annex 8). At Inception stage and in consultation with the Evaluation Office, the field mission was discussed and field site visits were agreed upon.
- b. Pre-country Mission Stakeholder Interviews and Email Exchanges: The evaluator conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with a small set of key stakeholders during September and October, in advance of the country mission. These interviews were conducted on a virtual platform, all of which were done using video. The selection of stakeholders to be interviewed was made by the evaluator, in agreement with the EA and the IA. During the inception stage, the EA delivered a list of stakeholders. During a series of discussions with the IA and the EA (most notably, the current and former Project Managers), the evaluator added to this list. The overall sampling frame for interviews in both the pre-country and in-country interviews combined can be found in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Respondents' sample for the Terminal Evaluation of the GEF5 Palau Project

<b>Respondent Category</b>	<b>Entity</b>	<b># People Involved (M/F)</b>	<b># People Contacted (M/F)</b>	<b># Respondent (M/F)</b>	<b>% Respondent</b>
<b>Project team</b> ( <i>those with management responsibilities</i> )	Implementing agency	3 (2/1)	3 (2/1)	3 (2/1)	100
	Executing Agency	5 (1/4)	5 (1/4)	4 (0/4)	80
<b>Respondent Category</b>	<b># Entities Involved</b>	<b># People Involved (M/F)</b>	<b># People Contacted (M/F)</b>	<b># Respondent (M/F)</b>	<b>% Respondent</b>
<b>Project (implementing/ executing) partners</b> ( <i>receiving funds from the project</i> )	14	30	25 (11/14)	22 (9/14)	88
<b>Project (collaborating/ contributing<sup>7</sup>) partners</b> ( <i>not receiving funds from the project</i> )	9	Unknown, not recorded in total by project	19 (15/4)	18 (14/4)	95
<b>Local Government</b>	4 (integrated under IP)	-	-	-	-

<sup>7</sup> Contributing partners may be providing resources as either cash or in-kind inputs (e.g. staff time, office space etc).

Respondent Category	Entity	# People Involved (M/F)	# People Contacted (M/F)	# Respondent (M/F)	% Respondent
Multi-lateral partners	3	3	3	3	100
Total	25	>38	52	47	90

- c. Country mission: The country mission took place between 1 and 10 November 2023. The country schedule was determined by the evaluator, but scheduling and logistics were supported by the Project Manager. In September, several discussions between the Evaluation Office, the Task Manager, the evaluator and the Project Manager helped determine which sites to visit during the country visit.<sup>8</sup> The five sites chosen are included in Table 3 below. The country schedule and stakeholder interview list are included in Annex 2.
- d. Validation of data: Once the data were gathered through the document review (a), online interviews and emails (b) and in-country interviews, document checks, and site visits (c), this was organized according to the criteria and evaluations questions as laid out in the matrix (Annex 8). Where data from the three areas of collection demonstrated complementarity, these were used directly in the findings. In the cases where information did not coincide, additional interviews with relevant stakeholders were held (either (i) through direct follow up with the project team and through documentation verification (e.g. request for email evidence), or (ii) through triangulation with other stakeholders and written sources).
- e. Preliminary Findings: The evaluator developed the preliminary findings which were circulated among the Evaluation Office, the IA and the EA in advance of a feedback meeting with the EA and key stakeholders post-country visit. The feedback meeting was held on 27 November 2023 where preliminary results were presented by the evaluator, and participants (Task Manager, Project Manager, stakeholders) provided feedback/clarifications, these were included in the final report.
- f. Development of Terminal Evaluation Report: The evaluator developed a draft TE report and submitted it (1<sup>st</sup>) to the evaluation manager at the Evaluation Office, who reviewed it and shared it with (2<sup>nd</sup>) the IA and EAs, after which the evaluator responded and/or revised the draft for the evaluation manager to finally (3<sup>rd</sup>) share it with project stakeholders for comment. Comments were shared with the evaluator for response and/or revision for finalisation of the Terminal Evaluation Report.

**Table 3.** Site visits for the Terminal Evaluation of the GEF-5 Palau Project (5208)

Site/State	Project implementation activities (as per PIR 2023)	TE activities
Melekeok	One of the four states that did the IPP program (Indicator 1.2.4) One of the four states that have eco-tourism plans (Indicator 1.2.4) Only state to align their PAN site plan to their state master plan (Indicator 2.1.3)	Visit to Ngardok Nature Reserve, walked trail, visited nursery and erosion demo site, tourist office Interviews with site coordinator and senior ranger

<sup>8</sup> Criteria to select these sites were based on (a) relevance to project result and sustainability, (b) geographical and demographic (in terms of beneficiary and gender) representation, (c) feasibility and cost to access site

	Ngardok, Bai, Beach - three sites where tourism products were developed (Indicator 2.2.3) Activities to reduce impact of tourism - installed boardwalks in wetland areas and installed signage to reduce breakage and poaching of native orchids (Indicator 2.2.4) Ngardok as a demonstration site for erosion (Output 2.2.2)	
Peleliu	One of four states with income from visitor fees (Indicator 1.2.4) Seven new tourism products/sites (Indicator 2.2.3) Activities to reduce impact of tourism - improved trail in Forest of Hope to keep visitors on trail, installed signage to avoid transporting invasive spp, and increase conservation awareness (Indicator 2.2.4) Two new community-based protection areas established (Peleliu Sandflats as an IBA and Techakl Mangrove for climate resilience)	Visit to Protection Areas (Techakl Mangrove) Walked the Forest Hope Trail Interviews with community members Interview with Chief of State of Peleliu
Aimeliik	One of the four states that did the IPP program (Indicator 1.2.4) One of the four states that have eco-tourism plans (Indicator 1.2.4) One of several states that have accessed grant funding for their PAN site (Indicator 1.2.4) Staff trained in eco-tourism planning and management (Indicator 2.2.2) Four new tourism products/sites (Indicator 2.2.3)	Visit tourism sites and tourist centre, interview with tourist centre Interview with state administrative officer Visit to Ngerderar Watershed and interviews with community members
Ngardmau	One of the four states that did the IPP program (Indicator 1.2.4) One of the four states that have eco-tourism plans (Indicator 1.2.4) One of several states that have accessed grant funding for their PAN site (Indicator 1.2.4) Staff trained in eco-tourism planning and management (Indicator 2.2.2) One new tourism products/sites (Indicator 2.2.3) SLM work - improved steep part of its trail to Taki Waterfall to reduce erosion from hikers, installed boardwalks in wetland areas, replanted trees in some tourism areas (Indicator 2.2.4) Demonstration site for land rehabilitation (Output 2.2.2)	Visit to Ngardmau - Taki Waterfall Trail Interview with OSCA rangers
BOA Sites	Best practice SLM farm, Forestry Protocols, Eco-agriculture policy implementation, SFM	Reforestation sites, nurseries, visited three farms and interviewed farmers, extension officers and forestry staff
Northern Reefs	Pilot project with Northern Reefs Fisheries Cooperative	Interviews with NRFC Board Members

49. A significant limitation to the evaluation was that the project documentation was not clear and organised in one place which meant that the evaluator had to spend an enormous amount of time and effort in locating project reporting. In addition, the key people who were part of implementation had moved on and were not accountable for project results nor could provide enough time to discussing what exactly happened to outputs that were not achieved. The evaluator was not able to get clear answers on various gaps in the timeline and project reporting.
50. Throughout this evaluation process and in the compilation of the Final Evaluation Report, efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups, in two specific ways (a) the evaluator requested for a representative sample of farmers to speak to (which was lower than requested but more time could be spent as a result with a smaller group), and (b) the evaluator requested to speak to women's groups

particularly involved in conservation (this was not organised as was hoped by the evaluator)<sup>9</sup>.

51. This evaluation was bound to the Ethical Code of Conduct as per the UNEP Evaluation policy, which includes the following key factors: (a) all interviews and information were provided in confidence and anonymously and no information can be traced back to a direct source/individual, (b) those involved in the evaluation have had the opportunity to review the evaluation findings as well as the main evaluation report, (c) the evaluator was sure to have empathy and sensitivity to different contexts and cultures in which stakeholders work.

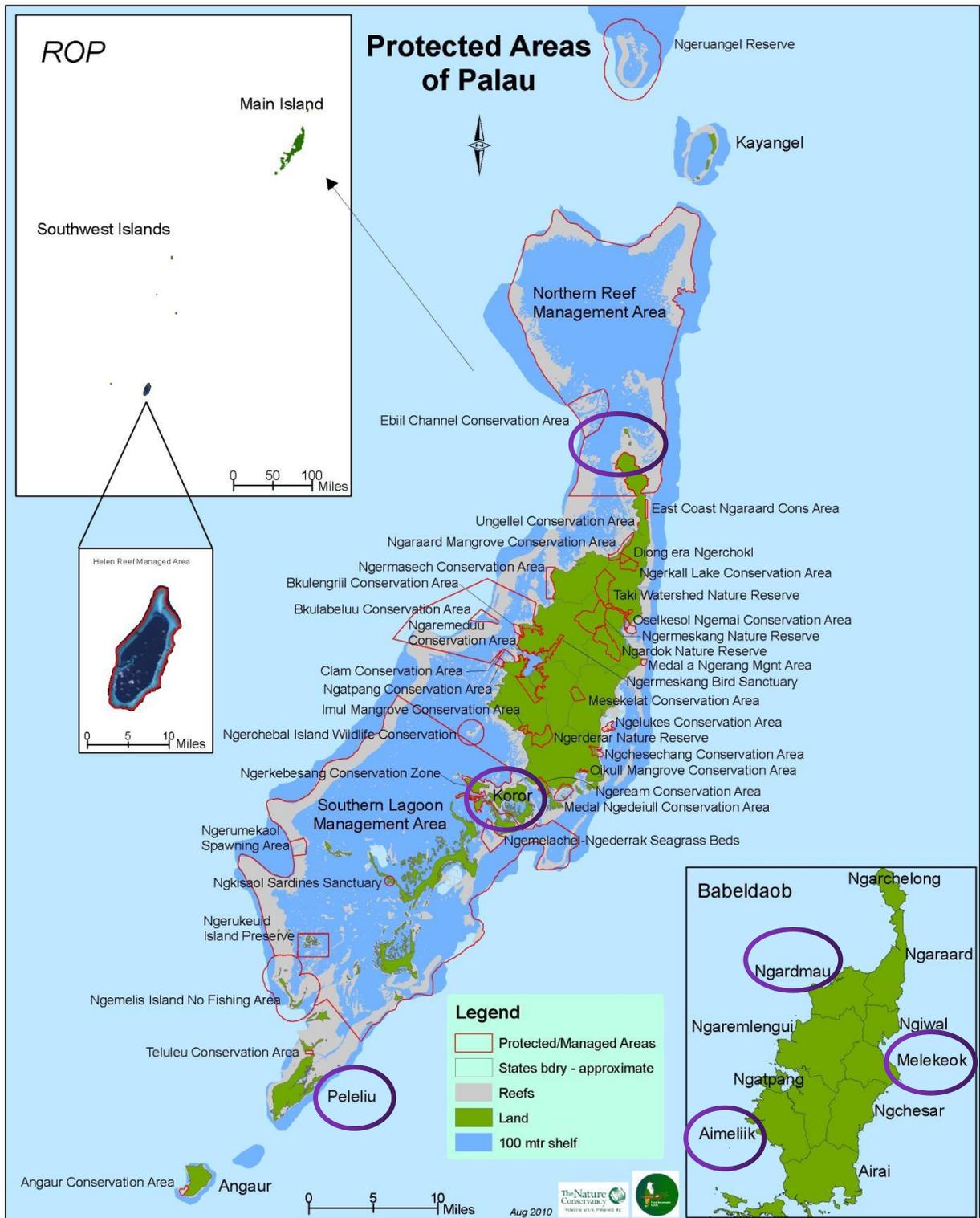
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<sup>9</sup> Despite several requests to meet with women specifically as outlined under indicators on women beneficiaries with regard to conservation initiatives, this was not ultimately acted upon (the evaluator was told that these initiatives were actually not linked to the project)

### III. THE PROJECT

#### Context

52. Palau is a country made up of several islands high in endemic biodiversity of global importance. The small population (18,024 according to the 2021 government census) largely depends on Palau's rich ecosystems through tourism, agriculture and fisheries. The conservation and sustainable management of the country's resources are thus of utmost importance.
53. The GEF-5 Palau project was designed to address the following key barriers to the effective conservation and sustainable management: (a) Protected Areas Network (PAN) tools and strategies were not fully developed, (b) the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) policy was endorsed but not fully developed for implementation, (c) cross-coordination of PAN and SLM had gaps and overlaps and needed streamlining (including areas such as SFM, CCM and CCA, R2R, alien invasive species and biosecurity), and (e) there were capacity gaps in effective management of PAN and SLM. It aimed to do this by predominantly working on a three-tier approach: improved PAN, improved SLM, and improved coordination for both.
54. More specifically, it aimed to improve PAN functioning through technical capacity building, increasing PAN coverage from a scientific basis (i.e. areas of high biodiversity value), develop and implement the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (METTs), do some kickstarter actions (mostly through policy refinement and implementation) to provide momentum to SLM, and better incorporate coordination and cross-sector planning on SLM and PAN.



**Figure 2.** Map of Protected Areas in Palau (Source: Project Document, 2016) (circled in purple are the sites visited for the Terminal Evaluation)

55. This was Palau’s first GEF full-size project. The actual project conceptualisation occurred around the 2011/12 timeframe. Palau was just in the process of closing out the GEF-3 SLM focused MSP of which the major output was the SLM Policy. Commonly, the IA (in this case UNEP, who at the time did not have a strong presence in the Pacific) would support the hiring of an international consultant to work in the country to lead project development. However, the evaluator was told that the environment community in Palau was excited and motivated by the project development and that the country decided to do this in-house. Lack of experience meant that the first iterations did not pass through UNEP

and finally a national consultant was hired to do some of the drafting together with a representative from Conservation International. The project went through various processes before finally starting implementation in the last quarter of 2016.

56. The project faced several challenges which resulted in the project being extended by almost double the intended project lifespan (September 2020, when the project was planned to end, to September 2023 when the project actually closed). These challenges were mostly internal and will be discussed further in the evaluation results section of this report. However, a key external challenge the project faced, as with all projects implemented between 2020 and 2022, was the COVID-19 pandemic – an extra burden which caused delays to and alterations in several project activities. The election which resulted in major administrative changes also had an influence on the project results attainment and is further discussed under findings.

## Results Framework

57. The project objective was to *effectively and sustainably use biodiversity and maintain ecosystem goods and services in Palau by building institutional capacity to integrate the Palau Protected Area Network (PAN) with the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) initiative, and fostering a ridge-to-reef approach across and within these initiatives*. The table below outlines the results hierarchy of the project.
58. More specifically, it aimed to improve PAN functioning through technical capacity building, increasing PAN coverage from a scientific basis (i.e. areas of high biodiversity value), develop and implement METTs, do some kickstarter actions (mostly through policy refinement and implementation) to provide momentum to SLM, and better incorporate coordination and cross-sector planning on SLM and PAN.
59. The table below reflects the project results hierarchy as stated in the Project Document (2016).

**Table 4.** Project results hierarchy as stated in the Project Document (2016) of the GEF-5 Palau Project

Stated Project Outcomes	Outputs
<b>Component 1. Improving Palau's Protected Area (PAN)</b>	
1.1. Improved design, evaluation and implementation of the PAN leads to increased engagement by states, improved coverage of sites, species, and ecosystem functions, and increased conservation effectiveness.	1.1.1. IMPROVED DESIGN: A National PAN Management Strategy and Action Plan is developed and endorsed by 2017; and the National and associated State Plans 1) align with SLM in the 4 core areas and with regional projects such as R2R, 2) engage all 16 states, and 3) cover gaps and ensure representative coverage of sites, species, and ecosystem functions, and 4) address the applicability of national, regional, and global goals and benefit-sharing
	1.1.2. IMPROVED EVALUATION: Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (METT): Agree on a set of 3 harmonized national and state level PAN site monitoring and evaluation tools and protocols (1 marine, 1 terrestrial, 1 socio-economic) which are aligned with METT, with full trial and evaluation of Palau's METT tool in at least 9 PAN sites by the end of the Project
	1.1.3. IMPROVED IMPLEMENTATION: At least 4 PAN sites meet a minimum METT score, and at least 5 other sites show improving trends toward effective conservation (e.g. reduction in over/illegal harvesting) by the end of the Project and total area protected
1.2. PAN management capacity (engagement, training and financial) and coordination improved across sectors and across governance levels and results in benefits across genders and for marginalized populations in outlying states	1.2.1. IMPROVED ENGAGEMENT: An outreach program reaching at least 80% of stakeholders in 8 states results in communities that area measurably more aware and supportive of PAN and increasing active participation in management of PAN sites
	1.2.2. IMPROVED TRAINING: The number of trained, certified PAN staff increases by at least 15 and benefits some marginalized populations in outlying states

Stated Project Outcomes	Outputs
	1.2.3. IMPROVED FINANCING: PAN revenue generation assessment from local and non-local sources at project inception (baseline) and project end show diversified financial support at the national and state levels and alignment with regional programs such as the Micronesia Challenge, and benefits are shared widely with gender and environmental safeguards in place
<b>Component 2. Effective Implementation of Palau's Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Policy</b>	
2.1. Improved and effective planning, alignment, and coordination of the Palau SLM Policy	2.1.1. IMPROVED PLANNING: A national SLM action plan that incorporates ecosystem-based management, includes updated sustainable financing information and goals, addresses cross-sector issues such as SFM and climate change, considers benefits
	2.1.2. IMPROVED COORDINATION: A national coordinating mechanism and body for SLM with representatives from at least 6 sectors and levels of government is operational and includes associated capacity building and resourcing to ensure its function
2.2. Increased implementation of the SLM Policy in the key sectors of land use planning, land uses, and tourism development	2.2.1. INCREASED LAND USE PLANNING: State SLM Plans for at least 4 states are developed, tested and implemented
	2.2.2. IMPROVED LAND USE: Best practices for multiple land uses are identified, tested, promoted; and capacity to implement them is built, particularly among vulnerable populations such as women and foreign farmers
	2.2.3. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: Improved national level tourism planning and state level implementation of tourism benefits realized across genders and socio-economic levels
<b>Component 3: Integrated Coordination, Mainstreaming and Project Management</b>	
3.1. Effective coordination by MAFE for this Project and environmental actions in Palau, including through facilitating information-sharing and two-way learning and thereby ensuring benefit sharing among a wide population	3.1.1. Improved capacity of MAFE to act as the national coordinating body for Palau's environmental sector
	3.1.2. MAFE effectively implementing, reporting, and evaluating project.
	3.1.3. Two-way learning approach fostered through a participation in regional initiatives (Micronesia Challenge, Ridge-to-Reef, Integrated Water Resources Management, etc) and uses multiple forms of communication and media to share lessons from the project
3.2. Effective national and state coordination of PAN, SLM and associated cross-sector issues	3.2.1. Enable effective cross-sectoral coordination of PAN and SLM policies
	3.2.2. Streamline forest management across sectors, government levels, and within watersheds with at least 1/3 of native forest under protection and sustainable management (21000 ha in PAN sites and an additional 6000 ha in SFM catchments)
	3.2.3. A national biosecurity policy agreed upon with legislation drafted and with at least 2 invasive alien species (IAS) risk reduction or eradications achieved that demonstrates a harmonized approach by PAN and SLM
	3.2.4. At least 4 states have SLM and PAN plans aligned with climate change adaptation plans, with at least one modelling a gender-inclusive approach to climate change adaptation

## Stakeholders

60. A full stakeholder analysis was provided in the TE Inception Report, describing roles and relevance to the project design, implementation and evaluation. Stakeholder involvement and communication channels were further analysed during the evaluation, particularly in terms of sustaining the maintenance, evolution, uptake and further use of the tools. These are further discussed in the evaluation findings. The table analysis done in the inception phase was updated based on the evaluation findings and is provided below.

**Table 5.** Stakeholder analysis by the Terminal Evaluation of the GEF-5 Palau Project

Stakeholder	Power/Interest over Project	Role in Project Design	Role in Project Implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project	Role in TE
<i>Type A: High power / high interest = Key player</i>					
MAFE	This ministry changed over implementation time (from MNRET, and subsumed the OERC which would have been responsible for implementing this project). The MAFE is the executing agency of the project, houses the PMU, chairs the PSC (Project Steering Committee) and is responsible for all resource management in the country. Houses PAN, oversees BoA and BoT.	The previous MNRET (and OERC) co-developed this project with UNEP.	Executing Agency, overall coordination of the entire project and largely responsible for the sustaining of project results.	Stronger coordination and facilitation role of PA and SL management in Palau.	Key - interviews and provide key output deliverables other project implementation information. Support in site visits.
PAN Office	Part of MAFE, is in charge of PAN, supporting state governments with funding for PAN sites and interested in sustainable financing for PAN sites.	Supported project development, needs and gaps of office to be addressed by project. Together with PAN Fund, committed USD 400,000 in-kind towards project.	In charge of implementing Component 1 of the project (all about strengthening the PAN).	Improved capacity to support improved management, monitoring and evaluation across PAN sites, support the diversified financing of PAs and the increase of the PAN.	Key - interviews and provide key output deliverables other project implementation information. Support in site visits.
PAN Fund	Independent body, in charge of sustainable financing of PAN.	Was to support the sustainable financing elements of Component 1. Committed USD 4 mil in cash in co-financing, as well as together with PAN Office, USD 400,000.	Were contracted to conduct the formal review and update of the PAN Sustainable Financing Plan, and also developed the endowment fund for the states and getting it going, including matching contributions.	Strengthened support to sustainable financing to the PAN sites as well as overall through the plan.	Key - interviews on the sustainable financing plan and its implementation and the progress on the endowment fund.
PCS	NGO that works on NRM in Palau with conservation at its core and works in communication, project management and	Were engaged in the development the project and particularly Component 2. Committed	Contracted to support on various outputs under all Components, but specifically Component 2.	Empowered and active in supporting communities in SLM, supporting CBNRM and PAN management.	Key - interviews and provide key output deliverables other project implementation information.

Stakeholder	Power/Interest over Project	Role in Project Design	Role in Project Implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project	Role in TE
	policy development, strong connection with CBNRM - help establish locally managed conservation areas, MPAs, watershed management strategies.	USD 700,000 in-kind towards project.	Supposed to co-manage Component 2 but MAFE did not ultimately give them this task.		Support in site visits.
NEPC	Designed to be a high-level policy council that focuses on improving coordination of environmental initiatives.	The Head of the NEPC supported the development from the role as GEF Focal Point.	Taking on aspects of improved coordination, particularly associated with Component 3, strong role in PSC at high level. (this did not play out in practice, level of engagement overall was low)	Increased capacity for improved coordination at high level - harmonization of SLM and PAN.	Interviewed.
State Governments	States are responsible for designating PAs, overseeing management of PAs. They also have power over land uses within their territories.	9 of the 16 states committed in-kind co-financing toward the project, and all 16 were engaged in project development.	Developing and implementing PAN sites, SLM plans and implementation, three states engaged in the endowment fund (IPP Programme).	All states involved and interested in conservation and sustainable land management of their territories.	Interviews with selected state governments involved in IPP Programme.
BOT	Oversees tourism in Palau, seeing as tourism depends on healthy ecosystems, interest in project and power over project (in terms of what kind of tourism development is up and running) is high.	Engaged in project development through inputs on tourism revenue generation for PAN and sustainable tourism policies. Committed USD 300,000 in-kind towards project.	To improve sustainability through development of sustainable tourism practices and policies, support in revenue generation for PAN.	Champion for nature-friendly tourism.	Interviewed.
BOA + Farmers	Key agency in integrated land, watershed and forestry management, training agency for farmers, strong connection in improved SLM for country.	Part of MNRET at the time, strong engagement on the SLM component aspects of the project. Committed USD 800,000 in-kind towards the project.	To develop monitoring protocols, land use management, forestry management policies, develop training materials and capacity building, SLM demos.	Do yearly trainings, champion SLM across country, and effective forest health monitoring, fire management, and other SLM interventions, champion the SLM best practices from this project.	Key - interviews and provide key output deliverables other project implementation information. Support in site visits.
EQPB	Key organisation in implementing land	Were involved as key partner, committed	Were supposed to be part of PMU	Promote SLM and SFM across	Interviewed.

Stakeholder	Power/Interest over Project	Role in Project Design	Role in Project Implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project	Role in TE
	management policies, part of SLM of project.	USD 200,000 in-kind towards project.	as the ESG person "ESG watchdog" (according to Inception Report of Project), the evaluator could not verify this; implementation of SLM and SFM policies.	country and ensure quality.	
CBOs and PAN Communities	Communities and representatives of communities who are ultimate beneficiaries and managers of land (both in terms of SLM and PAN). CBNRM at certain sites.	Involved through stakeholder engagements at site level (assumed).	Involved in training for CBNRM and also to promote conservation practices in their sites, with possible upscaling and duplications.	Engaged in activities that are sustainable and regenerative towards biodiversity conservation. CBOs champion this and support communities in this endeavour. Supposed to be representative of gender and marginalised communities - especially in terms of access and benefits to.	Interviews and Site Visits.
PVA	Plays an important role in developing tourism opportunities in Palau, in charge of Green Fee (evaluation to verify this).	Committed USD 200,000 in co-financing to the project.	Connected and working with/partner to the BOT.. Supposed to support identification and development of sustainable tourism opportunities, BOT took on this role and PVA were not ultimately as involved in the project.	Champion sustainable tourism that protects biodiversity.	Interviewed through BOT, who work closely with them as they were not directly involved in the project.
<i>Type B: High power/ low interest over the project =Meet their needs</i>					
Palau Council of Chiefs	Identified in the MTR as an important stakeholder, but was not engaged in the design of the project (does not appear in the stakeholder list of the project document). The evaluation will need	See left.	Not engaged in project.	Possible champion towards PAN and SLM on respective land.	Was not able to get interview, was told that they were not engaged through this project.

Stakeholder	Power/Interest over Project	Role in Project Design	Role in Project Implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project	Role in TE
	to further investigate.				
Office of the President	Oversees all government ministries, project document highlighted that support from this office was critical.	Project was developed with full support from the Presidential office.	President at design left office and was replaced in 2021 by their successor. Evaluation found that some levels of political support to the project had decreased from the changes in structure and lack of uptake of key policy documents.	High level support and championship in terms of key country developmental needs.	Not interviewed.
PPLA	Administers, manages and regulates the use of public lands and any resulting income.	Engaged in development with regard to land use, committed USD 200,000 in-kind towards project.	Supposed to provide support in developing and implementing SLM and SFM policies. PPLA was not engaged in the project, work with PALARIS who were more engaged.	Supports the SLM policy across the country.	Not interviewed.
MOE	Responsible for curricula development.	Engaged in terms of biodiversity integration into curriculum.	To integrated country-focused BD and SLM topics into school curricula.	Integrated SLM and BD into curricula for long-term value system shift.	Interviewed.
MOJ	Responsible for overseeing law enforcement.	Level of engagement at design unknown.	Involved in law enforcement training for PAN rules and regs.	Support towards the enforcement of sustainable land use and protected area regulations.	Not interviewed, interviews with PAN rangers sufficed.
<i>Type C: Low power/ high interest over the project= Show consideration</i>					
PICRC	Key agency in researching and promoting conservation in Palau.	Key partner in terms of project development, contributed USD 2,500,000, contributions to PAN.	Conducted research and other support to establish monitoring protocols for PAN.	Continue providing scientifically grounded information for sound decision-making.	Interviewed.
PALARIS	Provides mapping services that support land use and management.	Consulted and confirmed interest, housed within Ministry of Finance.	Created maps to support NRM.	Continue updating and supporting in maps in support of NRM.	Interviewed.
PCC	Leading tertiary education in Palau - important in course work and	Engaged appropriately.	PICRC course moved to PCC to have academic qualification, but	Continue developing courses and degrees for effective NRM	Not interviewed.

Stakeholder	Power/Interest over Project	Role in Project Design	Role in Project Implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project	Role in TE
	academics for NRM professions.		still in starting phase.	capacity in-country.	
BNM	Key agency in research and promoting conservation management in Palau.	Were involved in developing project with regard to information gaps and supporting research, committed USD 500,000 in-kind towards project.	Conducted research and provided support to establish monitoring protocols, development of policy documents like Endangered Spp Regulations, supported BOA in nursery and propagation.	Continue supporting in updated research and monitoring to inform decision-making.	Interviewed.
Marginalised farmers (women + foreign farmers)	Particularly involved in improved land use and best practices, beneficiaries to project.	Level of engagement during design is unknown.	Supposed to have been engaged as beneficiaries of best practice SLM identified, tested and promoted, and capacity built.	Empowered with new tools to engage in SLM.	Interviews, community focus groups and site visits, interview with foreign farmer.
<i>Type D: Low power /low interest over the project= Least important</i>					
BLS	Identifies land boundaries, including those of PAs.	Involved through the MAFE, housed within the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Industries, committed USD 500,000 in-kind towards project.	Minor role: Support land use management through validating the mapping and boundary identification done by PALARIS.	Continue to do so after project end.	PALARIS will be engaged and represent BLS.
BWA	Supports SLM through cross-boundary, ecosystem-based watershed management.	Engagement in design unknown.	To support other stakeholders in developing cross-boundary SLM practices.	Evaluation to verify whether the BWA is still on-going and involvement in project during implementation.	BWA has become inactive, interview with previous secretary.
Tri-Org	Supports economic development in Palau - influence over what development goes through.	Part of stakeholder list, engaged somewhat.	Supposed to support the identification and implementation of sustainable economic development opportunities of project.	Support initiatives that promote conservation and nature-based values.	Not involved.
TNC	INGO with office and working on conservation in	Engaged in development, committed USD	Supposed to provide support and technical	N/A	Interviewed current director who was

Stakeholder	Power/Interest over Project	Role in Project Design	Role in Project Implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project	Role in TE
	Palau with no direct role (as at inception of evaluation but to be further verified).	200,000 in-kind towards project.	guidance for implementation of project activities, were ultimately not directly involved but did support through their own initiatives which were complimentary. TNC developed PAN Fund finance plan.		previously at PICRC...
Bureau of Fisheries (housed in MAFE)	Previously Bureau of Marine Resources. Not described in project documentation.	Not under key list of stakeholders in design, but committed USD 1,000,000 toward project.	Supported through in-kind efforts like fisheries and PAN Office connection and monitoring, as well as e.g. NRFC.	Support to PAN management activities and sustainable fisheries.	Interviewed fisheries department.
Bureau of Arts and Culture	Not described in project documentation.	Not under key list of stakeholders in design, but committed USD 500,000 toward project.	Not involved.	Not involved.	Not involved.

61. Those with project execution responsibilities included MAFE for which the PAN Office, Bureau of Environment<sup>10</sup>, Bureau of Agriculture, Bureau of Tourism<sup>11</sup> had individual project tasks for implementation, and state governments, particularly those that were provided with project funding, namely Melekeok, Ngardmau, Koror, Ngarchelong, as well as the independent PAN Fund, and the Environmental Quality Protection Board, to a lesser degree the following institutions supported the executing agencies with implementation: National Environmental Protection Council, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice.

62. Those that provided more technical-level implementation included the Palau Conservation Society, the Palau International Coral Reef Center, the Belau National Museum, the Belau Water Alliance<sup>12</sup>, the Office of the Palau Automated Land and Resources Information Systems.

63. Those that benefitted and those at the local level included the PAN sites and site coordinators and rangers in terms of improved monitoring and support to strengthening conservation, tourism, agriculture and other opportunities to those communities involved in conservation efforts, such as the Northern Reefs Fisheries Cooperative, farmers,

<sup>10</sup> This Bureau was only instituted after the new administration and is responsible for sustaining various project interventions but was not existing for the majority of project implementation.

<sup>11</sup> This Bureau was part of MNRET before the administration change.

<sup>12</sup> Which was disbanded mid-project implementation, and responsible for water and SLM coordination work.

community members leading community-based conservation efforts. The SLM component included the aim of particularly benefitting marginalised communities such as foreign farmers (e.g. from Bangladesh and Philippines); however, this was not found to be the case directly as those involved in training and other benefits around SLM principles were predominantly farm owners. This is further discussed under findings below (paragraph 340).

64. Various stakeholders played differential roles to bring about change under the project, government partners at central level were engaged in terms of national-level planning, policy and legislative endorsement and financing of projected areas and best practices outreach, state governments who had the mandate over the majority of land in Palau had a large influence over the land use planning and extension of PAN across the country, site level government staff, communities and land owners and farmers all had a large role to play in deciding how benefits would accrue to them and how important conservation is in this and how they can support the efforts in their areas of influence and actions, youth and school groups who were beneficiaries of outreach act as custodians for the next generation.

### **Project implementation structure and partners**

65. UNEP's Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (now the Ecosystems Division) was the implementing agency. An out-posted task manager from UNEP Pacific Sub-regional Office was to provide the overall supervision and guidance for the project including approval of key project activities, funding commitments, and co-financing arrangements. This was to include aspects of monitoring and evaluation, including organising project reviews, approving annual implementation work plans and any needed budget revisions, monitoring progress, and identifying problems and actions to improve the project. They would also assist in providing linkages with other regional and global initiatives.
66. The Steering Committee (SC) was to guide project decisions, oversee implementation, and conduct reporting and evaluation. The Steering Committee was planned to be comprised of National Environmental Protection Council (NEPC) which is mandated to coordinate national environmental actions. The NEPC consists of decision-makers from all major government, semi-government, and nonprofit sectors, with representatives from business and communities as well. The SC was also to have a UNEP representative and at least one representative acting on behalf of the PAN Management Committee and the SLM Coordinating Body, as well as representatives of each implementing partner.
67. The project execution and overall management was planned to be through three entities, a Project Management Unit with at least one staff (minimum Project Manager) would be hired and placed within MAFE to oversee day to day execution of the project and implement coordination activities - this person was also planned to be the Component 3 manager.
68. The PAN Office under MAFE would be the Component 1 Manager. MAFE and PCS were to share project management duties for Component 2 and thus be component 2 co-managers, they would lead the establishment of a National SLM Coordination Body and Mechanism.
69. Together with Component Managers, the Project Manager and the direct supervisor (at time of design this was the National Environment Planner) were to form the PMU. The PMU was to represent a core group of individuals from the PAN Office, PCS, and MAFE Office of the Minister. Multiple implementing partners<sup>13</sup> were to support project

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<sup>13</sup> BNM, BOA, EQPB, PAN Fund, PAN Office, PCS, PICRC, BOT, Koror, Melekeok, Ngarchelong, Ngardmau.

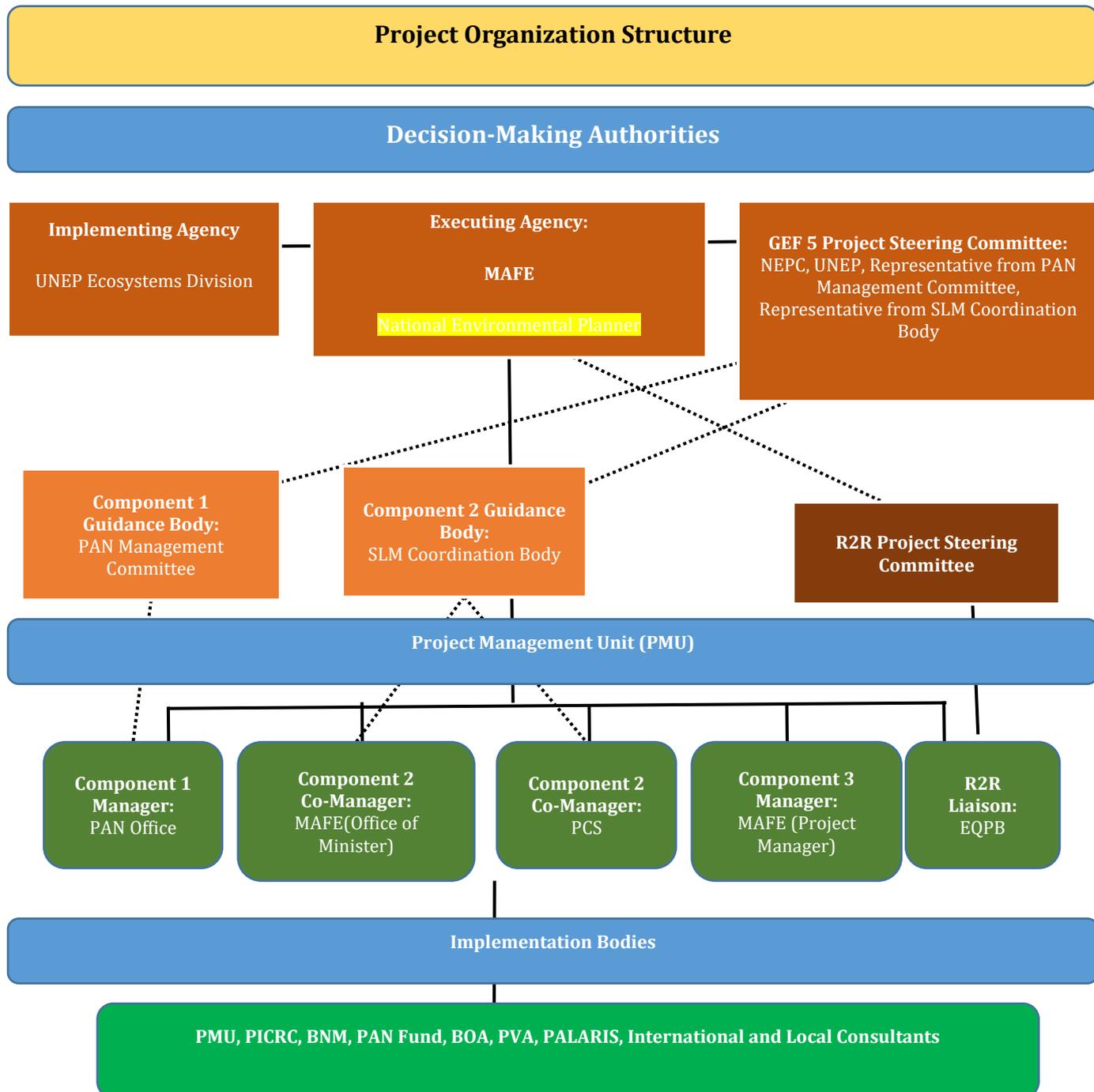
implementation and were given budget allocations in the project document budget under sub-contracts, as well as nine consultancies<sup>14</sup> were budgeted for.

70. The project organisation structure is found below in Figure 3 as was laid out in the project document.
71. In reality, this did not work out in practice; this is discussed in detail in the evaluation findings under *Changes in design during implementation* (most notably paragraph 42) and particularly and in more detail under *Factors affecting performance and cross-cutting issues* (most notably paragraphs 364, 377-379) of this report.

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<sup>14</sup> College Curriculum Developer, Digital Mapping Expert, Ethnobotanical Researcher, Land Use Planner, Legal Consultant, Management Plan Developer, Primary School Curriculum Specialist, Species Specialist, Sustainable Financing Consultant.

**Figure 2.** Revised organigram for the GEF-5 Palau Project 5208 (original source: Project Document, 2015)



### Changes in design during implementation

72. Two inception meetings were held, the first one was held at the beginning of the project in Q4 of 2016, and once the second task manager came in (the project went through a turn over of four UNEP task managers) the PMU was told they did not follow correct procedure with the inception meeting and had to hold another one, a year later. Here the inception meeting participants discussed that the indicators needed changing but no formal changes took place.

73. At the beginning of the project there was a budget reshuffle that was not formally reported on in the budget revisions (there were two budget revisions in total which is discussed under financial management under findings). Table 6 shows the allocation changes that took place from project document to implementation. In addition, the MTR mentions how the budget revisions were not clear - e.g. the projects inception report of 2018 highlighted that there was little budget for monitoring indicators but rather focused on project management and includes budget for auditing and MTR and TE when there was a clear M&E budget in the project document.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 6.** Table showing changes in implementation to the sub-contractors and amounts allocated

Sub-contractor/EA/IP	Project Document Budget Allocation	Actual Allocation (MOA)
BNM	USD 290,000	USD 65,000 (+USD 12,000 for endangered spp work)
BOA	USD 270,500	USD 327,500
EQPB	USD 190,000	USD 53,600
MAFE	USD 200,000	USD 383,900
PAN Fund	USD 140,000	USD 115,000
PAN Office	USD 433,000	USD 1,266,000
PCS	USD 310,000	USD 350,000
PICRC	USD 540,000	USD 479,000
BOT	USD 150,000	USD 217,000
<b>Consultancies</b>		
College Curriculum Developer (USD 50K), Digital Mapping Expert (USD 50K), Ethnobotanical Researcher (USD 30K), Land Use Planner (USD200K), Legal Consultant (USD 75K), Managemetn Plan Development (USD 90K), Primary School Curriculum Specialist (USD 25K), Species Specialist (USD 20K), Sustainable Financing Consultant (USD 75K)	USD 615,000	Presumably shuffled into sub-contracts, sustainably finance consultant - TNC was hired to develop the PAN Finance Plan.
MOE		* MOE was provided with USD 25,000 for the curriculum development for Grade 9 (not verified as no MOA was shared with evaluator)
Other		Additional funding was provided to four states of USD 25,000 each as the initial investment into the IPP Programme, and USD 25,000 to the NRFC

74. The project was extended twice formally from September 2020 to March 2023 (justification was the same for both extensions)<sup>16</sup>, without formal extension

<sup>15</sup> MTR: "the current evaluation budget however is not the original budget in the Project Document which does not include costs for monitoring indicators (when these were revised from the original is not clear)"

<sup>16</sup> Justification (dated 4 March 2021): "this extension will allow MNRET to complete remaining project tasks relating to the improvement of the PAN program, the implementation of the SLM policy in Palau and implement coordination and mainstreaming of biodiversity. Furthermore, it will allow for the Mid-Term evaluation to occur and give time to make adjustments, if necessary, to revise and improve the project before its completion next year. The GEF-5 project's largest component is with the PAN program which has been impacted greatly by the pandemic as its main funding source is tourism. As such, this would allow us time to review project deliverables, some of which were completed prior to the pandemic, to ensure that they are still relevant and will continue to help improve our livelihoods and protect our biodiversity"; Justification (dated 14 January 2022): "this extension will allow MNRET to complete remaining project tasks relating to the improvement of the PAN program, the implementation of the SLM Policy in Palau and implement the coordination and mainstreaming of biodiversity. Furthermore, it will allow for the Mid-term evaluation to occur and give time to make adjustments, if necessary, to

documentation for the project ending August 2023 (other than the PCA amendment clause), the project requested a further extension from August 2023 to March 2024 which did not formally take place because the PCA Amendment 3 was effectively valid until March 2024, so it was agreed that the technical completion date would be September 2023 but all terminal reports would be submitted to UNEP for clearance by latest March 2024.

75. Some output-related products (e.g. PAN strategy, leadership changes at state level resulting in different land use plans) had moved forward between design and implementation (while waiting for approval). This was not changed formally during inception and instead these were updated and some adaptive management took place but reporting on these changes were not always consistent (see Output 1.1.1., 2.1.1. and 2.2.1. under findings - Effectiveness).<sup>17</sup>

## Project financing

76. The total planned project budget was USD 19,547,706, of which the GEF allocation was USD 3,747,706, with planned co-financing of USD 15,800,000 (in-kind: USD 11,800,000). See Annex 3 for the project budget and expenditures tables, as well as co-financing.
77. At the time of writing this report, the final budget expenditure reporting had not been completed, and the evaluator only had expenditure reporting up until Q4 of 2022. This figure is given as USD 3,575,574 of which 95.4% of the budget had been spent. This said, the PM assured the evaluator that there was no more budget left at the time of the terminal evaluation, at least in the project account. As per the PCA, the final 5% will only be released by UNEP all final reporting is to be submitted by the EA.
78. Co-financing reporting expenditure was reported on by different partners/sub-contractors for some of the quarterly reporting timeframes in 2017 and 2018, but stopped in 2018. No expenditure reporting was done/shared with the evaluator.

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revise and improve the project before completion next year. The GEF-5 project's largest component is with the PAN program which has been impacted greatly by the pandemic as its main funding source is tourism. As such, this would allow us time to review project deliverables, some of which were completed prior to the pandemic, to ensure that they are still relevant and will continue to help improve our livelihoods and protect our biodiversity".

<sup>17</sup> e.g. the MTR stated e.g. strategic plan (Output 1.1.1) the plan however did not align with SLM priorities nor provide any indicator of PAN expansion plans or priorities for management but was rather an institutional strategy for the PAN office - the strategy was being reviewed was planned to be updated in March 2022

#### IV. THEORY OF CHANGE AT EVALUATION

79. The project's theory of change is depicted in minimal form in some statements across the project document, where it indicates the barriers the project aims to address, the long-term vision ("safeguard the environment to protect biodiversity and provide important ecological services"), and provides assumptions for its results framework.
80. Because this was a GEF-5 project, a Theory of Change was not required for the project document and thus there is no diagram. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) constructed a Theory of Change. During the Inception Phase of the Terminal Evaluation, the MTR and the project document statements (and results framework) were reviewed and analysed and for the purposes of understanding the causal pathways and which assumptions and drivers allow for causal pathways to be achieved, the evaluator re-constructed this Theory of Change to better understand the complex nature of the project in a more coherent manner, while keeping the causal pathways that the MTR described.
81. The revised theory of change (rToC) that is presented by this evaluation in Diagram 1 thus demonstrates more complex interrelationships and change pathways, but in a more coherent manner. Stakeholders involved in decision-making processes are included. For this reconstruction, the results framework was revised somewhat without changing the original intentions for the project. The justification for this revision is presented in the table below.

Table 7. Justification for Reformulation of Results Statements for the purpose of the reconstruction of the TOC to guide the Terminal Evaluation of the GEF-5 Palau Project

RESULTS AS IN PRODOC		INDICATORS	REFORMULATED STATEMENT	JUSTIFICATION FOR REFORMULATION
Impact statement				
None given			Ecosystems in Palau are healthy, resilient and providing services for improved livelihoods and economic development through sustainable and careful use and appropriate protection.	There was no impact statement for the project as for GEF-5 TOCs were not required.
Project Objective				
Effectively and sustainably use biodiversity and maintain ecosystem goods and services in Palau by building institutional capacity to integrate the Palau Protected Area Network (PAN) with the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) initiative, and fostering a ridge-to-reef approach across and within these initiatives.		Extent, type, or size of threats from climate change, habitat degradation/loss, IAS, and over/illegal harvesting population size/spatial range of biodiversity  METT Threat Scores  METT Assessment Form Scores	No change	
Long-term outcome				
Not given.			See impact statement above.	N/A
		Intermediate states (changes beyond the project outcomes that are required to contribute to impacts)		
Not given			IS1: PAN is strengthened and expanded for conservation effectiveness and covers representative ecosystems and their biodiversity.  IS2: Cross-sector coordination supports the safeguarding of the environment.	

RESULTS AS IN PRODOC	INDICATORS	REFORMULATED STATEMENT	JUSTIFICATION FOR REFORMULATION
		IS3: Development and sustainable use of land is in harmony with conservation goals.	
<b>Component 1: Improving Palau's Protected Area Network (PAN)</b>			
<p>OUTCOME 1.1. Improved design, evaluation, and implementation of the PAN leads to increased engagement by states, improved coverage of sites, species, and ecosystem functions, and increased conservation effectiveness.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of states engaged in PA</li> <li>2. Existence of METT</li> <li>3. Extent of PAN coverage (same measure as GEF METT)</li> <li>4. Total ha of marine and terrestrial area protected</li> <li>5. % of endemic and endangered spp covered by PAN</li> </ol>	<p>Improved PAN conservation management effectiveness, including improved engagement by states and improved PAN coverage representing key biodiversity and ecosystem functions.</p>	<p>Re-worded for purpose of TOC.</p> <p>Comment on indicators:</p>
<p>Output 1.1.1. IMPROVED DESIGN: A National PAN Management Strategy and Action Plan is developed and endorsed by 2017; and the National and associated State Plans (1) align with SLM in the 4 core areas and with regional projects such as R2R, (2) engage all 16 states, and (3) cover ecosystem functions, and (4) address the applicability of national, regional, and global goals and benefit-sharing</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Status of National Management Strategy and Action Plan (and Communication Plan)</li> <li>2. State plans with headers aligned with national plan</li> <li>3. Status of PAN gap analysis report and data; no of taxonomic assessments</li> <li>4. No of PAN/SLM coordination documents</li> </ol>	<p>National PAN management strategy and action plan is developed, including engagement of all sixteen sites.</p>	<p>Shortened and simplified for the purpose of the TOC, points 1-4 should form part of the activities and are encompassed in the strategic action plan.</p>
<p>Output 1.1.2. IMPROVED EVALUATION: Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (METT): Agree on a set of 3 harmonized national and state level PAN site monitoring and evaluation tools and protocols (1 marine, 1 terrestrial, 1 socio-economic) which are aligned with METT, with full trial and evaluation of</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No and types of data produced by METT</li> </ol>	<p>Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (METT) developed and trialled and shared with project beneficiaries.</p>	<p>Shortened for purpose of TOC, rest is part of indicator measurement.</p>

RESULTS AS IN PRODOC	INDICATORS	REFORMULATED STATEMENT	JUSTIFICATION FOR REFORMULATION
Palau's METT tool in at least 9 PAN sites but the end of the Project			
Output 1.1.3. IMPROVED IMPLEMENTATION: At least 4 PAN sites meet a minimum METT score, and at least 5 other sites show improving trends toward effective conservation (e.g. reduction in over/illegal harvesting) by the end of the Project and total area protected	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. METT used for PAME</li> <li>2. PAME score</li> <li>3. % of marine and terrestrial areas meeting Micronesia Challenge goals</li> </ol>	Improved management for 4 PAN sites through METT measurement.	The original output reads more as an indicator target, and not an output. Slightly reworded but with original intention intact.
OUTCOME 1.2. PAN management capacity (engagement, training, and financial) and coordination improved across sectors and across governance levels and results in benefits across genders and for marginalized populations in outlying states	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stakeholder management capacity</li> <li>2. Public perception of PAN/MPAs (% support)</li> <li>3. No of conflicts between PAN and SLM</li> <li>4. Status of revenue assessment</li> <li>5. GEF METT Financial Sustainability Scores raised on meeting agendas</li> </ol>	Sectors and government levels apply enhanced capacity to improved management and coordination of the PAN.	Simplified to demonstrate behavioural change and action by project stakeholders. The part about resulting in benefits across genders and for marginalised people is included as a driver.
Output 1.2.1. IMPROVED ENGAGEMENT: An outreach program reaching at least 80% of stakeholders in 8 states results in communities that are measurably more aware and supportive of PAN and increasing active participation in management of PAN sites	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. % of stakeholders exposed to PAN information</li> <li>2. No and type of crowdsourcing opportunities for biodiversity and ecosystem monitoring</li> </ol>	Awareness and support for PAN built in 8 states through PAN Outreach programme.	Simplified for TOC, with no change to original intention.
Output 1.2.2. IMPROVED TRAINING: The number of trained, certified PAN staff increases by at least 15 and benefits some marginalized populations in outlying states	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No of conservation staff</li> <li>2. No of staff receiving training</li> </ol>	Certified PAN staff increased as a result of a training programme, including benefits for marginalized populations in outlying states.	Simplified for TOC, with no change to original intention.

RESULTS AS IN PRODOC	INDICATORS	REFORMULATED STATEMENT	JUSTIFICATION FOR REFORMULATION
Output 1.2.3. IMPROVED FINANCING: PAN revenue generation assessment from local and non-local sources at project inception (baseline) and project end show diversified financial support at the national and state levels and alignment with regional programs such as the Micronesia Challenge, and benefits are shared widely with gender and environmental safeguards in place	1. PAN revenue generation from local and non-local sources (no of sources)  2. No of management plans with diversified portfolio in budget	Revenue streams at national and state levels diversified for PAN.	Simplified for TOC, with no change to original intention.
<b>Component 2: Effective implementation of Palau's Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Policy</b>			
OUTCOME 2.1. Improved and effective planning, alignment, and coordination of the Palau SLM Policy	1. Existence of national SLM action plan  2. No of actions implemented from national SLM action plan  3. No of public mandates requiring PAN/SLM linkages, degree of alignment between PAN and SLM documents  4. GEF METT Score for Policy and Regulatory Frameworks	No change.	
Output 2.1.1. IMPROVED PLANNING: A national SLM action plan that incorporates ecosystem-based management, includes updated sustainable financing information and goals, addresses cross-sector issues such as SFM and climate change, considers benefits	1. No of policy statements  2. No of assessments on PAN/SLM completed  3. No of documents with joint PAN/SLM statements	National SLM action plan is developed and made available to national stakeholders.	Simplified for TOC, with no change to original intention.
Output 2.1.2. IMPROVED COORDINATION: A national coordination mechanism and body for SLM with representatives from at least 6 sectors and levels of government is operational and includes associated	1. No of coordinating mechanisms for SLM  2. No and types of members on coordinating body	Coordination mechanism for SLM is in place including capacity development for improved implementation.	Simplified for TOC, with no change to original intention.

RESULTS AS IN PRODOC	INDICATORS	REFORMULATED STATEMENT	JUSTIFICATION FOR REFORMULATION
capacity building and resourcing to ensure its function	3. Adherence to SLM Sustainable Finance Plan		
OUTCOME 2.2. Increased implementation of the SLM Policy in the key sectors of land use planning, land uses, and tourism development	1. No of violations in forests 2. No of trained tourism professionals with terrestrial expertise 3. No of non-Koror tourist opportunities 4. Type and extent of negative environmental impacts 5. No of dollars generated by non-Koror tourism 6. No of land use plans 7. Water quality 8. Farm productivity, area of reforestation/rehabilitation 9. Perceptions of food security 10. No and type of "hotspots" protected	SLM Policy is implemented in key sectors of land use plans, land uses and tourism development.	No significant change, purely editorial.
Output 2.2.1. INCREASED LAND USE PLANNING: State SLM plans for at least 4 states are developed, tested and implemented	1. No of states with full land use plans	No change.	
Output 2.2.2. IMPROVED LAND USE: Best practices for multiple land users are identified, tested, promoted; and capacity to implement them is built, particularly among vulnerable populations such as women and foreign farmers	1. No of ridge-to-reef practices incorporated into SLM documents	Best practices for multiple land users are identified, tested and promoted, and capacity to implement them is built, particularly among vulnerable populations such as women and foreign farmers.	Simplified for TOC, with no change to original intention.

RESULTS AS IN PRODOC	INDICATORS	REFORMULATED STATEMENT	JUSTIFICATION FOR REFORMULATION
	2. No of demonstration catchments established 3. No of conservation policies implemented 4. No of farmers trained in sustainable practices		
Output 2.2.3. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: Improved national level tourism planning and state level implementation of tourism leads to benefits realised across genders and socioeconomic levels	1. Amount of information enabling sustainable tourism 2. Status of National Tourism Plan 3. No of laws supporting sustainable tourism 4. No of state plans incorporating tourism	No change.	
<b>Component 3: Integrated coordination, mainstreaming and project management</b>			
OUTCOME 3.1. Effective coordination role by MoAFE for this Project and environmental actions in Palau, including through facilitating information-sharing and two-way learning and thereby ensuring benefit sharing among a wide population	1. MoAFE capacity (no of staff, expertise, partnerships) 2. Convention reporting 3. No of mechanisms created or used for information sharing 4. No and type of organisations and individuals participating in two-way learning and information sharing	Improved coordination by MoAFE on environmental actions in Palau, including through effective information sharing.	MoAFE was changed from OERC at MTR because OERC was made redundant and subsumed within MoAFE, the wording from MTR was only changed slightly to simplify for the TOC.
Output 3.1.1. Improved capacity of MoAFE to act as the national coordinating body for Palau's environmental sector	1. No of partnerships/MoUs in place	No change.	

RESULTS AS IN PRODOC	INDICATORS	REFORMULATED STATEMENT	JUSTIFICATION FOR REFORMULATION
	2. No and types of MoAFE staff capacity developments		
Output 3.1.2. MoAFE effectively implementing, reporting, and evaluating Project	1. No of reports completed 2. On-time performance 3. No of partners providing requested MoVs 4. No of conservation professionals trained <i>("exact indicators to be addressed at Inception and/or METT", as stated in Project Document)</i>	Not used in Theory of Change.	This output seems redundant given that GEF project implementation should not be an output, capacity should be built for improved PAN and SLM, nor for better implementation of GEF projects. While the evaluation will speak to this output, it does not seem necessary for the Theory of Change.
Output 3.1.3. Two-way peer learning approach fostered through participation in regional initiatives (Micronesia Challenge, Ridge to Reef, Integrated Water Resource Management, etc) and uses multiple forms of communication and media to share lessons from the project	1. No of webpages developed, no of hits and downloads 2. No of journal articles 3. No of conference presentations 4. No of best practices included in best practice guidance manual 5. No of demonstration catchment reports published	Two-way peer learning approach fostered through participation in regional initiatives and project lessons shared through multiple forms of communication and media.	Simplified for TOC, with no change to original intention.
OUTCOME 3.2. Effective national and state coordination of PAN, SLM and associated cross-sector issues	1. No of documents undergoing PAN/SLM/Cross-sector review 2. No of competing objectives addressed and resolved	Cross-sector coordination at national and state levels improved.	Simplified for TOC, with no change to original intention.

RESULTS AS IN PRODOC	INDICATORS	REFORMULATED STATEMENT	JUSTIFICATION FOR REFORMULATION
	3. No of cross-sector violations (e.g. earth moving), species plans and threats		
Output 3.2.1. Enable effective cross-sectoral coordination of PAN and SLM policies	1. No of agencies with capacity to implement cross-sectoral coordination  2. No of individuals with capacity to enforce cross-sector regulations  3. No of local PAN site managers trained in cross-sector issues	Effective cross-sectoral coordination of PAN and SLM policies enabled.	Simplified for TOC, with no change to original intention.
Output 3.2.2. Streamline forest management across sectors, government levels, and within watersheds with at least 1/3 native forest under protection and sustainable land management (2,100 ha in PAN sites and additional 6,000 ha in SFM catchments)	1. No and extent of threats from habitat degradation in forest  2. No and extent of threats from over and illegal harvesting  3. Size and location of protected forest  4. No of fires  5. GEF METT Area with Management Practices applied	Forest management across sectors, government levels, and within watersheds streamlined.	Simplified for TOC, with no change to original intention.
Output 3.2.3. A national biosecurity policy agreed upon with legislation drafted and with at least 2 invasive alien species risk reduction or eradications achieved that demonstrates a harmonized approach by PAN and SLM	1. Status of National Biosecurity Plan and Strategy  2. No of laws supporting biosecurity  3. No of IAS management strategies	National Biosecurity Policy, laws and invasive alien species (IAS) management strategies developed.	Simplified for TOC, with no change to original intention.

RESULTS AS IN PRODOC	INDICATORS	REFORMULATED STATEMENT	JUSTIFICATION FOR REFORMULATION
Output 3.2.4. At least 4 states have SLM and PAN plans aligned with climate change adaptation plans, with at least one modelling a gender-inclusive approach to climate change adaptation	1. Vulnerability and resiliency scores  2. No of communities with climate change adaptation included in their PAN and SLM plans	States have SLM and PAN plans aligned with climate change adaptation plans, with at least one modelling a gender-inclusive approach to climate change adaptation.	Simplified for TOC, with no change to original intention.

82. The TOC diagram illustrates three main **causal pathways** that lead from project outputs to impact:

- a. PAN: While the PAN has been operational for over a decade and includes much of the country’s forest and near-shore marine areas, important and key biodiversity is not fully represented, and coordination overall is limited. Through this causal pathway, a national plan, improved METTs, outreach and capacity towards improved management, as well as diversified income streams should support improved management and strengthening of the PAN system.
- b. SLM: Land use and overall development has not always coincided with biodiversity conservation even though Palau has an SLM policy. Improved harmonisation and alignment between SLM and PAN could improve this situation. This causal pathway aims to improve the SLM policy through action plan development, developing a cross-sectoral coordination mechanism, improved forest management, tourism development planning, and best practice SLM piloting in order to strengthen SLM in Palau toward development and sustainable use that aligns with conservation goals.
- b. COORDINATION: Improved coordination and leadership from MoAFE, with information sharing between relevant sectors and government agencies, including through biosecurity policy development and testing and uptake in four states should improve and catalyse improve coordination of SLM and PAN in Palau, whose intermediate state (cross-sector coordination supports safeguarding the environment) should lead to the causal pathways 1 and 2 above.

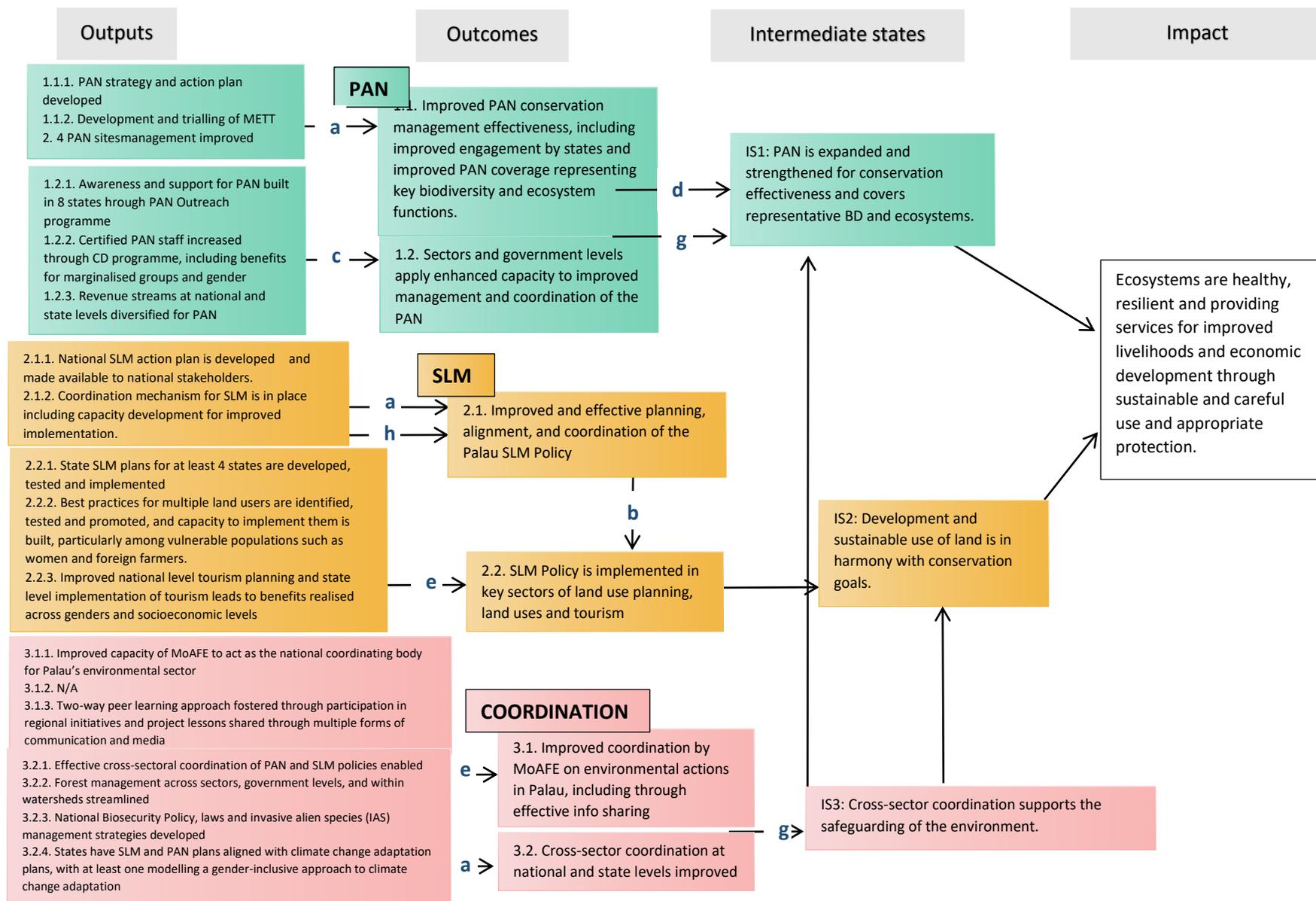
83. Together with the results statements and pathways, the TOC diagram also contains information on the preconditions for the changes to happen - assumptions and drivers<sup>18</sup>. On the TOC diagram they are marked as numbers next to the arrows and their corresponding description is provided below<sup>19</sup>:

<b>a</b>	Assumption	Investment into document preparations leads to biodiversity protection (planning leads to enforcement/implementation)
<b>b</b>	Assumption	Development and environmental goals are exclusively beneficial
<b>c</b>	Assumption	Capacity development leads to behaviour change
<b>d</b>	Assumption	Political will is there to support conservation and sustainable use
<b>e</b>	Assumption	Improved information exchange between institutions leads to improved decision-making on development
<b>f</b>	Assumption	Demonstration leads to upscaling and replication
<b>g</b>	Driver	Communities support and benefit, across genders and marginalised groups
<b>h</b>	Driver	Multi-stakeholder committees are functional

<sup>18</sup> A **driver** is a significant external factor that, if present, is expected to contribute to the realization of the intended results of a project. Drivers can be influenced by the project and its partners. (UNEP Glossary of results definitions, 2021)

An **assumption** is a significant external factor or condition that needs to be present for the realization of the intended results but is beyond the influence of the project and its partners. Assumptions are often positively formulated risks. (UNEP Glossary of results definitions, 2021)

<sup>19</sup> Note: drivers and assumptions are largely based on the information given in the project’s logical framework, risks analysis and in other parts of the project design document, as well as in the MTR.



## V. EVALUATION FINDINGS

### Strategic Relevance

#### A.1. Alignment to UNEP MTS and POW

84. The Project Document aligned the project at the time to the UNEP MTS 2014-2017 Expected Accomplishment (a) for the 2014-15 and 2016-17 PoW for UNEP under Ecosystem Management, 2014-15 EA (a) Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and PoW 2016-17 EA (a) Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased. All three components contributed to these subprogrammes by: enhancing in-country capacity for the integration of SLM policies into the PAN, and the effective design of management of the PAN (component 1); ensuring SLM actions are based on sustainable use of resources, and building capacity for their implementation (component 2); and seeking to integrate the two components for more effective cooperation and collaboration for land use inside and outside protected areas (component 3).
85. Alignment to UNEP MTS and POW is rated as **'Highly Satisfactory'**.

#### A.2. Alignment to Donor/Partner Strategic Priorities

86. The GEF-5 Palau project was a multi-focal area project, aligning to Biodiversity, International Waters, Land Degradation, and Sustainable Forest Management (REDD+). The Project Document outlined this in detail over three pages.<sup>20</sup>
87. For the Biodiversity Focal Area, the project aligned to BD1 - improved biodiversity conservation and sustainability of protected area systems and BD, and BD2 - mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes, seascapes and sectors.
88. For the Land Degradation Focal Area, the project aligned to LD3 - reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape, through the development of national coordination mechanisms around integrating SLM into land use and the implementation of the SLM policy in general (building on the GEF-3 work on SLM capacity development).
89. For the International Waters Focal Area, the project aligned in general to integrated watershed and coastal management and through working with the Palau International Waters programme (the UNDP Ridges-to-Reef) which was a regional project.
90. Lastly, for the Sustainable Forest Management (REDD+), the project aligned to SFM1 - reduce pressures on forest resources and generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services and SFM2 - strengthen the enabling environment to reduce GHG emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and enhance carbon sinks, as most of the SLM activities are revolved around Palau's forest and mangrove ecosystems (including conserving new priority forest areas and improved management of existing sites).
91. Global Environmental Benefits as reported on in the PIRs included the protection of habitats for at least five globally endangered birds, three endangered reptiles, two endangered mammals, three endangered plants and a number of other endemic and native flora and fauna. It planned to contribute data towards also climate change mitigation (sequestration), scaled conservation efforts, improved management

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<sup>20</sup> Project Document (2015)

effectiveness. These were ultimately not reported on in a way that could be recorded as direct benefits.

92. Alignment to donor priorities is **'Highly Satisfactory'**.

### A.3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities

93. Stakeholders relayed that the initial project development was not as participatory and those developing the project needed more support than they received in terms of what they knew for project development at GEF-level. The review time to accepting the project document took so long also that some outputs had changed or needed updating which did not happen as it should have. Many stakeholders also shared that the components of the project would have been implemented anyway but the GEF investment meant this could be done faster. The project relevance was high as aligned to the SLM and PAN goals for the country, as well as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2015-2020,<sup>21</sup> as well as several national policies and plans<sup>22</sup>. At a regional level, it fully aligned with the Micronesia Challenge 2030 Goals. This project came as a result of presidential demand as outlined in the project document.
94. The relevance and global significance of Palau's biodiversity preservation was highlighted in the project document. While the project did align with the SDGs (most directly 14 and 15), the project was in development during SDG development and thus the project document did not include these.
95. Relevance is **'Satisfactory'**.

### A.4. Complementarity with existing interventions

96. The project, to an extent, built on the GEF-3 UNDP MSP SLM Project from 2007 "Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management for Mitigation of Land Degradation" aiming to build capacity and establish the framework for implementation of sustainable land management planning. PALARIS was the executing partner on that project and through it a Sustainable Land Use Policy and SLM Finance Plan was developed. The GEF-5 project was to build on implementing these documents. The Project Review Committee at design of the GEF-5 project recommended a critical review of the GEF-3 project which was not ultimately done.
97. The GEF-4 UNDP/UNEP partnership R2R and IW project was a regional project looking at expanding and further strengthening IW work through GEF-5. In fact, GEF-5 was considered one of the nationally implemented projects under this regional project (something the project manager did not know until the two project managers of both projects were placed in the same office and worked together). A lot of the water components of the project under Component 2 were done in partnership with GEF-4 and were made the responsibility of the GEF-4 project manager.
98. Reporting and website work was to be done in collaboration with the INFORM project<sup>23</sup> under SPREP which was mentioned in subsequent PIRs, but this did not look like it fully

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<sup>21</sup> Themes addressed are 1) protected areas management, 2) species protection, 3) biosecurity/invasive species and bio-safety, 4) integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services into development policies, 5) reducing direct pressures on biodiversity through sustainable use, and strategic area, 6) mainstreaming conservation of protected areas.

<sup>22</sup> These include, e.g. the Sustainable Land Management Policy, the National Invasive Species Policy, Strategy and Action Plan, the National Implementation Strategy from the First Communication to the Convention on Climate Change, Palau's National Action Program to Combat Land Degradation, Ministerial Strategic Plans (particularly for MAFE), draft Forest Policy, National Forest Strategy, Palau National Master Development Plan.

<sup>23</sup> Through SPREP: Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environmental Agreements by Strengthening Planning and the State of Environmental Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific.

materialised in the way that the GEF-5 project had aimed (i.e. better coordination and platforms for information sharing for GEF-5 products).<sup>24</sup>

99. Various other projects were complimenting GEF-5, e.g. Component 2 aspects were supported by e.g. the Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Programme (IUCN BIOPAMA), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) project (vulnerable communities, climate change and food security), the Taiwan Technical mission (taro farming and markets for community agriculture) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) (fisheries work under PAN for communities and fishing cooperative in the Northern Reefs under Component 1) all worked complementary with GEF-5 and many picked up some of the GEF-5 work throughout the project.
100. The GEF-6 project<sup>25</sup> is also being implemented by MAFE and the projects were working closely together mainly once the project manager was shared (after the project manager of GEF-5 resigned and moved out of the country). The GEF-6 is addressing mainstreaming of global environmental priorities into national policies and programmes. The two projects are cooperating on coordination efforts and dissemination of project outputs. However, at times it can be difficult to follow which activities belong to which project and a lot of the activities under GEF-5 that were not completed were taken over into GEF-6 - while this has enhanced uptake in some cases (e.g. the land use plans), it is also difficult to see where there may have been duplication in funds and overlap where investment for GEF-5 for some work was not completed but then taken over into GEF-6 and finalised there. The GEF-6 project will come to an end in 2024.
101. Overall, the project built on many ongoing initiatives and made strong efforts to integrate GEF work for catalytic effect within its mandates and work overall among MAFE and implementing partners but in some cases then the project may have been de-prioritised in its activities for activities within MAFE.
102. Work is being integrated into future GEF-7 projects (one on aquaculture development under UNEP, and one on marine spatial planning under UNDP) and a large GEF-8 project on nature-based solutions for food-security (IUCN).
103. Complementarity is 'Satisfactory'.

**Rating for Strategic Relevance: Highly Satisfactory**

### Quality of Project Design

104. A detailed review of the project design was completed and elaborated in the Inception Report of the Terminal Evaluation and thus only the summarized version and the ratings summary table will be presented here (below).

**Table 8.** Summary table for project design quality assessment

Section	Rating <sup>26</sup>	Weighting	Total
A Operating Context	5	0,4	0,2
B Project Preparation	5	1,2	0,6
C Strategic Relevance	6	0,8	0,48

<sup>24</sup> No final website nor final reporting on how exactly INFORM supported web-related platforms for the GEF-5 project was received from the project.

<sup>25</sup> Integrating biodiversity safeguards and conservation into development in Palau, GEF UNDP Project ID 9208, 2018 -2024

<sup>26</sup> Rating scores: 6=highly satisfactory, 5=satisfactory, 4=moderately satisfactory, 3=moderately unsatisfactory, 2=unsatisfactory, 1=highly unsatisfactory, 0=not applicable

D	Intended Results and Causality	3	1,6	0,48
E	Logical Framework and Monitoring	4	0,8	0,32
F	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	4	0,4	0,16
G	Partnerships	4	0,8	0,32
H	Learning, Communication and Outreach	4	0,4	0,16
I	Financial Planning / Budgeting	4	0,4	0,16
J	Efficiency	4	0,8	0,32
K	Risk identification and Social Safeguards	5	0,8	0,4
L	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects	3	1,2	0,36
M	Identified Project Design Weaknesses/Gaps	3	0,4	0,12
<b>Total Weighted Score</b>		<b>4.08</b>		

105. The project was well aligned to the strategic priorities, dedicating more than five pages detailing how specific project interventions align to the GEF Focal Areas, the UNEP MTS and regional and national priorities. There is no mention of alignment to the Bali Strategic Plan, although the project did aim to build capacity and build on south-south partnerships.

106. The project document had a strong narrative baseline situation (including legislative and governance details, country situation and barriers analysis) and in quite some detail outlined the challenges and baseline analysis, as well as threats. It also gave a really strong and detailed analysis of the legal framework and the gaps that exist in the framework itself as well as the execution of the legal framework. It broke these down into the different sectors of governance (tourism, agriculture and forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, construction and development, freshwater and water systems, etc) and attempted to address the barriers through what the project would aim to address. It gave a strong and comprehensive outline of the key threats to biodiversity and sustainable land management.

107. Design weaknesses included unclear governance and supervision arrangements. Implementation arrangements were comprehensively discussed but lend themselves to confusion because different entities were to be involved and leading different components and it is not clear whether the project manager (who was supposed to work alone, without a PMU, on a massive project overseeing 52 activities) who was implementing only the third but overseeing the first two was supposed to coordinate this properly. It was also not stated whether this was a full-time position (it should have been). An important recommendation coming from the Terminal Evaluation of the GEF-3 project was that more staff were needed to implement this project (which had two staff members) - this recommendation was not taken up into the implementation arrangements for this, much bigger project where instead not only was the project design unclear on how it would be done properly, ultimately resulted in one part-time project manager who had many other responsibilities not being able to connect nor oversee a large number of implementing partners nor conduct the work under Component 3. Based on the recommendation from GEF-3 TE, this should have already been taken up at design.

108. The project results-framework was over-ambitious and convoluted, with too many indicators (81) that were not SMART. The sheer number of activities to implement and deliver on the outputs as well as the number of indicators to measure made this project overambitious both in terms of implementation and in terms of M&E.

109. That said, the project concept was a strong one and spoke to the needs of the country in terms of holistically looking at natural resource management and healthy ecosystems through improving the sustainability outlook of various economic and subsistence sectors, most notably tourism and agriculture.

110. The project design did not adequately address sustainability nor an exit strategy - while discussed, these appear to be superficial other than relying on the activities such as the financial sustainability of the PAN system.

#### **Rating for Project Design: Moderately Satisfactory**

#### **Nature of the External Context**

111. Two main external events impacted project results achievement, one of these could have been managed through adaptive management (government changes), the other was external and while some adaptive management could be done some impacts were largely outside of project control.

112. Government changes: there was a major election at the end of 2020 which resulted in a change in administration in 2021 that affected both the structural and human resources of the government; there was a high turnover in leadership both technical and political, the ministries were reshuffled (including the MNRET which changed to MAFE, which resulted in shifts and mandate changes, one of them being that biosecurity moved to the Division of Biosecurity of the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection under the Ministry of Finance which has meant de-prioritisation of alien invasives, for instance); this has also meant that some legal framework initiated by the project has been put on hold as a result. However, the election was not timed outside of general election times and despite the project being extended, this could have been picked up at design. Potential delays and changes in support are often associated with regular national election cycles, and while this change was the first in many election cycles and came as a surprise, project design and implementation should address these changes through adaptive management.

113. COVID-19: as in most projects implemented during this time, COVID-19 affected the project. The biggest impact was during the entire country lock-downs that were imposed largely for most of 2020 and part of 2021, in which no entry or exit out of the country took place which had a negative impact on the economy (causing serious cuts of staff positions across government) and a temporary collapse of the tourism sector which resulted in some conservation goals not being met (e.g. eco-tourism operations); this said the evaluator noted from observations of tourism sites and interviews that there is a bounce-back taking place. The project had to request an extension based on COVID-19 (although other extensions were a result of other implementation issues within the project's control). The resultant impact on output delivery is discussed under Effectiveness below.

#### **Rating for Nature of the external context: Moderately Favourable**

### **Effectiveness**

#### **Availability of Outputs**

##### **Output 1.1.1. National PAN management strategy and action plan is developed, including engagement of all sixteen sites**

*(Prodoc: IMPROVED DESIGN: A National PAN Management Strategy and Action Plan is developed and endorsed by 2017; and the National and associated State Plans (1) align with*

SLM in the 4 core areas and with regional projects such as R2R, (2) engage all 16 states, and (3) cover ecosystem functions, and (4) address the applicability of national, regional, and global goals and benefit-sharing)

Output-level indicators (1.1.1)	TE Comments
1. Status of National PAN Management Strategy and Action Plan, and Communication Plan (EoP Target: National PAN Management Strategy is endorsed; Strategy addresses key issues identified in Outcomes 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5; 5 state plans aligned with national plan.)	It is unknown to what extent the project <i>directly</i> contributed to the PAN Management strategy as the first one that was implemented throughout the project was developed prior to project implementation (2016-2020), and the second one that included elements of the project was developed with USAID funding (2023-2027).
2. State plans with headers aligned to national plan (EoP Target: 8 plans developed and further 4 planned)	8 Management Plans were shared with the evaluator. The evaluator could not verify the four being planned.
3. Status of PAN gap analysis report and data; no of taxonomic assessments (EoP Target: Gap analysis complete and incorporated into PAN Strategy and other cross-sector plans. PAN Criteria and Ranking System developed. Number of taxonomic assessments increased.)	This indicator should have included no of ecological surveys and socio-economic surveys as well as the baseline assessments. All PAN MPAs underwent baseline ecological and socio-economic surveys, Forest Inventory Assessment; National Bird Survey, one Taxonomic Needs Assessment; some gap analysis in the TNA, but no criteria or ranking system provided.
4. No of PAN/SLM coordination documents (EoP Target: At least 4 policy statements produced showing coordinated action between SLM and PAN coordinators on 4 cross-cutting issues.)	Evaluator could not find evidence of this.

114. **Activity 1.1.1.a.** 'Develop a National PAN Management Strategy that is supportive of national SLM policies, uses existing and proposed systems for criteria and ranking of existing and upcoming PAN sites with specific consideration of the 4 cross-sector issues (SFM, 1AS Climate Change, and R2R), uses standards criteria for ranking species protection needs, models PAN site connectivity, and considers national, state and local level natural resource management policies, laws, regulations and agency mandates'.

115. The evaluator found that there is some confusion about this activity based on the following information:

- a. The PAN Office second quarterly report for 2017 stated that "A PAN system-wide strategic plan has been in development for a couple of years. However, this draft of the plan did not consider the 4 cross-sector issues of sustainable forest management, invasive alien species, climate change and R2R. During this reporting period, this plan has been reviewed and these cross-sector gaps have been identified. In the next couple of months, the PAN Office will engage with partners in the environmental sector and begin to refine the draft plan by incorporating these cross-sector issues. The draft system-wide plan also does not address the issue of the network design and ensuring the representative coverage of ecosystems. This is to ensure that the Protected Areas Network is more than just a collection of sites and that as a whole the network captures relevant conservation and biodiversity targets within the archipelago. This network design will also assist to identify ecological gaps in the current network and provide the rationale for the advocacy and inclusion of new sites. The incorporation of these new components into the strategic plan will be done by

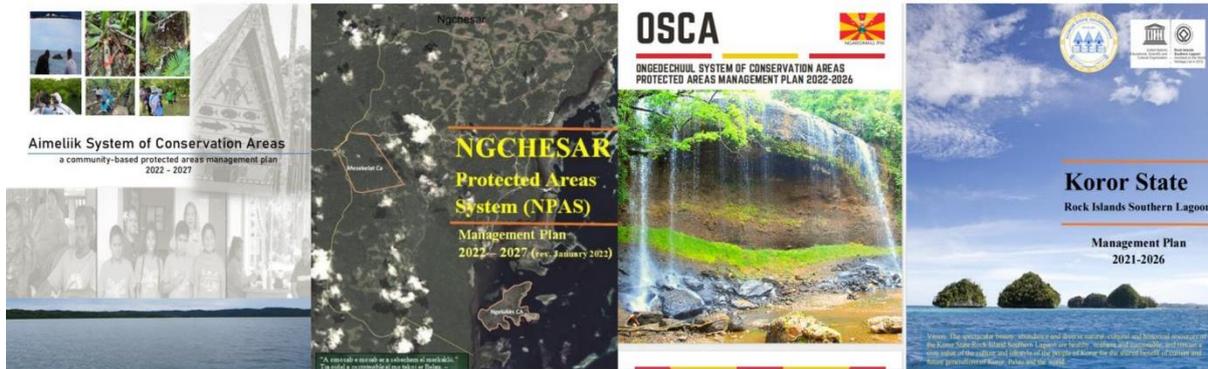
the PAN Office staff with the assistance of a Conservation Planner who is anticipated to be on staff by the next reporting period”.

- b. The PIR of 2018 stated that the PAN National Strategy had not been completed as it was contingent on other activities which had a slow start. The PIR 2019 stated that the strategy had been approved along with the Action Plan to implement the strategy. The PIR 2021 stated that state governments were starting to revise their PAN management plans to align with the strategy. At this point, a review and potential revision of the strategy was being planned.
- c. The MTR (conducted in the first quarter of 2022) noted that in fact the strategy had been developed prior to project implementation and that it did not align with SLM priorities nor provide any indication of PAN expansion plans or priorities for management, but rather that it was an institutional strategy for the PAN Office. At the time it was being planned to review this strategy but this plan had not yet been concretized.
- d. The PIR 2022 referred to the MTR and noted that the process as explained by the PAN Office is that there was resistance to a PAN strategy for the network that would set the direction for the programme. For this reason, they reverted to an institutional strategy that would help build the capacity of PAN to support the state governments. The PAN Office would re-do the Strategy based on the direction and development of state PAN plans. This process had started and was estimated to be completed by March 2023 (and done as advised by the MTR).
- e. Based on interviews with relevant project partners and the PAN Office, the evaluator was told that the strategy that had been developed was done so because there were gaps in institutional functioning that were necessary before a network strategy could be done. There were a lot of reporting systems in the PAN Office that needed to be updated, they needed to improve tracking of funds (e.g. putting internal controls in place around the green fee); a lot of it was looking at internal processes of PAN and strengthening these. This strategy was developed (for 2016-2020) and was therefore focused on building the institutional framework for the administration of the network.
- f. By 2023, the strategy “Palau PAN Strategic Plan: Strengthening the network to achieve lasting impacts that benefit communities and nature” (2023-2027) had been completed. This plan was funded by USAID and it does not mention full integration with SLM, although some activities in the action plan do. There is no direct credit to GEF nor UNEP although much of the project has been integrated into it (as per (g) below).
- g. Based on a review of this updated strategy, the goals speak to the project intentions, but also include key activities that were planned to be done through the project (e.g. capacity building of site coordinators and staff, that performance indicators would be built by 2024, financial sustainability and diversity of PAN sites, communications and PAN visibility, law enforcement capacity and increased number of professionals). The action plan also includes activities that were supposed to have been developed by the project and are assumed (by the evaluator) to continue, e.g. “develop a course for Palau Community College for adaptive management”, “work with Ministry of Justice on development of conservation law enforcement modules”, “work with Ministry of Education to develop a social and science learning module around conservation”. It also refers to doing a gap analyses in legal framework and

working on harmonising PAN site rules and state masters plans, land use and other resource regulations and laws.<sup>27</sup>

- h. There seem to be inconsistencies in the information received by the evaluator on the development of the strategy. While it was finally developed and probably the institutional strategy was indeed needed in advance, the question still remains what level of revision was done on project cost - a budget of USD 99,500 - if the final product was actually credited to USAID.

116. **Activity 1.1.1.b.** 'Following the development of a communication plan, work with PAN site managers to update individual site management plans to reflect National PAN Management strategy'.



**Figure 3.** A selection of the state/site management plans developed under the project

117. The updated PAN strategy (2023-2027) planned to develop a communications strategy under its Goal 3 by 2024. The Bureau of Environment finally shared a communications strategy that was developed in 2023 by the Ebiil Society (there is no reported link to project funding on this<sup>28</sup>). This communications strategy outlines several activities and programmes that rolled out during the project as per below.

118. Communication and outreach activities were certainly rolled out and a communications officer was hired for the duration of the project at the PAN Office (under project cost). According to interviews, a communications consultant was hired to develop a communications strategy early on but this was only partly delivered on.<sup>29</sup>

119. As for the state/site management plans, the evaluator was provided with 8 management plans for 8 states (Koror, Aimeliik, Arai, Melekeok, Ngarchelong, Ngardmau, Ngechesar, Ngeremlengui Ngermesakang) that were updated by the project to reflect the national strategy. According to the PIR 2023 four more state management plans were being updated but this could not be verified by the evaluator during the mission.

120. **Activity 1.1.1.c.** 'Consult subject experts and local naturalists to conduct baseline assessments of all PAN MPAs in Palau, including ecological surveys, socio-economic surveys and outreach and education campaigns'.

121. Through PICRC, all PAN MPAs (in 13 states) were assessed for baseline ecological and socio-economic surveys, and several outreach campaigns were done (including through public presentations, school competitions, community meetings and feedback

<sup>27</sup> Something the evaluator would have assumed should have been done by the project under Component 2, in fact there was a budget of USD 75,000 for a legal consultant presumably to cover partly this task (although a legal consultant was used for the NISSAP).

<sup>28</sup> The evaluator did not receive the contract with the Ebiil Society neither reporting nor could interviewees tell the evaluator if this was a direct project output.

<sup>29</sup> The evaluator was not able to get access to this consultancy contract nor of the deliverable nor of how the contract was terminated.

sessions, among others). All reports and programmes are shared on the PICRC website.<sup>30</sup>

122. BNM completed a National Bird Survey in 2020, which was supported by the project. Annual state of the bird reports are done, of which 2020 was funded by the project (other years are supported by other funders).
123. The Forest Inventory Assessment was fully completed<sup>31</sup> and in fact was extended to the entire country and not just the forested PAN sites. More on this is detailed under paragraph 248).
124. **Activity 1.1.1.d.** 'In support of the GTI, consult subject experts and local naturalists, conduct field surveys, and employ available genetic evaluation resources to conduct a Taxonomic Needs Assessment of Palau's terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity'.
125. PICRC was commissioned to compile taxonomic information and generate a report on taxonomic data to PAN. This work was ultimately conducted together with BNM; a taxonomic needs assessment "Palau Terrestrial, Aquatic, and Marine Taxonomic Needs and Capacity Assessment" was completed by January 2020.
126. As already noted in the MTR, no priority areas, PAN criteria or ranking systems were identified; although this was to be requested from project partners, the terminal evaluator could not find proof that this was ultimately done.
127. The purpose of the taxonomic needs assessment was to identify the taxonomic information required for protected areas and sustainable land and aquatic management. The completion of this assessment fulfilled, in part, Palau's obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity. A meeting was held in September 2018 with key stakeholders to review and complete the Taxonomic Needs Assessment Questionnaire and distribute to other key stakeholders nationally, the assessment addressed both policy and function for Palau's taxonomic needs. At the policy level, assessed information included capacity and management needs that prevent implementation of existing national strategies and/or establishing new ones. As an ongoing working document, the taxonomic needs assessment was seen as a useful tool in addressing national biodiversity issues to taxonomists, marine scientists, and funding agencies. The taxonomic assessment conducted was a desk inquiry on Palau's terrestrial and marine species including freshwater species. The BNM targeted terrestrial and freshwater aquatic species and PICRC targeted marine species. The information was compiled in two separate reports. This report included existing institutions and their taxonomic capabilities about Palau's terrestrial and aquatic and marine biodiversity and identifying current human resources on taxonomy. Recommendations were provided to address Palau's taxonomic needs.
128. **Output 1.1.1 was almost fully delivered (with the exception of one indicator target).**

### **Output 1.1.2. Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (METT) are developed, trialed and shared with project beneficiaries**

*(Prodoc: IMPROVED EVALUATION: Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (METT): Agree on a set of 3 harmonized national and state level PAN site monitoring and evaluation tools and protocols (1 marine, 1 terrestrial, 1 socio-economic) which are aligned with METT, with full trial and evaluation of Palau's METT tool in at least 9 PAN sites by the end of the Project)*

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<sup>30</sup> <https://picrc.org/work/mpa/>. Last accessed 28 November 2023.

<sup>31</sup> This was verbally confirmed on various occasions but not validated as the final documentation was not shared with the evaluator.

Output-level indicators (1.1.2)	TE Comments
1. No and types of data produced by METT (EoP Target: METT applied and utilized for adaptive management. Results shared widely.)	Monitoring protocols were produced for seven thematic areas: marine, forest bird, shorebird, forest inventory, PAME, socio-economic, mangrove. These are used by the PAN to track conservation. The METT itself (as per GEF projects) was not applied. Results are shared on some platforms including the PICRC website.

129. **Activity 1.1.2.a.** ‘Identify and evaluate existing relevant monitoring and reporting programmes and other tracking tools (such as the R2R programme, the Micronesia Challenge, and UNEP), and assess the existing body of research, to build a unified terrestrial, marine, and wetland METT for PAN sites. Consider down-scaled climate modelling (including impact on coral reef systems), resilience indicators for assessment and decision support. Include procedures for conducting a Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) evaluation’.

130. The PIRs and other progress reporting state the following evolution of activities based on the identification and evaluation of the existing tracking tools that PAN had to its disposal:

- a. The PAN Office 2017 second quarter narrative report stated that they had hired an Applied Scientist whose main focus was to review existing monitoring protocols and developing protocols for PAN sites. Since another implementing partner (PICRC) was focused on the marine protocol, the PAN Office focused its review on terrestrial protocols. To get the forest monitoring protocol started, the FAO monitoring protocol and the US Forest Service FIA protocol had been assessed, and a formal request was made to the US Forest Service for assistance in developing terrestrial protocols and building on the specific design tailored for pacific islands and the previous Forest Service mangrove plots that were surveyed in 2010.
- b. The PIR 2017 stated that a desktop review of existing tools had been done. In order to complete the METT, a terrestrial protocol needed to be developed, this protocol was being tested at this time.
- c. The PIR 2019 confirmed that the terrestrial protocol had been developed and was being tested in the field.
- d. The PIR 2020 stated that all that was missing for review was the Forest Monitoring Protocol. By 2022 the PIR was still referring to the forest monitoring protocol data collection being delayed as the number of site plots were extensive and that COVID-19 was delaying the process. The MTR recommended the training of PAN state rangers to assist in the monitoring which was done.
- e. The PIR 2023 states that partners had localized more than six sets of monitoring and evaluation protocols, namely: marine, forest bird, shorebird, forest inventory, PAME, and socio-economic, and were working on a mangrove protocol as well.

131. These monitoring protocols were being tested, but the METT (i.e. the tracking tool used in GEF projects) was not used in terms of tracking management effectiveness for PAN site management. This will be further discussed in the sections below.

132. **Activity 1.1.2.b.** ‘Test the METT in 9 pilot sites and generate PAME evaluations’.

133. The PIR 2023 stated that all tools had been trialled and that every PAN site had been tested for at least 2 of the tools (outlined in the activity above) depending on the characteristic of the site. At least one baseline report was produced for each protocol.
134. The METTs were done at design for four protected areas: Northern Reefs, Ngardok Nature Reserve, Rocks Islands Southern Lagoon, Negeremeskang Nature Reserve. These were then done again during 2022. After consultation on these METTS, it seemed to be seen more as a “tick-box” exercise where a group of people were brought together to fill in the METT excel sheet. In other words, the tools that they received from UNEP (i.e. the METT) were not integrated into daily reporting as they had identified and worked on their own monitoring tools (was “just a reporting tool to UNEP”<sup>32</sup>).
135. The PAN Status Report of 2015 reported on the PAME (prior to the project implementation) which estimated the level of effective management. This was only done again in 2023. The PAME was used as the METT to adequately track management effectiveness. It is unknown to what level the project supported this particular PAME or if it was done via e.g. IUCN BIOPAMA. The Bureau of Environment contracted PCS who then sub-contracted Environment Inc to develop the PAME.<sup>33</sup> Seven sites participated in the PAME evaluation (Helen Reef, Hatohobei, Teleleu, Peleliu, Ngerderar, Aimeliik, Ngermeskang Bird Sanctuary, Ngeremlengui, Ngemai, Ngiwal, Lake Ngardok, Melekeok, Olterukl, Oruaol Ibuchel, Chiuul, Ntgatepang). The site coordinators participated in two workshops in 2023 to assess and implement the revised 2023 PAME tool. The PAME report recommended that the tool be used annually to track progress as part of it PAN annual reporting.
136. **Activity 1.1.2.c.** ‘Identify percentages of Palau’s terrestrial area and marine area that are currently part of effectively managed protected areas’.
137. The PIRs for 2021 and 2022 stated that existing sites had been mapped (for 39 sites), but mapping for new sites was ongoing. This was not covered in the PIR for 2023, but the evaluator was told by PALARIS (who does the mapping) that all sites had been mapped. In addition to this, PALARIS provided the evaluator with the increase in number of hectares based on the mapping of the new sites.
138. **Activity 1.1.2.d.** ‘Support the Northern Reef Fisheries Initiative pilot project as a locally driven socio-economic METT, incorporating community based monitoring of PAN’.
139. The following updates were given on this activity based on the PIRs and other reporting:
- a. In 2017, the second quarter PAN Office report shared that the Northern Reef Initiative was a pilot project that aims to link benefits of a protected area to enhance fisheries. The support from the PAN Office was both financial and technical.
  - b. The PIR 2021 stated that work with the Northern Reef Fisheries Cooperative (NRFC) was still ongoing and would continue even after the project as a PAN initiative. By 2022, the PIR had considered the activity completed (but ongoing as part of PAN). The PIR 2023 stated that community-based monitoring was ongoing in the Northern Reefs to measure the species and catch size.

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<sup>32</sup> Direct quote from interview.

<sup>33</sup> The evaluator was not given access to this contract.



**Figure 4.** Interviews with NRFC Board Members during the evaluation (Chairman: Hadley Renguul and Board member: Hilary Ubedei)

140. The evaluator had several interviews with the NRFC and the PAN Office in this regard, and visited the NRFC. Apart from some monitoring done by the PAN Office, there does not seem to be regular communications between the Board and the PAN Office. The previous Executive Director was not aware of the involvement of the GEF-5 project *per se* until they were told about a contribution of funding that came from the GEF-5 budget. The NRFC received USD 25,000 from the project budget as a “donation from the Minister” in the last quarter of 2016 which the evaluator was told by the PAN Office went to the coop as “seed money”. The NRFC were not expected to report on this money by MAFE; there was never a signed agreement nor reporting on activities or expenditures. The money was apparently spent on operational activities on setting up the clam farm, reaching out to fishers to get more members on board, and to pay the Executive Director salary.
141. The state at the same time (before the onset of project implementation) designated the entire Northern Reef a PAN site and developed fishing regulations. The PAN Office shared that, at the onset of the work in the Northern Reefs, designating the channel as a PA was not enough because the fishing communities were still seeing decline in fish populations, so they proposed to do fisheries management and designated the entire northern reef as a PAN protected area with different zones, sustainable use, no take, catch and release, this was all TNC-related work. What PAN provided early on was 90,000 USD to bring power in order to put a radar in Todai to support enforcement and enhance compliance through the new state regulations.
142. The cooperative is meant to unify the fishers and support the legislation around the regulations for reef fish (e.g. size limits, moratoriums as needed) and awareness building around conservation. There have been many meetings over the years over the purpose to improve cooperation for the improvement of the livelihoods of fishermen.
143. The NRFC does not report any data to the PAN Office. The Nature Conservancy has been supporting the monitoring work in the Northern Reefs and with the NRFC since before the project and has the infrastructural presence at the NRFC office (in terms of monitoring equipment). TNC has provided them also with funding through a grant agreement of five years (which has recently ended). The NRFC has also been largely supported (through training, Japan visits with another coop in Okinawa, and through the purchase of two fishing vessels) by JICA. In addition, the NRFC has received USD 15,000 from the Bureau of Fisheries (under MAFE) for FAD monitoring and a small portion to marketing and transportation of fish.
144. The NRFC has had a lot of support and has had a lot of intervention both on livelihood and conservation, including the development of eight clam farms, eco-tourism product development, training on small business development including canning (and they have a canning machine). All these activities were brought to a halt in 2020 during COVID-19. There seems to be a limited engagement from members in taking up /owning some

of these interventions. The NRFC is still struggling to become self-sufficient and is still dependent on external funding support to keep operational. Structural changes, stronger membership engagement and business and financial management capacity development support could enhance and promote independence but this is not currently being done.

145. **Output 1.1.2. was mostly delivered.**

**Output 1.1.3. Improved management for 4 PAN sites through METT**

*(Prodoc: IMPROVED IMPLEMENTATION: At least 4 PAN sites meet a minimum METT score, and at least 5 other sites show improving trends toward effective conservation (e.g. reduction in over/illegal harvesting) by the end of the Project and total area protected)*

<b>Output-level indicators (1.1.3)</b>	<b>TE Comments</b>
1. METT used for PAME (EoP Target: METT is implemented in at least 9 pilot sites; METT is used to improve management in pilot sites.)	METT was partially done for four sites. Some anecdotal management effectiveness improvement but not based on METT.
2. PAME Score (EoP Target: At least 9 PAN sites meet minimum PAME score)	PAME was conducted in 2023 for seven sites, and only 6 comparable. Overall went from 65 to 73 for mean PAME score across all thematic areas, with overall improvement in all six sites. However, conservation effect went from 70 to 56)
3. Percentages of marine and terrestrial areas meeting Micronesia Challenge Goals (EoP Target: Total PAN Site coverage expands to 138,000 ha marine and 10,500 ha terrestrial)	From PALARIS: 2016 PAN Marine\Terrestrial (292.2 ha) 2016 PAN Terrestrial (2,000.7 ha) 2016 PAN Marine (14,240.1 ha)  2022 PAN Marine\Terrestrial (1455.1 ha) 2022 PAN Terrestrial (2,926.9 ha) 2022 PAN Marine (114,440.9 ha)

146. **Activity 1.1.3.a.** ‘PAN site management plans updated to address IAS, climate change, SFM, Ridge-to-Reef planning and site plans are in alignment with national policy and standardized criteria’.

147. Eight management plans were updated which addressed IAS, climate change, SFM, R2R and aligned to the national strategic plan. This has also been elaborated on in Output 1.1.1.

148. **Activity 1.1.3.b.** ‘Work with states to nominate and approve at least 4 new PAN sites, or expand existing PAN sites, to add at least 95,000 ha of marine area and 6,300 ha of terrestrial area, increasing the area of key ecosystems and the number of states currently protected in the PAN’.

149. The PIRs outlined the following progress on this activity:

- a. The PIR 2018 reported that the PAN Office was still working on including new sites or expanding existing sites. The target included PAN sites that were being submitted for nomination during the period in which the project was still being designed and that the situation had changed by implementation; as such the PIR stated that the target needed to be reviewed by the Project Steering Committee. The evaluator found that this target was never formally changed/ revised.

- b. The PIR 2019 stated that PAN had 36 sites in 16 states and that Sonsoral State was proposing a PAN site to become the last site. There was no reference as to which of the 36 sites were added or expanded as a result of the project.
- c. The PIR 2020 stated that the Sonsoral State had been successfully added as a new PAN site. Melekeok had also included a new site to their PAN system, and that Angaur had begun implementation of its site plans.
- d. The PIR 2022 stated that from a baseline of 21 states, there were 36 sites with a total marine area of 112,925 ha and terrestrial area of about 2,284 ha. It stated that the number of new PAN sites were achievable by end of project, but that ha targets set by the project were not as the assumption made at project development included sites that did not make it into the PAN programme (and were only considered as state conservation areas).
- e. The PIR 2023 states that far more than five states (as per EoP Target) had been added, and that 18 new sites had become PAN sites, with several more under nomination. It also stated that because the PAME was only being repeated in 2023 that it was not yet possible to see an improvement on the METT score.

150. The METT scores (July 2023) were recorded as follows: Northern Reefs (79), Rock Islands Southern Lagoon (84), Ngeremeskang Nature Reserve (77), Ngardok (83). The PAME developed in September 2023 actually showed, on the most part, reduced management effectiveness (particularly in conservation effectiveness) across the PAN network.

151. The indicator targets for this output were not reported on fully and the evaluator could not get the final figure from the PAN Office on the amount of ha that the project directly contributed in terms of the increase of PAN in Palau. A request for PALARIS to share data on the number of ha of marine and terrestrial areas in 2016 and those of 2022 does not show the increase as expected by the indicator target (Marine actual 114,440.9 ha versus target of 138,000 ha and Terrestrial 2,926.9 ha versus 10,500 ha target; this said they have met the Micronesia Challenge Goals, and added an extra >1,000 ha marine/terrestrial combo).

152. **Output 1.1.3 was partially delivered.**

**Output 1.2.1. Awareness and support for PAN built in 8 states through PAN Outreach Programme**

*(Prodoc: IMPROVED ENGAGEMENT: An outreach program reaching at least 80% of stakeholders in 8 states results in communities that are measurably more aware and supportive of PAN and increasing active participation in management of PAN sites)*

<b>Output-level indicators (1.2.1.)</b>	<b>TE Comments</b>
1. Percentage of stakeholders exposed to PAN information (EoP Target: Outreach program reached at least 80% of stakeholder groups (traditional leaders, men's and women's cheldebechel, fishers, conservation officers, youth groups, hunters, farmers association, PAQua, commercial buyers) in 8 states)	This was not measured effectively, but more than 1,000 were involved according to quarterly reporting from PICRC. Numbers could not be shared from PAN Office.
2. Number and type of crowdsourcing opportunities for biodiversity and ecosystem monitoring (EoP Target: Number of entries to crowd sourced data increases yearly. Community participation	Three crowd-sourcing (two the evaluator could verify through external information), eBird continuing with strong citizen science participation and yearly Palau Status of Birds Report.

in PAN monitoring and management is improved; Resources are developed to enable community participation)	No numbers provided on the target.
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153. **Activity 1.2.1.a.** ‘Conduct socio-economic surveys of public perception and key stakeholders of MPAs in Koror, Airai and 4 other states’.
154. PICRC was contracted to undertake this activity and did a comprehensive survey on PAN perceptions of 1,234 people finding that more than 75% supported PAN sites. In a 2020 MAFE survey, 62% of respondents had participated in terrestrial conservation activities.<sup>34</sup>
155. The PIRs stated that 12 states with MPAs had been surveyed.
156. **Activity 1.2.1.b.** ‘Develop and implement a PAN communication plan with the goal of establishing permanent outreach activities to build awareness and support of PAN’.
157. According to interviews with the PAN Office, a communications officer was hired. In addition, a communications consultant was hired to develop a communications plan (USD 12,000 was provided, of which USD 6,000 was spent and due to COVID-19 the deliverable was not finally delivered, the contract was cancelled and the final disbursement retained - the evaluator did not get access to this contract nor documentation on this). The PIR 2019 stated that the draft communications plan was being reviewed, and in 2020 the PIR stated that the second draft was being developed and outreach activities for the public were conducted. The PAN Office has also supported the work of the Palau Legacy Project, a public campaign to encourage students and visitors to take a pledge to be good stewards of the environment. This initial phase of the project is organizing field trips with teachers to expose them to the current environmental issues and initiatives that they can then share in the classroom. This project is also being supported by Palau Conservation Society and Palau National Marine Sanctuary.
158. The second draft was developed with the assistance of the communications consultant but not finalised. The outreach activities took place in parallel but were curtailed by COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021.
159. An updated communications plan was finalised recently in 2023 and communications and outreach are ongoing through PAN. Partners such as PICRC, BNM and PCS continue with their outreach activities (such as school competitions and visits, radio

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<sup>34</sup> PICRC Project Reporting.

interviews, etc).<sup>35</sup> PAN has a you tube channel with two videos (not credited to GEF-5) with limited view counts.<sup>36</sup>

160. **Activity 1.2.1.c.** 'Building on the success of eBird, identify other online databases to enable citizen science crowdsourcing as a means to participate in biodiversity and ecosystem monitoring'.

161. Overall, more focus was placed on continuing eBird with lesser effort on a new database.

162. The PIRs and other reporting state the following progress/level of completion on this activity:

- a. The BNM quarterly reporting from 2017 shared that Palau citizen-scientists contributed 25 checklists representing 38 bird species to the eBird website on the annual Global Big Day (May 13, 2017) sponsored by the Cornell University Ornithology Lab. The eBird cumulative database for Palau totals 2,301 checklists and 122 species as of the end of the reporting period (2017). The cumulative database attracts eco-tourists to Palau and is a resource for planning eco-tourism tours.
- b. The PIR 2019 stated that Koror State Government Rangers could assist with the monitoring of birds and as a result an MOU was signed between BNM (who run the eBird) and Koror State to build their capacity to monitor birds and to create a database for monitoring data collected. Capacity building was conducted on this with them and other rangers, the evaluator found that at least with the rangers spoken to that bird monitoring capacity was not further applied.
- c. The PIR 2021 shared that the project supported the printing of the 2020 State of Palau's Birds (a yearly publication that the BNM prints when funding is available).
- d. The PIR 2022 stated that the eBird monitoring was a continuous activity after the project and remained as the main crowdsourcing data from the citizen science arena. The 2023 PIR shared this too, but also shared that there was another crowdsourced database (iNaturalist) that was activity in use - this could not be verified by the evaluator during the mission.

163. An analysis of the eBird database reveals that the most popular bird tourism destinations were the RISL World Heritage Site, Long Island Park, Carp Island and the Koror Sewage Treatment plant ponds. Bird Tourists also visited the following PAN sites: Lake Ngardok, Mesekelat and Ngemai MPA.

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<sup>35</sup> The evaluator will not share all outreach activities as this would be too lengthy, but for e.g. 2019 and PICRC alone, the following outreach activities were done: 1) Meeting with Legislative leaders to create Palau National Coral Reef Framework 2) Koror State Tour Guide Certification presentation on coral status in Palau covering PICRC MPA Assessment sites in January, February and March 3) Presentation to Melekeok State Traditional Leaders regarding PAN MPA; 4) Presentation to Mindszenty High School Students 5) A total of 1,300+ student entries for Arts & Tides Calendar were received; 6) Research Lecture to the community on Micro Plastic a collaborative study for PICRC with Scientific Center of Monaco and from Dr. Dirk Petersen from SECORE "How can we restore coral reef resilience at scale?" 7) Radio Talkshow in January and March to discuss Research Updates and Outreach programs in 2 separate radio stations in Palau. 2019 2nd quarter 1) Koror State Tour Guide Certification presentation on coral status in Palau covering PICRC MPA Assessment sites in January, February and March 2) Radio Talkshow in to discuss; 2019 3rd Quarter 1) Presentation on Stakeholders and US Coral Reef Task Force by PICRC Staff 2) Lecture conducted by guest lecturer Mark Eake from NOAA on satellite remote sensing basics, CRWs and other NOAA products available online for use 3) Presentation to SDA/PMA teachers and staff on PICRC outreach activities and materials to be used in schools including research projects 4) 6 weeks internship for 4 Palauan students with specific topics on Ocean Acidification, MPA assessments, coral bleaching, and heat tolerant corals, 2019 4th quarter 1) Presentation to Airai State Governors PAN Council meeting on Airai state MPA, Watershed and SocioEconomic Survey results in November 2018; 2) Koror State Tour Guide Certification presentation on coral status in Palau covering PICRC MPA Assessment sites in October, November and December 2018; 3) Research Talk by Kirsten Oleson work on SocioEcon for PNMS; 4) Presentation to Palau High School Students in December (2 classes) on Research work including Socio Econ, MPA assessments and Outreach;

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/@PalauPAN> Last accessed 28 November 2023.

164. The BNM also shared in its quarterly reporting on the antweb website<sup>37</sup> which is a website hosted by the California Academy of Sciences now has over 4000 specimens from Palau. Most of the specimens were provided by Belau National Museum. The museum has distributed specimens to the California Academy of Sciences, Field Museum and Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology while maintaining a reference set of specimens at the museum in Palau. To date, 92 Palau specimens have been imaged on the website.<sup>38</sup>

165. **Activity 1.2.1.d.** 'Work with MOE to integrate Palau-specific biodiversity and island ecosystem topics into national curriculum standards'.

166. The PIRs stated the following for this activity:

- a. PIR 2018: The Ministry of Education is currently working with PREL to update its science curriculum. It was good timing to coincide the work under this project with existing work.
- b. PIR 2019: An MOE was signed between the PAN Office and the Ministry of Education to develop a curriculum targeting High School level. A draft curriculum was developed and was being tested at this time.
- c. PIR 2020: MOE curriculum was launched at the Education Conference on July 2019.
- d. PIR 2021: MOE curriculum was launched in 2019.
- e. PIR 2022: The MTR noted inconsistencies with this activity. An MOA was signed in 2017 with the Ministry of Education and the roll out was launched during the 2018-2019 school year. Further confirmation will be obtained regarding the status of this activity.
- f. PIR 2023: The entire MOE Science curriculum was revamped for Freshman Science during the project period to include new information about conservation and Palau's environment and launched in 2019. PICRC and MOE have a MOU for PICRC to deliver marine conservation content, and they feature Palau-specific biodiversity and island ecosystem topics in their curriculum. Socioeconomic surveys show consistently high awareness of PAN (78%-92%).

167. The evaluator verified this work through being shared the actual curriculum framework and seeing the project-implementation documentation on this activity, as well as through interviews with the MAFE and MOE. The MOE stated that they received funding from MAFE (through the project to revise the curriculum framework; they formed a committee and revised the science curriculum from grade 1 up to 12, and then focused on freshman (grade 9) to update and include environmental science. They worked with PREL (an education consultancy in Hawaii) to support in the curriculum development. The work also included a minor revision of primary school grade 1 to 8. But the grade 9 work included teacher training (including teacher visits e.g. to mangroves), and by 2018 school start the curriculum was being implemented, this included a lot of out-of-classroom learning.

168. **Output 1.2.1 was mostly delivered.**

**Output 1.2.2. Certified PAN staff increased as a result of a training programme, including benefits for marginalized populations in outlying states**

*(Prodoc: IMPROVED TRAINING: The number of trained, certified PAN staff increases by at least 15 and benefits some marginalized populations in outlying states)*

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<sup>37</sup> [www.antweb.org](http://www.antweb.org), last accessed 28 November 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Quarterly reporting from BNM.

Output-level indicators (1.2.2.)	TE Comments
1. Number of conservation staff (EoP Target: none)	25 individuals trained on the Policy Academy Certification course (enforcement) Apparently 70 rangers went through various trainings overall but there is no compiled documentation on this, evaluator spoke to rangers and found that there was limited application in terms of the ecological training but that enforcement continues.
2. Number of staff receiving training (EoP Target: No of trained PAN Managers increased by 24, stakeholder assessments show increased capacity)	See above - indicator is not clear how it is different to the above, no stakeholder assessments were done to show increased capacity.

169. The project document envisaged for this output that improved capacity would include that existing capacity programmes would be identified and streamlined, such as monitoring programmes offered by PICRC and management professional cohort training programmes developed by PCS, Palau Community College infrastructure necessary to house programmes, the conservation course curricula will follow the national PAN strategy and elucidate the PAN standard operating procedures.

170. **Activity 1.2.2.a.** 'Conduct capacity building training for PAN staff targeting improvement of monitoring, reporting and data management'.

171. The PIRs and other progress reporting state the following levels of completion for this activity:

- a. The PAN Office relayed in its third quarterly report of 2017 that: the PAN Office, in collaboration with the PAN Fund, planned and delivered a 2-day training workshop targeting state PAN coordinators and accountants. The content of the training workshop included the reporting process and requirements. The training workshop also was tailored to collective learning by allowing coordinators to share challenges and how they have adapted to them. The PAN Office was to use the results of this meeting to further plan and implement strategic actions to support state reporting and capacity development. The PAN Office, in conjunction with the Bureau of Agriculture, hosted a student intern who focused on entering and analyzing forest plot data from a protected area. This activity was aimed to temporarily increase capacity and also to explore the possibility of developing a PAN student mentorship program that is mandated in the PAN strategic plan. The evaluator did not see evidence of this being sustained.
- b. PIR 2019: Training was ongoing every year with different focuses to build capacity in different aspects of work.
- c. PIR 2021: Training was ongoing every year, but due to COVID-19 the efforts were slowed.
- d. PIR 2022: Different trainings were conducted every year but slowed during COVID-19. Wildfire, invasive species, and management trainings were still being conducted in small workshops to PAN Staff and rangers. This was planned to be a continuous activity beyond the project life.
- e. PIR 2023: At least 70 individual PAN Rangers had been trained, most attending repeated and diverse training seminars and workshops. PAN staff at MAFE received specific training for relevant topics. Rangers from outlying states benefitted from trainings, both through delivery on-site and by supporting their attendance in Koror. PAN Coordinators are receiving training in the PAME so

they can complete it in their own states. Regular training includes project management, work planning, etc.

172. Based on several interviews and some sharing of workshop and training documentation (this was not all received, and those that were were received in a piecemeal fashion where the evaluator could not ascertain what fit in and where, it would have been helpful for the PMU to have collected all training activities in a comprehensive list from all partners under this specific output - it did not do this, so the evaluator could not verify all the training), there was extensive training done.

173. However, based on some interviews, the capacity gaps intended to be closed by the project remain open in many aspects (at least in terms of management effectiveness), and all this capacity development has not necessarily reflected in application of this capacity.

174. **Activity 1.2.2.b.** 'Develop a conservation management course/certification program through a partnership with conservation sector and PCC professionals'.

175. The PIRs and other reporting shared the following level of completion on this activity:

- a. PIR 2020: Consultants were hired and were developing the Conservation Academy Curriculum. COVID-19 was limiting the progress of the work due to travel limitations of consultants.
- b. PIR 2021: Consultants were hired to support the development of the course, but due to COVID, this was delayed.<sup>39</sup>
- c. PIR 2022: Initially it was meant to be a course through PCC, but the process of developing a full course was not feasible as the timeline was too long. An alternate was developed in which rangers would go through a training course that combines Police Academy trainings for enforcement and includes conservation courses as well. An MOU was signed with the Ministry of Justice to conduct the training in conjunction with the PAN Office and other partner organizations to deliver this course.<sup>40</sup> The first set of ranger training was slated for the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2022.
- d. PIR 2023: PAN had an MOU with the Ministry of Justice to deliver combined enforcement training through a Policy Academy Certification Course. 25 individuals were certified through this course. PCC offers a ecological monitoring course, developed in partnership with PICRC, and is attended by PAN Rangers.

176. Interviews with PICRC and PAN Office yielded that training was indeed also done through PICRC and then handed over to PCC with limited sustainability post-project.

177. **Output 1.2.2 was mostly delivered.**

**Output 1.2.3. Revenue streams at national and state levels are diversified for PAN**

*(Prodoc: IMPROVED FINANCING: PAN revenue generation assessment from local and non-local sources at project inception (baseline) and project end show diversified financial support at the national and state levels and alignment with regional programs such as the Micronesia Challenge, and benefits are shared widely with gender and environmental safeguards in place)*

Output-level indicators (1.2.3.)	TE Comments
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<sup>39</sup> The evaluator did not get access to any contracts on this.

<sup>40</sup> Despite several requests, the evaluator did not receive this MOU.

<p>1. PAN revenue generation from local and non-local sources (EoP Target: Sustainable Financing plan updated and endorsed. Additional funding streams identified and implemented across more locations)</p>	<p>IPP Programme - endowment fund with four states signed up by end of project with sustained outreach to get more states to sign up.</p>
<p>2. Number of management plans with a diversified portfolio budget (EoP Target: Communication plan for the PAN Sustainable Financing Plan completed and endorsed and being implemented. Number of states reached increases yearly, Resiliency to economic fluctuations is institutionalized by increasing the number of states with diversified income (PA)</p>	<p>Four state eco-tourism plans included in their management plans.</p>

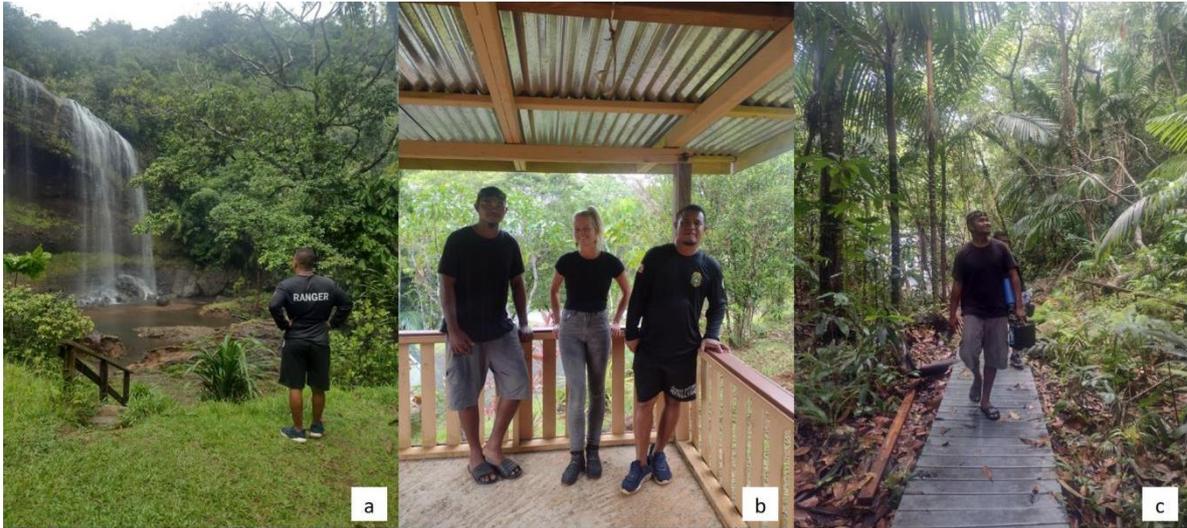
178. **Activity 1.2.3.a.** ‘Commission a formal review and update of the PAN Sustainable Financing Plan and actual funding conditions of the PAN Fund (Green Fee and grants), to include a monitoring and reporting programme’.

179. The PIRs state the following on the level of completion of the sustainable financing plan:

- a. The PIR 2019 stated that the work was delayed until February 2020 (according to the evaluation interview with the PAN Fund, the delay was connected to the difficulty in finding an appropriate consultant), but individual support to state governments to look into potential sustainable financing mechanisms was being done.
- b. By the PIR 2020, a final draft was awaiting review and approval by the PAN Fund Board.
- c. By the PIR 2021, an assessment of the PAN sustainable mechanism was completed that gave recommendations and updates to the SFP.
- d. By 2022, the SFP was assessed and the report was available that informed the SFP and provided recommendations which included diversifying the SFP to include other options such as grants and state level SFPs. An Investment Partnership Program was developed for State Governments to help diversify their SFPs (the IPP).

180. The PAN Fund relayed the difficulty in finding a suitable candidate to support them in developing the finance plan and ultimately TNC delivered the work for them for the finance plan (2020-2030), which is of good quality.

181. **Activity 1.2.3.b.** ‘The PAN Fund will work with states to identify new and improve existing income streams, including building reserves to support ongoing PAN needs through economic downturns, as well as alignment with new and existing SLM Plans’.



**Figure 5.** Visit to Ngardmau Waterfall in Aimeliik OSCA PAN site, with OSCA Rangers (b: right to left, Marino Kloulubak, Justine Braby - evaluator, **Ngersngai Termeteet**)

182. One of the greatest achievements of the project was through this activity. In 2020, an investment partnership programme (IPP) was developed between the PAN Fund and the states. This is an endowment fund that the states commit to through an initial investment of USD 25,000 (matched by the PAN Fund) and then every year at least USD 5,000 (the amount to be equally matched by the PAN Fund). The project supported those states wanting to sign up with the initial capital of USD 25,000. The first state to sign up was Melekeok in 2022, with three other states following suit in 2023 (Aimeliik, Ngardmau, Ngardelong). Melekeok, through its fund-raising activities of Ngardok Nature Reserve, was able to put in USD 25,000 for the first year (five times the minimum amount). Interviews about this programme with reflected overall success in this programme, and the PAN Fund were/are doing significant outreach on getting other states to sign up.
183. In terms of diversified funding, the tourism within some PAN sites were being explored and through the project eco-tourism plans were developed (see Output 2.2.2. and 2.2.3. below).
184. **Activity 1.2.3.c.** 'Develop strategies and implement pilot projects to diversify funding for Ngardok Nature Reserve, the Rock Islands Southern Lagoon area and the Ngarchelong Northern Reefs area to include eco-tourism as part of larger state-level tourism portfolios with a view to having a wider application to other sites and states in Palau'.
185. The PIRs reported on this activity only with reference to the IPP.
186. Eco-tourism plans were developed for four conservation sites, but no pilot projects were implemented. COVID-19 resulted in a collapse of the tourism industry and ultimately this activity was not achieved (although it could have been achieved as per workplan at the onset of the project implementation if it had started in 2017, but the PAN Fund instead started with working on the IPP Programme after which eco-tourism planning followed there-after, putting the project in a difficult position in terms of implementation during lockdown).
187. **Activity 1.2.3.d.** 'Develop a communication plan in alignment with the Micronesia Challenge communication strategy to build awareness of the updated Sustainable Financing Plan, and gain endorsement by the PAN Board'.
188. The reporting on this activity as well as the interviews with the PAN Office speak about this communications plan being the same as the communications plan for the PAN

strategy. This said, the communications plan that was developed in 2023 is not necessarily connected with the Finance Plan.

**189. Output 1.2.3. was partially delivered.**

**Output 2.1.1. National SLM action plan is developed and made available to national stakeholders**

*(Prodoc: IMPROVED PLANNING: A national SLM action plan that incorporates ecosystem-based management, includes updated sustainable financing information and goals, addresses cross-sector issues such as SFM and climate change, considers benefits across genders and marginalized communities, and aligns with the PAN is designed and agreed)*

<b>Output-level indicators (2.1.1.)</b>	<b>TE Comments</b>
1. Number of Policy statements (EoP Target: PAN and SLM Policy Statements agreed and under implementation)	Four policies/regulatory frameworks related to land use and SLM integration, including: public road works, housing development, agro-ecology, SFM policy)
2. Number of assessments on SLM/PAN completed (EoP Target: Policy statements on 4 cross-sector areas developed and incorporated into PAN and SLM documents)	Storm-water management capacity assessment Indicator not otherwise reported on
3. Number of documents with joint SLM/PAN policy statements (EoP Target: Number of documents with joint PAN/SLM policies increases yearly)	Indicator not reported on

**190. Activity 2.1.1.a.** ‘Develop and implement a National SLM Action Plan that incorporates ecosystem-based management practices ecosystem-based management practices and is aligned with the National PAN Management Strategy’.

191. The PIRs stated the following progress on the SLM Action Plan:

- a. PIR 2019: SLM Action plan was apparently near completion and was aligned with the PAN Management Strategy.
- b. PIR 2020: National SLM Action Plan was expected at the end of the year that would be aligned with the Urban Development and Land Use spatial planning for Babeldaob states and Southern Lagoon.
- c. PIR 2021: The consultation on this was reduced with COVID-19, but work continued with smaller stakeholder groups when possible. Attendance was an issue.
- d. PIR 2022: SLM Action Plan work was ongoing along with the Land Use Strategies. This was being aligned with the Mid-term Development Plan for Palau and other national action plans such as forestry, invasive species, and State land use and PAN management plans. The plan is expected to be developed by the end of December 2022.
- e. PIR 2023: The SLM Action Plan was completed in 2021 and updated in 2023 to incorporate emerging knowledge about Nature-Based Solutions as a climate adaptation (this apparently was part of GEF-6, not GEF-5, and the evaluator did not get access to the SLM Action Plan other than an “Updated NAP and SLM situation analysis” poster). It operationalizes the National SLM Policy and focuses the first 10 years worth of actions on institutional capacity building and enabling conditions, in addition to capitalizing on activities with momentum such as climate-resilient forestry. Climate change is integrated throughout, both as an

underlying risk principle as well as targeting specific mitigation and adaptation actions.

- f. The MTR said different: various SLM action plan meetings were held to assess what had already been done, what other relevant policies exist, and what would be the scope given there already exists an SLM policy, an SFM plan, that states already have master plans, and that several other strategic action plans at state and national levels already exist, with a lot of overlaps. Therefore, rather than an SLM action plan it was decided that an SLM coordination plan would be more appropriate and that existing plans need to be examined to assess where coordination efforts can be aligned, their current implementation status, and how they can be integrated and monitored. With the recent establishment of the Bureau of Environment this presents an opportunity to have an overall coordination arm for these existing plans. The evaluator did not find that this was ultimately done (other than what was reported in the PIR 2023 which was actually GEF-6).

192. Based on interviews on this work with several stakeholders, it was found that when the project started there had been three land use plans but at the same time they were in Arai, Ngardmau, Meleleok; by the time they started implementing the GEF-5 project, these plans had gone “straight to the shelves”. The cost to develop these was phenomenal (funded by others pre GEF-5) and many of these stayed as a draft. Arai had a land use plan, a master plan, a watershed management plan but while components of the plan were implemented when the governor changed they all went back to shelf. The GEF-5 project design approval process took so long so during design things were different and by the time they got to implementation a number of years had passed, governors had changed and given the type of support that was needed, it needed to be driven by the people and politically. They understood that this sort of external entity coming in and then getting a body created to develop a plan and then let the state implement this plan was not feasible nor desirable - what the states wanted was to look at where the areas of development are that are occurring, what is the impact on the land of those that would need a strategy and ended up developing resource strategies and being in general more demand-led, four resource use strategies were developed. For Babedoab, the project supported the development of a subdivision policy, integrating environmental considerations into some legislation (public road works, housing development regulations, storm water management assessment, for instance), an agricultural policy for food security (agro-ecology). Now under GEF-6 Master Plans and Land Use Plans were developed for which this project laid the foundation for, as well as an SLM Coordination Plan.

193. **Activity 2.1.1.b.** ‘Update existing SLM Sustainable Financing plan’.

194. This activity was not achieved.

195. **Activity 2.1.1.c.** ‘Review and update SFM strategy, and develop policies to enable implementation of SFM practices’.

196. The SFM Policy was developed and completed, and includes principles and actions to align with SFM and PAN and to ensure equitable gender and social benefits. The PIR of 2022 states that this policy had been used to leverage funding from other donors to implement.

197. **Output 2.1.1. was partially delivered.**

**Output 2.1.2. Coordination mechanism for SLM is in place including capacity development for improved implementation**

*(Prodoc: IMPROVED COORDINATION: A national coordination mechanism and body for SLM with representatives from at least 6 sectors and levels of government is operational and includes associated capacity building and resourcing to ensure its function)*

Output-level indicators (2.1.2)	TE Comments
1. Number of coordination mechanisms for SLM (EoP Target: not defined)	Ultimately none.
2. Number and types of members on coordinating body (EoP Target: coordinating body includes representatives from 6 sectors; Coordinating body meets at least biannually; Number of training opportunities for members of body)	N/A
3. Adherence to SLM Sustainable Finance Plan (EoP Target: Financial resources to SLM increases yearly; Alignment with Sustainable Financing Plan increases yearly)	N/A

198. **Activity 2.2.1.a.** ‘Identify an existing body or create a national steering committee responsible for coordinating implementation of SLM and SFM activities across sectors, with MAFE providing leadership to the committee, and members from at least 6 sectors’.

199. Despite various attempts during the first years of the project, this activity was finally not achieved. At the onset of project implementation, the Belau Watershed Alliance (BWA) was envisaged to host the coordinating body. Various quarterly reporting by MAFE and PIRs up until 2020 show that various meetings were taking place and activities had taken place (including under the output below on best practices on water management). According to the PIR 2021, the BWA was selected to coordinate the implementation of SLM and SFM (work that was already at the time also being done in conjunction with GEF-6).

200. The PIR 2022 stated that the BWA was on a hiatus during the COVID-19. However, there was also consideration for changing this committee into another if the National Government approved a proposed bill that would create a national level committee that would oversee land use development and management across the country. This was ultimately not done with the administration change after the elections in 2021.

201. At the time of the evaluation mission, the BWA had been disbanded, and the evaluator was told that members (who are all volunteers) had a lot of ideas but ultimately there was no secretariat to implement these ideas.

202. The PIR 2023 states that the “National Environmental Protection Board (NEPC) continues to act as the umbrella cross-sector advisory body for all environmental management.<sup>41</sup> It is comprised of the heads of all environmental agencies (10+ agencies) plus representatives from other ministries, with MAFE as the Chair. The NEPC implements a grant review process to ensure that large projects meet stakeholder needs. The NEPC creates subcommittees as needed, or relies on its Secretariat to ensure that smaller projects and policies are participatory in nature. Participatory approaches are employed exclusively for land planning, which reaches across multiple sectors and which must involve national to state coordination. Through the GEF6 project, States have developed a Joint Coordination Body which acts to align land use plans across ecosystems and borders, with MAFE as the Secretariat. New members to commissions have received training in projects, facilitation, and other

<sup>41</sup> <https://sites.google.com/view/nepcpalau>

topics as needed. Palau launched a multi-ministry coordination body to work towards Food Security called the #KeledANgercheled Task Force; and MAFE acts as the Secretariat and "Champion"/Chair for that body. Finally, MAFE's updated Strategic Plan and associated Organizational Chart institutionalized an Office of Strategic Support Services with the purpose of coordinating activities across sectors. A Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) strategy was completed using such participatory and coordinated methods, as was a 2023-2030 National Environmental Management Strategy, which had input from over 50 stakeholders. The NEPC Secretariat ensured that an updated Sustainable Financing Plan (covered both PAN's protected areas as well as new Micronesia Challenge indicators that require sustainable land management) was developed using a participatory process."

203. However, speaking to the NEPC Head it does not seem to be the case, and it is not coordinating any work on SLM.

204. **Output 2.1.2 was not delivered.**

**Output 2.2.1. INCREASED LAND USE PLANNING: State SLM plans for at least 4 states are developed, tested and implemented**

Output-level indicators (2.2.1.)	TE Comments
1. Number of states with full land use plans (EoP Target: 4 states with full land use plans)	4 states had incorporated the SLM related policies developed for GEF-5 and GEF-6 took on the land-use plan work and now there are minimum 11 states with land use plans and 10 of which are being implemented.

205. The project document stated the following hopes for this output: "land use plans must be at the state level and are most effective when at even smaller watershed scale - the project will speed the development of land use plans significantly and create momentum as well as standardized process for landscape level planning - develop SLM plans (land use and their master plans) for 4 states - inclusion of monitoring at community level also creates a feedback loop to inform ongoing development and implementation of plans, to reduce pollution and improve management of bd outside PAs".

206. **Activity 2.2.1.a.** 'Develop and implement State SLM Plans (with evaluation) in alignment with National SLM Policy in at least 4 states'.

207. This has already been covered in the Output above under the SLM Action Plan, however shared below are the PIR statements on the evolution and ultimately changing of this activity:

- a. PIR 2020: Four SLM strategies covering subdivision, agro-ecological systems, infrastructure, and storm water management are expected to be completed at the end of the year. These strategies are expected to be adopted by at least 4 states and are designed so that all states can adopt.
- b. PIR 2021: These consultations require stakeholder meetings that are impacted by COVID-19.
- c. PIR 2022: It was determined in the first year of the project that land use plans for 4 states was not a feasible idea since most states do not even have a master plan. At the time, development in Palau was going strong and environmental impacts were being seen around the country. In consultation with the stakeholders, they were more receptive to land use strategies that would address some of the impacts being seen in the areas of housing, infrastructure such as road development, and in agroecological areas. As such, land use strategies in

those sectors were being developed that could be adopted by more than 4 state governments. Noting the importance of SLM plans, this was integrated into the GEF-6 project that would look at land use planning for 11 state governments.

- d. PIR 2023: Together with the GEF-6 project, land use plans have been completed for 9 of 10 states on Babeldaob plus Kayangel and Peleliu (11). The plans implement the national Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Policy which is itself in line with the National Planning Act (Title 31). One of these state land use plans has been endorsed by the Governor and forwarded to the State Legislature for adoption. All 10 states on Babeldaob plus Peleliu now have legislated and authorized Planning Commissions to implement these land use plans and their zoning codes. All states have gone to their communities and leadership for approval and have incorporated feedback. Most states have started implementing aspects of their master plans through small grants (especially in tourism product development and food security). Many are preparing/training their Commissions and State permitting offices to begin following zoning rules and regulations. Airai and Ngiwal also have updated Watershed Management Plans. 4 states have eco-tourism plans that include sustainable land management, especially to minimize tourist impacts.

208. So, ultimately, the project supported foundational work first that seemed necessary and resulted in GEF-6 taking on and catalysing this activity further.

209. **Output 2.2.1 was fully delivered through laying the foundation for longer-term results uptake and catalytic and replication work of GEF-6.**

**Output 2.2.2. Best practices for multiple land users are identified, tested and promoted, and capacity to implement them is built, particularly among vulnerable populations such as women and foreign farmers**

*(Prodoc: IMPROVED LAND USE: Best practices for multiple land users are identified, tested, promoted; and capacity to implement them is built, particularly among vulnerable populations such as women and foreign farmers)*

Output-level indicators (2.2.2.)	TE Comments
1. Number of R2R best practices incorporated into SLM documents (EoP Target: Best practices developed and address: a) Local food production; b) protection of water resources; c) safe wastewater and solid waste systems; d) maintenance of historical cultural sites and biodiversity; e) fair and realistic access to resources and services; f) mitigating the threat from invasive alien species; g) improving climate change adaptation and resilience; h) improving sustainable forest management)	None of these indicators were reported on effectively. The evaluator found that best practices were developed that addressed (a), (b), (c), (d), (f), (h).
2. Number of conservation policies implemented (EoP Target: At least 1 Demonstration Catchment under active, coordinated, comprehensive management, )	There was no final demonstration catchment that was directly credited to the project, the Ngardok Nature Reserve had a small replanting and erosion demo site and the Ngerderar Watershed is the most relevant in terms of a demonstration community protected water catchment although it was not clear that this was a direct contribution by the project due to limited reporting, the evaluator visited this site and it seems many project activities

	had been completed here as a result of planning by the project.
3. Number of conservation policies implemented (EoP Target: Number of Best Practices/ Conservation policies implemented/adopted increases yearly, Biochemical and Socioeconomic METT scores improve from start to finish of project (water quality, food security); Lessons learned drafted)	6 best practice policies developed, water quality was tested apparently but the evaluator did not get the project-specific reporting on this, no overall lessons learned.
4. Number of farmers trained in sustainable practices (EoP Target: Area of reforestation and forest rehabilitation increased from start to finish of project)	This was not reported on, but the evaluator found one list from a quarterly report that gave the number of farmers trained as 31, school children were also trained in a separate workshop but the evaluator could not find the attendance list, only photos.

210. **Activity 2.2.2.a. (Agriculture)** 'Develop Best Practices in Agriculture and conduct workshops to build capacity'.



**Figure 6.** Visit to farms conducting SLM activities during the evaluation mission

211. The following reporting shows the implementation of this activity:

- a. The BOA first quarter reporting of 2018: "The Horticulture division was tasked to create a list of all farmers that are using best practices in Palau. Along with this list of farmers, training material and presentation is also still being created. Once the list and training presentations are finalized, invitations will be sent to these farmers for a best practice workshop. The goal for this workshop is knowledge sharing. After this workshop, BOA can finalize and create a platform for future training workshop geared to new and existing farmers."
- b. PIR 2019: Best practices for agriculture was developed and workshops with farmers were conducted targeting existing and potential farmers that had submitted request for farming support to the Bureau of Agriculture. These practices continue to be disseminated to the general public through other events to promote its use. In the PIR 2020 the BOA had aimed to follow up on the attendees to look at how capacity was being applied.
- c. The PIR 2022 and 2023 stated that workshops were ongoing and integrated. These best practices cover (a) vegetable crops and rotations, integrated pest management, contour plowing, (b) fruit trees, (d) root crops/taro, and rehabilitation of waterways and salt-water resistant taro, (d) responsible livestock management and dry litter for compost, (e) composting.
- d. The PIR 2023 stated that targeted training and translation was conducted with foreign farmers, particularly with the assistance of technical and bilateral partners, to reach a marginalized community. A unique taro project specifically targeted training for women, with over 200 women farmers being trained in climate resilient taro production practices that blend traditional knowledge with

new climate projections. Upon further investigation of this the evaluator found that this was part of another project (through the Asian Development Bank).

212. Based on interviews and BOA reporting the evaluator could find two training workshops that were conducted as part of the project, no foreign farmers nor marginalised communities were directly involved. Farmers visited were conducting SLM activities (including mulching, composting, crop rotation and legume-crop planting, diversity of crop, minimal tillage, and even in some cases, biochar application).

213. **Activity 2.2.2.b. (Water Resources)** ‘Expand existing water conservation best practice guidelines and public awareness programme’.

214. This activity was carried out under MAFE by the project manager of the regional IW project and with BWA (a GEF project under which this project sat).<sup>42</sup> They were hired to manage the specific deliverables under the IW project and thus some components of the GEF-5 project was on this; the project manager worked in the same office as the GEF-5 project manager between 2016 and 2020.<sup>43</sup>

215. By project implementation, the Public Utilities Corporation and the Environmental Quality Protection Board (EQPB) both had their own water conservation guidelines (developed in 2016). These guidelines were then integrated into best practice information materials targeting different users from individuals to businesses.<sup>44</sup> According to the PIR 2022, outreach on these best practices had been institutionalized in the Bureau of Environment, and the PIR 2023 stated that the BOE trains 20 community or resource managers each year.<sup>45</sup> Best practice guidelines were separately developed for schools, nurseries, hospitals, offices, guests, hospitality industry and at home.

216. **Activity 2.2.2.c. (Reforestation, Erosion, SFM)** ‘Scale up lessons learned from Ngardok Nature Reserve and Ngarchelong State reforestation and erosion control initiatives to produce reforestation and rehabilitation guidelines, and expand practices into at least 3 terrestrial PAN sites and 1 catchment area. Updated SFM strategies for Palau’.



**Figure 7.** Ngerderar Watershed Conservation area at OSCA (a), Demo site for erosion at Ngardok Nature Reserve in Melekeok (b), Dearlynn Rebluud (left), Ngardok Site Coordinator and Justine Braby (right), evaluator (c)

217. According to the PIRs, guidelines were developed and piloted. Apparently outreach and extension work was institutionalised in the BOE’s Division of Forest, Land and Water and with the Division of Protected Areas and Species using the PAN sites as pilot sites.

<sup>42</sup> See paragraphs 2 and 65 for a description and background of the project, the evaluator did not see any formal contracting with BWA

<sup>43</sup> Interviews with relevant stakeholders.

<sup>44</sup> PIR 2019.

<sup>45</sup> This could not be verified during the mission.

This could not be verified on the mission as none of the staff could relay to the evaluator exactly in which sites the project supported implementation.

218. The evaluator did review the Forest Restoration Field Guide that apparently was developed under the project through the Ebiil Society.<sup>46</sup> This field guide is of good quality and a useful addition to the knowledge base on SFM for the country.
219. While the evaluator was given the field guide, and told by several stakeholders that pilot reforestation activities did take place, the evaluator was not actually shown or given the exact sites where this was in fact done (there were several sites pointed out where reforestation was taking place, but this was apparently with other funding).
220. **Activity 2.2.2.d. (Fire)** 'Develop fire prevention protocols such as fire breaks and green belts, identify and map at least 4 priorities fire management zones in both protected and non-protected areas, and implement and test the protocols in these areas'.
221. The fire protocol work was conducted between 2019 and 2022. Workshops on fire prevention and planning utilizing the protocol (best practices) were held and PAN rangers also learned how to collect data on wildfire events. According to the PIR 2023, a large investment into fire prevention and wildfire response led to the development of a detailed protocol and reduction in overall fires. Fire mapping was also done, and knowledge was increased around fire breaks, green belts, safety protocols and fire hotspot management.
222. The evaluator was given access to the Wildfire Response Protocol and documentation on the Network for Wildlife Prevention's Dry Season Response Action Plan.<sup>47</sup> The evaluator was shown two zones where green belts and fire breaks were completed.
223. **Activity 2.2.2.e. (Rare sites)** 'Conduct studies and map and overlay key natural and cultural features, significant ethnobotanical sites, archaeological, historical, or otherwise unique or special sites to identify conservation hotspots that may need to be targeted for protection (and otherwise not captured in PAN)'.
224. The PIRs stated that this work was ongoing with PALARIS since 2019. By 2021, the PIR stated that this work, identifying and mapping "rare sites", was being done in conjunction with GEF-6 to align with spatial mapping exercises (apparently to reduce replication of work). By 2023, maps were developed that identified various areas of interests for State Governments who are now in the process of identifying potential areas for conservation or protection in their land use planning. For example, areas that contribute to their water sources and areas that are known for their biodiversity or cultural significance are being considered for conservation areas. The evaluator was shown a pocket guide of the cultural, historical and natural sites of Palau, and visited two trails in which historical sites were newly set up, work that had been done under GEF-6.
225. The evaluator did not actually get access to the maps. In the interview with PALARIS, there was no clarity on "whether rare sites were mapped, but definitely did mapping for cultural historical sites".<sup>48</sup>
226. **Activity 2.2.2.f. (Tourism)** 'Develop sustainable tourism guidelines and best practices communication materials, and conduct outreach to relevant sectors'.
227. Together with PCS, the Bureau of Tourism has finalized the "Green Boots", which is a best practice guideline for tour operators in terrestrial sites. "Green Boots" and "Green Fins" guidelines are being implemented by the Bureau of Tourism for tour operators to

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<sup>46</sup> The evaluator did not see any contract between MAFE and Ebiil.

<sup>47</sup> These had various logos, but UNEP nor GEF was credited.

<sup>48</sup> Quote from project partner during interview.

implement best practices in marine and terrestrial sites. PAN sites that are interested in running eco-tours are provided these guidelines and trainings on these best practices. The BOT also worked on the Palau Pledge which is part of the visa entry system where tourists pledge to conduct responsible tourism activities while in-country.

228. The evaluator was given access to several guidelines and project deliverables, including the BOT Strategic Plan, the Regulations Governing the Boat Owners Association for Tourism, Regulations governing Tour Operators, Responsible Tourism Act of 2018, Sunscreen Regulations of 2020, and the green boots/fins guidelines. These were all developed through extensive stakeholder discussions, site assessments, and co-design and development, as well as outreach activities.

229. **Activity 2.2.2.g. (Coordinated SLM Demonstration)** 'Identify, assist and promote at least 1 Demonstration Catchment with policies in place to implement and integrated SLM approach, including R2R ecosystem management'.

230. There is no definite result on this work, below is what the evaluator was able to derive from project reporting and interviews:

- a. The PIRs 2020 and 2021 stated that this work was pending the SLM strategy development, but that Melekeok state had been identified to pilot this work.
- b. By 2022 this was still pending based on the development of the strategies but that ongoing work with Melekeok on their land use planning, tourism, sustainable finance plans and with a PAN site that implements SFM, that they were receptive to integrating their land use strategies as related to the planned housing development. These strategies were to be completed by the end of 2022.
- c. The PIR 2023 stated that rather than adopt a single demonstration site, the Ministry was instead pursuing multiple demonstration sites to access multiple populations. Melekeok's demonstration site was for eco-tourism and sustainable forestry, Ngardmau was slated as a site for land rehabilitation, and that BOA's work with the Taiwan Technical Mission had a demonstration farm for crops and livestock (the SLM component of this could not be verified by the evaluator).
- d. While the evaluator visited these sites, there was no definitive proof that this came as a result of the GEF-5 project. That said, GEF-6 has taken on and upscaled a lot of this work in such a way that in terms of sustaining project results, SLM seems to be much more integrated as a result in a way that one single demonstration site at this point might not be necessary.

231. **Output 2.2.2. was partially delivered.**

**Output 2.2.3. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: Improved national level tourism planning and state level implementation of tourism leads to benefits realised across genders and socio-economic levels**

Output-level indicators (2.2.3.)	TE Comments
1. Amount of information enabling sustainable tourism (EoP Target: Information increases yearly (legislation gaps))	This target was not measured, but certainly there has been a rise in information and outreach through the BOT strategy and the RTF as well as all the new guidelines and the education and tourism act.

2. Status of National Tourism Plan (EoP Target: none)	BOT strategy exists and holistically looks at strategic tourism from the point of sustainability.
3. Number of laws supporting sustainable tourism (EoP Target: legislation drafted)	Eight new regulations, acts, frameworks.
4. Number of state plans incorporating tourism (EoP Target: 4 new states include sustainable tourism in State SLM Plans)	Four, with four more from other funders

232. **Activity 2.2.3.a.** ‘Assess tourism capacity development needs and opportunities to improve tourist experience and promote sustainable tourism in different regions of Palau: (a) Koror/RISL, (b) Babeldaob, (c) More accessible outer islands (Peleliu, Kayangel, Angaur)’.

233. The assessment took longer than expected (and was further curtailed by COVID-19), and by 2022, it had still not been completed. The PIR 2022 stated that the BOT was working with the Palau Visitor’s Authority (PVA) in developing tourism products such as signage and promotion of environmental best practices. A Capacity Assessment was conducted in Koror state to determine carrying capacity (this was stated in the PIR 2023). It found that marine tourism was at capacity and as a result they have expanded their variety of non-marine tourism products available, including those that celebrate terrestrial biodiversity (such as parks and trails on land). The BOT strategy incorporated wide community and stakeholder engagement, finally committing to low-impact tourism and decentralization away from Koror with shared benefits, which includes a plan for improving infrastructure.

234. According to the PIR 2023, PVA and its partners have invested heavily in site assessments outside of Koror, working to create new products and to promote them as part of tourism packages. PVA also promotes local products and holds regular market opportunities for local artisans and food producers to sell locally-produced sustainable products. PVA is implementing a nationwide payment system called “AliiPass” that standardizes payments and enables marginalized people to benefit from modern payment systems. The evaluator could not verify how much of the assessments were directly attributed to the project. In interviews with BOT, the evaluator was told that communities were more involved in decentralised tourism activities, this included, as an example, Aimeliik state investing in a women’s market space at their historic trail, and house-stays for tourists who come to Babeldaob, for instance.

235. **Activity 2.2.3.b.** Draft a National Sustainable Tourism Management Plan that will (a) Address key management issues in the RISL on a national level, (b) Expand interest, access and activities available for tourists on Babeldaob, (c) Identify best management practices to support SLM in tourism-related industries across sectors (i.e. coordination with PAN, improvement of diving experience, fishery/reef management, local food access etc), (d) Develop a strategy for improving infrastructure needed to support anticipated growth in the tourism industry using SLM principles.

236. The BOT hired a person who was responsible for GEF-5 activities that were under the responsibility of the BOT. The responsible Tourism Framework had already been developed (a high-level document that gave the aspirations but not concrete activities). They developed the Strategic Plan for BOT (this was directly credited to UNEP and GEF), they implemented many activities, working with local guides, investigation community-based ecosystem tourism initiatives, integrating sustainability principles into all of these (e.g. reef-safe sunscreens, no plastic water bottle use, pack-in-pack-out), tourism potential and feasibility. This all provided a solid framework from which to build.

237. The BOT strategy fulfilled the tourism management plan components as laid out in the activity and was a more integrated way to do this activity. However, there has been turnover in leadership at BOT and it is unknown how much the same principles are being taken forward. The strategy, the evaluator was told, is still being implemented.
238. **Activity 2.2.3.c.** 'Draft legal and regulatory framework necessary to support implementation of Palau's National Sustainable Tourism Management Plan'.
239. The BOT promulgated and enforced a set of laws and regulations on sustainable tourism, including legislation on the Responsible Tourism Education Act of 2018, an update to immigration laws to require a pledge for responsible environmental behaviour and cultural stewardship by incoming visitors, and regulations governing Tour Operators, Tour Guides, Boat Operators, Plastic Reduction, and Reef-safe Sunscreen.
240. These new laws were mainstreamed into licensing requirements. BOT also developed a manual to guide training and learning on these new regulations. Tour Operators must be relicensed every year and thus must stay up to date with new regulations. In addition, BOT continues to offer training on these regulations.
241. A concurrent effort based out of a local NGO is working to raise awareness of the Palau Pledge by seeking voluntary commitments by local businesses to even more stringent environmental standards, and rewarding well-behaved eco-tourists.
242. BOT and PCS together piloted that Tour Operators adopted best practices like Green Fins (for marine) and Green Boots (for land) to ensure sustainable practices by visitors. Extensive outreach and stakeholder engagement was conducted responsible tourism product development.<sup>49</sup>
243. **Activity 2.2.3.d.** 'Design and implement sustainable tourism management plans in at least 4 sites: Koror (targeting the RISL), Ngarchelong (Northern Reefs), Melekeok (Ngardok Nature Reserve), and one other site'.



**Figure 8.** Women's market at Aimeliik (left), PAN Fund Executive Director and Staff during evaluation visit (middle), Forest of Hope Trail on Peleliu Island (right)

244. Based on the PIRs, this work only got going in 2020, assessments were delayed (and state onboarding took time) and then COVID-2019 curtailed some of this work. By 2021, work was ongoing with states and PAN to integrate the BOT and PAN strategy into the state management plans. By 2022, tourism strategies were being integrated into state management plans for Ameliik, Melekeok, Ngiwal and Ngardmau. This was identified as the best option for securing sustainable financial support for their tourism plan, but also integrating conservation and protection into their tourism as well as generate revenue for the State Governments to benefit their local communities.

<sup>49</sup> BOT quarterly reporting for 2017 Q4 and 2018 Q1.

245. The PIR 2023 stated that PAN invested in eco-tour plans for 4 states and that NGO and bilateral partners also invested in eco-tour development for other states through the BCET. These state plans assessed capacity needs and targeted capacity and training in addition to product development. Koror has new plans targeting tourists in the RISL, Ngarchelong and Kayangel have new master plans that address tourism in the Northern Reefs, Melekeok, Aimeliik, Ngardmau, and Ngiwal have a new eco-tourism plans, and all other states have master plans that address land and marine tourism needs.

246. **Output 2.2.3. was fully delivered and sustained (with the minor exception of not having full assessments done under Activity 2.2.3.a., which the evaluator does not believe impeded the achievement of the work).**

**Output 3.1.1. Improved capacity of MAFE to act as the national coordinating body for Palau’s environmental sector**

Output-level indicators (3.1.1.)	TE Comments
1. Number of MOUs/Partnerships in place (EoP Target: MOUs in place covering PAN, SLM, and cross-sector partnerships)	This was not measured by the project. The TE was provided with several project-level MOUs, and was told of MOUs with e.g. Ministry of Justice, but these were on project delivery and not on cross-sector partnerships.
2. Number and types of MAFE staff capacity developments (EoP Target: MAFE fully staffed according to government organizational chart; Every staff receives at least 1 training opportunity)	This was not measured, although given the overall capacity development of the project, it seems that all key staff attended at least one training opportunity.

247. The Prodoc stated that although PAN and SLM are complex, Palau is a small enough community that integration among sectors was both feasible and valuable. Empowering MAFE (at the time MNRET) in taking a leadership role was important but it was chronically understaffed and that the project aimed to provide resources to allow MAFE to take on its mandate as a coordinating body. This was to be done through a partnership model to facilitate information sharing and identification of gaps and redundancies and to model innovative approaches to streamlining and aligning activities and reducing disputes within the country’s environment sector. The following activities were planned under which the project had limited achievement under this output.

248. **Activity 3.1.1.a.** ‘Conduct a capacity needs assessment of MAFE (including staffing needs) to identify obstacles to performing the role as executing agency for environmental management, and develop strategies and actions for addressing these issues and provide training as necessary’.

249. While the evaluator was not provided the capacity needs assessment or any other documentation for this activity, the following levels of achievement were provided in the PIRs:

- a. PIR 2019: Assessment has been delayed due to focus on implementation. This will be implemented this year and may continue to Year 3 of the project
- b. PIR 2020: Assessment completed. Full analysis still pending. Initial analysis showed gaps in capacity in certain areas.
- c. PIR 2021: Assessment completed. Areas for improvement and potential training identified. Ministry currently undergoing restructuring.

- d. PIR 2022: Assessment was completed that noted the low capacity for the Ministry as a whole with the highest level of capacity at the project management levels and not necessarily within the Bureaus who implement the main mandate of the Ministry. The new administration restructured the Ministry creating a new name of Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and the Environment (MAFE) and created a new Bureau of Environment to help address some of the gaps and streamline the work. COVID-19 has reduced the ability for the government to hire personnel to address the gaps in implementation of work, but it is an ongoing process that is hoped to be achieved with the opening of the borders and with tourism slightly increasing in Palau.
- e. PIR 2023: A Capacity Needs assessment was completed. MAFE went through organizational restructuring, creating an Office of Strategic Support Services to help implement projects. Partnerships also help align indicators and improve management of projects both inside and outside the Ministry. New staff were brought on to improve implementation. MAFE's improved capacity can be seen in its implementation of GEF6, which is schedule to end on time.

250. **The evaluator could not verify the availability of output 3.1.1. At the time of the evaluation, there appeared to be serious capacity gaps continuing, including in e.g. BOE which was understaffed and underbudgeted, the PAN Office which was also understaffed, and in terms of project management where one project manager was finalising GEF-5 and managing GEF-6 at the same time.**<sup>50</sup>

**Output 3.1.2. MAFE effectively implementing, reporting and evaluating the project**

Output-level indicators (3.1.2.)	TE Comments
1. Number of reports completed (EoP Target: Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports of Project completed; By end of project all reports are on-time and complete at 1st submission; 100% of MOVs provided by partners)	No final reporting from partners nor from MAFE, final PIR 2023 reporting is not directly linked to project achievements in some cases. Monitoring and reporting overall extremely limited and organisation of deliverables also severely limited.
2. On-time performance (EoP Target: Number of conservation professionals trained increases. Number of training topics meets minimum need as stated by Needs Assessment. Indicators of capacity show improving trends)	This was not measured; the TE could verify that training had occurred but could not get numbers.

251. This output in general was removed from the TE’s Theory of Change as GEF project implementation should not be an output, GEF investment should go into capacity built for improved PAN and SLM not for improved GEF implementation which is only supposed to be catalytic addition. This said, this was the first FSP for Palau and experience in GEF project implementation and management was very low, this was mentioned by many stakeholders in interviews and the implementing partners, and particularly MAFE learned how to do this through this project. The capacity built during the project was not strategic nor treated as an output but rather learning happened from making mistakes and having to correct them, and as a result GEF-6, for instance, has stronger management. However, design and management still need improving and this should not be done through project funding *per se* but rather through the supportive and advisory role of the implementing agency.

<sup>50</sup> Based on several interviews with key stakeholders.

252. **Activity 3.1.2.a.** ‘Develop project implementation organisational structure, MOUs for project implementing partners, and protocols and timeframes for reporting on project activities’.

253. The PIR 2022 stated that this was accomplished at the beginning of the project and through the restructure, the Office of Strategic Support Services was created to host the Project Management units of various projects to provide a more coordinated management and implementation of projects across the Ministry and to meet its mandate under the projects. While this may have been done (and it is not clear exactly when this was done, at the beginning or after the new administration), the project seemed to do better in terms of organisation, at least from MOUs and action planning and reporting, in the first two years.

254. The evaluator did not receive project documentation in an organised manner and had to spend multiple weeks searching for documents in arbitrary folders and fit the project together from loose documents and an overall unorganised filing process. This was already stated in the MTR but was not rectified by project end. MOAs were clearly done in the beginning of the project (in 2017), and reporting was done, but the project was chopped up into pieces so all partners were working on their own with only the project manager doing spot visits to see how things were moving along. There was no real coordinated and harmonized approach to seeing the project as one holistic entity.

255. **Activity 3.1.2.b.** ‘Compile and review progress reports, evaluate project implementation, and complete reports on progress’.

256. This has already been covered in the paragraphs under Activity 3.1.2.a. Progress reporting was missing for most partners in 2019 and there was no final project reporting, not a collection of all project deliverables in one place.

257. **Output 3.1.2 was not delivered.**

**Output 3.1.3. Two-way peer learning approach fostered through participation in regional initiatives and project lessons shared through multiple forms of communication and media.**

<b>Output-level indicators (3.1.3.)</b>	<b>TE Comments</b>
1. Number of webpages developed, number of hits and downloads (EoP Target: At least 80% of data, reports, and other materials related to the Project published electronically. Number of downloads increases yearly)	No measuring of this target and no website.
2. Number of journal articles (EoP Target: At least 2 journal articles or conference presentations)	Journal articles as per baseline studies developed by PICRC, BNM and PCS. Not measured by project.
3. Number of conference presentations (EoP Target: see EoP Target of indicator 2 above)	Not measured by project, although several were done.
4. Number of best practices included in the Best Practice Guidance Manual (EoP Target: Best Practices document complete, with at minimum: Agriculture, Climate Change Adaptation, EBM/Ridge- to-Reef, Fire prevention, Forest rehabilitation and reforestation, Tourism, Water Protection, Gender Mainstreaming)	>8 best practice manuals developed
5. Number of Demonstration Catchment reports published (EoP Target: Catchment Synthesis report complete)	No demonstration catchment report published (as far as was shared with the evaluator)

258. **Activity 3.1.3.a.** ‘Identify or create a website where project materials can be published, stored and maintained electronically for access by stakeholders, the public and other

interested entities and post communications products to the website that illustrate project progress and outcomes (including reports on demonstration catchments and best practices. Publish as necessary in other forms of media (e.g. paper) and share with R2R and other partners’.

259. The evaluator was told in interviews that there had ultimately been no website developed for the project, but that some partners had put up their deliverables on their respective websites. Below is a summary on what was reported on with regard to this activity:

- a. The MNRET (MAFE) fourth quarter progress report from 2017 reported in detail the work on the MNRET website protocol and the goals in developing the website further. No further information was provided in quarterly reporting beyond this.
- b. The PIR 2020 stated that they were working with the INFORM project on the database development and reporting. Also working with the National IT Office to host website for project. The PIR 2021 also stated that they were working with several projects to reduce overlap in implementation, and working with INFORM for a National Website containing information from all Ministries, working with GEF-6 showcasing specific projects outputs on best practices, and developing the national government website as a dashboard of information with links to the other websites.

260. By PIR 2022, there was no dedicated website for the GEF-5 deliverables and therefore work was apparently done in collaboration with GEF-6 to host the best practices that have been developed for both projects as the national government website was being updated at the time. It is envisioned that the Government Website for MAFE will eventually host all project deliverables, dashboard, and other publications to be accessible by the public.

261. At the time of terminal evaluation no one could point the evaluator to a central website in which this was the case.

262. **Activity 3.1.3.b.** ‘Support the development of peer-reviewed articles and sharing of information at relevant national and international conferences’.

263. The following status reporting on this was provided by the PIRs:

- a. PIR 2020: Various articles and technical reports have been developed for the project and will be printed and distributed.
- b. PIR 2021: Various articles and technical reports have been developed and distributed. Support to print and make available other reports still on going.
- c. PIR 2022: Journal Articles and Technical reports have been developed and distributed to interested parties and stakeholders. PAN has also held various knowledge exchange programs between state governments PAN sites and rangers.
- d. PIR 2023: Peer to peer learning was advanced through the project, such as via annual PAN Conferences and leadership forums in country as well as networking among Pacific islands. In 2022 for instance peers from around the Pacific gathered to learn from each other ways to prevent and manage invasive alien species. In 2023 the project sponsored 12 people from Palau to travel to Hilo, Hawaii to learn from peers in a functioning Zoning Office and Commission to see how they implement their land use plans and zoning regulations. The Micronesia Challenge recently updated its indicators to include sustainable land management, and employed numerous peer to peer learning opportunities to learn about existing research and viable indicators. Multi-Stakeholder forums were used to hold the 3rd National Environment Symposium in 2021 and

subsequent Conservation Consortium meetings multiple times per year. This same model continues to be implemented with emerging issues, such as Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Knowledge products have taken many forms, such as printed Best Practices for agriculture, in-person workshops on enforcement, and videos about PAN. Most are linked online on the Palau Biodiversity Project (GEF6) website on appropriate pages (e.g. "National Policies" or "Best Practices") so they are no longer seen as only "Project" documents but rather "Palau" documents. Both PICRC and the museum have published journal articles on outcomes of the project (such as status of birds and coral reefs).

264. Several deliverables including legal documents, journal articles, national strategies, finance plans, state plans, eco-tourism plans were developed but not ultimately organised by the project. PICRC provided a list of all peer-reviewed reports and articles. BNM provided several of their reports as developed by the project, as did BOT, BOA and others. **Output 3.1.3 partially delivered but without clean list provided.**

### Output 3.2.1. Effective cross-sectoral coordination of PAN and SLM policies enabled

*(Prodoc: Enable effective cross-sectoral coordination of PAN and SLM policies)*

Output-level indicators (3.2.1.)	TE Comments
1. Number of agencies with capacity to implement cross-sectoral coordination (EoP Target: Stakeholders meet at least quarterly to review PAN, SLM, and Cross-sector issues and to identify areas of alignment and coordination; Document sharing process established to move documents through a hierarchy of review (OERC, Project Management Unit, Component coordination bodies, full GEF 5 Steering Committees)	According to the PIR 2023, EQBP and PAN and states had cross-sector strategies. The evaluator would also argue that BOT and BOA had such strategies based on the development of strategies and guidelines that take into account both SLM and PAN. However, the EOP target was not measured, and the evaluator could not find evidence of such meetings.
2. Number of individuals with capacity to enforce cross-sector regulations (EoP Target: Number of days for EQPB to respond to earthmoving violations decreased from start to mid-term and finish; At least 6 individuals certified to enforce Earth Moving regulations)	It seemed that EQPB had developed strong regulations and were implementing these.
3. Number of local PAN site managers trained in cross-sector issues (EoP Target: At least 2 species management plans demonstrate full consideration of PAN, SLM, and Cross-sector issues (including cross-border management)	This was not measured by the project, but there was one species management plan and endangered species regulations which take into consideration these cross-sector issues.

265. **Activity 3.2.1.a.** 'Review EQPB's mandate in order to identify and clarify the agency's role in SLM and identify opportunities to incorporate SLM into the earth moving permitting process'.

266. An assessment was done where several regulations were reviewed and updated that took into account SLM principles. EQPB updated its regulations on Wastewater, Earthmoving, Marine and Freshwater Quality, and EA/EIS Requirements. According to the PIR 2023, the EA/EIS Regulations explicitly state the need for cumulative assessment and mentions biodiversity.

267. **Activity 3.2.1.b.** 'Develop a programme to train and certify PAN site officers to enforce EQPB regulations to assist with erosion and sedimentation control'.

268. This work was supposed to be integrated into Palau Community College Curriculum for rangers. The PIRs state that this work was ongoing (PIRs 2019, 2020, 2021), and that training was indeed being conducted (although the evaluator was not provided evidence of this). By 2022, training modules was meant to be integrated into the PCC training course but was changed in terms of providing workshops with rangers to assist in the monitoring of environmental impacts from development at state levels. The PIR 2023 stated that training modules for rangers had been developed and done to implement key aspects of SLM, such as monitoring, fire response, erosion control and reforestation/restoration. The evaluator was not provided evidence of this training.
269. PICRC had managed the rangers course and the evaluator was told during the evaluation interviews that while PCC would host the training there was still dependence on PICRC to provide the training. Training is only useful if rangers also have the equipment needed to apply the training which was not always the case.
270. At the time of the evaluation the PCC course had been established but was not running.
271. **Activity 3.2.1.c.** ‘Develop guidelines for cross-boundary management of SLM/PAN issues, such as the continuous forest ecosystem linking Ngiwal and Melekeok States via Ngardok Nature Reserve’.
272. The evaluator was not provided with these guidelines and the responsible entity (MAFE) could not elaborate on this activity or provide information on its completion. The PIRs state the following:
- a. PIR 2020: Work was being conducted through PAN to look at co-managing areas beyond PAN sites, specifically in areas beyond PAN sites that may potentially impact the PAN site.
  - b. PIR 2021: Were working with PAN and in conjunction with the GEF-6 master planning work to identify high-value conservation forests.
  - c. PIR 2022: PAN had co-management between two state governments in the marine and was open to considering such management in the terrestrial. Through GEF-6 land use planning, areas were being identified for protection including forests looking at connectivity as well as potential collaboration for management.
  - d. PIR 2023: Legislation for State Planning Commissions also addressed cross-boundary needs, linking the need to manage land holistically. Melekeok completed updates to its master plan and Ngardok nature reserve plan, plus created new Eco-tourism plans. The State then cross-referenced between the plans to ensure that protected areas goals were captured appropriately in master plans and vice versa. Land use plans used protected areas in a base map and as a suitability criteria for development recommendations, thus cross-sector coordination has been built into tools used for SLM.
273. **Activity 3.2.1.d.** ‘Develop species-specific management plans for key vulnerable species, linking PAN, SLM, and SFM management practices’.
274. The BNM was tasked to develop the Megapode Conservation Action Plan. It also developed the “Regulations Governing Threatened and Endangered Species”. The Museum has also (with GEF-6 support) developed an exhibit of the list of species and an information board on the regulations. These regulations are pending endorsement at the time of writing this report with no indication of the process by the BOE, and there seems to be an overall lack of political support at high-level.<sup>51</sup> The BOE could also not

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<sup>51</sup> Based on several interviews with relevant stakeholders.

provide the evaluator with any progress on the implementation of the Megapode Conservation Plan.

275. The PIR 2023 stated that the MAFE created a new Bureau of Environment and placed the PAN Program and its Forestry, and Species (endangered species, endemic species, and invasive species) programs under it to enable better management of eco-systems inside and outside protected areas. MAFE also created the Office of Strategic Support Services to enable coordination among fisheries, agriculture, and environment sectors. The NEPC also continues to hold and implement its mandate of coordination across all environment sectors.

276. **Output 3.2.1 was partially delivered.**

**Output 3.2.2. Forest management across sectors, government levels, and within watersheds streamlined**

*(Prodoc: Streamline forest management across sectors, government levels, and within watersheds with at least 1/3 native forest under protection and sustainable land management (2,100 ha in PAN sites and additional 6,000 ha in SFM catchments)*

<b>Output-level indicators (3.2.2.)</b>	<b>TE Comments</b>
1. Number and extent of threats from habitat degradation in forest (EoP Target: Number and extent of threats in forests declines from start to finish)	Project did not measure EOP Target and evaluator could not access the number.
2. Number and extent of threats from over and illegal harvesting (EoP Target: see target of Indicator 1 above)	Project did not measure EOP Target, evaluator was not able to access number.
3. Size and location of protected forest (EoP Target: Size of protected forest or forest actively managed under SLM for SFM is at least 2100 ha in PAN sites and 6000 ha non- PAN)	Through state planning an additional 11,335 ha of Babeldaob Forest, 205 ha of Peleliu Limestone Forest, 128 ha Outer Island Atoll Forest, and nation-wide 4,992 ha of mangroves have been allocated to SFM - a total of 16,661 ha under SFM, an equivalent of 33% of forested land of total land area when including the PAN too. (this was stated in PIR 2023) - this was achieved largely within GEF-6 but GEF-5 laid the foundational work.
4. Number of fires (EoP Target: Number and extent of fires decreased from start to finish of project)	This was not reported.
3. GEF METT (Objective 2, Part III), Area with Management Practices Applied	This was not reported.

277. **Activity 3.2.2.a.** 'BOA develop and pilot a forest monitoring programme using PAN, SLM and FIA standards based on reference plots from FIA as focal points for monitoring transects, and align and assist with PAN METT in 4 sites'.

278. The forest monitoring protocol was nearing completion over years 2020 to 2022 (delayed due to COVID-19 and the fact that the work was underestimated).

279. PIR 2023 stated that "Palau developed a Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Policy and updated its Forest Action Plan, which is being implemented in partnership between national government, state governments, and NGOs. A Forest Monitoring protocol was developed and is being employed.

280. The Palau Protected Areas Network (PAN) Office and the Bureau of Agriculture collaborated to establish the first national forest monitoring program in 2019. In consultation with the US Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) and in coordination with the Micronesian Conservation Trust (MCT) grant funded by USFS Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) program, and with other relevant local partners, the design of the forest monitoring protocol was established. It went beyond the project PAN sites into the entire country. This program aimed to detect long-term trends in forest cover and structure. The program included an access database to house forest monitoring data, a protocol for database accessibility, data entry, and back up, and training on the use of the database. The Ebiil Society continues to support forestation projects in habitats impact by climate change, fire and previous human induced disturbances in Hatohobei, Ngardmau, Melekeok and Ngerchelong.
281. **Activity 3.2.2.b.** ‘Develop and implement localized training materials to support improved forestry, terrestrial, and associated marine PAN management and monitoring capacity (including data collection, entry and analysis to support monitoring, evaluation and reporting of SLM/SFM/PAN management initiatives)’.
282. Brochures, pamphlets, posters and other training materials have been developed to support outreach and integration of best practices to national, state, and local community levels. Data collection tools were identified and have been piloted by some agencies for use in their data management efforts. The Bureau of Agriculture are utilizing survey tools to collect data on farmers and agricultural products.
283. Best Practice documents were developed to guide forest restoration. BOA, Melekeok, and BNM have a partnership to support seedlings for reforestation, which is also supported by NGOs like Ebiil Society and by community organizations and States.
284. **Activity 3.2.2.c.** ‘Expand the national botanical garden and develop a botanical partnership network, including the botanical garden and at least 4 PAN areas, 4 existing nurseries, and 1 catchment area to coordinate conservation and cultivation of botanical species and build capacity across organizations’.



**Figure 9.** Nursery at BOA Headquarters (left and right image), and Ngerderar Watershed Medicinal Garden (middle image)

285. A partnership was established between the Bureau of Agriculture and BNM to establish and support nurseries. The BOA quarterly report (Q1 of 2018) stated that it had identified six nurseries BOA Nekken Nursery, Belau National Museum Botanical Garden and Nursery in Koror, BOA Ngechesar nursery and botanical garden, Ebiil Soceity nursery, Ngardok Nature REsearve nursery, Ngarderar catchment area botancial garden and nursery. The PIR 2023 stated that multiple States had nurseries and BOA continues to support nursery production for both restoration and combined food security/land rehabilitation efforts.
286. Interviews and site observation visits however did not provide enough evidence to show an active botanical partnership network neither the numbers of nurseries outlined

in the activity. There seems to be ongoing work and the BNM has certainly done a lot of work on collecting and propagating native species for reforestation. The partnership between BNM and BOA and Melekeok which was supposed to grow the nursery did not work out as planned as the Ngardog Nature Reserve wanted to propagate their own plants and not bring in outside plants even from the same species - they are now expanding their nursery. BNM is also expanding its nursery and BOA has an active nursery that is in full use.

287. **Output 3.2.2 was almost fully delivered.**

**Output 3.2.3. National Biosecurity Policy, laws and invasive alien species (IAS) management strategies developed**

*(Prodoc: A national biosecurity policy agreed upon with legislation drafted and with at least 2 invasive alien species risk reduction or eradications achieved that demonstrates a harmonized approach by PAN and SLM)*

<b>Output-level indicators (3.2.3.)</b>	<b>TE Comments</b>
1. Status of National Biosecurity Plan and Strategy (EoP Target: National Biosecurity Plan and Strategy)	Developed but not endorsed.
2. No of laws supporting biosecurity (EoP Target: laws and invasive alien species (IAS) management strategies developed)	Developed under GEF-6 but not endorsed.
3. No of IAS management strategies (EoP Target: see indicator target 2 above)	Developed under GEF-6.

288. **Activity 3.2.3.a.** ‘Develop a national biosecurity plan and strategy for managing existing invasive alien species, including Living Modified Organisms (LMO) and preventing the introduction and successful colonization of new alien species, including legal and regulatory framework’.

289. BOA hired Siabal Entreprise as a consultant to develop the plan and strategy (in the first quarter of 2018). The National Invasive Species Strategic Action Plan (NISSAP) was developed by 2021 and updated regulations on biosecurity and activities under this were being supported by GEF-6.

290. The PIR 2023 stated that the MAFE institutionalized the Invasive Species Program and the National Invasive Species Committee (NISC) Coordinator in its Organizational Chart, which had previously been an ad hoc committee based on project funding. It also stated that Palau had developed an overarching Policy Statement for invasive species, ranking all invasive species actions among biosecurity (prevention), control, and eradication.<sup>52</sup> Regulations to implement the comprehensive 2014 Biosecurity Law continue to be refined, including LMOs. A MOU was drafted to enable cross-Ministry actions.

291. Interviews with project management and BOA yielded that since the new administration there had not been endorsement of the NISSAP. The Division of Biosecurity had moved to the Ministry of Finance and that the GEF-6 project was under negotiations to support the endorsement and implementation of the strategy.

<sup>52</sup> <https://sites.google.com/view/gef6palau/gef6-key-sectors/invasive-species/proposed-ias-priorities>, last accessed 30 November 2023.

292. **Activity 3.2.3.b.** ‘Establish ranking criteria and identify top 5 IAS that need to be eradicated or controlled, including evaluation of Palau’s capacity to effectively eliminate or manage these species (capacity to survey, map, control, and potential for eradication) and agree on eradication strategies to pursue for 2 species’.
293. The PIR 2022 stated that the ranking criteria has been developed and identified the top 10 IAS that are endangering Palau’s biodiversity which have been listed on the Blacklist of species banned from Palau. There are also native species that are being considered invasive as they have spread to various areas and are competing with other species that are also listed as needing to be controlled. This was work that was conducted under GEF-6.
294. Final project reporting (PIR 2023) stated that the national policy includes rankings of the top biosecurity threats (targeted for prevention) and the top control and eradication threats, and Black and White lists were updated. These were incorporated into an Early Detection and Rapid Response Policy Framework and action plan and an Inter-Island Biosecurity Framework (with training). The NISSAP was updated and is under continual implementation by MAFE and its partners. Eradication strategies for rodents on key high biodiversity small islands were agreed. Control and Risk Reduction for Coconut Rhinoceros Beetles and Fruit Flies are also under continual implementation. Research and training to fill a gap in responding to marine invasions is also underway. The policies apply island-wide and thus integrate actions in PAN sites as well as outside of protected areas. Rangers as well as Resource Managers have received numerous invasive species trainings for prevention and control in protected areas and outside them.
295. BNM developed a “Field Guide to Invasive Plants for Protected Areas in Palau”, this was done with funding from the US Forest Service.
296. It is unclear to the evaluator if project funding actually went to this activity if other projects and donors supported it.
297. **Output 3.2.3. was partially delivered and will be almost fully delivered through GEF-6 and sustained thereafter.**

**Output 3.2.4. States have SLM and PAN plans aligned with climate change adaptation plans, with at least one modelling a gender-inclusive approach to climate change adaptation.**

*(Prodoc: At least 4 states have SLM and PAN plans aligned with climate change adaptation plans, with at least one modeling a gender-inclusive approach to climate change adaptation)*

Output-level indicators (3.2.4.)	TE Comments
1. Vulnerability and resiliency scores (EoP Target: none)	This was not measured by the project.
2. Number of communities with climate change adaptation included in their PAN and SLM plans (EoP target: States have SLM and PAN plans aligned with climate change adaptation plans, with at least one modelling a gender-inclusive approach to climate change adaptation)	Was not measured by project and the evaluator was not provided with documentation specific to this indicator other than the PIR reporting. Climate change was integrated into the state management plans and the strategic PAN plan.

298. **Activity 3.2.4.a.** ‘Develop and implement climate change adaptation strategies integrating SLM and PAN management ideals with state and national SLM Plans’.
299. The following reporting was relaying level of progress and final achievement on this activity based on PIR reporting:

- a. PIR 2020: Climate change considerations integrated into new PAN state management plan template in alignment with the National PAN strategy.
- b. PIR 2021: Work was integrated into the template for the PAN Management strategies. Alignment/revised management plans included climate change adaptation strategies
- c. PIR 2022: Work integrated into the approved template for the PAN State Management Plans and 8 states have included SLM and climate change considerations in their planning and management of their PAN sites.
- d. PIR 2023: MAFE partnered with the Office of Climate Change to conduct Vulnerability & Adaptation (V&A) Assessments of states doing land use planning, and as a result several states updated their master plans and land use plans to incorporate climate change. The V&A tools included questions to facilitate a gender-balanced approach. Ngarchelong, Ngaraard, Ngiwal, Ngeremlengui, and Peleliu updated their land use plans to include Special Management Zones to reflect the need for special management in the face of sea level rise or storm risks. The Bureau of Agriculture, together with other partners and ADB, is also implementing a project to expand upland taro, an effort targeted to ensure climate-resilient food security among vulnerable women. Palau is updating its Climate Change Policy and integrating input from these state partners into the national policy. The PAN Management Plan template also requires alignment with the National Climate Change policy and takes a gender-balanced approach. This, the evaluator was told, was part of GEF-6, and not GEF-5.

300. The evaluator was not provided with the reporting on this activity.

301. **Output 3.2.4. partially delivered with work carrying into GEF-6.**

#### OVERALL AVAILABILITY OF OUTPUTS FINDINGS

302. Below is a summary of the level of availability/delivery of the outputs planned under the project. Overall, the project only partially delivered on its outputs. However, many outputs are envisaged to be extended through other partnerships and projects (in many cases, GEF-6) where not only delivery has or will take place, but upscaling and sustaining of project results. For this reason, overall availability of outputs findings is **Moderately Satisfactory**.

**Table 9.** Level of delivery of project outputs for Palau’s GEF-5 Project

<b>Output</b>	<b>Level of delivery</b>
Output 1.1.1	Almost fully delivered and of good quality.
Output 1.1.2	Mostly delivered. Monitoring protocols developed but not really METT used as per GEF.
Output 1.1.3	Partially delivered, missing sustained effective management and did not meet EOPs.
Output 1.2.1	Mostly delivered. Strong engagement with states, outreach to schools, curriculum changes, awareness raising.
Output 1.2.2	Mostly delivered. Certification on enforcement and training, no sustained academy nor focus <i>per se</i> on marginalised communities.
Output 1.2.3	Partially delivered. Strong endowment fund creation through IPP, eco-tourism diversification, but no real pilot projects directly under the project.
Output 2.1.1	Partially delivered. No central action plan, strong SFM policy, master planning done under GEF-6 built on foundational work of GEF-5.
Output 2.1.2	Not delivered.

Output 2.2.1	Fully delivered but supported by GEF-6. Several other foundational pieces of work need to take place prior to support on-boarding. 11 states now have SLM plans under GEF-6.
Output 2.2.2	Partially delivered but those achieved are of good quality and in use.
Output 2.2.3	Fully delivered and sustained. Capacity assessments not fully done, but conducted several activities that have set Palau on a strong SLM tourism path.
Output 3.1.1	Evaluator could not verify this output.
Output 3.1.2	Not delivered.
Output 3.1.3	Partially delivered.
Output 3.2.1	Partially delivered. EQPB delivered on its mandated work, some training was done, specific management plan was developed.
Output 3.2.2	Almost fully delivered. Overall overachieved on SFM also through GEF-6 work, but some work was not finally delivered e.g. botanical garden network.
Output 3.2.3	Partially delivered with possibly of being fully delivered through GEF-6.
Output 3.2.4	Partially delivered and fully delivered under GEF-6.

### Achievement of Project Outcomes

303. The achievement of the project's outcomes was evaluated based on the reconstructed Theory of Change's causal pathways between outputs and outcomes and intermediate states, and the strategic questions provided per outcome.

304. It is important to note that the project stated several times in different PIRs that some of the outcome and objective-level indicators were hard to quantify or provide information for as the data are not collected in a consistent interval by the partners nor by the project. However, nothing was done to change the indicators nor the targets formally.

### **Outcome 1.1. Improved PAN conservation management effectiveness, including improved engagement by states and improved PAN coverage representing key biodiversity and ecosystem functions**

(Prodoc: Improved Design, Evaluation, and Implementation of the PAN leads to increased engagement by states, improved coverage of sites, species, and ecosystem functions, and increased conservation effectiveness)

<b>Outcome-level Indicators (Outcome 1.1.)</b>	<b>TE Comments</b>
1. Number of PAN states engaged in PA (EoP Target: Majority of PAN Activities are in line with National PAN Strategy and SLM Strategy; 16 states with PAN sites)	The final number as outlined in PIR 2022 was 39 PAN sites
2. Existence of METT (EoP Target: METT finalized, implemented, and utilized for adaptive management in 4 new PAN sites and 5 existing PAN sites. METT provides evidence that PAME is increasing)	Their own tools: Monitoring protocols were produced for seven thematic areas: marine, forest bird, shorebird, forest inventory, PAME, socio-economic, mangrove. These are used by the PAN to track conservation. The METT itself (as per GEF projects) was not applied, and only done at project design and in year 2022 for four sites, namely Northern Reefs, Rock Islands Southern Lagoon, Ngeremeskang, Ngardok - the 2022 GEF METT was done without visiting the sites and in a rapid way.

<p>3. Extent of PAN coverage (same measure as GEF METT) (EoP Target: PAN is expanded to include at least one representation of all key ecosystems. At least 1 site is added to PAN or has a changed management regime to maximize refugia or resiliency to climate change. At least one site provides benefits for women or marginalized populations)</p>	<p>None of the project reporting gave evidence that at least one representation of all key ecosystems was included as a result of the project although the evaluator was told this was the case in interviews. Based on observations at least one site did provide benefits for women.</p>
<p>4. Total ha of marine and terrestrial area protected (EoP Target: 25 PAN sites; PAN coverage expanded by 95,000-hectare marine and 6,300 hectares terrestrial (138,000 marine and 10,500 hectares terrestrial, total)</p>	<p>36 PAN sites (did not receive the full list), see under output 1.1.2 for numbers)</p>
<p>5. Percentage of endemic and endangered species covered by PAN (EoP Target: Combined, PAN sites and protect 100% of endangered megafauna and trees and an increasing percentage (by year) of endangered microfauna and flora. Combined, PAN sites protect at least 1 known occurrence of each recorded endemic species, or coverage of known endemic species increases significantly from start to end of project)</p>	<p>No project reporting on this target and evaluator could not get numbers on this.</p>

305. This outcome was partially achieved. Those sites which were focused on were strengthened, much more knowledge was attained through the taxonomic needs assessments and the baseline studies at all the MPAs and various terrestrial sites.

306. It is unclear to the evaluator based on limited reporting and no definitive answer from the interviews whether PAN has expanded and strengthened in such a way that it covers all the representative BD and ecosystems.

307. While overall PAME scores increased for those sites comparable (5), conservation results actually decreased (defined as “conservation effects” as stated in the PAME report<sup>53</sup>). Much more needs to be done at site level to improve conservation outcomes at the various PAN sites, more so in the terrestrial than in the marine where more is being done in terms of ecological monitoring. That said, state-level engagement has largely increased and there have been large-scale efforts through this project and through carrying over in GEF-6 with regard to prioritising conservation in state-level planning and implementation. States were actively engaged to an extent that all states now have PAN sites.

### **Outcome 1.2. Sectors and government levels apply enhanced capacity to improved management and coordination of the PAN**

(Prodoc: PAN management capacity (engagement, training, and financial) and coordination improved across sectors and across governance levels and results in benefits across genders and for marginalized populations in outlying states)

<b>Outcome-level Indicators (Outcome 1.2.)</b>	<b>TE Comments</b>
<p>1. Stakeholder management capacity (EoP Target: Increasing stakeholder management capacity; Number of conservation staff increases; Number of individuals receiving training increases)</p>	<p>While management capacity development was conducted throughout the project, the evaluator was not convinced that it was sufficiently applied (as a result of high</p>

<sup>53</sup> Bureau of Environment, MAFE. Protected Area Network Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool Project. September 2023. “conservation effects” looking at water quality, bird diversity and numbers, forest monitoring programme/forest health, marine resources (coral, fisheries), wildfires, ecosystem services, climate change and cultural resources.

	turnover, those trained not applying the work, and lack of human resources). This EOP target was also not effectively measured; the PIR stated that 70 rangers had been trained over the project lifespan, but the evaluator did not receive evidence to this effect.
2. Public perception of PAN/MPAs (Percentage support) (EoP Target: At least 80% of stakeholder population in 8 states exposed to new PAN information, % of public supporting PAN/MPAs increased from baseline to finish)	While this was also not strictly measured, extensive outreach from PAN, PICRC and other partners meant that the majority of communities had been engaged and were supporting PAN.
3. Number of conflicts between PAN and SLM (EoP Target: Conflicts between PAN and SLM reduced)	The PIR 2020 stated that Work in conjunction with the GEF-6 project spatial mapping has begun to conduct land use planning to reduce PAN and SLM conflicts. The evaluator could not find more reporting on this target (which was in itself not SMART)
4. Status of revenue assessment (EoP Target: Financial sustainability of PAN is improved, funding portfolio is increasingly diversified in at least 3 sites, exclusive reliance on Green Fee reduced (only 13 sites reliant on Green Fee for majority of budget, Green Fee provides less than 70% of budget), dollar amount raised from conservation from diversified streams increases yearly)	Four states have signed up and are part of the IPP Programme (endowment fund) - this is running successfully. Four states have eco-tourism plans and diversified funding plans within their management plans. COVID-19 limited the piloting of this, and as a result outside of the IPP there was no measuring of any dollar amount raises or figures.
5. GEF METT (Objective 1, Section III) Financial Sustainability Scores raised on meeting agendas (EoP Target: Total GEF METT Financial Sustainability Score improves by at least 50%, final score at least 45)	Financial sustainability scorecards were not completed.

308. This outcome was partially achieved. Training was done extensively during the project and plans were made to put these in place formally and although it is likely that the Ranger Academy at PCC would become sustainable, the evaluator could not find evidence that it had been fully integrated by project end. The ranger turnover has been extremely high and the rangers the evaluator spoke to were not necessarily applying all the ecological monitoring they had learnt during their capacity training. Site coordinators could not verify or confirm the level of training they received from the project, although from project reporting this was done and based on observations there were strong efforts made into improved monitoring and management of their sites through implementing the site management plans developed by the project. At state level, this was also integrated into state planning and implementation both within and outside of PAN (together with Component 2).

309. Financially speaking, the IPP Programme was a strong success of the project and the PAN Fund continues to work with states to engage more states in the programme; this will continue sustainably and the evaluator has confidence based on the interviews that the PAN Fund will continue to be successful with the programme and it will support further conservation and improved management effectiveness of the sites. Post-COVID, the sites that are equipped with eco-tourism plans are set up strongly to diversify and increase their revenues streams together with the higher level work from Component 2 on tourism will improve tourism revenue and thus re-invest more into improved conservation.

**Outcomes 1 level Question: What evidence is available to show that the project strengthened the PAN network through enhanced capacity and overall improved management (Outcomes 1.1. and 1.2, related assumptions/drivers a, c, h, g, d)?**

310. For component 1’s two outcomes, there was evidence to show that the project has certainly supported the PAN in increasing its areas, diversifying funding outside of the green fee, engaging all 16 states and in limited ways increasing capacity and management effectiveness of some sites. The assumption that investment into document preparation leads to biodiversity protection was met; the PAN office is making use of the taxonomic assessments and all the studies developed through Component 1 to have a stronger knowledge base from which to work and conserve species.
311. The assumption that capacity development leads to behaviour change has not completely held up to scrutiny under the evaluation. This is a result of high turnover of staff, low human resources and the fact that there is a lack of general application of capacity (at least in terms of the ecological monitoring for rangers).
312. The assumption that political will is there to support conservation and sustainable use has held up in some regards and not in others. At least from the point of view of PAN strengthening and expansion it has held up at national and state level, but when it comes to endorsing some critical documents (e.g. NISSAP and endangered spp regulations), this has not held although this is more aligned to Component 3 than Component 1.
313. Based on outreach and community engagement by project partners during the project, the project has certainly supported the increase of community support and benefit to and from conservation and sustainable use.
314. Overall, outcomes for component 1 were partially achieved but more capacity and management effectiveness strengthening are needed for impact to be reached.

**Outcome 2.1. Improved and effective planning, alignment and coordination of the Palau SLM Policy**

Outcome-level Indicators (Outcome 2.1.)	TE Comments
1. Existence of national SLM action plan (EoP Target: National Action Plan drafted and agreed)	PIR 2023 talks about an SLM plan being developed in 2020 and updated in 2023, but the evaluator is led to believe this is actually GEF-6 work, and the evaluator was not provided with the SLM action plan. Several SLM related regulations and frameworks were developed from the policy, and now all states have SLM master plans.
2. No of actions implemented from national SLM action plan (EoP Target: Number of actions from National SLM Action Plan increases (yearly))	This was not measured by the project, although the PIR 2023 does state that the “updated action plan is being implemented”, this is a result of GEF-6 intervention building on GEF-5 work.
3. No of public mandates requiring PAN/SLM linkages, degree of alignment between PAN and SLM documents (EoP Target: Degree of alignment (number of sections that match in each document, number of conflicts) increases yearly)	This was not fully measured by the project. No official mandate exists. Implementing agencies are ensuring that alignment and coordination is conducted during the development of both SLM and PAN documents. All site management

	plans, the PAN plan, all SLM documents and plans have been harmonized.
4. GEF METT Score for Policy and Regulatory Frameworks (EoP Target: GEF METT Score improves by at least 66% (to at least 15 out of 24))	LD tracking tool not done at end of project.

315. The background on the development of the SLM action plan has been elaborated on in detail under the relevant output above (Output 2.1.1.). Ultimately this work was not fully achieved under this project and has been taken up into GEF-6. However, a lot of foundation work that led to the achievement of this in GEF-6 was laid by this project and was absolutely necessary for state-level and central engagement on SLM. Given that the previous (GEF-4) project supported the development of the policy, it is understandable how the design would have gone the route of action planning at central level. However, given that land is managed at the state-level, state-level engagement and ownership was of utmost importance and it seemed that the project partner (PCS) and MAFE had to go through extensive consultation to align and integrate the SLM for a more bottom-up approach. This work has led to a successful intervention to the degree that by GEF-6, all states have committed and at the time of evaluation, 11 states have master plans on SLM, integrated SLM and PAN, and that central action plan has been updated and implemented.

316. This outcome has been partially achieved, but through the GEF-6 the IS2 of the theory of change (development and sustainable land use of land is in harmony with conservation goals) is being achieved and likely to move towards impact. Coordination, overall, was not achieved.

## **Outcome 2.2. SLM Policy is implemented in key sectors of land use plans, land uses and tourism development**

(Prodoc: Increased implementation of the SLM Policy in the key sectors of land use planning, land uses, and tourism development)

<b>Outcome-level Indicators (Outcome 2.2.)</b>	<b>TE Comments</b>
1. No of violations in forests (EoP Target: Number of reported terrestrial violations (including fire) decreases yearly)	No reporting on violations in general other than forest fires of which there were none in PAN sites, PAN network and Division of Forestry have implemented a wildfire prevention programme. Online firemap is available ( <a href="https://arcg.is/10Pzsq">https://arcg.is/10Pzsq</a> ), overall decrease and better management of fires.
2. No of trained tourism professionals with terrestrial expertise (EoP Target: Number of terrestrial experts increases yearly (minimum of 36))	PIRs reported 70 rangers and staff were trained, but did not receive the full list of names. Six people were trained on eco-tourism in Japan, again no evidence on this was provided. Additional state staff were trained via a co-financed eco-tourism program. 12 people were trained on land use planning and zoning. There was also a tour guide training programme for the new licencing of tour operators under the BOT work under the project.

<p>3. No of non-Koror tourist opportunities (EoP Target: Desirability of non-Koror tourism (dollars spent, numbers of visitors) increases yearly)</p>	<p>Number of tourism products have been developed (it was unclear though how the project directly contributed to this other than through planning) - 8 site management plans and 4 eco-tourism plans were developed that laid out tourism potential for outside Koror. The PIR 2023 stated that 41 products had been developed but when the evaluator tried to verify this and visit some of these products, they were told that this was not part of this project.</p>
<p>4. Type and extent of negative environmental impacts (EoP Target: 4 states have stable or decreasing environmental impact from tourism)</p>	<p>Green Boots and Green Fins are being implemented by the Bureau of Tourism for tour operators to implement best practices in marine and terrestrial sites. The BOT strategy is good quality and has laid a strong foundation for the entire country to be attract and implement low-impact, high-value tourism.</p>
<p>5. No of dollars generated by non-Koror tourism (EoP Target: 4 states have increasing revenue generation from tourism)</p>	<p>This was not properly reported on by the project, no data collected. COVID-19 also temporarily collapsed the tourism industry during 2020-2022, with tourists only now coming back.</p>
<p>6. No of land use plans (EoP Target: 4 states with full land use plans)</p>	<p>The PIR 2020 stated that Land use strategies were delayed due to an introduction of a new project targeting urban development and the GEF-6 spatial mapping in order to align efforts. By 2023, 11 states had full land use plans (as a result of GEF-6 taking on work built by GEF-5)</p>
<p>7. Water quality (EoP Target: Stable or improving water quality tests in 100% of states with land use plans or utilizing best practices)</p>	<p>The PIR 2023 stated that "Water quality has increased in rural states with land use planning and using best practices both to decrease sedimentation and to treat water. Since 2010 the proportion of samples with fecal coliform has decreased steadily. Turbidity (NTU) has also declined steadily. Those states that fail compliance tests are correlated with poor land quality. A study of States draining into Ngeremeduu Bay found that Ngardmau's water system average NTU was 1.26, lower than Aimeliik's average of 6.2 NTU. Aimeliik has more unpaved roads, more bare land, more agriculture, and repeated fires. Ngardmau has more forest and has invested in fire prevention, with the result of improved water quality."</p>
<p>8. Farm productivity, area of reforestation/rehabilitation (EoP Target: At least 1 farm maintains or increases productivity (dollars, output, or levels of effort) using Best</p>	<p>There was no "demo farm" as a result of this project, but the project supported various developments in SLM in farming including capacity</p>

<p>Agricultural Practices; Area of reforestation or forest rehabilitation increases from start to end)</p>	<p>development and guidelines and best practices. Visits to various farms showed that SLM practices were integrated. In addition, government encouraged and incentivized local-level farming (successfully) during COVID-19 to enhance food security, and the BOA has established a yearly baseline production (1/2 ton) from local produce with SLM principles for production in place. Extension support is garnered around SLM.</p>
<p>9. Perceptions of food security (EoP Target: Responses to socio-economic surveys show increasing positive perceptions of food security from start to finish of project)</p>	<p>A socio-economic survey on food security was not completed, but all state master plans developed (mostly under GEF-6) have included food security goals, national planning has included sustainable use in the agriculture and fisheries fields.</p>
<p>10. No and type of “hotspots” protected (EoP Target: Number of protected “hotspots” increases from start to finish)</p>	<p>This was not recorded, although the PIR 2023 does talk about 7 new protected areas (from 60 to 67), 39 total PAN sites. This covers 68% of nearshore marine, 33% of mangroves, 16% of streams, 100% freshwater lakes, 25% terrestrial, 35% IBAs. Apparently, partners had created hotspots for IBAs, Important Forest Areas, High Live Coral Cover, Cultural Sites, Megapod sites, Nesting turtle sites, locations of endangered trees, high coral diversity, climate resilient sites, spawning aggregations. Nine new community-based protection sites were added. Representatives of all 11 hotspot habitats are protected in one or more protected area. How much this was directly a result of the project could not be verified.</p>

317. Strong foundational work (SLM regulations in various thematic areas improving land use and coordination on land use in the country) was laid through this project that could then be brought into state SLM plans. This project aimed to develop four state master plans, but stakeholders are convinced that without the foundational work the state plans would have been developed and “ended up on the shelf”, but as a result, the GEF-6 was able to take on this work through the foundation and engagement by GEF-5 and develop 11 state land use plans (master plans) which have been endorsed and are being implemented. Best practices were well developed through the project and of high quality and one of the successes of the project that are being used and sustained. Improved tourism planning and implementation was also highly successful. That said, indicators and their targets were not sufficiently measuring the achievements and outcome-related work of this particular outcome. The project, while not ticking the boxes as per results framework, has definitely shifted the SLM agenda in the country and allowed the GEF-6 to be largely successful in implementing a lot of the planning laid out under GEF-5.

318. Outcome is mostly achieved with some targets missing proper data collection and measuring.

**Outcomes 2 level Question: To what extent has the SLM policy been improved and effectively implemented, how has the coordination mechanism improved the implementation across sectors? (Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2, investigate assumptions/drivers a, b, e, h)**

319. Overall, despite coordination still lacking at central level, state-level implementation and uptake of SLM has been strong (although this is largely also due to GEF-6 taking on work that could not materialise in GEF-5). Document preparation has led to biodiversity protection in that it was demand-led and bottom-up through the extensive consultation process by PCS. When looking at agriculture and tourism, as well as urban developments (e.g. housing, road works), development and environmental goals seem to be working in unison in the country. Improved information exchange had led to improved decision-making but only because GEF-6 could pick up from GEF-5. One big aim was that the project would structuralise and institutionalise a coordination body and that multi-stakeholder committees would be functional. This did not materialise.

320. Overall, the outcomes have a large potential to lead to IS2 (development and sustainable use of land is in harmony with conservation goals).

**Outcome 3.1. Improved coordination by MAFE on environmental actions in Palau, including through effective information sharing**

(Prodoc: Effective coordination role by MAFE for this Project and environmental actions in Palau, including through facilitating information-sharing and two-way learning and thereby ensuring benefit sharing among a wide population)

Outcome-level Indicators (Outcome 3.1.)	TE Comments
<p>1. MAFE capacity (no of staff, expertise, partnerships) (EoP Target: Capacity of MAFE significantly increases (no of staff, levels of expertise)</p>	<p>The PIR 2020 stated that the assessment had been completed and the data was being analysed. However, initial findings showed that MNRET had capacity in building partnerships, accessing data, and stakeholder engagements but lacked capacity in areas such as skill sets, knowledge and data analysis.</p> <p>The PIR 2023 stated that the needs assessment was completed and that MAFE had updated its organisational strategic plan. COVID-19 resulted in economic declines that led to staffing shortages declining from 120 at MAFE in 2020 to 60 in 2023 (rising to 71 by 2023). Recently the MAFE had onboarded new staff with college degrees, the national capacity scorecard found capacity increased from 16 to 50 from the start to end of the project. None of this data could be directly verified by the evaluator as the documentation was not shared.</p>
<p>2. Convention reporting (EoP Target: Overall convention reporting performance increases (no of reports, on-time performance), no of partners assisting with convention reporting and project reporting increases from start to finish)</p>	<p>The PIR 2023 stated that "According to a SPREP 2020 State of the Environment Report, Palau was responsible for reporting to 12 MEA conventions. In 2020, Palau was up to date on 50% of</p>

	those reports (SDG VNR, CBD, CITES, Ramsar, UNFCCC, UNCCD). It was behind on: CMS/Bonn, World Heritage, Basel, Stockholm, Waigani, Noumea. Those reports that MAFE was responsible for were updated on time (CMS was updated in 2017 but still needs to make up for past missing reports).” The evaluator could not find a direct link between this statement and the project contributions.
3. No of mechanisms created or used for information sharing (EoP Target: At least 1 new information sharing mechanism created and used, no and type of documents significantly increased, no of downloads increases yearly, geographic reach increases)	There was not project website developed as planned by the project. The PIR 2023 reports two new information sharing platforms, namely the GEF-6 project’s website and the Palau Environment Data Portal (hosted by SPREP) stores documents (an outcome of the INFORM project). In addition, the MAFE website was updated. Given that the evaluator could not be provided with clean folders and deliverables and had to find them piece meal, and after reviewing the website, cannot say that this project has a clean one-stop-place for information sharing.
4. No and type of organisations and individuals participating in two-way learning and information sharing (EoP Target: At least 80% of stakeholders participating in two-way learning and information sharing)	The PIR 2023 gave a lengthy paragraph on the different types of training and engagement workshops that are done; there is no real project-specific reporting on this.

321. While the project reported on assessments being done, the evaluator was not given access to these. This said, the project reported on the fact that MAFE had made efforts in restructuring and improving on its capacity to implement environmental coordination work. The COVID-19 and government restructuring after elections had external influence on this that hampered the investment and effort by the project. Overall the evaluation could not find evidence to suggest that coordination by MAFE on environmental actions had improved.

322. Outcome was not achieved.

### **Outcome 3.2. Cross-sector coordination at national and state levels improved**

(Prodoc: Effective national and state coordination of PAN, SLM and associated cross-sector issues)

<b>Outcome-level Indicators (Outcome 3.2.)</b>	<b>TE Comments</b>
1. No of documents undergoing PAN/SLM/Cross-sector review (EoP Target: At least 90% of documents produced in Palau (plans, policies, strategies, SOPs, regulations) by one of the members of the GEF-5 Steering Committee or related stakeholder goes through a coordination review)	This was not effectively reported on by the project. The PIR states some documents but none of these can be definitely tied to the project.
2. No of competing objectives addressed and resolved (EoP Target: At least 90% of documents produced in Palau (plans, policies, strategies, SOPs, regulations) by one of the	This was also not reported on by the project.

members of the GEF-5 Steering Committee or related stakeholder goes through a coordination review and shows positive alignment with PAN/SLM/cross-sector issues and has no competing objectives)	
3. Enable effective cross-sectoral coordination of PAN and SLM policies (EoP Target: No of earthmoving violations decreased from start to finish, no of cross-sector species management activities increased, no and extent of cross-sector threats decline)	Really good work was done on developing regulations and action plans on cross-sector issues, including the EQBP work, the species management activities, the NISSAP. Some of it has been received better than others. The project reported (PIR 2023) that EQPB's earthmoving permit violation rate was reduced from 15% to 4% from start to project end. The project contributed to the Megapode Action Plan. This action plan, the Endangered Spp regulations and the NISSAP are still to be endorsed and implemented.

323. This outcome was partially achieved, mostly through the work of the third indicator. Outputs were largely achieved but how much this has resulted in cross-sector collaboration and coordination is questionable. While certainly many new regulations have been developed and have set the country in a better position to look at things holistically and do cross-sector planning and implementation, the evaluation cannot conclude that there has been improved coordination as a result of the project that can lead to IS3 (cross-sector coordination supports the safe-guarding of the environment). However, the SLM and land use work carried over into GEF-6 has set the country on a path of sustainable land use and conservation goals.

**Outcomes 3 level Question: To what extent has MAFE improved on its capacity to coordinate and how has cross-sector coordination improved through project interventions? (Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2, investigate assumptions/drivers a, e, g)**

324. The evaluation could not find concrete evidence that MAFE has improved its capacity to a sufficient level to have improved coordination of cross-sector issues in the country. To an extent this was influenced by the COVID-19 and government restructuring, but even without these external factors, the project management itself did not report on this nor made an effort to fully complete or monitor the activities under this outcome. Assumptions under this outcome may have held but implementation was limited. Outcomes were not fully achieved.

325. **Overall achievement of outcomes was 'Moderately Satisfactory'. The table below presents a summary of outcome achievements.**

**Table 10.** Summary of level of achievement of project outcomes of the GEF-5 Palau Project

Outcome	Level of achievement
Outcome 1.1	Partially achieved. Sites focused on were strengthened and more sites added, but reporting was limited and so not clear on how much. PAME results show improvement but not in conservation results.
Outcome 1.2	Partially achieved. Training was extensive but not fully retained, IPP Programme strong success of project. COVID-19 curtailed tourism efforts but these are bouncing back and strong eco-tourism plans in place.
Outcome 2.1	Partially achieved. Project had to adapt and go back a few steps, but laid strong foundations for this outcome to be fully achieved and upscaled in GEF-6.

Outcome 2.2	Mostly achieved. Strong foundational work and sustained through SLM integration into land use and management.
Outcome 3.1	Not achieved. MAFE capacity has both improved (other than some restructuring but without the human resources) as a result of the project and as the project had hoped in terms of its coordination role.
Outcome 3.2	Partially achieved. Cross-sector collaboration not found to have been achieved although many new regulations have set the country in a better position to see things from a systems perspective for effective decision-making.

## Likelihood of Impact

326. This section looks at the strategic level questions associated with likelihood of achieving impact.

What evidence is there to suggest that PAN has been expanded and strengthened for conservation effectiveness?

327. The project has certainly set the project on a strong track towards strengthened PAN and conservation effectiveness, but capacity is still limited and needs strengthening. The PAN office is still not equipped to take on the tasks it needs due to low human resources even if the strategic plan and structural set up is strong.

328. The management effectiveness tools (although not GEF METT) are strong and overall if monitored regularly and correctly could measure conservation effectiveness. The finance plan for PAN is good at the state level if all states engage effectively and tourism infrastructure (within the limits and guidance of the strong BOT strategy) is effectively implemented.

329. Overall, the project is on track to support its biodiversity goals, at least in terms of PAN, for healthy ecosystems, if work is continued by all partners involved.

What evidence is there to suggest that SLM has been integrated into decision-making processes with regard to land use and tourism development?

330. SLM has been integrated effectively into developmental decision-making as evidenced by the multiple land use regulations (e.g. waster water, housing development, eco-agriculture, earth moving, etc). The tourism sector has fully embraced sustainable use and understood the importance of reinvesting in nature as well as enforcing responsible tourism and attracting the kind of tourists who conform to the "Palau Pledge" when they enter.

331. Best practices development was a great contribution and along with the tourism contribution possibly some of the strongest successes of the project. This, along with GEF-6 work, will contribute to overall improved land use and conservation goals for the country outside of the PAN.

What evidence is there to suggest that there is improved coordination and cross-sector collaboration on SLM and PAN?

332. As the evaluator already outlined under the Outcomes for Component 3, there was very little evidence to suggest that there has been improved coordination on SLM and PAN. Certainly, planning and implementation has taken into consideration both and much work has been done to harmonise land use overall in the country for conservation goals. But MAFE a central role in this as was hoped in the project did not materialise.

To what extent have the project results been sustained towards impact of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity conservation?

333. Overall, despite Component 3 having limited achievement, and the overall partial achievement of most outputs, the outputs that were significant in terms of moving

towards healthy ecosystems and sustainable use of resources, along with community benefits, were realised. The project was severely limited in its reporting and in its implementing of various activities, but when looking at the overall picture of what the project actually achieved in terms of the overall strategy (the PAN strategy, the BOT strategy, the SLM regulations and reforestation, forest monitoring protocol for the entire country, work feeding into upscaled state-level SLM implementation through GEF-6), the project has put the country on track towards meeting its impact. That said, it is unfortunate that the lack of project reporting and management resulted in many benefits and learnings across the project not being fully recorded and taken on board, not helpful for other related projects in the region.

334. **Likelihood of impact is 'Likely'.**

**Rating for Effectiveness: Moderately Satisfactory**

## Financial Management

### Adherence to UNEP's Policies and Procedures

335. The roles of financial management and reporting were defined in the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the IA (Ecosystems Division of UNEP) and the EA (MAFE). The PCA outlined that UNEP would provide the first cash advance within two weeks of signing the contract, advance the second and subsequent installments to the EA within two weeks of a financial report, make the final disbursement (5%) upon submission and acceptance of the final report, final audited expenditure statement, and the final co-finance report. UNEP clearance was needed for service contracts or agreements for services that are not in procurement plan and costing above USD 5,000. The EA was supposed to inform UNEP in writing of any substantive co-finance change. The EA was also to notify UNEP about any expected variations in budget on an annual basis. The EA was also to keep separate, accurate and up-to-date records and documents in respect of all expenditures in conformity with the provisions of the project document - all records needed to be kept up to three years; quarterly expenditure reports and explanatory notes were to be provided.

336. The MOAs provided between MAFE and the implementing partners were those signed in the last quarter of 2016 when the project started implementation. The MAFE made various project budget revisions, three of which were formal and accepted by UNEP. However, one major project budget revision was done at the onset of implementation (i.e. when the MOAs were signed and agreed upon with allocated budgets) and missed by UNEP<sup>54</sup> of which multiple partners were not informed appropriately. The consultancy budget of USD 615,000 was predominantly moved to sub-contracting as outlined in Table 6 (the evaluator was told this was to integrate better and build capacity within the institutions rather than outsourcing the work to external consultants, of which for internationals this is particularly difficult anyway given that the government requests a Palauan business licence). Each implementing partner had allocated amounts as per the Project Document budget; this too was re-shuffled meaning that some received more, and others received less (see Table 6 for these under section on changes in design during implementation). For instance, BNM was to receive USD 290,000 and instead received USD 65,000 through a direct sub-contract and an additional USD 12,000 for working with another sub-contract. The PAN Office, set to

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<sup>54</sup> Budget changes were conducted under the Minister of MAFE at the time and no formal budget change requests were submitted by MAFE about this. The evaluator did not have the opportunity to speak to the previous Minister nor the Minister at time of the evaluation mission as both were unavailable - however, discussions with the project manager, multiple partners as well as MAFE staff confirmed this.

receive USD 433,000 in the Prodoc budget ended up with a budget of USD 1,266,000 in the MOA. In total, the sub-contracts amounts were USD 3,238,627, more than 80% of the GEF budget. The remainder was spent on project management and administration. The evaluator, despite requesting several times, was not given access to any financial expenditure reporting on this amount.

337. The MTR found discrepancies in some of the figures reported across the different years. The project is required to undergo an audit every year but by the Mid-Term Review the project was yet to receive its 2018 audit. The project submitted a letter to the IA explaining that only one audit firm exists in Palau, and that it is also auditing the government's finances, with the project still waiting for them to complete their audit. This was exacerbated by COVID-19 when the only firm, Deloitte and Touche, had an office in Palau and were inundated with audits. Any other audit firms would have also requested more than 3 times the budget per audit. It appears that the project design underbudgeted for audits. At Terminal Evaluation, there are still missing audits for years 2018-2022.
338. There were late disbursements of funds in 2018 due to the late receipt of the 2017 audit, although disbursements carried on until Quarter 1 of 2020 despite no audits for 2018-2019. Cash advance requests from the beginning of 2021 (Q1 Cash Advance Request of USD627, 913) were not answered until Quarter 3 of 2022 (through two payments which do not equal the amount requested - USD 528,623 on 6 August 2022 and USD 58, 664 on 26 August 2022). The evaluator was told by UNEP that because the project had not completed its audits and financial reporting, these funds were not disbursed. The partners claimed that they stopped reporting because funds were not being disbursed. However, funds were disbursed in 2022 even though reporting was not completed.<sup>55</sup>
339. The evaluator was told in interviews that there was pressure to "spend this money quickly" once it came in 2022 and as a result finances were spent on things that were not necessarily project activities. Because the evaluator was not provided with detailed expenditure reporting, this could not be verified or further investigated. However, the fact that no partner could provide the evaluator with expenditure reporting on their budgets (except for the co-financing), and that there were examples where e.g. the Northern Reef Fisheries Cooperative received a "donation from the minister" that came from project funding without an expectation from the MAFE to have NRFC report on its expenditures (the evaluator could verify that funding was indeed used for conservation activities), raises concerns on project financial management and fiduciary responsibilities. The turnover of FMOs did not help to bring better oversight to this, and

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<sup>55</sup> At the time of finalising this report, the evaluator had in their possession the letter from the Ministry providing justification for the delays in audit reports and a request for support or advice on how to proceed. The evaluator had no further documentation on any response by UNEP on this matter. After finalisation of this report, the evaluator received information (not documented evidence, although reference was made to a UNEP country mission in February of 2018) from UNEP that in fact UNEP had had several discussions - between the Task Manager and the EA on the need of these funds in support of project implementation to complete the work, additional cash advances were issued up until Quarter 1 of 2020. In fact, a mission was conducted by the TM and the FMO at the time; the following was shared by UNEP to this effect: "During this mission, it was alleged to the FMO/TM that the GEF Operational Focal point was providing the Palau government treasury with instructions to make payments with the GEF project funds, which were not in line with project activities. At this stage, coupled with the delay in provision of 2016 and 2017 audit reports due from the auditor general, UNEP requested that MAFE undertake a bidding process for an independent private sector audit firm, or certified public accountants be engaged for the 2016 and 2017 audit. In spite of concerns raised by the Executing Agency on the unavailability of funds for such an engagement, UNEP worked with MAFE to increase the initially anticipated annual audit budget to accommodate the higher costs charged by private sector entities. The report received by UNEP in Dec 2018 was accepted". As a result, the EA was able to provide audit report for the year 2017 conducted by Deloitte and Touche. Beyond this, audits were not done, the EA stated (to the evaluator) that even with bidding not enough private auditing firms (including Deloitte and Touche) were able to do the work within the budget limitations (2018-2022). No further advances were issued between Quarter 1 of 2020 and Quarter 3 of 2022, despite cash transfer requests made. Another letter was received in the first Quarter of 2022 from the EA about the difficulty in getting the audits done, after which (according to UNEP) the letter was reviewed, and fund disbursement was approved and then issued in Quarter 3 of 2022.

in fact the evaluator was told that UNEP policy allows the EA to report just on sub-contract amounts without providing details from partners, but in the case where 80% of the budget is for sub-contracts the evaluator would expect more detailed financial reporting on this.

340. Overall, financial management and adherence to UNEP and GEF policies were severely limited in this project, and while the evaluator did not find evidence of misappropriation of funds, an external audit is necessary to better understand the expenditure of the GEF funding in relation to the activities.

341. The rating given is '**Highly Unsatisfactory**'.

### Completeness of Project Financial Information

342. Project financial information is missing the following:

- a. Project revision where the entire consultancy budget was moved to subcontracts (USD 615,000) and major amendments were made and reshuffled between sub-contracts. There were three budget revisions shared that were approved.<sup>56</sup>
- b. Transfer requests were only up to the first quarter of 2021 (the last request was for USD 627,913 of which USD 547,400 was supposed to be for sub-contracts, at that point there was still USD 841,173 remaining of which USD 213,260 had not yet been requested); according to the final expenditure statement on record (Q4 2022), an amount of USD 587,287 was disbursed to the IPs from the EA so this was released. Upon final requests to the IA FMO, a cash release was shared that released USD 528,623 on 6 September 2022. The IA maintains that cash was not released because reporting was not complete (neither was it complete even when it was released), the EA maintains that no work nor reporting was done because no funds were received between Q1 of 2020 and Quarter 3 of 2022. The evaluator was told that during 2022, when the project manager left and the new project manager came in, there was a lot of confusion about how much money was still available and where this was with multiple communications between the IA and the EA on this (not verified). There is no final reporting neither technical nor financial from any of the partners.
- c. Various subcontracts and consultancy contracts were not shared with the evaluator; while the evaluator has the original MOAs and their appendix work plans and budgets for BOA, BOT, EQPB, PCS, PICRC, PAN Fund, PAN Office, BNM and some further contracts appended to the quarterly reports of the IPs, there are many contracts missing for which the evaluator has found out piece meal and still is not sure (based on limited reporting) what more is missing (e.g. NISSAP consultancy contract, contract with Ebiil Society, contract for the PAME development in 2023, MOU with Ministry of Justice, MOU with PCC).
- d. There is no final financial reporting, the last expenditure reporting for the project that was made available to the evaluator was from Q4 2022 of which the majority of the budget was just put under the budget line "sub-contracting" and there is no way to verify, compare or even identify expenditure per outcome or even component.
- e. Co-finance reporting is only complete up to 2019 and there is no final co-finance reporting. Some partners also exclaimed their confusion in having signed off on co-financing commitments that they were convinced were not possible to achieve.<sup>57</sup>

343. Financial completeness is rated as '**Highly Unsatisfactory**'.

### Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff

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<sup>56</sup> 1) original; 2) revised – 1 (NCE-1); 2) revised – 2 (NCE-2) and 3) revised – 3 (NCE-3)

<sup>57</sup> IP interviews in country.

344. Implementing partners shared frustrations over delays in fund disbursements in 2018 and 2019 (the first time being that not all partners had complied to reporting requirements, the second time that the EA had not received the disbursements from the IA). As a result, some of them were not able to implement at all and others had to use funds from other projects to continue.
345. There was a high turnover in FMOs at the IA, and while the task manager apparently at the beginning of implementation visited to country to walk through template reporting for UNEP, financial reporting was generally limited (and especially for partners) and this was not picked up until MTR and then not acted upon further.
346. The turnover of project managers also meant that a weak hand over process resulted in the new project manager not having any idea about what funds were still available, something UNEP was also unable to answer at the time (mid-way through 2022).
347. The EA stated in a letter to UNEP (in 2018) the difficulty in conducting its 2017 audit; it is clear through a mission by the UNEP in February 2018 by the Task Manager and the FMO that UNEP made efforts to find a solution to the audit delay and financial management in general (through using private auditing firms and adjusting some of the budget to allow for higher audit costs, as well as face-to-face support at the time to the Project Manager on financial reporting)<sup>58</sup>. As a result, the 2017 audit was conducted by Deloitte and Touche and funds were transferred later in 2018, but also in 2019 and 2020 despite no audit reports being made available for 2018 or 2019. The evaluator did not receive documentation on communication about these transfers or the lack of audits.<sup>59</sup> Subsequently, there were no fund transfers from Quarter 2 of 2020 until Quarter 3 of 2022. In February of 2022, a letter from the EA to UNEP justified this lack of audits and the difficulty in getting an appropriate firm to conduct them. This was reviewed and approved, and the remaining funds were disbursed to the EA in September 2022. There is limited documentation of the communication of the *overall* issues in financial reporting between the EA and the IA. While there is reporting on communication on the 2017 audit issues (the letter and the 2018 resultant mission), and then the letter from 2022 (although no reporting on the formal response from UNEP), there is a lack of reporting on communication between 2019 and 2022. This, together with the lack of communication and oversight on financial reporting of 80% of the budget that was under the auspices of the IPs (which provided no financial reporting at all), means that communication was severely limited, despite some strong effort yet adhoc attempts made by UNEP to rectify the financial management challenges.
348. Communication between finance and project management staff is rated as **'Unsatisfactory'**.

### Rating for Financial Management: Highly Unsatisfactory

#### Efficiency

349. The project underwent reporting delays from partners and project management and disbursement delays from UNEP (most notably in 2019 where final disbursement only took place end 2022).
350. The project was extended twice formally from September 2020 to March 2023, without formal extension documentation for the project ending August 2023 (other than the

<sup>58</sup> This is information from UNEP received two months after finalisation of this report as written in comments to this report but not verified through mission reporting.

<sup>59</sup> Although UNEP in late correspondence did mention multiple conversations between the TM and the EA about this.

PCA amendment clause), the project requested a further extension from August 2023 to March 2024 which did not formally take place because the PCA Amendment 3 was effectively valid until March 2024, so it was agreed that the technical completion date would be September 2023 but all terminal reports would be submitted to UNEP for clearance by latest March 2024.

351. Staffing issues at the EA and at several IAs delayed implementation during 2018. The PIR 2018 mentioned that delays in 'building block' activities were resulting in delays on activities that were meant to get started. The 2019 PIR relayed that the project had a slow start, and activities were still suffering from these moderate delays.
352. The MTR was severely delayed and only took place in 2021/2022,<sup>60</sup> much too late to be used for adaptive management. The delay was a result of COVID-19 but also limited PMU capacity and not enough oversight from UNEP undergoing too many task manager turnovers (four in total from design to end of implementation).
353. COVID-19 really delayed the project because the country went on full lock down. In addition to this, funding disbursement delays also further delayed project activities.
354. The PIR 2022 spoke about details as follows: "progress is still slow partially due to the pandemic and the country beginning to get back to normal as well as financial means to continue the implementation of the work. However, many of the project activities such as best practices, PAN assessments, forest monitoring and capacity building trainings have been institutionalized in the project partners and are still able to continue, at a limited number, in being implemented. The slow progress has meant that the project has had to request another project extension to complete its work. The challenges could be attributed to the COVID impacts resulting in changes of planned activities. However, working and aligning with other projects such as GEF 6 has helped in moving forward some activities as well as institutionalized some of these best practices that were developed through GEF 5. To meet the objectives of the project, utmost efforts to mainstream cross-sector issues into PAN and SLM, biodiversity values into national level development plans and project management were performed and achieved."
355. The Steering Committee was not used effectively for project guidance (which is further discussed under paragraph 381 below). It was supposed to meet at least once a year, but only ended up meeting three times in total. Apparently, it was called several times but could never get a quorum because apparently many members are on several committees and have several obligations and were not able to attend. The Minister, chairing the last Steering Committee Meeting had the following to say: "I used to be on this board when I was at The Nature Conservancy and I don't remember the last time we met. So it's been quite a while since the inception of this project. When I became the Minister I recognized that there are some reporting challenges as well as disbursement challenges that this GEF-5 project faced. It took almost 2 years to address those reporting as well as the disbursement process. Particularly the understanding of the availability of funding that was available to close the project. Coupled with that, during COVID-19 communication was difficult. It has also been difficult with recruiting an auditor to do the required audit as well as project midterm evaluations during COVID. So this all has contributed to our [in]ability to close out this project. We did get a no cost extension and we know that a no cost extension is not

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<sup>60</sup> PIR 2020: The mid-term review of the project, which was expected to take place late 2019 and then delayed to Q1 2020, had to be further delayed because of the travel restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Carrying out the MTR must take place soon after travel restrictions are lifted. The project will be extended in one year to compensate for delays during the first year of implementation and Covid-19 measures.

really no cost, it's actually costing the implementation team to complete all the deliverables. I hope that the Project Manager will be able to provide necessary updates as well as for us to make necessary decisions on where to move forward for us to be able to close out this project.”<sup>61</sup>

356. Some project partners also relayed that the amount of work expected compared with the budget received was severely inadequate.<sup>62</sup>

357. Inadequate use of the inception meeting resulted in the project having to implement on outputs that had changed since design (given that from design to implementation several years had passed) and within a convoluted and non-SMART results framework (52 activities and 81 indicators). Project partners and the EA relayed that they did not have sufficient guidance or knowledge on what they were able to do and not do at the Inception Meeting (there were two for this project because there was a task manager turn over and the second task manager relayed that the first inception meeting did not meet UNEP nor GEF standards), nor how much power they had over changing the logframe. Lack of harmonized guidance from different task managers did not help their cause.

358. Not enough was done to include recommendations from previous projects and this has continued from GEF-5 to GEF-6 where lack of communications means that overlap and double-budgeting is a risk.

### **Rating for Efficiency: Unsatisfactory**

## **Monitoring and Reporting**

### **Monitoring Design and Budgeting**

359. Indicators at outcome level had varying levels of SMART. Outcome 1.1. has SMART indicators, but e.g. Outcome 1.2 has some which are vague and difficult to measure and seem cumbersome to monitor. One outcome has 10 indicators, and these are not connected in terms of how the activities are implemented. Some outcome-level indicators are near impossible to measure (e.g. under outcome 3.1. “level of expertise” of staff, or Outcome 1.2 “% of public support increases from baseline” (but there is no baseline, nor an actual percentage target given). Around a third of the indicators do not have mid-term targets. There are way too many indicators and the evaluator will be surprised to see how the project managed to even track progress of all of them throughout the project while also attempting to implement the project successfully.

360. Discussions with those involved in design admitted that the indicators were a separate thing, an “after-thought” and not properly woven into implementation. This was a product of developers not having enough experience in GEF project development and not enough support and oversight or guidance from UNEP. Partners, nor MAFE nor the Steering Committee made the connection to the practicality of actually needing to measure these properly throughout implementation.

361. Responsible parties were outlined in the Costed M&E plan (Appendix 7 of the Prodoc), which assigns the Project Manager as the main responsible party for monitoring the project. There is insufficient budget allocated to the monitoring of such a large monitoring framework. The budget allocated to the measurement of indicators was USD 24,000 from GEF and USD 10,000 from co-financing (to be done for outcome indicators three times across the project and for indicators generally annually).

<sup>61</sup> 15 September 2023, Project Steering Committee minutes.

<sup>62</sup> Interviews with IPs in country.

362. The work plan is detailed and comprehensive, but given the results framework, the evaluator does not believe it was realistic.

363. Monitoring design and budgeting is rated as **'Moderately Unsatisfactory'**.

### Monitoring of Project Implementation

364. The results framework was not implemented or measured. Indicator targets that were supposed to have been further developed at project start were never eventually developed.

365. PIRs measured project progress from 2017 until 2023 and in some years were more descriptive than others (e.g. 2020, 2022 were well described).

366. The progress of project implementation was relatively well reported up until 2019. The PIR 2017 stated that some implementing partners were better equipped and capacitated to handle implementation and reporting requirements of the project while others needed more assistance and guidance. The project was cut into pieces for implementation by partners with little to no red thread pulling the project together.

367. The PIR of 2020 itself stated the following: "A major challenge in measuring the success of the project is that the exact targets still have not been determined even after three and half years since the beginning of the project. This should be given highest priority. The mid-term review of the project, which was expected to take place late 2019 and then delayed to Q1 2020, had to be further delayed because of the travel restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Carrying out the MTR must take place soon after travel restrictions are lifted." The PIR of 2021 then stated: "The rate in which we are achieving the outcomes based on the indicators is low as there are several indicators that require the MTR so they have not been done at all and some indicators are difficult to assess as they require long-term monitoring beyond the project life to see if they have any impacts as a result of the project. A revision of these indicators need to be done during the MTR to improve how we could rating the progress towards achieving the outcomes."

368. The MTR came along too late and while it made some helpful recommendations and suggestions around improving and strengthening the monitoring and implementation of the project, it took place too late and with the Project Manager stepping out at the same time as when the management response to the MTR was to be implemented did not help its cause. Despite the Task Manager of UNEP actually visiting the country to walk through the management response with the (then) Project Manager, no real action was taken to respond effectively to the MTR.

369. Monitoring of Project Implementation was **'Unsatisfactory'**.

### Project Reporting

370. PIRs were completed every year from 2017 until 2023, although 2017 was only half completed and 2023 entered many activities that were not strictly conducted under the project (but by other funders and projects, most notably GEF-6). Some minimal gender disaggregated data is provided in terms of the community beneficiaries for some activities.

371. Partners conducted frequent quarterly technical reporting up until 2019 (some up until Q4 of 2019, and one up until first quarter of 2020) and then no reporting followed. Not one partner submitted any final report.

372. The evaluator was also not provided with all the MOAs nor the deliverables and none of the project documentation was organised.

373. None of the partners neither MAFE were able to provide the evaluator with financial expenditure reporting for the sub-contracted activities).
374. Some budget revisions (particularly the first one with the major reshuffle of sub-contracting budgets) were not reported.
375. Project reporting is rated as '**Moderately Unsatisfactory**'.

### Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Moderately Unsatisfactory

## Sustainability

### Socio-political Sustainability

376. Palau, through the previous administration, prioritised PAN and has been an active player in meeting the Micronesia Challenge Goals.<sup>63</sup> The project was a demand-led effort based on overcoming the barriers to achieving conservation effectiveness through improved management and improved representation of ecosystems among PAs in Palau, as well as more coordinated systems approach to SLM for conservation goals in general across Palau. The first few years of the project showed (at least from reporting) a flurry of activity from all partners. However, MAFE (at the time MNRET) did not at the time prioritise enough the importance of overall coordination and the sheer amount of work to coordinate and oversee the implementation of all the activities of the project. This meant that many balls were dropped in the process. This speaks, in some cases, to a lack of prioritisation of some aspects of the project results.
377. The administration change has resulted in changes in leadership and reshuffling of government departments of which MAFE was also affected. This has meant that some policy documents have not gained as much traction as was hoped and have had to carry into the GEF-6 project to re-invest into high level engagement and commitment to these. This includes the lack of endorsement of the NISSAP as a result of biosecurity moving out of MAFE and to the Ministry of Finance where alien invasive species have not (yet) been prioritised. The Endangered Species Regulations endorsement is also missing the political will.
378. That said, at state level the project has laid some strong foundations politically in terms of SLM integrated across regulations and state land use plans. In addition, states have really engaged with PAN, with virtually all states now having at least one PAN site, and there being strong and continued representation of key ecosystems within the PAN network.
379. At the socio-economic level, communities are well aware of the benefits of the ecosystems in Palau (as a result of the project outreach and as a result of the general culture) and the vast majority of the population is in support of PAN and conservation goals in general.
380. National tourism, agriculture and conservation strategies developed through the project are likely to continue because decision-makers see the value in them for sustaining Palau both in terms of its ecosystems and people but also for its economic development. The tourism industry has really committed to sustainable tourism that protects nature; agricultural policy focuses on eco-agriculture and SLM.
381. Socio-political sustainability is rated as '**Likely**'.

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<sup>63</sup> <https://themicronesiachallenge.blogspot.com/>, last accessed 2 December 2023.

## Financial Sustainability

382. The project has laid several foundations from which the government and partners can work from, including the finance plan for the PAN Fund, the IPP Programme of which four states had committed to and are already putting in yearly contributions much larger than envisaged (e.g. Melekeok was able to put USD 25,000 in 2023 as opposed to the yearly minimum of USD 5,000), eco-tourism plans for PAN sites which are being replicated elsewhere through tourism product development (e.g. Forest of Hope Trail basing its trail off the Ngerderar Watershed).
383. SLM work has been integrated into 11 states through work continuing through the GEF-6 project that built on this project.
384. Multiple partners and funders are continuing to work on SLM and PAN (including e.g. GEF-6, ADB agriculture project, Taiwan Mission, work with JICA, GIZ). In addition, Palau has already strategically thought about its future GEF STAR allocations for GEF-7 and GEF-8, with two GEF-7 projects (one UNEP and one UNDP) focusing on food security (aquaculture) and conservation goals (marine spatial planning) in its marine territory, and one large GEF-8<sup>64</sup> project (IUCN) focusing on nature-based solutions for food security which will likely build on the SLM work from GEF-5 and GEF-6.
385. It is very likely that funding (at least external) will be available towards this project's results having pathways moving towards the eventual impact that ecosystems are sustained and healthy and provide for the livelihoods (and especially at farm-level little financing is needed as the population has been incentivised through land and extension support to become self-sufficient and decentralised in terms of food). However, central government budgeting is lacking in terms of reinvesting into the needs of the Bureau of Environment and other conservation-related departments and partners despite most revenue coming in as a result of healthy ecosystems.
386. No exit strategy was developed by the project, for any of the dimensions of sustainability.
387. Financial Sustainability is '**Moderately Likely**'.

## Institutional Sustainability

388. Most partners are continuing their work and building on the various knowledge products and tools developed through the project, including monitoring and surveying through PICRC, BNM and PCS, capacity building initiatives within the PAN strategy 2023-2027, continued outreach by various partners, tourism strategy by BOT, eco-agriculture, SLM and SFM by BOA and the states, among others. These outputs and their activities have been institutionalised as part of the daily work of these partners.
389. The various best practices for agriculture, fire, water management and others developed by the project are still being utilized in outreach to different target audiences. They have also been institutionalised and part of the extensions services that the BOA and the Bureau of Education provide to the public.
390. All the GEF-5 work has been integrated into the PAN strategy and work plans.
391. GEF-7 and 8, and SPREP (which will be getting a new sub-regional coordinator representing UNEP in the Pacific) are carrying on a lot of the work to continue UNEP support (and aiming to strengthen support and oversight) for Palau.
392. Human resources and capacity at the institutional level continue to be a large hinderance to effective results attainment, particularly in MAFE and the PAN Office who

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<sup>64</sup> "Transforming productivity in Palau's food systems through nature positive innovations"

are severely understaffed at the time of evaluation. The evaluator was informed (during interviews and from project reporting) that this was largely a result of COVID-19 and that staff numbers are slowly increasing again but the general consensus is that there are capacity gaps given that there is turnover when someone becomes capacitated (this is generally the case on low populated islands). Despite this, the work seems to continue and strategies continue to be implemented through the large support base of partners like TNC, PCRC, PCS, BNM, etc.

393. The PAN Office and Forestry Division continues to work with the national wildfire prevention network; the fire department and the state governments work together with PAN rangers to do surveillance during the dry season, and a call for the upcoming dry season (forecast to be a drought) has initiated risk management and preparedness in terms of fire prevention and management activities.

394. Institutional Sustainability is '**Moderately Likely**'.

### Rating for Sustainability: Moderately Likely

## Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-cutting Issues

### Preparation and readiness

395. It seems, based on several discussions, that Palau was not sufficiently set up to understand the process of GEF funding. The role of the Focal Point was not clearly understood, many different people were pulled in to support the GEF-5 project design when it was realised that the capacity to do this effectively was lacking, and the Task Manager at the time was inaccessible. Based on several interviews, there was not enough support to the team writing the proposal from UNEP and people were effectively "groping in the dark". The proposal was written up and the indicator framework was almost an afterthought leading to an overambitious project with 52 activities and 81 indicators (of which many did not align with the activities).

396. The project held two inception meetings. The first was held and brought together the key stakeholders but apparently did not conform to the UNEP guidelines, and once the second Task Manager (interim) was seconded to the project, they requested the PMU to conduct another inception meeting one year into the project. Neither of the inception meetings were used to update the project document nor edit the results framework. It appears the project management nor the project partners understood what the key functions of the inception meeting were.

397. Despite the GEF-3 project terminal evaluation recommending that it was important that human resources be seconded to a GEF project, the project only had one-part time Project Manager and early on the project changed in its implementation in that the budget was reshuffled and activities were moved around to different entities that in the end meant that the original implementation structure with PAN doing component 1, PCS component 2, and MAFE component 3 was not fully understood.

398. There was also not enough understanding of the level of engagement on the SLM interventions at state level and there had been turnover in leadership since project design which resulted in having to re-engage on a lot of work around Component 2.

399. Preparation and readiness is rated as '**Moderately Unsatisfactory**'.

### Quality of project management and supervision

#### UNEP/Implementing Agency

400. The evaluator was told that UNEP sent task managers more than usual to the country for this project (twice)<sup>65</sup>. Both missions were support missions, the second was a weeklong with two areas of focus (1) management responses to the MTR and support in putting together the PIR 2022 (project-related), and (2) discuss UNEP's involvement in GEF-8 programming (not related to the project).
401. The project went through multiple task managers: the first task manager was there for the design but retired two months into implementation, thereafter the Portfolio Manager supported the first year of implementation (2017) (second), after which a (third) temporary task manager was hired for two years working out of Samoa, after which UNEP readvertised the full position and a (fourth) new task manager was chosen during the application process until COVID-19 in which this task manager resigned. During this time of COVID-19, UNEP hired an interim consultant (fifth) who supported as a task manager to support Palau. Thereafter the final (sixth) task manager came on board in June 2021 and oversaw the completion of the project. Overall, the project from design to completion had six people in succession overseeing the project.
402. The EA shared the following on UNEP oversight: the GEF-5 was the first full-sized GEF project for Palau and the country was "very lost in the beginning";<sup>66</sup> the first task manager was there until submission then left and they had an interim task manager (second task manager) and at the time they didn't even know how to run the inception workshop so they just called it a validation meeting given that there had been three years between submission and approval of the project they merely brought a small team together to validate and make sure the activities were still relevant (this was in 2017). When the third task manager came in a year into implementation the project was told that the inception meeting needed to be re-done as it was not done properly the first time. At the time there was also the issue with the audit of 2017 and general financial management issues, and as a result the Task Manager and the FMO visited the country to support the inception process as well as provide the Project Manager with financial management advice. At this inception meeting, they agreed that there were too many indicators, but these were never officially changed. Multiple partners have shared in interviews that they received resistance from UNEP when it came to making any formal changes (being told that this is a complicated process).
403. According to the EA, communication from UNEP was not helpful in terms of consistent guidelines, "there was no handbook for when you are implementing a project for the first time"<sup>67</sup>, a lot of stuff the EA and partners had to learn on their own by making mistakes, it was apparently really difficult having multiple task managers and not having consistent advice. According to the EA, each task manager had a different way of doing things, there was no conformity even in some circumstances to the extent that would contradict each other (e.g. regarding the advice and guidance provided on the purpose and running of the inception meeting, as well as on financial and technical reporting). According to task managers, various adaptive mechanisms were shared with the EA but there was no appetite to take these on board - this was true for both missions that the evaluator is aware of (i.e. financial reporting, as well as the management response to the MTR).
404. The last task manager came in June 2021, got the folder and saw that the project was supposed to be coming to an end and saw that it was not being properly implemented in terms of the timeline and immediately saw that it needed an extension, there was not

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<sup>65</sup> According to one task manager, two missions were actually conducted between 2017 and 2019, this could not be verified because the evaluator did not receive the mission reporting.

<sup>66</sup> Wording used in several interviews with project developers and implementers, especially EA.

<sup>67</sup> Direct quote from interview.

much progress, and that there also had been no MTR.<sup>68</sup> The task manager commissioned an MTR and requested a visit the country to prepare follow-up actions based on the recommendations of the MTR and check on project progress (in addition to planning UNEP involvement on GEF-8). The project manager at the time agreed but then the task manager realised the project manager had gotten another position outside of the country, they had initial bi-weekly meetings over several months and realised things were not moving, PSC meetings could not be organised, COVID-19 was being used as a reason but there were other ways to run meetings even during COVID-19. Then when the new project manager came in (the standard recruitment was not done for hiring the project manager because things needed to be speeded up so the EA recommended the new project manager who was also managing the GEF-6 project), bits and pieces of the project had to be picked up and closed off piecemeal.

405. When the new project manager took over and the technical advisor to GEF-6 was also seconded to support the closing off of deliverables in late 2022, neither UNEP nor the project could apparently confirm how much money was actually in the UNEP account at this time. Finally, the final cash request from Q1 2021 (USD 627, 913) was (partly) released in September of 2022, despite the project not having full financial reporting (see paragraph 347).
406. The (latest) task manager was overseeing 8 projects in 2021, in 2023 this had risen to 11 projects in various stages from development to closing. The portfolio in the Pacific is smaller than for other Task Managers in other countries but the extent of travel is more difficult and cost-intensive. The new Task Manager is meant to take on projects now from Asia too as the corporate fee from GEF is not enough and generally UNEP is covering more costs than gains through GEF projects in the Pacific. The evaluator notes this to highlight the high level of responsibility and oversight task managers have over multiple projects making it a difficult task to give more thorough technical and financial oversight and guidance to countries in their infancy in implementing GEF projects.
407. When the MTR came in late, the sentiment from the PMU (at the time with an outgoing Project Manager) was that it was already too late to try and do all management responses in one year despite the task manager visiting the country and walking through the management response to which the PMU agreed. A little bit more stability from UNEP would have been much more helpful to the EA, and although many shared that they appreciated that UNEP allowed them adaptive flexibility to changing circumstances (especially helpful when it came to setting up foundations for sustaining project results), but needed better oversight and guidance. Project partners maintain that with the UNEP presence through SPREP being strengthened in the Pacific UNEP might have stronger presence and oversight of future projects.
408. So, to summarize, the project suffered from a high turnover of task managers (four formal task managers from design finalisation throughout implementation, six overall including interim staff and consultants). This, and inconsistent advice from the different task managers resulted in poor overall oversight. This said, the task managers did visit the country in person, once (together with the FMO) to provide guidance on project management, financial and other reporting requirements (using the templates) and the second visit to walk through the MTR management response (which was not effective given that the project manager resigned shortly after and the responses were not taken up). There were ad-hoc efforts made by some task managers to provide

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<sup>68</sup> As already mentioned previously in this report, while the MTR was delayed by COVID-19, if it has been conducted at mid-term of the project timeline (2018), it would not have been affected by COVID. An earlier MTR may have picked up important issues earlier and allowed for UNEP to improve its oversight requirements.

guidance, but overall the project needed much more consistent oversight. This was provided by the last task manager, perhaps too late.

409. Project supervision and management by the IA is rated as '**Unsatisfactory**'.

### **Executing Agency and Partners**

410. **Executing Agency and the PMU:** The project implementing structure was supposed to be, according to the project document, a PMU of three component level coordinators (component 1 PAN, component 2 PCS/MAFE, component 3 MAFE/EA), one overall project manager (who was also responsible for overall coordination), with the possibility if needed of a project assistant. Already at design this was not well enough laid out (as in how these coordinators from different institutions would work together exactly).
411. This was Palau's first full sized GEF project, and an overambitious one at that. Already the TE from the MSP GEF-4 had said that the PMU was insufficient to carry out the project implementation. For a situation like this, the project should have had more structured PMU, with a project manager, a project assistant with financial background and an international technical advisor who has had experience with GEF project implementation and preferably expertise in PAN financing and management effectiveness, even with different institutions being seconded under the different components to be implementing partners. This may have been more expensive on the central budget, but would have built capacity in a much smoother way from the start and probably enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.
412. However, at the onset of implementation the EA seconded a project manager whose salary was being paid by the GEF-5 project but who worked only part-time on the project and had several other tasks under MAFE for which they were responsible for.
413. Ultimately the project did not get implemented as per project document and instead the project was effectively chopped up into pieces by the EA and these pieces were handed over to several different institutions to implement individually with the project manager visiting these institutions sporadically to monitor progress and advise on reporting. This was also done by taking an executive decision by MAFE to reshuffle the budget from consultants to and within different subcontracts which meant that the overall coordination among components became confused with no entity taking full responsibility for any of the components.
414. The MTR took place very late (according to PIRs as a result of COVID-19), and when the management response was critical, the project manager resigned and the new project manager (who was already managing another full-sized project, the GEF-6 UNDP project) was made project manager to close off this project. The technical advisor for GEF-6 was also pulled into to support the development of the PIR for 2023, and support the closing off of deliverables. The hand over process between project managers was not sufficient to ensure a full understanding of the project state nor of what was possible to close off and achieve final project results. This said, the evaluator was told multiple times that because Palau is small and human resources are limited, it is hard to find capacitated professionals to fill positions.
415. While Steering Committee meetings are important and needed especially in a project where oversight and guidance is paramount, these were not organised on a regular basis, and apparently when these were called it was difficult to get all members to commit to come.<sup>69</sup> Given that most of the members were heads of the implementing

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<sup>69</sup> According to the PMU, the board members were also trying to influence the process too much, that there were too many members with too little ideas, then trying to get a quorum was near impossible and trying to get alternates also did not work. Too many members and too many high level members who had other priorities.

partners there should have been accountability on their part too to attend such meetings. Three meetings were held in total over the 7 years of implementation.<sup>70</sup>

416. The EA (several individuals) stated that the implementing structure of the project should reflect the government structure, and the project manager was placed directly under the Minister which was good access. But when looking at what benefits were accrued as a result of this, it is questionable - steering committee meetings were not called, not enough coordination took place, and many outputs were finally not delivered.
417. Several partners shared that the project was not managed efficiently or effectively, it lacked transparency, communication and coordination, including that they felt the project manager was overworked and had too many responsibilities. Many partners also relayed that GEF-6 was a stark contrast in project management and that GEF-6 delivered on some things that were not delivered in GEF-5.
418. The PIR 2020 states that a project coordination unit (PCU) was established as working group to assist the project manager in the coordination of the different components of the project. Included in the PCU is a member whose specific role is to consider and evaluate environmental and social safeguards associated with project and its implementation. A gender policy exists in Palau that sets guidance for gender and social inclusion which is also utilized by the project partners. The evaluator did not get access to any documentation on this nor was this referred to in any interviews when asking about adaptive management.
- 419. Implementing partners:**
420. Eight main implementing partners were involved in project implementation (and at least 6 more were sub-contracting or hired as consultants that the evaluator was made aware of but did not get access to the contracting information) with MOAs with the EA. Some of these received much more funding than was planned and some of these received a third or less of what was planned in the project document. There was a lack of transparency and open discussion on these changes. In addition, states were also involved, and particularly four states had MOAs with regard to the IPP Programme.
421. The PAN Office received three times the budget as planned and was implementing almost half of the project in terms the entire funds allocated to sub-contracts. It hired two staff during the project namely the conservation planner and chief enforcement officer. Later on, it also hired a communications officer and a communications consultant to support communications and outreach. Initially work was focused on building the administrative capacity of the office and the PAN sites. The new strategy is now focused more on monitoring and research as well as conservation effectiveness. The project allowed the office to have strong capacity within the office but this was not retained post-project.
422. Other partners involved included the PAN Fund, the BNM, the BOA, EQPB, PCS, PICRC and BOT. Partners shared that this was the first FSP and it required a large collaboration effort by a number of government agencies (regional and local) and other partners. This was a large project that did not necessarily have the enabling environment (this from management capacity to organisational capacity and culture, this environment barely existed at the time of the project implementation). This said, partners felt that the work achieved was monumental and a major milestone not just for the environmental sector

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<sup>70</sup> As an example, here is an excerpt from PCS from the Q3 2017 PCS narrative report: I think the project steering committee unit needs to meet. We didn't meet during the 1st 2nd and 3rd quarters and we are half-way through implementation during the first year and it would be a good opportunity to assess where we are and look for opportunities to synergize our efforts with other project components or with other projects being currently implemented.

but also for government. Overall, partners felt that they had to undergo a lot of trial and error because the experience in project reporting and management was lacking.

423. Project reporting was consistent up until 2019, although no expenditure reporting was available for none of the partners. Apparently reporting stopped when funding stopped coming in, but even after all partners received their final installment, these reports were not delivered.
424. In summary, partners mostly delivered on their outputs (mainly) for components 1 and 2 although none were asked to report on indicators (nor was the project doing so), none of the partners could provide the evaluator with final project reporting, the project management should have made this conditional on release of final funding. There were some delays from partners but generally partners were effective in achieving their pieces of the project; there was large reshuffling of the budget by MAFE (then MNRET) allocated to partners and consultants, based on reporting along the evaluator could not ascertain the level to which the different partners achieved their final activities and outputs - this had to be done piecemeal through interviews and individual document searching (in some cases in arbitrary locations).
425. Partner/executing agency is rated as '**Unsatisfactory**'.
426. Overall, Project management and supervision is rated as '**Unsatisfactory**'.

#### Stakeholder participation and cooperation

427. Project activities required large amounts of stakeholder engagement. Partners such as PICRC, PAN Office, the BOT and the BOA, as well as PCS and BNM worked through various stakeholder engagement meetings and outreach activities to involve as many people as possible in specific project activities.
428. State-level communication from PAN Fund in terms of getting states on board on the IPP Programme included extensive participation from state representatives. At the same time, the PCS worked diligently at on-boarding states on the SLM work which was not an easy feat and eventually led into GEF-6 work taking on the foundations which resulted in 11 states having SLM plans and implementing them.
429. Stakeholder cooperation was particularly strong from the tourism and agriculture sectors with regard to SLM work and integrated sustainable use and principles in this sector. This was a result of extensive engagement by both. In addition, the fact that the forest monitoring protocol went beyond just the PAN sites and into the whole country is also testament to good engagement and participation processes.
430. The PIRs stated that this project explicitly coordinated stakeholder involvement, analyzed gaps in stakeholders, and streamlined stakeholder involvement. This is across sectors, including government, nongovernment, business, and community-based. Palau has a very large and robust environmental sector and many years of formalized inclusion of all sectors in environmental planning at the national level. Inclusion of representative sectors is mandated by Executive Orders establishing the National Environmental Protection Council. Further, the majority of land in Palau is owned by individuals and clans, thus wide engagement of the public is required for effective conservation.
431. This said, there were some discrepancies where the evaluator wanted to speak to some representative councils (e.g. Governor's Council, Chief's Council, women's

groups) and was not able to because “they were not as involved as they should have been in the project and thus would not have much to tell you”.<sup>71</sup>

432. Stakeholder participation and cooperation is rated as **‘Satisfactory’**.

### Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity

433. The PIR 2019 stated that “Palau is different than most countries in that its matrilineal society has given women a strong voice in the decision-making process traditional and is reflected in the current modern governance structures at the various levels. As such, the gender policy for Palau focuses more on social inclusion to ensure that marginalized and vulnerable populations such as young men, elderly, children, foreign workers and people with special needs are part of any consultative and decision-making process. The project follows that by timing meetings to capture the highest possible number of people to attend and then also conducts targeted meetings with individual groups such as Legislatures, Men’s Groups, Women’s Groups, and Youth Groups to ensure that the different groups are captured.” The PIR 2022 followed on this by stating that “Palau has a Gender Policy that the project aligns with to ensure social inclusion of various groups identified in the policy as well as in various sectors in our implementation and mainstreaming efforts. Gender and social disaggregated data have been collected at project hosted meetings and the project template was further developed and integrated into many of the Ministry’s offices and projects who utilize this template to collect their gender and social data. These data help provide information on the groups that have had access to the projects being implemented, but also the services that the ministry provides and help identify what groups are missed during these outreach and work to ensure that we are reaching a wider group of people as well as ensure fair and equitable representation of the people benefiting from the work of the Ministry whether through projects or regular Ministry work.”

434. This said, the evaluator did not receive this gender disaggregated data. In some cases, it was visible that gender equality was integrated (in terms of farmers being equal ratio women, site coordinators also largely female, as with the training and most implementing partner leaders). Apparently, there was work done on women’s markets around site-level tourism (the evaluator observed this at one PAN site where a women’s market was set up in Aimeliik, but it could not be verified whether this was directly linked to the project). The promise by the project that it would specifically focus on benefitting marginalised societies worked in some of the areas (in terms of eco-tourism planning allowing decentralised community-based conservation efforts) but in terms of farming, foreign farmers were not included in the list of farmers trained even though they were the ones conducting most of the farming (in fact, the farmers that were trained seemed to be, from the interview list, relatively privileged members of society).

435. The responsiveness to human rights and gender is **“Moderately Unsatisfactory”**.

### Environmental and social safeguards

436. The PIR 2022 stated that the project did not have an Environmental and Social Safeguards management plan within the project document but recognized the need to ensure that it be implemented and therefore a project coordination unit was developed to provide the oversight on environmental and social safeguards. The project coordination unit comprised of the 3 component managers and 1 social and safeguard representative review the current progress and planned activities for the project year

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<sup>71</sup> Interviews with sources when pressing to meet with these.

prior to its approval by the project board, and quarterly review of direct implementation by the partners. The evaluator did not see evidence of this actually being implemented.

437. The evaluator could not find any reporting on environmental and social safeguard checks. Socio-economic surveys and other outreach seemed to work on livelihood priorities. While the project was environmental and livelihoods focused in nature, and the evaluator could not find any maladaptive practice in this regard based on review of project reporting, nor from interviews nor field observations, a strong social safeguarding process could have helped to support more inclusion of marginalised societies like foreign farmers.

438. Environmental and social safeguards rated as **'Moderately Unsatisfactory'**.

#### Country ownership and drivenness

439. The multiple partners and government agencies involved in the project certainly have owned their products and support each other in the greater pathways towards impact in the reconstructed Theory of Change. Even if project management and overall coordination by MAFE was lacking and not built as envisaged by the project document, and even with the administration change, the country definitely prioritises environmental protection and conservation in its country strategy and all partners are certainly aligned in this aspect.

440. Country ownership and drivenness is rated as **'Satisfactory'**.

#### Communication and public awareness

441. While internal communication was not particularly strong in this project and partners felt that they were piece-meal implementing the project, external communications was strong with the exception of the GEF/UNEP branding (which in the greater picture is not as important as impact, but it does lend itself to confusion about which project supported what).

442. Much outreach was done, a large number of knowledge products were developed that are being shared by several partners. Much of the outreach and communication is being carried on and sustained by the different partners.

443. This said, there was no one-stop-shop or organisation of knowledge products nor easy access to these by anyone interested to support Palau in its conservation efforts. Many lessons and best practices could have been documented better and shared more widely and these were not, although best practices continue to be shared in-country among various target audiences with the public (community, fishers, farmers, youth, school, tourists, etc).

444. From an effort and resulting demand point of view, communication and public awareness is rated as **'Satisfactory'**.

**Rating for Factors Affecting Performance: Moderately Unsatisfactory**

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

445. The project was highly relevant to the country and in terms of global environmental benefits and well-designed in terms of addressing these priorities in a holistic manner through a three-pronged approach of PAN strengthening, SLM interventions and effective coordination of PAN and SLM (systems thinking towards ecosystems health). At the same time, it was over-ambitious in its design both in terms of its many activities, its indicator framework and its inability to properly assess country capacity and therefore address project management structure in an appropriate manner.
446. The project had to face two external challenges that affected its ability to implement and sustain project results (COVID-19 and elections causing large administrative changes). This said, the project effectiveness was also influence internally.
447. The project only partially delivered on its many outputs and only partially achieved its outcomes, however those that were delivered and achieved were the ones significant in setting the country on a path towards the intermediate states (around effective natural resource management and representative ecosystems protection) and the intended long-term impact of healthy ecosystems that provide services for human livelihoods and economic development as laid out in the reconstructed Theory of Change.
448. The country does however need to prioritise its management capacity to effectively monitor and manage its protected areas through a coordinated approach by MAFE and the PAN Office that was not realised as hoped by the project. A strong collaborative arrangement with partners supported the gap in this aspect but cannot entirely substitute for improved coordination. Particularly Component 3 in this regard that was focused on MAFE ability to coordinate and strengthen its capacity was not found to be successful.
449. The evaluation, based on several interviews, was led to believe that the country understood that it had more flexibility and sovereignty over the GEF funding allocation to the project than what is outlined in GEF and UNEP policy. On several occasions when it came to the project (mostly attributed to lack of experience being the first GEF FSP and UNEP's limited oversight and guidance) it seems that the fiduciary and delivery process was not fully understood. Limited reporting made it impossible for the evaluator to properly verify many outputs and overall outcomes achievements and which ones were indeed specifically funded by the project despite the obvious evidenced observations of follow-on activities and actions based on project outcomes.
450. Particularly in terms of GEF-6, there is no clear delineation between GEF-5 and GEF-6 achievements within Components 2 and 3, the line between where GEF-5 ends and GEF-6 begins is very grey and in fact there are many activities that overlap (particularly in land-use planning) which should have been completed in GEF-5 but instead were being done in GEF-6. This said, on a positive note, GEF-6 has upscaled and catalysed more and provided a segway to achieving project results in a more sustainable manner (e.g. land use plans where four master plans were envisaged through GEF-5 but 11 master plans were developed and being implemented through this combination of projects).
451. Given the lack of financial expenditure reporting of more than 80% of the budget, coupled with the partial delivery of outputs and no final reporting from partners, an independent audit will certainly be needed.
452. Despite there being complementarity with other projects, the project lacked efficiency due to overall limited management, reporting, and oversight.

453. The project has laid some strong foundations and major milestones in terms of PAN and SLM which has resulted in partners and other projects taking on board the significant achievements in way that sustainability of project results is likely. Some policy frameworks have not gained traction due to the administrative change, but the GEF-6 project and partners in general are carrying on their work on engaging leadership and putting pressure on endorsement of these to support more effective management and protection of species and ecosystems.
454. Overall, the country ownership is strong particularly among the key champions and actors institutionally and individually, even without strong coordination by MAFE, the small community makes overall work flow.
455. Responsiveness to human rights, particularly because the project promised to focus on gender and marginalised communities, was not reported on effectively. While bits and pieces, particularly within tourism and PAN work, hint at the benefits to isolated and marginalised communities, the lack of overall strategy and reporting on this meant that this was not sufficiently seen in the measuring of gender and social disaggregated data. Particularly in the agricultural context, the evaluator did not see prioritisation or effective inclusion of marginalised communities, with little to no direct engagement of e.g. foreign farmers. Despite this, follow-on projects (like the ADB project) are specifically focusing on this aspect in the agriculture sector.
456. While it is obvious from observations and the reporting from different partners that much was done on communications and outreach to the Palauan public, not enough knowledge management was implemented. A communications strategy exists for PAN and partners are conducted a lot of outreach and overall one can see that in the cultural value system vis-a-vis nature in Palau. This said, it is unfortunate that a lack of capturing best practices and knowledge products (as a result of limited reporting and organising of project deliverables) will likely result in limited uptake for other projects which could learn a lot of how this work was successful in Palau.
457. The needs and interests of differentiated groups were considered in terms of communications and outreach and in terms of benefits (particularly in community-level protected areas management, tourism and agriculture, as well as fisheries), although the Terminal Evaluation found that marginalised groups were not as considered in either implementation nor monitoring as the project had planned. This said, gender equality seemed to be, in general, strong in terms of implementation but not well monitored. The evaluator has recommended that gender and marginalised groups be discussed in terms of project results at the closing workshop to better document gender-mainstreaming and inclusion as well as human rights inclusion. The recommendations from the MTR were mostly not actioned upon. COVID-19 impacted the project mostly indirectly due to economic shortages and the collapse of the tourism industry; the project adapted only in that it delayed its meetings and trainings (no online equivalents were done, for instance), but some aspects supported the project e.g. sustainable farming increased as a result of Government encouraging food security enhancing options like household farming.
458. The project could have had a stronger project management structure if the design had considered effective capacity assessment and acted on any gaps in this capacity with e.g. a chief technical advisor and a fuller project team, especially as this weakness had already been picked up in the terminal evaluation of a previous GEF project. The project also did not take into proper account any learnings from the same project on how to improve on coordination, and coordination overall, despite being one of the primary goals of the project, was ultimately not achieved.
459. In summary, this ambitious project laid a very strong foundation towards impact despite the many external and internal challenges it faced. The country is well set up

and committed to a holistic and systems-oriented approach to conservation that can be seen in future project and programmes development and strategies for natural resource management in Palau. This said, several recommendations are made for the country to improve on its management and capturing of project design and implementation.

460. The table below provides a summary of the ratings and findings discussed in the Evaluation Findings (Chapter V). Overall, the project demonstrated a rating of 'Moderately Satisfactory'.

**Table 11.** Summary of project findings and ratings of the GEF-5 Palau Project

<b>Criterion</b> <i>The criterion rating and the overall project rating is based on the automatic calculations based on the Weighting of Ratings table in the UNEP Evaluation Guidance package.</i>	<b>Summary Assessment</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<b>A. Strategic Relevance</b>		<b>HS</b>
<i>1. Alignment to MTS and POW</i>	Well aligned to UNEP MTS 2014-2017 and its relevant POWs in relation to Expected Accomplishment a	HS
<i>2. Alignment to Donor/GEF strategic priorities</i>	Multi-focal area project that was highly relevant to GEF strategy and well described in project document	HS
<i>3. Relevance to regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities</i>	Well aligned to regional and national priorities although with administration change some high-level priority missed in some policy documents	S
<i>4. Complementarity with existing interventions</i>	Strong complementarity although possibly with a lot of overlap among and between other interventions and projects. Good integration into government interventions and strategies	S
<b>B. Quality of Project Design</b>	Project had strong baseline situation and alignment to priorities, overambitious in its results framework and too many indicators that did not speak to project activities, no exit strategy and governance structure not detailed or thought out in terms of capacity to implement	<b>MS</b>
<b>C. Nature of External Context</b>	Nature of external context changed due to COVID-19 and elections having large impact on government changes	<b>MF</b>
<b>D. Effectiveness</b>	Overall, despite partial achievement of outputs and outcomes significant enough achievement for likelihood of impact	<b>MS</b>
<i>1. Availability of outputs</i>	Partial delivery of outputs, although those that were significant have been delivered (in many cases by other funders) and will be sustained	MS
<i>2. Achievement of project outcomes</i>	Partial achievement of outcomes although significant achievement in terms of sustaining of results and shift to improved NRM	MS
<i>3. Likelihood of impact</i>	Despite partial delivery of project, the delivery that was significant in terms of moving the country towards SLM and PAN effectiveness was high and enough evidence exists to show results sustainability and move to impact	L
<b>E. Financial Management</b>		<b>HU</b>
<i>1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures</i>	Lack of compliance in terms of budget revisions, re-shuffling, expenditure reporting, financial management	HU
<i>2. Completeness of project financial information</i>	Lack of expenditure reporting for 80% of budget, limited co-finance reporting, no final reporting, only two audits done	HU

<b>Criterion</b> <i>The criterion rating and the overall project rating is based on the automatic calculations based on the Weighting of Ratings table in the UNEP Evaluation Guidance package.</i>	<b>Summary Assessment</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<b>3. Communication between finance and project management staff</b>	Unclear communications throughout different timelines of the project life	U
<b>F. Efficiency</b>	Inefficient in terms of management, several project delays in terms of reporting and funding disbursement, ineffective use of project inception to realign/simplify project, lack of overall coordination among different elements of project	<b>U</b>
<b>G. Monitoring and Reporting</b>		<b>MU</b>
<b>1. Monitoring design and budgeting</b>	Ineffective results framework	MU
<b>2. Monitoring of project implementation</b>	Lack of monitoring of results framework, budget was changed	U
<b>3. Project reporting</b>	Missing project reporting, no final project reporting from partners, no collection of all final deliverables, no knowledge from partners on the finalisation of each other's activities, final reporting credits work from GEF-6	MU
<b>H. Sustainability</b>		<b>ML</b>
<b>1. Socio-political sustainability</b>	Despite administrative changes resulting in deprioritisation of some policy documents, overall socio-political support high for conservation and evidenced through outcomes delivery	L
<b>2. Financial sustainability</b>	Financial sustainability high through PAN finance plan and IPP, integration of SLM into state planning and budgeting, integration of SLM into national tourism and agriculture strategies and PAN, and external funding even if central government underbudgeting PAN Office and BOE	ML
<b>3. Institutional sustainability</b>	Overall strong although MAFE still lacks coordination capacity	ML
<b>I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues<sup>72</sup></b>		<b>MU</b>
<b>1. Preparation and readiness</b>	Lack of preparation and experience by country and contradictory advice from UNEP meant project was unprepared and not ready for effective implementation and management	MU
<b>2. Quality of project management and supervision</b>	Overall, management and oversight was lacking	U
UNEP/Implementing Agency	Too much turnover of task managers who were not providing uniform oversight and advice	U
Partners/Executing Agency	PMU understaffed and limited capacity to coordinate a project of this size, partners engaged by working on independent separate chunks of the project and not fully completing work	U
<b>3. Stakeholder participation and cooperation</b>	Strong stakeholder engagement and outreach	S
<b>4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity</b>	Generally strong gender inclusion from a cultural perspective, but project did not capitalise sufficiently and partially achieved on its promises in terms of prioritising benefits to marginalised communities	MU
<b>5. Environmental and social safeguards</b>	No environmental or social safeguards developed although some reporting in PIRs	MU

<sup>72</sup> While ratings are required for each of these factors individually, they should be discussed within the Main Evaluation Report as cross-cutting issues as they relate to other criteria. Note that catalytic role, replication and scaling up are expected to be discussed under effectiveness if they are a relevant part of the TOC.

<b>Criterion</b> <i>The criterion rating and the overall project rating is based on the automatic calculations based on the Weighting of Ratings table in the UNEP Evaluation Guidance package.</i>	<b>Summary Assessment</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<b>6. Country ownership and driven-ness</b>	Strong country ownership in general despite administration change	S
<b>7. Communication and public awareness</b>	Strong communication and inclusion of various target audiences but not well reported on	S
<b>Overall Project Rating</b>	<b>Overall project had limited management capacity and oversight and only partially achieved on its outcomes, but despite this, had significant achievement for results sustainability and move to impact</b>	<b>MS</b>

## Lessons learned

461. The below lessons are shared based on the findings of the evaluation. The TE would also like to highlight that the MTR documented some helpful lessons (these are not repeated but should be considered by the project).

<b>Lesson Learned #1:</b>	<b><u>Oversight is extremely important: clear and consistent IA oversight and support is integral to a country implementing a GEF FSP for the first time, and don't underestimate the value of an effective Steering Committee</u></b>
<b>Context/comment:</b>	<p>The project would have likely improved on reporting and overall implementation if there had been consistent oversight and guidance by the IA. The fact that the Steering Committee was also lacking in effectiveness exacerbated the lack of oversight and uncoordinated management.</p> <p>The IA is there for a reason, particularly in a country implementing a FSP GEF project for the first time (and probably too afraid to ask or admit things they do not know). The IA should also make sure at design already what capacity is missing and how effective and structured the Steering Committee needs to be.</p>

<b>Lesson Learned #2:</b>	<b><u>Effective project reporting and coordination can eliminate overlap and inefficient use of funding and time</u></b>
<b>Context/comment:</b>	<p>This project suffered from understaffing and capacity limits within project management, even if implementation was carried out by many technically capacitated partners. This resulted in ineffective reporting and overall, a lack of coordination and communication on the "whole" of the project.</p> <p>This lack of coordination resulted in many parts of the project falling through the cracks and some pieces having to be picked up by other funders and projects, which causes financial inefficiency in an already financially scarce environment.</p>

	Prioritisation for a dedicated PMU and capacitated full-time PM could have improved coordination and maintenance record of project achievements.
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<b>Lesson Learned #3:</b>	<b><u>Effective use of the inception meeting can realign the project to priorities and adjust any results framework issues</u></b>
<b>Context/comment:</b>	Often the project turn-around/application process from design to implementation takes years. In the meantime, some priorities may change and/or some indicators might not be realistic. The inception meeting is the most important opportunity to realign and revise the project results framework to be able to set the project up for successful implementation. Even if formal changes are cumbersome, doing them can result in better implementation, improved uptake and an overall improved project closure.

<b>Lesson Learned #4:</b>	<b><u>Despite lack of management, champions and overall culture of values of nature can still lead to impact</u></b>
<b>Context/comment:</b>	The project had a strong umbrella of partners that all overall have the right value and culture towards protected areas and ecosystem health preservation. Technical capacity and championship are strong among the environmental actors in Palau and are likely the reasons why the project was able to sustain and follow through on results even when overall management and coordination was limited.

## Recommendations

462. The following recommendations are intended to enhance cooperation, sustaining of project results, and support movement towards the TOC impact, as well as enhance project implementation for future projects. They are divided as per the following: (a) Project-level Recommendations, and (b) UNEP-wide Recommendations (for take up by UNEP for future work/learning).

### (a) Partner-level Recommendations:

<b>Recommendation #1:</b>	<b>EA should hold final closing workshop with all partners and develop workshop report</b>
<b>Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:</b>	Given there was no final reporting from partners, that not all deliverables are in one place, and there is limited conformity on the state of various outputs and overall outcomes, and that many partners are not aware of the process and next steps on the outputs, a final closing workshop to discuss (a) the finalisation of project outputs, and (b) the sustainability of key project results, is important in improving coordination,

	cooperation and partnership, as well as honest and transparent communications for move to impact.
<b>Recommendation steps:</b>	<p>Project Manager to convene all project partners for a 1/2 day meeting in Koror</p> <p>The following items should be on the agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Each partner to present their final work and level of completion (and a discussion after each presentation as to what next steps on that particular work is from EA and/or relevant partners)</li> <li>- For those items not completed, an honest discussion as to what the challenges were</li> <li>- The target of exact ha as per indicator (Output 1.1.3. Indicator 3 - Percentage of marine and terrestrial areas increased - EOP Total Pan Site coverage 138,000 ha marine and 10,500 ha terrestrial) should be discussed and fully recorded as to what the contribution was by the project (building on the PIR 2022 measurement)</li> <li>- The sustainability of project results</li> <li>- What would be feasible/practical ways to coordinate and communicate among conservation actors for PAN and SLM work in Palau</li> <li>- How exactly gender and marginalised communities benefitted from this project and a dialogue on how this could be improved in future projects</li> </ul> <p>The workshop should be recorded and a workshop report should be written up to serve as the final project report, covering the items (as headers) above</p>
<b>Priority Level:</b>	Important
<b>Type of Recommendation:</b>	Partners
<b>Responsibility:</b>	UNEP project team to pass this recommendation to the EA to convene all partners
<b>Proposed implementation time-frame:</b>	As soon as possible

<b>Recommendation #2:</b>	<b>EA to urgently close off financial reporting and submit final reporting</b>
<b>Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:</b>	There is no final expenditure reporting nor final project reporting (the PIR 2023 while acting as a final report does not align directly to project achievements)
<b>Recommendation steps:</b>	Urgently conduct final expenditure reporting and co-finance reporting Submit final project report (as per Recommendation 1)
<b>Priority Level:</b>	Important
<b>Type of Recommendation:</b>	Partners
<b>Responsibility:</b>	UNEP project team to pass this recommendation to the EA
<b>Proposed implementation time-frame:</b>	Urgent/after final project closing workshop

<b>Recommendation #3:</b>	<b>EA and IA to set up stronger PMU structure for future GEF projects in Palau (and in general and where applicable)</b>
<b>Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:</b>	<p>Future project implementation requires more commitment to project management by MAFE, if MAFE wants to integrate the project into its organisational structure (which the evaluator tends to agree with and believes is the point of GEF catalytic impact) it is supposed to be for project sustainability and incremental transformation in terms of institutional capacity. The management of a GEF FSP is a big undertaking and no person can do this on their own, nevermind take it on part-time.</p> <p>The evaluator understands the turn around sometimes between design and implementation means that the context and priorities have changed - but this is why the inception meeting is so important and should be used to adjust the project accordingly, this is a recommendation for future projects.</p> <p>The lack of capacity and the fact that one part-time project manager was the only person coordinating this project resulted in many challenges the project could have avoided.</p>
<b>Recommendation steps:</b>	<p>For future project development, clearly outline how the PMU will be structured, the PMU should have a full-time Project Manager, and preferably also a Chief Technical Advisor (or International Technical Advisor) to support project implementation and build project management capacity. Technical expertise is not the problem in Palau (even if human resources are limited), but project management expertise is - this can be easily fixed with more thought and budget going into a structured PMU.</p> <p>A Steering Committee is also a vital part of project implementation and steps should be taken at design to ensure commitment from steering committee members to fulfil their roles and prioritise the project.</p>
<b>Priority Level:</b>	Important.
<b>Type of Recommendation:</b>	Partners and Project-level
<b>Responsibility:</b>	GEF Focal Point together with UNEP Project Team and EA
<b>Proposed implementation time-frame:</b>	12 months (for GEF-7 and GEF-8 projects).

(b) Project-level and UNEP-wide Recommendations:

<b>Recommendation #4:</b>	<p><b>Conduct a full independent audit of the project</b></p> <p><b>Note:</b> on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2024, the UNEP Evaluation Office was informed by the project team that the Executing Agency (MAFE) contracted the firm Ernst &amp; Young to conduct the audits for the missing years. The audits should be ready by June 2024. Upon receipt of the audits, the UNEP Evaluation Office will assess whether the issue raised by this recommendation (i.e., lack of financial</p>
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	expenditure reporting from the implementing partners) was adequately addressed.
<b>Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:</b>	More than 80% of the project budget was spent on sub-contracts and there is no financial expenditure reporting on this, there is no clarity on where and on what funds were spent (especially where outputs and activities were not fully achieved and/or financed by other funders), audits are missing for the majority of the project timeline.
<b>Priority Level:</b>	Important
<b>Type of Recommendation</b>	Project-level
<b>Responsibility:</b>	(The UNEP Project Team within the) Ecosystems Division
<b>Proposed implementation time-frame:</b>	As soon as possible

<b>Recommendation #5:</b>	<b>Improve oversight and guidance to projects both in design and implementation</b>
<b>Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:</b>	Too many task managers, each with their own way of doing things and in some cases contradicting each other, lack of oversight in general, and not enough guidance to a country implementing an FSP for the first time and not having enough capacity to do so
<b>Recommendation steps:</b>	<p>Conduct capacity assessments of EA and project partners at design to improve ways to structure project when it comes to design and think seriously about including a CTA/ITA when it is necessary</p> <p>Provide standardized guidance, improve handover processes between task managers</p> <p>Provide more oversight (regular meetings with EA which include an overall ethos/enabling environment for the EA to ask questions/direct support line)</p> <p>Provide better guidance in terms of social safeguarding, inclusion re marginalised communities and gender mainstreaming (through the UNEP Gender and Safeguards Unit)</p>
<b>Priority Level:</b>	Important
<b>Type of Recommendation:</b>	UNEP-wide
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Ecosystems Division
<b>Proposed implementation time-frame:</b>	12 months

## ANNEX 1: RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

**Table 12:** Response to stakeholder comments received and not fully accepted by the evaluator.

Place in text	Reviewer	Comment	Evaluator's Response
Para. 27 and 460	Sang Jin Lee	Good recommendation indeed, however, not sure if the EA has enough budget to organize the WS. If not, having a meeting virtually could be alternative option the EA could consider of "sharing on how to improve overall coordination on conservation and SLM in Palau, not only for this project but upcoming projects for future". Thanks for the detailed items listed which sound great and agree.	That can be part of the management response, however, given that all partners were given substantial amounts of funding, as well as MAFE as the EA, and did not fully deliver on the outputs, it should be their responsibility to account for all this in this meeting which could be organised at very little cost given that partners are close to each other - MAFE could host the meeting at BoE with just the key IPs.
Para. 460	Sang Jin Lee	In Rec. 4, Since the EA is planning to conduct audit right after the TE, problems addressed could be resolved at some degree. Responsibility could be addressed on EA and UNEP Project Team	An independent audit is the responsibility of UNEP - if UNEP finds that some problems are addressed through the EA and project audit that is UNEP's prerogative.
Para. 335	Paul Vrontamitis	"These are excerpts from the PCA agreement, and which do not account for periods where clarifications are required on expenditures from MAFE by UNEP, which are very common".	Comment noted, no change to paragraph made.
Para. 336	Paul Vrontamitis	"The budget revision process requires dialogue between the Implementing (UNEP) and Executing (MAFE) functions, to address, inter alia: 1). time extensions to the project, 2). changes to the project workplan, 3). total budgetary changes (increases/decreases in GEF and/or Co-finance funds) and 4). specific expenditure variances against GEF budgetary object codes + or - 10% which require UNEP approval.  Grateful if the evaluator could elaborate on what is meant by 'onset' – when was the revision	Based on multiple interviews with several stakeholders, the evaluator understood that this was an executive decision made by the Minister at the time and no formal budget changes were apparently submitted; the project partners were told these are the new amounts they would receive without too much elaboration on why these changes were made; many interviews reflected the lack of experience and knowledge on GEF and UNEP procedures and the project manager and MAFE assumed that they had more sovereignty over the money than the rules and procedures suggest. Given that this was not picked up in reporting until the evaluator came along means that there was lack of oversight

Place in text	Reviewer	Comment	Evaluator's Response
		<p>requested by MAFE sent to UNEP? We would like to know what happened such that we can put measures in place to prevent the same in future.</p> <p>That said, it is uncommon for budget revisions to occur at project start because this process is always as a result of changing project needs and the impact of these changes on expenditures/budgets."</p>	<p>(probably due to high turnover of TM and FMOs, according to evaluator opinion based on the interviews).</p> <p>It is unclear as to when exactly these changes took place as the only evidence are from the signed MOAs and the interviews. These are major changes and there should have been some written justification at inception on such major budgetary changes.</p> <p>The following changes have been made to the paragraph:</p> <p>"However, one major project budget revision was done at the onset of implementation (i.e. when the MOAs were signed and agreed upon with allocated budgets) and missed by UNEP [Footnote 53: Budget changes were conducted under the Minister of MAFE at the time and no formal budget change requests were submitted by MAFE about this. The evaluator did not have the opportunity to speak to the previous Minister nor the Minister at time of the evaluation mission as both were unavailable - however, discussions with the project manager, multiple partners as well as MAFE staff confirmed this] of which multiple partners were not informed appropriately."</p>
Para. 338	Paul Vrontamitis	<p>"Incorrect. Late disbursement funds in 2018 was because the 2016/2017 audit was not received until 6 December 2018.</p> <p>The statement that cash advance requests from 2019 were not answered until 2022 is factually incorrect. As shown below there were 6 funds transfers to MAFE between 29.01.2019 to 06.06.2022.</p> <p>1 KZ 3302242887 24.10.2016 300,000.00</p>	<p>This documentation was not fully provided, like it should have been, at the desktop phase of the evaluation. Instead, it was provided piecemeal with some documents arriving in the post-comment phase (end of January). The evaluator had to use budgets and Cash Advance Requests (all provided in different folders making it near impossible to track random excel sheets and pdf files) and this section was the result of the evidence that was provided.</p> <p>The evaluator has found some of the missing 2019 cash advance documentation based on the amounts provided here, and can now see the record as provided. However, there is still a large gap (2.5 years) where no funds were disbursed (between Q1 of 2020 and Q3 of 2022), and there are still discrepancies between the CA requests and CA transfers. As a result of this, the dates have</p>

Place in text	Reviewer	Comment	Evaluator's Response
		<p>2 KZ 3302712562 09.06.2017 325,080.11</p> <p>3 KZ 3303001240 15.11.2017 376,760.00</p> <p>4 KZ 3303211358 06.03.2018 327,517.89</p> <p>5 KZ 3303802320 29.01.2019 40,053.00</p> <p>6 KZ 3303802326 29.01.2019 779,246.00</p> <p>7 KZ 3304215216 20.09.2019 474,278.00</p> <p>8 KZ 3304529579 16.03.2020 283,598.00</p> <p>9 KZ 3305776893 06.09.2022 528,623.00</p> <p>10 KZ 3305764886 06.09.2022 58,664.00</p>	<p>been changed in this section, and the overall statement has been revised as follows:</p> <p>“There were late disbursements of funds in 2018 due to late audit receipt, although disbursements carried on until Q1 of 2020 despite no audits for 2018-2019. Cash advance requests from the beginning of 2021 (Q1 Cash Advance Request of USD627, 913) were not answered until Quarter 3 of 2022 (through two payments which do not equal the amount requested - USD 528,623 on 6 August 2022 and USD 58, 664 on 26 August 2022). The evaluator was told by UNEP that because the project had not completed its audits and financial reporting, these funds were not disbursed. The partners claimed that they stopped reporting because funds were not being disbursed. However, funds were disbursed in 2022 even though reporting was not completed” as well as a footnote (54) which is elaborated in the cell below.</p>
Para. 340	Paul Vrontamitis	<p>“UNEP received a letter form the Ministry (as shared with the Evaluator) providing justification for the delays in audit reports, which were outstanding from 2018. However, given extensive discussions between the Task Manager and MAFE on the need for these funds in support of project implementation to complete the work, additional cash advances were issued.</p>	<p>This comment refers more to the audit trail outlined in paragraph 338, rather than to the overall recommendation that an independent audit takes place in paragraph 340. In response to this comment, elaboration is provided in footnote 54, as follows:</p> <p>“At the time of finalising this report, the evaluator had in their possession the letter from the Ministry providing justification for the delays in audit reports and a request for support or advice on how to proceed. The evaluator had no further documentation on any response by UNEP on this matter. After finalisation of this</p>

Place in text	Reviewer	Comment	Evaluator's Response
		<p>The balance of delayed reporting from a Government entity and further implementation delays from funds withheld is always a difficult one. It is also important to flag that funds disbursed, beyond audit requirement reporting deadlines, are usually the exception rather than the norm."</p>	<p>report, the evaluator received information (not documented evidence, although reference was made to a UNEP country mission in February of 2018) from UNEP that in fact UNEP had had several discussions - between the Task Manager and the EA on the need of these funds in support of project implementation to complete the work, additional cash advances were issued up until Quarter 1 of 2020. In fact, a mission was conducted by the TM and the FMO at the time; the following was shared by UNEP to this effect: "During this mission, it was alleged to the FMO/TM that the GEF Operational Focal point was providing the Palau government treasury with instructions to make payments with the GEF project funds, which were not in line with project activities. At this stage, coupled with the delay in provision of 2016 and 2017 audit reports due from the auditor general, UNEP requested that MAFE undertake a bidding process for an independent private sector audit firm, or certified public accountants be engaged for the 2016 and 2017 audit. In spite of concerns raised by the Executing Agency on the unavailability of funds for such an engagement, UNEP worked with MAFE to increase the initially anticipated annual audit budget to accommodate the higher costs charged by private sector entities. The report received by UNEP in Dec 2018 was accepted". As a result, the EA was able to provide audit report for the year 2017 conducted by Deloitte and Touche. Beyond this, audits were not done, the EA stated (to the evaluator) that even with bidding not enough private auditing firms (including Deloitte and Touche) were able to do the work within the budget limitations (2018-2022). No further advances were issued between Quarter 1 of 2020 and Quarter 3 of 2022, despite cash transfer requests made. Another letter was received in the first Quarter of 2022 from the EA about the difficulty in getting the audits done, after which (according to UNEP) the letter was reviewed and fund disbursement was approved and then issued in Quarter 3 of 2022."</p>

Place in text	Reviewer	Comment	Evaluator's Response
Para. 342.b.	Paul Vrontamitis	"Incorrect. See list of disbursements above."	Changed to between Q1 of 2020 and Q3 of 2022.
Para. 347	Paul Vrontamitis	<p>"Incorrect. The Feb 2018 mission of then FMO and Task Manager - flagged a poor implementation (expenditure vs budget) rate of 1.95% in 2016 and 61.83% in 2017.</p> <p>During this mission, it was alleged to the FMO/TM that the GEF Operational Focal point was providing the Palau government treasury with instructions to make payments with the GEF project funds, which were not in line with project activities. At this stage, coupled with the delay in provision of 2016 and 2017 audit reports due from the auditor general, UNEP requested that MAFE undertake a bidding process for an independent private sector audit firm or certified public accountants be engaged for the 2016 and 2017 audit. In spite of concerns raised by the Executing Agency on the unavailability of funds for such an engagement, UNEP worked with MAFE to increase the initially anticipated annual audit budget to accommodate the higher costs charged by private sector entities. The report received by UNEP in Dec 2018 was accepted. It is unfortunate that the project did not continue along this same thread."</p>	<p>The evaluator did not receive this mission reporting despite multiple emails about missing project documentation.</p> <p>As this mission reporting is relevant to other paragraphs, it has been detailed in footnote 54 as outlined in the cells above. In addition, the statement for paragraph 347 has been revised as follows:</p> <p>"The EA stated in a letter to UNEP (in 2018) the difficulty in conducting its 2017 audit; it is clear through a mission by the UNEP in February 2018 by the Task Manager and the FMO that UNEP made efforts to find a solution to the audit delay and financial management in general (through using private auditing firms and adjusting some of the budget to allow for higher audit costs, as well as face-to-face support at the time to the Project Manager on financial reporting)[ This is information from UNEP received two months after finalisation of this report as written in comments to this report but not verified through mission reporting. As a result, the 2017 audit was conducted by Deloitte and Touche and funds were transferred later in 2018, but also in 2019 and 2020 despite no audit reports being made available for 2018 or 2019. The evaluator did not receive documentation on communication about these transfers or the lack of audits. Although UNEP in late correspondence did mention multiple conversations between the TM and the EA about this. Subsequently, there were no fund transfers from Quarter 2 of 2020 until Quarter 3 of 2022. In February of 2022, a letter from the EA to UNEP justified this lack of audits and the difficulty in getting an appropriate firm to conduct them. This was reviewed and approved, and the remaining funds were disbursed to the EA in September 2022. There is limited documentation of the communication of the overall issues in financial reporting between the EA and the IA. While there is reporting on communication on the 2017 audit issues (the letter and the 2018 resultant mission), and then the letter from 2022 (although no</p>

Place in text	Reviewer	Comment	Evaluator's Response
			reporting on the formal response from UNEP), there is a lack of reporting on communication between 2019 and 2022. This, together with the lack of communication and oversight on financial reporting of 80% of the budget that was under the auspices of the IPs (which provided no financial reporting at all), means that communication was severely limited, despite some strong effort yet adhoc attempts made by UNEP to rectify the financial management challenges."
Para. 400	Johan Robinson	Need to revise. To discuss its IA options for GEF-8 programming was one of the objectives of the mission, however, the major one was to discuss on 2022 PIR, findings/recommendations of MTR and compiling all outcomes from the project. The sentence described sounds a little bit skewed into one direction.	Revised to the following: "The evaluator was told that UNEP sent task managers more than usual to the country for this project (twice). Both missions were support missions, the second was a week long with two areas of focus (1) management responses to the MTR and support in putting together the PIR 2022, and (2) discuss UNEP's involvement in GEF-8 programming (not related to the project)."
Para. 401	Johan Robinson	The first task manager retired, portfolio manager never supported, 3 <sup>rd</sup> task manager accepted another position within UNEP, did not resign. Remove the working "limping along" since the terminology seems inappropriate, not representing most of stakeholder engaged in the project. Consideration should be given to the fact that COVID 'forced' a late MTR, and we needed to adapt.	There is inconsistency in the information provided by UNEP and EA, but this is what the evaluator understands based on the interviews and from the project documentation:  1 <sup>st</sup> Task Manager Greg Sherley (involved in design, two months into implementation retired)  2 <sup>nd</sup> (informal) Task Manager Mohamed Sessay who was Portfolio Manager in 2017 as far the evaluator is aware (but perhaps had another title?) The EA (PMU) provided much detail about the fact that the initial stages of implementation after Greg left were by Mohamed  3 <sup>rd</sup> Task Manager Stamatios Christopoulos  4 <sup>th</sup> Task Manager Manoela Passoa de Miranda  5 <sup>th</sup> (informal) Task Manager who was a temporary consultant hired during COVID to oversee region (no name provided and not in stakeholder list) - this according to notes from interview with UNEP

Place in text	Reviewer	Comment	Evaluator's Response
			<p>6<sup>th</sup> Task Manager Sang Jin Lee</p> <p>Whole section has been revised to provide more detail, see paragraphs 400-409.</p> <p>Given that the project was supposed to be implemented between Q3 of 2016 and Q3 of 2020, the MTR should have been conducted in 2018 (the earliest mention is in PIR 2020 that it was planned for end 2019, but was delayed), way before COVID-19. The first extension was only requested in 2020, without an MTR having been conducted. While COVID-19 certainly delayed the MTR, and adaptation as a result was necessary, it was not the direct cause.</p>
Para. 402	Johan Robinson	This is harsh - how if both validation and inception workshops were held, task manager and FMO attended the inception workshop, the evaluator mentions "they saw this as just a formality", seems to indicate that UNEP made an effort, changing of indicators is a formal process and need strong justification.	There should have been one inception meeting at the beginning (Q3 2016) of the project, instead two were done (one referred to as a validation workshop because the EA did not know anything about an inception workshop in 2017, and then an inception workshop based on guidance by the then task manager in 2018, a year and a half into project implementation. Indeed, based on interviews the evaluator was told that the EA saw the second inception workshop as a formality by UNEP. This section has been revised to provide more context and detail, see paragraph 403.
Para. 403	Johan Robinson	Not clear what this implies	Reworded to "Communication from UNEP was not helpful in terms of consistent guidelines, "there was no handbook for when you are implementing a project for the first time", see paragraph 404.
Para. 403	Johan Robinson	Please provide examples	See paragraphs 403 and 404, reflecting the discrepancy in guidance on the inception reporting, as well as technical and financial reporting to UNEP.
Para. 403	Johan Robinso	PMU was engaged and between PMU and UNEP decided that MTR can only be held when Palau opened up after COVID.	The evaluator has already mentioned the effect of COVID on the MTR, but even with this the MTR should have been done earlier. In fact, strictly speaking, the MTR should have taken place in 2018. See paragraph 367, where the PIR 2020 mentions the delay

Place in text	Reviewer	Comment	Evaluator's Response
			("...The mid-term review of the project, which was expected to take place late 2019 and then delayed to Q1 2020, had to be <i>further</i> delayed because of the travel restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Carrying out the MTR must take place soon after travel restrictions are lifted.")
Para. 403	Johan Robinson	This is unclear	Have revised sentence to "Project partners maintain that with the UNEP presence through SPREP being strengthened in the Pacific UNEP might have stronger presence and oversight of future projects", see paragraph 408.
Para. 405	Johan Robinson	Need to rephrase. The audit delay for the project was requested by the EA on Feb. 2022, by submitting justification letter which was reviewed and cleared by IA (finance team). After its clearance, the funds disbursement was made to carry out activities even if disbursement was delayed. In line with this, therefore, the sentence "finally, the final cash request from 2019 was released in Sep. of 2022, despite the project not having full financial reporting" needs to be revised or removed. Again, justification letter for delay of audit which was prepared and submitted on Feb. 2022 "should be" in review and clearance before releasing funds which was right approach.	Revised in paragraph 406, with reference made to the detailed elaboration in paragraph 347.  "When the new project manager took over and the technical advisor to GEF-6 was also seconded to support the closing off of deliverables in late 2022, neither UNEP nor the project could apparently confirm how much money was actually in the UNEP account at this time. Finally, the final cash request from Q1 2021 (USD 627, 913) was (partly) released in September of 2022, despite the project not having full financial reporting (see paragraph 347)"
Para. 406	Johan Robinson	Not clear what the paragraph is in support of, suggest to delete.	Revised and can be found in paragraph 407, added the following sentence:  "The evaluator notes this to highlight the high level of responsibility and oversight task managers have over multiple projects making it a difficult task to give more thorough technical and financial oversight and guidance to countries in their infancy in implementing GEF projects."
Para. 406	Johan Robinson	No evidence is given of this statement,	Evidence/examples provided. See paragraph 403.

Place in text	Reviewer	Comment	Evaluator's Response
Para. 406	Johan Robinson	This could actually have been helpful, as new project manager needed support.	Support was provided to the previous Project Manager, who then moved to another country for another assignment and the new Project Manager, who was already managing GEF6 had not been involved at all in the MTR or the management response visit by the TM.
Para. 406	Johan Robinson	Suggest that the evaluator also interview the other task managers as I am sure they will provide a different perspective.	The evaluator received the feedback from multiple different stakeholders who were involved in the design and the implementation of the project. It is not general practice to interview previous task managers who have moved on unless (a) they were involved for the majority of the project implementation, (b) there are significant contradictions and/or information missing that only they can answer. This was not the case in this project given that the main issue was lack of consistent oversight due to high turnover of TMs. The evaluator opines, given her extensive experience in project evaluations, that the project management unit and the EA, indeed required more oversight given the lack of experience of the project team in implementation (and design) of GEF projects - this was also reiterated by the majority of the 50 stakeholders interviewed. That said, two of the previous TMs were contacted at the beginning of April 2024 by the Evaluation Office. The draft evaluation report was shared with them. However, no written comments on factual inaccuracies were received.
Stakeholder Table Annex 2 referring to previous Project Manager	Johan Robinson	Was she interviewed?	Yes, the previous Project Manager was interviewed face to face online, as well as several follow up emails.  Added this into the table in Annex 2 ("Interviewed once, with several follow-up emails")
130	Stamatios Christopoulos (TM 2017-2019)	Please check if there was a PIR in 2017 and what is the meaning of half-completed	In this paragraph (see 130 (b)) the evaluator refers to the PIR 2017, so yes there is one. There is no reference in paragraph 130 to the PIR 2017 being half completed - but by half-completed the evaluator means that the PIR is missing about half of the

Place in text	Reviewer	Comment	Evaluator's Response
			information that is usual in PIRs - tables aren't completed, ratings are not given, risks were not outlined, etc.
396	Stamatios Christopoulos (TM 2017-2019)	The TM delivered extensive training, also bringing along an FMO from HQ to meet and clarify all technical/financial/admin issues of execution. There should be BTORs available.	In paragraph 408, the evaluator does include the visit by the TM to "walk through the financial and reporting requirements", reworded to "(together with the FMO) to provide guidance on project management, financial and other reporting requirements".
400	Stamatios Christopoulos (TM 2017-2019)	There were two missions during the period of 2017-2019. Unless there were more missions these two did not include MTR discussion nor GEF 8	The evaluator was informed of two missions overall, one where the TM came with the FMO to provide guidance on admin and financial and technical issues, and then one when the last TM requested to go. This is the first time the evaluator is hearing of three missions total - since no mission reporting was provided, the evaluator cannot verify this. A footnote was provided in this context: "According to one task manager, two missions were actually conducted between 2017 and 2019, this could not be verified because the evaluator did not receive the mission reporting."
	Stamatios Christopoulos (TM 2017-2019)	Indeed and that kind of TM turnaround should say something about the organization's capacity to maintain streamlined support to projects as such	No action taken
402	Stamatios Christopoulos (TM 2017-2019)	Incorrect. Adaptive management principles were ready to be applied. There has been absolutely no appetite from the EA to follow up on any agreements as per discussions during the two missions. BTORs should be available.	This together with the information received from another TM, the evaluator tends to agree here, an additional sentence added to paragraph 403: "According to task managers, various adaptive mechanisms were shared with the EA but there was no appetite to take these on board - this was true for both missions that the evaluator is aware of (i.e. financial reporting, as well as the management response to the MTR)". BTORs were not made available to the evaluator.
407	Stamatios Christopoulos (TM 2017-2019)	The MTR was discussed already during 2018 mission. BTORs should be available	The evaluator is going off the PIRs which the evaluator has elaborated on in detail across the report...no BTORs were made available to the evaluator in this regard. Even if there were discussions about the MTR, there was no oversight to ensure this

Place in text	Reviewer	Comment	Evaluator's Response
			was actually done in time. If there was a delay on the part of the EA, the Evaluation Office at UNEP could have been seconded independently to manage the MTR - given the issues in this project, that may have been the appropriate route to go here.
410	Stamatios Christopoulos (TM 2017-2019)	The PM was a regular Ministry employee who has been performing a number o focal point responsibilities for the Ministry. Was frequently on duty travel unrelated to the project yet was on project payroll. There are official communications to the portfolio manager on the same. (viz 412)	The evaluator is aware of this and has therefore added 412 as a result, although no formal comms was shared, multiple interviews supported this statement. This along with other more major discrepancies resulted in the audit requirement recommendation.

## ANNEX 2: STAKEHOLDER LIST AND COUNTRY VISIT SCHEDULE

**Table 13.** Stakeholders engaged for the GEF-5 Palau Project Terminal Evaluation

NAME	TITLE/ROLE	GENDER (F Female; M Male; O Other)	ORG/ENTITY	INTERVIEW RESULT
Johan Robinson	Currently Chief of the Biodiversity Unit/Past Portfolio Manager	M	Biodiversity Unit UNEP	Interviewed once
Sangjin Lee	Current Task Manager	M	BD/LD Unit UNEP	Interviewed multiple
Rachel Kagiri	Current FMO	F	BD/LD Unit UNEP	Interviewed once
Dolmii Remeliik	GEF-6 Project Manager/Current GEF-5 Project Manager (MAFE)	F	MAFE	Interviewed multiple
Leena Mesebeluu	Current Director of Bureau of Environment/Project Manager IW R2R, BWA representative	F	MAFE	Interviewed once
Joyce Beouch	Previous PAN Coordinator	F	PAN, MAFE	
Adelle "Lukes" Isechal	MAFE Technical Project Support	F	MAFE	Interviewed once
Regis Emesiochel	General Manager PAN Fund	M	PAN FUND	Interviewed once
Umai Basilius	Program Manager PSC	F	Policy and Planning Program, Palau Conservation Society	Interviewed multiple
Gwen Sisor	Previous Project Manager (MAFE)	F	Past MAFE	Interviewed once, with several follow-up emails
Keith Mesebeluu	Previous BOA Project Manager	M	MAFE	Interviewed once
Kevin Mesebeluu	Previous BOT Director	M	Past MAFE	Interviewed once
Yimnang Golbuu	former PICRC CEO	M	Past Palau Internation Coral Reef Center	Interviewed once
Geraldine Rengiil	Director, Research Department	F	Palau Internation Coral Reef Center - PICRC	Interviewed once
Ann Kitalong	Manager, Natural History	F	Belau National Museum	
Charlene Mersai	GEF Focal Point	F	NEPC	Interviewed once
Dave Idip	Project Support to Mapping	M	PALARIS	Interviewed once
Debbie Nagata	Ministry of Education/ curriculum development/farmer	F	Ministry of Education	Interviewed multiple
Kyarri Kazuma	National PAN Coordinator	F	PAN Office	Interviewed once
Losii Samsel	Aimeliik State Coordinator	F	Aimeliik	Interviewed once

NAME	TITLE/ROLE	GENDER (F Female; M Male; O Other)	ORG/ENTITY	INTERVIEW RESULT
Jennifer Ngiraiwet	Ngardmau State PAN Coordinator	F	Ngardmau	Interviewed once
Reva Ilemelong	Ngatpang State Coordinator	F	Ngatpang	Interviewed once
Dearlynn Rebluud	Melekeok PAN State Coordinator	F	Melekeok	Interviewed once
Anu Gupta	Completed the METTs	F	MAFE	Interviewed once
Bridget Marbou	NRFC Northern Reef Fisheries Coop	F	NRFC Executive Director	Interviewed once
Destin Penland	Ministry of Education/ curriculum development	M	Ministry of Education	Not available
Steven Victor	Minister of MAFE/ Chair of Steering Committee	M	MAFE	Not available
Mickey Towai	Senior Ranger Ngardok Nature Reserve (Melekeok)	M	PAN Office	Interviewed once
Jefferson Thomas	Ngardok Nature Reserve Community Leader and previous Chair of Board	M	Community	Not available
Felix Sengebau	CRE - BOA Partner and Senior Agricultural Extension Officer (stand in for Terebukl Tellei)/farmer	M	BOA	Interviewed once
Terebukl Tellei	BOA Project SLM Farming Best Practice Implementer	M	BOA	Not available
Noe Yalap	Chief of Horticulture, ADB Project	M	BOA Project Partner	Interviewed once
Laverne Merez	Farmer, Green Hills Farm in Ngeremlengui	F	Farmer	Interviewed once
Edwin Polloi	Division of Forests, Land and Management	M	BOA	Interviewed once
Miou Subris	Division of Forests, Land and Management	F	BOA	Interviewed once
Cheluii Swanson	Division of Forests, Land and Management	F	BOA	Interviewed once
Ngeyaol Polycarp	Division of Forests, Land and Management	M	BOA	Interviewed once
Hilary Ubedai	Member of the Board NRFC	F	NRFC	Interviewed once
Dou Ngiratrang	Member of the Board NRFC	M	NRFC	Interviewed once
Hadley Renguul	Member of the Board NRFC	M	NRFC	Interviewed once
Shirley Kembo	Aimeliik Tourist Information Centre	F	Aimeliik Tourism	Interviewed once
Sherry Koshiha	Aimeliik State Government Administrative Officer	F	Aimeliik State Government	Interviewed once
Marino Kloulubak	OSCA Ranger	M	PAN Office	Interviewed once
Ngersngai Termeteet	OSCA Ranger	M	PAN Office	Interviewed once
June Duenas	Ngerderar Watershed Management	M	Ngerderar Watershed Management	Interviewed once
Frutoso Tellei	Farm owner and Congressman	M	Farmer	Interviewed once
Ripun Ripun	Foreign Farmer	M	Farmer	Interviewed once
Carl Haruo	Division of Fisheries	M	Division of Fisheries	Interviewed once
Shari K Nicholas	Peleliu State Government Chief of Staff and Community member	F	Community	Interviewed once
Elwais Samy	Milkfish Farm, Peleliu	M	Community	Interviewed once
Romeo Merp	Milkfish Farm, Peleliu	M	Community	Interviewed once

**Table 14.** Country mission schedule for the GEF-5 Palau Project Terminal Evaluation

Date and Time	Place	Stakeholder
Wednesday, 1 November		
02:35 Justine arrival in Koror International Airport		
18:00	Hotel Justine Koror	Dolmii Remeliik meeting
Thursday, 2 November		
09:00-10:00 (08:45)	Pan Fund Office (Koror, Malakal, Bureau of Fisheries Building)	Regis Emesiochel, PAN Fund
11:30	Coffee Berry, Koror	Debbie Negata, Ministry of Education
14:00-15:30	Coffee Berry, Koror	Umai Basilius, PCS
16:00	Garden Palace, Koror	Kevin Mesebeluu, BOT
20:00	Google Meet	Melvira Kazuma, PAN Office
Friday, 3 November		
09:00-09:50	MAFE, Koror	Adelle Isechal, MAFE
10:00 - 11:00	Belau National Museum, Koror	Ann Kitalong, Belau National Museum
11:30 - 12:30	TNC Office (on PICRC grounds)	Yimnang Golbuu, PICRC (former), (now TNC)
12:30-14:00	Lunch with Dolmii and maybe Fabian from BOT	
14:00-15:00	PICRC Office	Geraldine Rengiil, PICRC

Date and Time	Place	Stakeholder
16:00 - 17:00	PALARIS, Bureau of Budget and Planning, Ministry of Finance	Charlene Mersai, NEPC
Saturday, 4 November		
09:00-12:00	Melekeok	Dearlynn Rebluud (Programme Manager/Site Coordinator)  Mickey Towai (Senior Ranger)  Absent: Jefferson Thomas (Community leader, used to be Chairman of Board, did not answer phone)
12:00-14:00	Arai	Debbie's Farm (head of Women's Group farming Taro, Cassava, Sweet Potato etc)
Sunday, 5 November		
	Rest/Write-up	
Monday, 6 November		
8:30 AM - 2 PM (08:00 pick up)	BOA Office and Nursery - Ngechesar  Ngchesar  Aimeliik	Felix Sengebau, BOA Partner & Farmer (Senior Extension Officer, CRE, stand in for Mr Terebukl Tellei from BOA)  Noe Yalap, Chief of Horticulture, ADB Project  Laverne Merep, Farmer, Green Hills Farm in Ngeremlengui  Division of Forests, Land and Water Management: Edwin Polloi, Miou Subris, Cheluil Swanson, Ngeyaol Polycarp
15:30	Coffee Berry, Koror	Keith Mesebeluu, BOA
Tuesday, 7 November		
08:30	Koror	Bridget Marbou, NRFC

Date and Time	Place	Stakeholder
	TBD Northern Reefs (NRFC HQ)	Hilary Ubedei Dou Ngiratrang Hadley Renguul
15:45-16:45	PALARIS, Koror	Dave Idip, PALARIS
Wednesday, 8 November		
08:30	Aimeliik	Shirley Kembo, Aimeliik Tourist Information Centre  Sherry Koshiba, Administrative Officer for Aimeliik State Government
11:30	Ngardmau (OSCA)	Marino Kloulubak, OSCA Ranger Ngersngai Termeteet, OSCA Ranger
13:30	Ngerderar Watershed (Aimeliik State)	June Duenas Visited women's market at entrance
14:30	Melekeok Farm	Frutoso Tellei (Farm owner and congressman) Ripun Ripun (Foreign Farmworker)
Thursday, 9 November		
08:00 - 15:00	Peleliu PAN	Carl Haruo, Division of Fisheries Shari K Nicholas (Chief of Staff, Peleliu State Government, Community Member) Elwais Samy, Romeo Merp (Milkfish Farm, community members)
16:00	Belau National Museum	Ann Kitalong, BNM Sholeh Hanser, BNM

Date and Time	Place	Stakeholder
Friday, 10 November		
9:00	Coffee Berry	Leena Mesebeluu, Director of Bureau of Environment
10:30	Coffee Berry	Joyce Beouch
14:00	Pick up documents at PCS	Umai Basilius, PCS
12:00-14:00; 14:30-17:00	Wrap up and remaining time spent with Project Manager, document checks and final interview	Dolmii Remeliik, MAFE
21:50 Justine departure Koror International Airport		

## ANNEX 3: PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

**Table 15:** Expenditure by Component for the GEF-5 Palau Project

Component/sub-component/output <i>All figures as USD</i>	Estimated cost at design (USD) Source: (PRODOC)/Original Budget <sup>73</sup>	Actual Cost/ expenditure (USD)	Expenditure ratio (actual/planned)
Component 1	USD 2,139,344	*	*
Component 2	USD 858,400	*	*
Component 3	USD 571,500	*	*
Project Management	USD 178,462	*	*
	<b>USD 3,747,708</b>	<b>USD 3,575,574**</b>	<b>95.4%**</b>

\* Did not receive this as FMO was not reporting budget under this (was not a requirement during project implementation)

\*\* Final expenditure reporting was not received from the EA to the IA FMO at the time of writing of the TE report and these figures reflect the expenditures up to Q4 of 2022 only

**Table 16.** Financial Management Table of the GEF-5 Palau Project

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
<b>1. Adherence to UNEP policies and regulations</b>			
Adherence to policies and regulations		HU	Various discrepancies found, no reporting from partners on expenditures (sub contracting budget of more than 80%), not all budget revisions formalised, no final reporting, audits for only two years
<b>2. Completeness of project financial information<sup>74</sup>:</b>		HU	
Provision of key documents to the evaluator (based on the responses to A-G below)			
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Yes, well outlined at design, including separate excel budget for co-finance
B.	Revisions to the budget	No	Received all three budget revisions but one budget revision was not formalised
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	Received all fund-related MOAs with EAs, but missing various contracts and MOAs between partners and smaller contracts
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	All cash requests received
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Not really	Co-financing reporting really good from partners up until 2019, then not; no co-financing final reporting received
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	No	No final expenditure reporting received
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (where applicable)	Yes	Received the audits and the letters about the difficulty in doing audits, audits not done for 5/7 years
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list): <i>legal letters of delayed funds disbursement between UNEP and Executing Agency</i>	No	There was no expenditure reporting by the partners, given this was more than 80% of the entire GEF budget, and that several deliverables were not met, this was a necessary reporting requirement in the evaluator opinion
Any gaps in terms of financial information that could be indicative of shortcomings in the project's compliance <sup>75</sup> with the UNEP or donor rules		Yes	Serious gaps in financial expenditure information, recommending an independent audit
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the evaluation process		MS	The evaluator had to request several times, there were delays. The evaluator managed to have a meeting with the very busy FMO who

<sup>73</sup> The amount in the prodoc does not coincide with the amount in the

<sup>74</sup> See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference

<sup>75</sup> Compliance with financial systems is not assessed specifically in the evaluation. Nevertheless, if the evaluation identifies gaps in the financial data, or raises other concerns of a compliance nature, a recommendation should be given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.

		is temporarily based in Jamaica on another project, the FMO had not received the financial expenditure reporting from the EA
<b>3. Communication between finance and project management staff</b>	U	
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.	MU	During project timeline there was a lot of confusion even to a point in 2022 where neither the IA nor the EA knew if there was still >500k in the account. At the time of TE, there was a good understanding from both of the amount of remaining budget although no financial expenditure reporting was done
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.	U	Last disbursement was done 2 years later than the cash advance request was done even though reporting had still not conformed to the initial reporting obligations
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.	U	The project manager sent letters addressing the difficulty in obtaining audits given the budget and audit firms available, UNEP did not address this, the delay in disbursing the funds has serious implications on reporting and implementation of the project between 2019-2022
Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.	MU	Too many FMO turnovers, not enough communication, turnover of PM also did not help, reporting generally okay for some periods and then non-existing up to end
<b>Overall rating</b>	U	<b>TE recommends an external audit</b>

**Table 17.** Co-financing Table for the GEF-5 Palau Project

Co-financing (Type/Source)	UNEP own Financing (US\$1,000)		Other* (US\$1,000)		Total (US\$1,000)		Total Disbursed (US\$1,000)
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
- In-kind support							
- Other (*) -cash							
<b>Totals</b>							

NOTE: no final co-financing reporting was received

**Table 18.** Co-financing committed versus actual per partner for the GEF-5 Palau Project

Committed	Actual co-financing
UNEP: USD 0	UNEP: USD 0
Third-party:	Third-party: <i>No final co-financing reporting was received, some partners reported co-finance expenditure in 2017 and 2018</i>
PAN Office: USD 4,000,000 (cash) USD 400,000 (in-kind) Belau National Museum USD 500,000 (in-kind) Bureau of Arts and Culture USD 500,000 (in-kind) Bureau of Land and Survey USD 500,000 (in-kind) Bureau of Fisheries (previously Marine Resources) USD 1,000,000 (in-kind) Bureau of Agriculture USD 800,000 (in-kind) Bureau of Tourism USD 300,000 (in-kind) Palau International Coral Reef Center USD 2,500,000 (in-kind) Palau Conservation Society USD 700,000 (in-kind) PALARIS USD 500,000 (in-kind) Palau Public Lands Authority USD 200,000 (in-kind)	

Committed	Actual co-financing
The Nature Conservancy Palau USD 200,000 (in-kind) EQPB USD 200,000 (in-kind) Palau Visitors Authority USD 200,000 (in-kind) States (all in-kind): Koror (USD 1,000,000) Angaur (USD 250,000) Melekeok (USD 250,000) Ngiwal (USD 250,000) Airal (USD 250,000) Ngaraard (USD 250,000) Ngatpang (USD 250,000) Ngardmau (USD 200,000) Aimeliik (USD 200,000) Ngarchelong (USD 200,000)	
<b>Total: USD 15,800,000 (USD 11,800,000 in-kind)</b>	<b>Total: USD</b>

## **ANNEX 4: LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED**

Documents reviewed for the GEF-5 Palau Project Terminal Evaluation include:

- Evaluation Terms of Reference
- GEF MSP Project Document and Annexes and CEO Endorsement Request and Annexes
- GEF Submission and Review Documentation
- Project PIRs
- All project agreements and amendments thereof (several missing)
- Quarterly Progress Reports (from partners up until 2019)
- Initial Budget Plans, Budget Revisions
- Financial Reporting, including co-financing and all expenditure reports (final and partner-level missing)
- All component-related outputs, publications and extras
- Steering Committees written reports and minutes
- Outreach and Communications materials (of which some missing)
- Training reporting (of which some missing)
- No-cost extension requests and approval documentation
- Additional email communications requested for verification and triangulations
- Mid-Term Review and Management Response

## ANNEX 5: GEF PORTAL INPUTS

The following table contains text to be uploaded to the GEF Portal. **It will be drawn from the Evaluation Report, either as copied or summarised text.** In each case, references should be provided for the paragraphs and pages of the report from which the responses have been copied or summarised.

### GEF portal inputs

<p><b>Question:</b> What was the performance at the project's completion against Core Indicator Targets? (For projects approved prior to GEF-7<sup>76</sup>, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided<sup>77</sup>).</p>
<p><b>Response:</b> (Might be drawn from Monitoring and Reporting section) Project was GEF-5 and thus this question is not relevant (as per footnote 65). That said, measurement on GEF indicator framework with regard to GEB's (ha) was limited.</p>
<p><b>Question:</b> What were the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program as evolved from the time of the MTR? (This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval)</p>
<p><b>Response:</b> (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section) There was no stakeholder engagement plan; however stakeholders were sufficiently involved in the project through extensive stakeholder engagements, socio-economic surveys, co-creation meetings. Challenges to this were a result of COVID-19 restrictions and overall did not significantly impact the level of stakeholder engagement or support.</p>
<p><b>Question:</b> What were the completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas? (This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent)</p>
<p><b>Response:</b> (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section) Despite gender mainstreaming being culturally and politically speaking quite strong in Palau (also in terms of matrilineal societies), overall marginalised and vulnerable societies were not as prioritised as planned in the project document.</p>
<p><b>Question:</b> What was the progress made in the implementation of the management measures against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval? The risk classifications reported in the latest PIR report should be verified and the findings of the effectiveness of any measures or lessons learned taken to address identified risks assessed. (Any supporting documents gathered by the Consultant during this review should be shared with the Task Manager for uploading in the GEF Portal)</p>
<p><b>Response:</b> (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section) There was no safeguards plan.</p>
<p><b>Question:</b> What were the challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions? (This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)</p>
<p><b>Response:</b> (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section) Overall strong communications and outreach from partners to stakeholders but weak communications between project partners and limited organisational or coordinated effort for knowledge management, mostly due to ineffective project management and coordination.</p>
<p><b>Question: What are the main findings of the evaluation?</b></p>

<sup>76</sup> The GEF is currently operating under the seventh replenishment period of the GEF Trust Fund covering the period July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2022. The GEF Portal Reporting Guide for FY20 Reporting Process indicates that GEF-6 projects that have yet to map existing indicators to GEF-7 Core Indicators need to do so at MTR stage or (if already there) at the time of the TE. (i.e. not GEF projects approved before GEF-6)

<sup>77</sup> This is not applicable for Enabling Activities

**Response:**

Despite partial delivery of project results, achievement was significant enough to have high probability of likelihood in terms of impact

Project management and coordination was severely limited and resulted in ineffective reporting, implementation and collection of project results and deliverables

Project financial reporting was also severely limited and project requires an external audit

Project oversight was limited due to high task manager turnover and inconsistent advisory support

Project overambitious but set the country on a strong pathway of learning and improving and moving towards healthy ecosystems and SLM across country

## ANNEX 6: EVALUATION TORS (WITHOUT ANNEXES)

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project

“Advancing sustainable resource management to improve livelihoods and protect biodiversity in Palau” (GEF ID 5208)

#### Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

##### 1. Project General Information

Table 1. Project summary

<b>GEF Project ID:</b>	5208		
<b>Implementing Agency:</b>	UNEP	<b>Executing Agency:</b>	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and the Environment (MAFE), formerly know as Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism (MNRET).  Office of Environmental Response and Coordination (OERC)
<b>Relevant SDG(s) and indicator(s):</b>	SDG1, SDG 2; SDG 3, SDG 8; SDG 12, SDG13 and SDG15.		
<b>GEF Core Indicator Targets (identify these for projects approved prior to GEF-7)</b>	N/A (This is GEF-5)		
<b>Sub-programme:</b>	<p>PoW 2014-2015 SP3 Ecosystem Management</p> <p>PoW 2016-2017 SP3 Ecosystem Management</p> <p>PoW 2018-2019 Healty and Productive Ecosystems (SP3)</p> <p>PoW 2020-2021 Healty and Productive Ecosystems (SP3)</p> <p>PoW 2022-2023 Nature Action</p>	<b>Expected Accomplishment(s):</b>	<p>PoW 2014-2015 EA(a): Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased Indicator: (i) Increase in the number of countries integrating the ecosystem approach with traditional sector-based natural resource management.</p> <p>PoW 2016-2017 EA(a): Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased Indicators: (i) Increased percentage of countries integrating the ecosystem approach into sector-based natural resource management, with the assistance of UNEP (iv) Increased percentage of area managed using an ecosystem approach out of the total area covered by countries, with the assistance of UNEP</p> <p>PoW 2018-2019 EA(a) The health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sector and transboundary collaboration frameworks<sup>33</sup> at the national and international levels(i) Increase in the number of countries and transboundary collaboration frameworks that have made progress to monitor and maintain the health and productivity of marine and terrestrial ecosystems<sup>34</sup> Unit of measure: Number of countries and transboundary collaboration frameworks</p>

			<p>(iv) Increase in the number of education institutions that integrate the ecosystem approach in education frameworks</p> <p>PoW 2020-2021 EA(a) The health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sectoral and transboundary collaboration frameworks<sup>47</sup> at the national and international levels (i) The number of countries and transboundary collaboration frameworks that have made progress in monitoring and maintaining the health and productivity of marine and terrestrial ecosystems with the assistance of UNEP (iv) The number of education institutions that integrate the ecosystem approach into education frameworks with the assistance of UNEP</p> <p>PoW 2022-2023 (2.3) Productive land- and seascapes and freshwater are sustainably managed (2.7) Nature assets are valued, monitored and sustainably managed</p>
<b>UNEP approval date:</b>	15.09.2016 (PCA, 2016)	<b>Programme of Work Output(s):</b>	
<b>GEF approval date:</b>	28.04.2016 (PCA, 2016)	<b>Project type:</b>	Full-sized Project
<b>GEF Operational Programme #:</b>		<b>Focal Area(s):</b>	Biodiversity, Land Degradation, Sustainable Forest Management (REDD), International Waters
		<b>GEF Strategic Priority:</b>	<p>BD-1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems BD-2: Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors LD-3: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape SFM/REDD-1: Reduce pressures on forest resources and generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services IW-1: strengthening national blue economy opportunities to reduce threats to marine and coastal environment</p>
<b>Expected start date:</b>	January 2016	<b>Actual start date:</b>	15 September 2016
<b>Planned operational completion date:</b>	December 2019	<b>Actual operational completion date:</b>	September 2023
<b>Planned project budget at approval:</b>	\$ 19,547,706	<b>Actual total expenditures reported as of [date]:</b>	3,652,268 as of 12/7/2023
<b>GEF grant allocation:</b>	\$ 3,747,706	<b>GEF grant expenditures reported as of [date]:</b>	3,652,268 as of 12/7/2023
<b>Project Preparation Grant - GEF financing:</b>	\$ 110,100	<b>Project Preparation Grant - co-financing:</b>	
<b>Expected Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:</b>	\$ 15,800,000	<b>Secured Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:</b>	13,779,427 as of Q2 2021
<b>Date of first disbursement:</b>	25/10/2016	<b>Planned date of financial closure:</b>	September 2023

<b>No. of formal project revisions:</b>	3	<b>Date of last approved project revision:</b>	March 2023	
<b>No. of Steering Committee meetings:</b>	2	<b>Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:</b>	Last: Apr. 2019	Next: July 2023 (expected)
<b>Mid-term Review/Evaluation (planned date):</b>	January 2018	<b>Mid-term Review/Evaluation (actual date):</b>	March 2022	
<b>Terminal Evaluation (planned date):</b>	December 2019	<b>Terminal Evaluation (actual date):</b>	August 2023	
<b>Coverage - Country(ies):</b>	Republic of Palau	<b>Coverage - Region(s):</b>	Asia Pacific	
<b>Dates of previous project phases:</b>	N/A	<b>Status of future project phases:</b>	N/A	

## 2. Project Rationale

1) Palau has been blessed with an exceptional array of biological diversity, both on land and in the ocean. The marine sector has diverse marine habitats within a relatively limited area and is home to diverse and abundant endemic, native, and endangered marine life (Colin, 2009). Palau's forests and terrestrial diversity are the most biodiverse in Micronesia (Olkeriil, 2012; Kitalong, 2010; Costion, 2007) and its population is highly reliant on its natural resources for both subsistence and commercial livelihoods. Palau's marine environment underpins tourism, the nation's primary economic industry.

2) Even though urbanization and development have resulted in substantial changes to the environment in some areas, much of Palau's environment is still in a healthy state (BOA, 2013; CRRF and Palau Forestry, 2013). This, combined with its exceptional variety of biodiversity, makes it a critical area for protection. Preserving healthy terrestrial and marine ecosystems is not only important to protect biological diversity and to secure the country's economic base, but also a fundamental requirement towards attaining food security and livelihoods for local communities.

3) Palau has a growing and robust environmental sector, with active participants from government, nonprofit, academic, and business sectors. There are links between traditional and modern best practices and governance systems. Political administrations have recognized the dependence of Palauans on the natural environment for direct sustenance and monetary income, and numerous environmental issues and offices have been elevated to the national level.

4) In the past decade, Palau has sought to institutionalize two areas of conservation management: 1) The Protected Areas Network (PAN) as a coordinated national framework for aligning and standardizing management of protected areas, and 2) the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Initiative, which seeks to align, standardize, and minimize broader impacts of land use. However, there are still many gaps in coordination between environmental and conservation actors (whether government or civil society), understanding, and capacity to fully achieve national environmental goals.

5) The UNEP/GEF project '**Advancing sustainable resource management to improve livelihoods and protect biodiversity in Palau**' (GEF ID 5208) sought to fill key gaps and capitalize on existing investments and gains.

6) The project aimed to accomplish three strategic components:

- Strengthen the Protected Areas Network (PAN);
- Implement a National Sustainable Land Management (SLM) policy; and
- Develop an effective method for coordinating PAN and SLM policies and activities and addressing cross-sector issues.

7) The PAN has been operational for over a decade and has improved drastically in its performance in the past years. The current structure of the PAN directs the majority of its funds to PAN sites, which by Constitutional Authority are owned by individual states. However, technical expertise is most often provided at the national level. This project aimed to invest in the last few steps at the national level to complete establishing the PAN, including developing an overarching, scientifically-based plan and finalizing monitoring and evaluation tools and protocols that indicate management effectiveness.

8) SLM has been recognized as essential for securing gains made from protected areas and PAN and for ensuring national goals such as food security. This project aimed to invest in key "kickstarter" actions that will provide momentum for SLM.

9) This project aimed to address the following broad threats to biodiversity in Palau:

- Climate change, which is directly affecting the environment and further compounding other stressors;
- Loss and degradation of natural habitat by direct stressors, including ridge-to-reef impacts from erosion and nonpoint source pollution;
- Displacement of native species by invasive alien species; and
- Illegal harvest of biological resources (forest and marine).

### 3. Project Results Framework

10) The **goal** of the project was to improve livelihoods and protect biodiversity (Project Document, 2016).

11) The project **objective** was to effectively and sustainably use biodiversity and maintain ecosystem goods and services in Palau by building institutional capacity to integrate the Palau Protected Area Network (PAN) with the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) initiative, and fostering a ridge-to-reef approach across and within these initiatives (Project Document, 2016).

12) Table 2 below summarizes the project outcomes and outputs. The Terminal Evaluation will assess the project's performance based on the version of the project's intended results in the approved Project Document (2016). The Task Manager confirmed that no changes were made to the Results Framework during the project implementation.

**Table 2. Results Framework (Mid-Term Review, 2022)**

Project components	Planned Outputs	Expected Outcomes
COMPONENT 1 Improving Palau's Protected Area Network (PAN)	1.1.1 IMPROVED DESIGN: A National PAN Management Strategy and Action Plan is developed and endorsed by 2017; and the National and associated State Plans 1) align with SLM in the 4 core areas and with regional projects such as R2R, 2) engage all 16 states, and 3) cover gaps and ensure representative coverage of sites, species, and ecosystem functions, and 4) address the applicability of national, regional, and global goals and benefit-sharing	Outcome 1.1 Improved Design, Evaluation, and implementation of the PAN leads to increased engagement by states, improved coverage of sites, species, and ecosystem functions, and increased conservation effectiveness.
	1.1.2 IMPROVED EVALUATION: Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (METT): Agree on a set of 3 harmonized national and state level PAN site monitoring and evaluation tools and protocols (1 marine, 1 terrestrial, 1 socio-economic) which are aligned with METT, with full trial and evaluation of Palau's METT tool in at least 9 PAN sites by the end of the Project	
	1.1.3. IMPROVED IMPLEMENTATION: At least 4 PAN sites meet a minimum METT score, and at least 5 other sites show improving trends toward effective conservation (e.g. reduction in over/illegal harvesting) by the end of the Project and total area protected.	
COMPONENT 1 Improving Palau's Protected Area Network (PAN)	1.2.1 IMPROVED ENGAGEMENT: An outreach program reaching at least 80% of stakeholders in 8 states results in communities that are measurably more aware and supportive of PAN and increasing active participation in management of PAN Sites.	Outcome 1.2 PAN management capacity (engagement, training, and financial) and coordination improved across sectors and across governance levels and results in benefits across genders and for marginalized populations in outlying states.
	1.2.2 IMPROVED TRAINING: The number of trained, certified PAN Staff increases by at least 15 and benefits some marginalized populations in outlying states.	
	1.2.3 IMPROVED FINANCING: PAN revenue generation assessment from local and non-local sources at project inception (baseline) and project end show diversified financial support at the national and state levels and alignment with regional programs such as the Micronesia Challenge, and benefits are shared widely with gender and environmental safeguards in place.	
COMPONENT 2 Effective Implementation of Palau's Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Policy	2.1.1. IMPROVED COORDINATION: A national coordinating mechanism and body for SLM with representatives from at least 6 sectors and levels of government is operational and includes associated	Outcome 2.1 Improved and effective planning, alignment, and coordination of the Palau SLM Policy

	<p>capacity building and resourcing to ensure its function.</p> <p>2.1.2 IMPROVED COORDINATION: A national coordinating mechanism and body for SLM with representatives from at least 6 sectors and levels of government is operational and includes associated capacity building and resourcing to ensure its function.</p>	
	<p>2.2.1 INCREASED LAND USE PLANNING: State SLM Plans for at least 4 states are developed, tested, and implemented</p> <p>2.2.2 IMPROVED LAND USE: Best Practices for multiple land uses are identified, tested, promoted; and capacity to implement them is built, particularly among vulnerable populations such as women and foreign farmers.</p> <p>2.2.3. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: Improved national level tourism planning and state level implementation of tourism leads to benefits realized across genders and socioeconomic levels.</p>	<p>Outcome 2.2 Increased implementation of the SLM Policy in the key sectors of land use planning, land uses, and tourism development.</p>
<p>COMPONENT 3 Integrated Coordination, Mainstreaming and Project Management</p>	<p>3.1.1 Improved capacity of MAFE to act as the National coordinating body for Palau's environmental sector.</p> <p>3.1.2 MoAFE effectively implementing, reporting, and evaluating Project.</p> <p>3.1.3 Two-way peer learning approach fostered through participation in regional initiatives (Micronesia Challenge, Ridge to Reef, Integrated Water Resource Management, etc.) and uses multiple forms of communication and media to share lessons from the project.</p>	<p>Outcome 3.1 Effective coordination role by the MoAFE for this Project and environmental actions in Palau, including through facilitating information-sharing and two-way learning and thereby ensuring benefit sharing among a wide population.</p>
	<p>3.2.1 Enable effective cross-sectoral coordination of PAN and SLM policies</p> <p>3.2.2 Streamline forest management across sectors, government levels, and within watersheds with at least 1/3 of native forest under protection and sustainable management (2100 ha in PAN sites and an additional 6000 ha in SFM catchments)</p> <p>A national biosecurity policy agreed upon with legislation drafted and with at least 2 invasive alien species (IAS) risk reduction or eradications achieved that demonstrates a harmonized approach by PAN and SLM</p> <p>3.2.3 At least 4 states have SLM and PAN plans aligned with climate change adaptation plans, with at least one modelling a gender-inclusive approach to climate change adaptation</p>	<p>Outcome 3.2 Effective national and state coordination of PAN, SLM and associated cross-sector issues</p>

#### 4. Executing Arrangements

13) As the GEF Implementing Agency (IA), UNEP provided the overall supervision and guidance for the project through its Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit, part of the Biodiversity and Land Branch of the Ecosystems Division (the Task Manager was based in the UNEP Pacific sub-regional office). This included responsibility for, in conjunction with the various project partners and especially the GEF 5 Project Steering Committee (PSC), aspects of monitoring and evaluation, including organizing project reviews, approving annual implementation work plans and any needed budget revisions, monitoring progress, and identifying problems and actions to improve the project.

14) The Office of Environmental Response and Coordination (OERC), part of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism (MNRET), now Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and the Environment (MAFE), was the Executing Agency (EA) of the project. In this role OERC managed the project including the midterm and final review

(financial and progress), facilitate information sharing and coordination (including membership to committees and coordinating bodies) and shared information and lessons learned on cross-sector issues with the Ridge to Reef Programme and the Micronesia Challenge, and other international projects (such as the PACC programme through SPREP/UNDP).

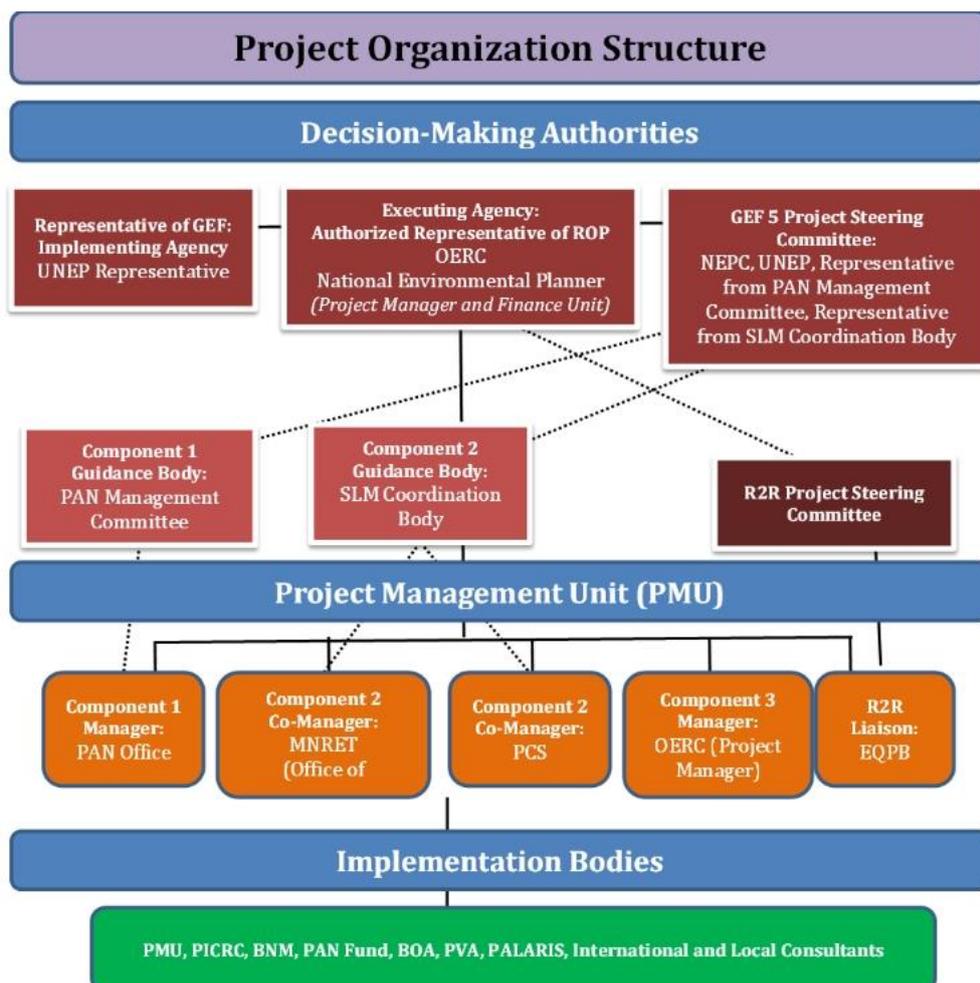
15) For the project execution, a multi-partner PSC was established to guide project decisions, oversee implementation, and conduct reporting and evaluation, which was comprised of the National Environmental Protection Council (NEPC), and representatives from UNEP, the PAN Management Committee and the SLM Coordinating Body. A smaller Project Management Unit (PMU) consisting of OERC, Palau Conservation Society (PCS), PAN Office, MNRET, and Environmental Quality Protection Board (EQPB) met more regularly.

16) A Project Manager was hired and placed within OERC to oversee day to day execution of the project and implement coordination activities. The Project Manager was also responsible for managing Component 3 and reported to the head of OERC, the National Environmental Planner, who had overall responsibility for implementation of the project. The PAN Office under MNRET was Component 1 Manager. MNRET and OERC ensured that the PAN Management Committee was established as the steering committee for this component. This committee included representatives from every state with a PAN site. MNRET and PCS shared project management duties for Component 2 and thus were Component 2 Co-Managers.

17) Together the Component Managers (1, 2, 3), the Project Manager, and the National Environmental Planner formed the PMU. The PMU represented a core group of individuals from the PAN Office, PCS, and MNRET's Office of the Minister with close working ties to the project. The PMU differed from the PSC, which was a larger body of stakeholders with interests in the progress and outcomes of the project. OERC acted as both EA with decision-making authority, and as a Component Manager (and thus a member of the PMU) with implementing responsibilities. Different individuals at OERC oversaw those responsibilities, with the Project Manager overseeing implementation and Palau's National Environmental Planner (head of OERC) holding decision-making authority.

**Figure 1** shows the reporting and coordination structure of the project.

Figure 1. Organigram of Management Arrangements



## 5. Project Cost and Financing

18) The total cost of the approved full-sized project was US\$ 19,547,706, which comprised of US\$ 3,747,706 funding from the GEF Trust Fund and planned co-financing (cash and in-kind) of US\$ 15,800,000, of which US\$ 4,000,000 in cash from the Protected Areas Network (PAN) and US\$ 11,800,000 of in-kind contributions, as reported in Table 3 below. The total co-finance committed to the project to be mobilized during the course of implementation represented over 80% of the total cost of the project. Table 3 and table 4 show the planned project budget and cost by project component.

**Table 3. Overall Project Budget and Co-finance**

	US\$	%
<b>Cost to the GEF Trust Fund</b>	3,747,706	19.2%
<b>Co-financing</b>	15,800,000	80.8%
<b>Co-financing Details:</b>		
<i>Cash</i>		
Protected Areas Network (PAN)	4,000,000	20.4%
<i>In-Kind</i>		
Belau National Museum	500,000	2.6%
Bureau of Arts and Culture	500,000	2.6%
Bureau of Land and Survey	500,000	2.6%
Bureau of Fisheries (previously Marine Resources)	1,000,000	5.1%
Bureau of Agriculture	800,000	4.1%
Bureau of Tourism	300,000	1.5%
Protected Areas Network (PAN)	400,000	2.0%
Palau International Coral Reef Center	2,500,000	12.8%
Palau Conservation Society	700,000	3.6%
PALARIS	500,000	2.6%
Palau Public lands Authority	200,000	1.0%
The Nature Conservancy – Palau Office	200,000	1.0%
EQPB	200,000	1.0%
Palau Visitors Authority	200,000	1.0%
Koror State	1,000,000	5.1%
Angaur State	250,000	1.3%
<i>Babeldaob States</i>		9.4%
Melekeok State	250,000	1.3%
Ngiwal State	250,000	1.3%
Airai state	250,000	1.3%
Ngaraard State	250,000	1.3%
Ngatpang State	250,000	1.3%
Ngardmau State	200,000	1.0%
Aimeliik State	200,000	1.0%
Ngarchelong State	200,000	1.0%
UNEP	200,000	1.0%
<i>Sub-total, In-Kind</i>	11,800,000	60.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,547,706</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Table 4. Overall Project Budget and Co-finance by Component**

	GEFTF	Co-financing	Total
<b>Component 1</b>	2,139,344	9,900,000	<b>12,039,344</b>
<b>Component 2</b>	858,400	4,250,000	<b>5,108,400</b>
<b>Component 3</b>	571,500	1,450,000	<b>2,021,500</b>
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>3,569,244</b>	<b>15,600,000</b>	<b>19,169,244</b>
<b>Management</b>	178,462	200,000	<b>378,462</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,747,706</b>	<b>15,800,000</b>	<b>19,547,706</b>

19) Actual co-finance during the project amounted to 13,779,427 (as of December 2020). Project revisions were undertaken to revise annual expenditure and commitments to the GEF Trust Fund during the implementation of the project. Annual expenditures are presented in table 5.

**Table 5. Annual expenditures to the GEF Trust Fund**

Year	Amount/ US\$
2016	258,130.00
2017	694,528.00
2018	380,884.00
2019	1,302,283.00
2020	280,327.00
2021	49,045.00
2022	617,287.00
2023	
<b>Total</b>	

## 6. Implementation Issues

20) The project was expected to have a duration of four years (September 2016 - August 2020). However, as emerged from the Mid-Term Review (2022), the project faced a number of challenges which affected its implementation and administration.

21) A major issue consisted in the high turnover of UNEP staff at all levels relevant to the project but in particular UNEP Task Managers (TMs), with significant periods of the project implementation time frame with interim TMs or without any designated one. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic added an extra burden on the implementation of project activities by delaying and altering the way in which some activities were conducted, meetings for example.

22) A combination of all of these challenges led the project to apply for three no-cost extensions. The first no-cost extension (approved in April 2021) extended the project till March 2022. The second no-cost extension (approved in June 2022) extended the project till March 2023. Lastly, a third no-cost extension (approved in March 2023) extended the project and the Project Cooperation Agreement at no additional cost for six months, till 30 September 2023 to achieve the overall objective of the Project.

23) The Mid-Term Review (MTR) (finalised in March 2022) raised five recommendations specific to this project, most of which with immediate action. These recommendations addressed the need for:

- Enhanced coordination between the Implementing and Executing Agencies;
- Gathering and making all project outputs and deliverables available to project partners, reviewers, UNEP and other interested parties;
- In case of a new no-cost extension, focusing on organizing, finishing and maximizing the effectiveness of project outputs and outcomes already near completion rather than starting new activities;
- Reinstating formal coordination meetings between project management and project implementers;
- Training community members and PAN staff in forest monitoring protocols;

24) Moreover, the MTR raised two recommendations for consideration for future projects: Externally executed projects should consider independent project managers or engage NGOs for overall project coordination;

A review of project management capacity should be carried out prior to project implementation.

## Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

### 6. Objective of the Evaluation

25) In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme Manual, the Terminal Evaluation is undertaken at operational completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The Evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and Belau National Museum, Bureau of Agriculture, Bureau of Tourism, Environmental Quality Protection Board, Protected Areas Network Fund, Protected Areas Network Office, Palau Conservation Society, Palau International Coral Reef Center. Therefore, the Evaluation will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation, especially where a second phase of the project is being considered. Recommendations relevant to the whole house may also be identified during the evaluation process.

### 7. Key Evaluation Principles

26) Evaluation findings and judgements will be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the Evaluation Report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) as far as possible,

and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned (whilst anonymity is still protected). Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

27) **The “Why?” Question.** As this is a Terminal Evaluation and a follow-up project is likely [or similar interventions are envisaged for the future], particular attention will be given to learning from the experience. Therefore, the “why?” question should be at the front of the consultants’ minds all through the evaluation exercise and is supported by the use of a theory of change approach. This means that the consultant(s) needs to go beyond the assessment of “what” the project performance was and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of “why” the performance was as it was (i.e. what contributed to the achievement of the project’s results). This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project.

28) **Attribution, Contribution and Credible Association:** In order to *attribute* any outcomes and impacts to a project intervention, one needs to consider the difference between what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project (i.e. take account of changes over time and between contexts in order to isolate the effects of an intervention). This requires appropriate baseline data and the identification of a relevant counterfactual, both of which are frequently not available for evaluations. Establishing the *contribution* made by a project in a complex change process relies heavily on prior intentionality (e.g. approved project design documentation, logical framework) and the articulation of causality (e.g. narrative and/or illustration of the Theory of Change). Robust evidence that a project was delivered as designed and that the expected causal pathways developed supports claims of contribution and this is strengthened where an alternative theory of change can be excluded. A *credible association* between the implementation of a project and observed positive effects can be made where a strong causal narrative, although not explicitly articulated, can be inferred by the chronological sequence of events, active involvement of key actors and engagement in critical processes.

29) **Communicating evaluation results.** A key aim of the Evaluation is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and key project stakeholders. The consultant(s) should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the evaluation process and in the communication of evaluation findings and key lessons. Clear and concise writing is required on all evaluation deliverables. Draft and final versions of the Main Evaluation Report will be shared with key stakeholders by the Evaluation Manager. There may, however, be several intended audiences, each with different interests and needs regarding the report. The consultant(s) will plan with the Evaluation Manager which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key evaluation findings and lessons to them. This may include some, or all, of the following; a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of an Evaluation Brief or interactive presentation.

## 8. Key Strategic Questions

30) In addition to the evaluation criteria outlined in Section 10 below, the Evaluation will address the **strategic questions** listed below. These are questions of interest to UNEP and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution. Also included are five questions that are required when reporting in the GEF Portal and these must be addressed in the TE.

**Q1:** In what ways, and to what extent, have the needs and interests of differentiated groups been considered in the implementation and monitoring of the project?

**Q2:** In what ways, and to what extent, were the recommendations from the Mid Term Review actioned upon?

**Q3:** What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project’s performance?

**Q4:** What opportunities has the evaluation identified to improve the integration of gender and human rights considerations in the sustainable management of resources and to maintain ecosystem goods and services in Palau, and with what foreseeable benefits to the sustainability of results?

**Q4:** In what ways and to what extent can the project management capacity/PMU be identified prior to the project implementation?

Address the questions required for the GEF Portal in the appropriate parts of the report and provide a **summary of the findings in the Conclusions section of the report:**

Under Monitoring and Reporting/Monitoring of Project Implementation:

What was the performance at the project’s completion against Core Indicator Targets? (For projects approved prior to GEF-7, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided).

Under Factors Affecting Performance/Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation:

What were the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program as evolved from the time of the MTR? (*This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval*)

Under Factors Affecting Performance/Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality:

What were the completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas? (This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent)

Under Factors Affecting Performance/Environmental and Social Safeguards:

What was the progress made in the implementation of the management measures against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval? The risk classifications reported in the latest PIR report should be verified and the findings of the effectiveness of any measures or lessons learned taken to address identified risks assessed.

(*Any supporting documents gathered by the Consultant during this review should be shared with the Task Manager for uploading in the GEF Portal*)

Under Factors Affecting Performance/Communication and Public Awareness:

What were the challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions? *(This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)*

## **9. Evaluation Criteria**

31) All evaluation criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Sections A-I below, outline the scope of the criteria. A weightings table in excel format will be provided by the Evaluation Manager to support the determination of an overall project rating. The set of evaluation criteria are grouped in nine categories: (A) Strategic Relevance; (B) Quality of Project Design; (C) Nature of External Context; (D) Effectiveness, which comprises assessments of the availability of outputs, achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact; (E) Financial Management; (F) Efficiency; (G) Monitoring and Reporting; (H) Sustainability; and (I) Factors Affecting Project Performance. The Evaluation Consultant(s) can propose other evaluation criteria as deemed appropriate.

### **A. Strategic Relevance**

32) The Evaluation will assess the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the donors, implementing regions/countries and the target beneficiaries. The Evaluation will include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's mandate and its alignment with UNEP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. Under strategic relevance an assessment of the complementarity of the project with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups will be made. This criterion comprises four elements:

#### **i. Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities**

33) The Evaluation should assess the project's alignment with the MTS and POW under which the project was approved and include, in its narrative, reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW. UNEP strategic priorities include the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC). The BSP relates to the capacity of governments to: comply with international agreements and obligations at the national level; promote, facilitate and finance environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen frameworks for developing coherent international environmental policies. S-SC is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries.

#### **ii. Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partner Strategic Priorities**

34) Donor, including GEF, strategic priorities will vary across interventions. GEF priorities are specified in published programming priorities and focal area strategies. The Evaluation will assess the extent to which the project is suited to, or responding to, donor priorities. In some cases, alignment with donor priorities may be a fundamental part of project design and grant approval processes while in others, for example, instances of 'softly-earmarked' funding, such alignment may be more of an assumption that should be assessed.

#### **iii. Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities**

35) The Evaluation will assess the alignment of the project with global priorities such as the SDGs and Agenda 2030. The extent to which the intervention is suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries, sub-regions or regions where it is being implemented will be considered. Examples may include: UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF), national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) plans or regional agreements etc. Within this section consideration will be given to whether the needs of all beneficiary groups are being met and reflects the current policy priority to leave no one behind.

#### **iv. Complementarity with Relevant Existing Interventions/Coherence**

36) An assessment will be made of how well the project, either at design stage or during the project inception or mobilization, took account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UNEP sub-programmes, or being implemented by other agencies within the same country, sector or institution) that address similar needs of the same target groups. The Evaluation will consider if the project team, in collaboration with Regional Offices and Sub-Programme Coordinators, made efforts to ensure their own intervention was complementary to other interventions, optimized any synergies and avoided duplication of effort. Examples may include UNDAFs or One UN programming. Linkages with other interventions should be described and instances where UNEP's comparative advantage has been particularly well applied should be highlighted.

#### **Factors affecting this criterion may include:**

- Stakeholders' participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality
- Country ownership and driven-ness

### **B. Quality of Project Design**

The quality of project design is assessed using an agreed template during the evaluation inception phase, ratings are attributed to identified criteria and an overall Project Design Quality rating is established. The complete Project Design Quality template should be annexed in the Evaluation Inception Report. Later, the overall Project Design Quality rating should be entered in the final evaluation ratings table (as item B) in the Main Evaluation Report and a summary of the project's strengths and weaknesses at design stage should be included within the body of the report.

#### **Factors affecting this criterion may include (at the design stage):**

- Stakeholders participation and cooperation

- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality

**C. Nature of External Context**

37) At evaluation inception stage a rating is established for the project's external operating context (considering the prevalence of conflict, natural disasters and political upheaval). This rating is entered in the final evaluation ratings table as item C. Where a project has been rated as facing either an Unfavourable or Highly Unfavourable external operating context, and/or a negative external event has occurred during project implementation, the ratings for Effectiveness, Efficiency and/or Sustainability may be increased at the discretion of the Evaluation Consultant and Evaluation Manager together. A justification for such an increase must be given.

**D. Effectiveness**

**i. Availability of Outputs**

38) The Evaluation will assess the project's success in producing the programmed outputs and making them available to the intended beneficiaries as well as its success in achieving milestones as per the project design document (ProDoc). Any *formal* modifications/revisions made during project implementation will be considered part of the project design. Where the project outputs are inappropriately or inaccurately stated in the ProDoc, reformulations may be necessary in the reconstruction of the Theory of Change (TOC). In such cases a table should be provided showing the original and the reformulation of the outputs for transparency. The availability of outputs will be assessed in terms of both quantity and quality, and the assessment will consider their ownership by, and usefulness to, intended beneficiaries and the timeliness of their provision. It is noted that emphasis is placed on the performance of those outputs that are most important to achieve outcomes. The Evaluation will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Preparation and readiness
- Quality of project management and supervision

**ii. Achievement of Project Outcomes**

39) The achievement of project outcomes is assessed as performance against the project outcomes as defined in the reconstructed Theory of Change. These are outcomes that are intended to be achieved by the end of the project timeframe and within the project's resource envelope. Emphasis is placed on the achievement of project outcomes that are most important for attaining intermediate states. As with outputs, a table can be used where substantive amendments to the formulation of project outcomes is necessary to allow for an assessment of performance. The Evaluation should report evidence of attribution between UNEP's intervention and the project outcomes. In cases of normative work or where several actors are collaborating to achieve common outcomes, evidence of the nature and magnitude of UNEP's 'substantive contribution' should be included and/or 'credible association' established between project efforts and the project outcomes realised.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Quality of project management and supervision
- Stakeholders' participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality
- Communication and public awareness

**iii. Likelihood of Impact**

40) Based on the articulation of long-lasting effects in the reconstructed TOC (*i.e. from project outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact*), the Evaluation will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality. Project objectives or goals should be incorporated in the TOC, possibly as intermediate states or long-lasting impacts. The Evaluation Office's approach to the use of TOC in project evaluations is outlined in a guidance note available and is supported by an excel-based flow chart, 'Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree'. Essentially the approach follows a 'likelihood tree' from project outcomes to impacts, taking account of whether the assumptions and drivers identified in the reconstructed TOC held. Any unintended positive effects should also be identified and their causal linkages to the intended impact described.

41) The Evaluation will also consider the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects (e.g. will vulnerable groups such as those living with disabilities and/or women and children, be disproportionately affected by the project?). Some of these potential negative effects may have been identified in the project design as risks or as part of the analysis of Environmental and Social Safeguards.

1. The Evaluation will consider the extent to which the project has played a  catalytic role or has promoted scaling up and/or replication  as part of its Theory of Change (either explicitly as in a project with a demonstration component or implicitly as expressed in the drivers required to move to outcome levels) and as factors that are likely to contribute to greater or long-lasting impact.

42) Ultimately UNEP and all its partners aim to bring about benefits to the environment and human well-being. Few projects are likely to have impact statements that reflect such long-lasting or broad-based changes. However, the Evaluation will assess the likelihood of the project to make a substantive contribution to the long-lasting changes represented by the Sustainable Development Goals and/or the intermediate-level results reflected in UNEP's Expected Accomplishments and the strategic priorities of funding partner(s).

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Quality of Project Management and Supervision (including adaptive management)

- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality
- Country ownership and driven-ness
- Communication and public awareness

**E. Financial Management**

43) Financial management will be assessed under three themes: *adherence* to UNEP's financial policies and procedures, *completeness* of financial information and *communication* between financial and project management staff. The Evaluation will establish the actual spend across the life of the project of funds secured from all donors. This expenditure will be reported, where possible, at output/component level and will be compared with the approved budget. The Evaluation will verify the application of proper financial management standards and adherence to UNEP's financial management policies. Any financial management issues that have affected the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance will be highlighted. The Evaluation will record where standard financial documentation is missing, inaccurate, incomplete or unavailable in a timely manner. The Evaluation will assess the level of communication between the Project/Task Manager and the Fund Management Officer as it relates to the effective delivery of the planned project and the needs of a responsive, adaptive management approach.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Preparation and readiness
- Quality of project management and supervision

**F. Efficiency**

44) Under the efficiency criterion the Evaluation will assess the extent to which the project delivered maximum results from the given resources. This will include an assessment of the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution.

45) Focusing on the translation of inputs into outputs, cost-effectiveness is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. Timeliness refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently. The Evaluation will also assess to what extent any project extension could have been avoided through stronger project management and identify any negative impacts caused by project delays or extensions. The Evaluation will describe any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe and consider whether the project was implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative interventions or approaches.

46) The Evaluation will give special attention to efforts made by the project teams during project implementation to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency.

47) The factors underpinning the need for any project extensions will also be explored and discussed. As management or project support costs cannot be increased in cases of 'no cost extensions', such extensions represent an increase in unstated costs to implementing parties.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Preparation and readiness (e.g. timeliness)
- Quality of project management and supervision
- Stakeholders participation and cooperation

**G. Monitoring and Reporting**

48) The Evaluation will assess monitoring and reporting across three sub-categories: monitoring design and budgeting, monitoring implementation and project reporting.

**i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting**

49) Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART results towards the provision of the project's outputs and achievement of project outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender, marginalisation or vulnerability, including those living with disabilities.. In particular, the Evaluation will assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project indicators as well as the methods used for tracking progress against them as part of conscious results-based management. The Evaluation will assess the quality of the design of the monitoring plan as well as the funds allocated for its implementation. The adequacy of resources for Mid-Term and Terminal Evaluation/Review should be discussed if applicable.

**ii. Monitoring of Project Implementation**

50) The Evaluation will assess whether the monitoring system was operational and facilitated the timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period. This assessment will include consideration of whether the project gathered relevant and good quality baseline data that is accurately and appropriately documented. This should include monitoring the representation and participation of disaggregated groups (including gendered, marginalised or vulnerable groups, such as those living with disabilities) in project activities. It will also consider the quality of the information generated by the monitoring system during project implementation and how it was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability. The Evaluation should confirm that funds allocated for monitoring were used to support this activity.

51) The performance at project completion against Core Indicator Targets should be reviewed. For projects approved prior to GEF-7, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided.

**iii. Project Reporting**

52) UNEP has a centralised project information management system (Anubis) in which project managers upload six-monthly progress reports against agreed project milestones. This information will be provided to the Evaluation Consultant(s) by the Evaluation Manager. Some projects have additional requirements to report regularly to funding partners, which will be supplied by the project team (e.g. the Project Implementation Reviews and Tracking Tool for GEF-funded projects). The Evaluation will assess the extent to which both UNEP and donor reporting commitments have been fulfilled. Consideration will be given as to whether reporting has been carried out with respect to the effects of the initiative on disaggregated groups.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Quality of project management and supervision
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality (e.g. disaggregated indicators and data)

#### **H. Sustainability**

53) Sustainability is understood as the probability of the benefits derived from the achievement of project outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. The Evaluation will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the endurance of achieved project outcomes (i.e. 'assumptions' and 'drivers'). Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. Where applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of project outcomes may also be included.

##### **i. Socio-political Sustainability**

54) The Evaluation will assess the extent to which social or political factors support the continuation and further development of the benefits derived from project outcomes. It will consider the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards. In particular the Evaluation will consider whether individual capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

##### **ii. Financial Sustainability**

55) Some project outcomes, once achieved, do not require further financial inputs, e.g. the adoption of a revised policy. However, in order to derive a benefit from this outcome further management action may still be needed e.g. to undertake actions to enforce the policy. Other project outcomes may be dependent on a continuous flow of action that needs to be resourced for them to be maintained, e.g. continuation of a new natural resource management approach. The Evaluation will assess the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained. Secured future funding is only relevant to financial sustainability where a project's outcomes have been extended into a future project phase. Even where future funding has been secured, the question still remains as to whether the project outcomes are financially sustainable.

##### **iii. Institutional Sustainability**

56) The Evaluation will assess the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes (especially those relating to policies and laws) is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance. It will consider whether institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure. In particular, the Evaluation will consider whether institutional capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality (e.g. where interventions are not inclusive, their sustainability may be undermined)
- Communication and public awareness
- Country ownership and driven-ness

#### **I. Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues**

*(These factors are rated in the ratings table but are discussed within the Main Evaluation Report as cross-cutting themes as appropriate under the other evaluation criteria, above. If these issues have not been addressed under the evaluation criteria above, then independent summaries of their status within the evaluated project should be given.)*

##### **i. Preparation and Readiness**

57) This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilisation stage of the project (i.e. the time between project approval and first disbursement). The Evaluation will assess whether appropriate measures were taken to either address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilisation. In particular the Evaluation will consider the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team, the confirmation of partner capacity and development of partnership agreements as well as initial staffing and financing arrangements. *(Project preparation is included in the template for the assessment of Project Design Quality).*

##### **ii. Quality of Project Management and Supervision**

58) In some cases 'project management and supervision' may refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it may refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP. The performance of parties playing different roles should be discussed and a rating provided for both types of supervision (UNEP/Partner/Executing Agency) and the overall rating for this sub-category established as a simple average of the two.

59) The Evaluation will assess the effectiveness of project management with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; managing team structures; maintaining productive partner relationships (including Steering Groups etc.); maintaining project relevance within changing external and strategic contexts; communication and collaboration with UNEP colleagues; risk management; use of problem-solving; project adaptation and overall project execution. Evidence of adaptive management should be highlighted.

**iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation**

60) Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs and target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP and the Executing Agency. The assessment will consider the quality and effectiveness of all forms of communication and consultation with stakeholders throughout the project life and the support given to maximise collaboration and coherence between various stakeholders, including sharing plans, pooling resources and exchanging learning and expertise. The inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender groups should be considered.

61) The progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program occurring since the MTR should be reviewed. (*This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval*).

**iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality**

62) The Evaluation will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context the Evaluation will assess to what extent the intervention adheres to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment.

63) In particular the Evaluation will consider to what extent project-implementation and monitoring have taken into consideration: (i) possible inequalities (especially those related to gender) in access to, and the control over, natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) to environmental degradation or disasters; and (iii) the role of disadvantaged groups (especially those related to gender) in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

64) Note that the project's effect on equality (i.e. promoting human rights, gender equality and inclusion of those living with disabilities and/or belonging to marginalised/vulnerable groups) should be included within the TOC as a general driver or assumption where there is no dedicated result within the results framework. If an explicit commitment on this topic is made within the project document then the driver/assumption should also be specific to the described intentions.

65) The completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas should be reviewed. (*This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent*).

**v. Environmental and Social Safeguards**

66) UNEP projects address environmental and social safeguards primarily through the process of environmental and social screening at the project approval stage, risk assessment and management (avoidance, minimization, mitigation or, in exceptional cases, offsetting) of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities. The Evaluation will confirm whether UNEP requirements were met to: *review* risk ratings on a regular basis; *monitor* project implementation for possible safeguard issues; *respond* (where relevant) to safeguard issues through risk avoidance, minimization, mitigation or offsetting and *report* on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken. UNEP requirements for proposed projects to be screened for any safeguarding issues; for sound environmental and social risk assessments to be conducted and initial risk ratings to be assigned are evaluated above under Quality of Project Design).

67) The Evaluation will also consider the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.

68) Implementation of the management measures against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval should be reviewed, the risk classifications verified and the findings of the effectiveness of any measures or lessons learned taken to address identified risks assessed. Any supporting documents gathered by the Consultant should be shared with the Task Manager.

**vi. Country Ownership and Driven-ness**

69) The Evaluation will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project. While there is some overlap between Country Ownership and Institutional Sustainability, this criterion focuses primarily on the forward momentum of the intended projects results, i.e. either a) moving forwards from outputs to project outcomes or b) moving forward from project outcomes towards intermediate states. The Evaluation will consider the engagement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices (e.g. representatives from multiple sectors or relevant ministries beyond Ministry of Environment). This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes and that is necessary for long-lasting impact to be realised. Ownership should extend to all gendered and marginalised groups.

**vii. Communication and Public Awareness**

70) The Evaluation will assess the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups arising from the project during its life and b) public awareness

activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large. The Evaluation should consider whether existing communication channels and networks were used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gendered or marginalised groups, and whether any feedback channels were established. Where knowledge sharing platforms have been established under a project the Evaluation will comment on the sustainability of the communication channel under either socio-political, institutional or financial sustainability, as appropriate.

71) The project's completed Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions should be reviewed. This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval.

### Section 3. EVALUATION APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

72) The Terminal Evaluation will be an in-depth evaluation using a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the evaluation process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the consultant(s) maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the Evaluation implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the evaluation findings. Where applicable, the consultant(s) will provide a geo-referenced map that demarcates the area covered by the project and, where possible, provide geo-reference photographs of key intervention sites (e.g. sites of habitat rehabilitation and protection, pollution treatment infrastructure, etc.)

73) The findings of the Evaluation will be based on the following:

A desk review of:

- Relevant background documentation, inter alia, technical reports, publications, tools, etc.
- Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;
- Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence and including the Project Implementation Reviews and Tracking Tool etc.;
- Project deliverables;
- Mid-Term Review or Mid-Term Evaluation of the project conducted in 2021-2022;
- Evaluations/reviews of similar projects.

**Interviews** (individual or in group) with:

- UNEP Task Manager (TM);
- Project management team, including the Project Manager within the Executing Agency, where appropriate;
- UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO);
- Portfolio Manager and Sub-Programme Coordinator, where appropriate;
- Project partners in Palau.
- Relevant resource persons;
- Representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's, farmers and trade associations etc).

Surveys

Field visits

Other data collection tools, as appropriate.

## 10. Evaluation Deliverables and Review Procedures

74) The Evaluation Team will prepare:

- **Inception Report:** (see Annex 1 for a list of all templates, tables and guidance notes) containing an assessment of project design quality, a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, evaluation framework and a tentative evaluation schedule.
- **Preliminary Findings Note:** typically in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings is intended to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings. In the case of highly strategic project/portfolio evaluations or evaluations with an Evaluation Reference Group, the preliminary findings may be presented as a word document for review and comment.
- **Draft and Final Evaluation Report:** containing an executive summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the evaluation findings organised by evaluation criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

75) An **Evaluation Brief**, (a 2-page overview of the evaluand and key evaluation findings) for wider dissemination through the UNEP website may be required. This will be discussed with the Evaluation Manager no later than during the finalization of the Inception Report.

76) **Review of the Draft Evaluation Report.** The Evaluation Consultant(s) will submit a draft report to the Evaluation Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. Once a draft of adequate quality has been peer-reviewed and accepted, the Evaluation Manager will share the cleared draft report with the Task Manager and Project Manager, who will alert the Evaluation Manager in case the report contains any blatant factual errors. The Evaluation Manager will then forward the revised draft report (corrected by the Evaluation Consultant(s) where necessary) to other project stakeholders, for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the Evaluation Manager for consolidation. The Evaluation Manager will provide all comments to the Evaluation Consultant(s) for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.

77) Based on a careful review of the evidence collated by the Evaluation Consultants and the internal consistency of the report, the Evaluation Manager will provide an assessment of the ratings in the final evaluation report. Where there are differences of opinion between the evaluator and the Evaluation Manager on project ratings, both viewpoints will be clearly presented in the final report. The Evaluation Office ratings will be considered the final ratings for the project.

78) The Evaluation Manager will prepare a **quality assessment** of the first draft of the Main Evaluation Report, which acts as a tool for providing structured feedback to the Evaluation Consultant(s). The quality of the final report will be assessed and rated against the criteria specified in template listed in Annex 1 and this assessment will be appended to the Final Evaluation Report.

79) At the end of the evaluation process, the Evaluation Office will prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals by the Task Manager. The Evaluation Office will track compliance against this plan on a six-monthly basis for a maximum of 12 months.

#### **11. The Evaluation Consultant**

80) For this Evaluation, the Evaluation Team will consist of an Evaluation Consultant who will work under the overall responsibility of the Evaluation Office represented by an Evaluation Manager [Fabio Fiscaro], in consultation with the UNEP Task Manager [Sang Jin Lee], Fund Management Officer [Rachel Kagiri] and the Subprogramme Coordinator [Marieta Sakalian] of the Nature for Action Subprogramme (formerly known as Healthy and Productive Ecosystems). The consultant will liaise with the Evaluation Manager on any procedural and methodological matters related to the Evaluation, including travel. It is, however, each consultant's individual responsibility (where applicable) to arrange for their visas and immunizations as well as to plan meetings with stakeholders, organize online surveys, obtain documentary evidence and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The UNEP Task Manager and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the consultants to conduct the Evaluation as efficiently and independently as possible.

81) The Evaluation Consultant will be hired over a period of 6 months (August 2023 to January 2024) and should have the following: a university degree in environmental sciences, international development or other relevant political or social sciences area is required and an advanced degree in the same areas is desirable; a minimum of 7 years of technical / evaluation experience is required, preferably including evaluating large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach; and a good/broad understanding of biodiversity and sustainable resource management is desired. English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. For this consultancy, fluency in oral and written English is a requirement. Working knowledge of the UN system and specifically the work of UNEP is an added advantage. The work will be home-based with possible field visits.

82) The Evaluation Consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the Evaluation Office of UNEP for overall management of the Evaluation and timely provision of its outputs, described above in Section 11 Evaluation Deliverables, above. The Evaluation Consultant will ensure together that all evaluation criteria and questions are adequately covered.

#### FOR SINGLE CONSULTANTS

83) In close consultation with the Evaluation Manager, the Evaluation Consultant will be responsible for the overall management of the Evaluation and timely provision of its outputs, data collection and analysis and report-writing. More specifically:

##### Inception phase of the Evaluation, including:

- preliminary desk review and introductory interviews with project staff;
- draft the reconstructed Theory of Change of the project;
- prepare the evaluation framework;
- develop the desk review and interview protocols;
- draft the survey protocols (if relevant);
- develop and present criteria for country and/or site selection for the evaluation mission;
- plan the evaluation schedule;
- prepare the Inception Report, incorporating comments until approved by the Evaluation Manager

##### Data collection and analysis phase of the Evaluation, including:

- conduct further desk review and in-depth interviews with project implementing and executing agencies, project partners and project stakeholders;
- (where appropriate and agreed) conduct an evaluation mission(s) to selected countries, visit the project locations, interview project partners and stakeholders, including a good representation of local communities. Ensure independence of the Evaluation and confidentiality of evaluation interviews.
- regularly report back to the Evaluation Manager on progress and inform of any possible problems or issues encountered and;
- keep the Project/Task Manager informed of the evaluation progress.

Reporting phase, including:

- draft the Main Evaluation Report, ensuring that the evaluation report is complete, coherent and consistent with the Evaluation Manager guidelines both in substance and style;
- liaise with the Evaluation Manager on comments received and finalize the Main Evaluation Report, ensuring that comments are taken into account until approved by the Evaluation Manager
- prepare a Response to Comments annex for the main report, listing those comments not accepted by the Evaluation Consultant and indicating the reason for the rejection; and
- (where agreed with the Evaluation Manager) prepare an Evaluation Brief (2-page summary of the evaluation and the key evaluation findings and lessons)

Managing relations, including:

- maintain a positive relationship with evaluation stakeholders, ensuring that the evaluation process is as participatory as possible but at the same time maintains its independence;
- communicate in a timely manner with the Evaluation Manager on any issues requiring its attention and intervention.

**12. Schedule of the Evaluation**

84) The table below presents the tentative schedule for the Evaluation.

**Table 3. Tentative schedule for the Evaluation**

Milestone	Tentative Dates
Evaluation Initiation Meeting	August 2023
Inception Report	September 2023
Evaluation Mission	September-October 2023
E-based interviews, surveys etc.	September-October 2023
PowerPoint/presentation on preliminary findings and recommendations	October 2023
Draft report to Evaluation Manager (and Peer Reviewer)	November 2023
Draft Report shared with UNEP Task Manager and team	December 2023
Draft Report shared with wider group of stakeholders	January 2024
Final Report	January 2024
Final Report shared with all respondents	January 2024

**13. Contractual Arrangements**

85) Evaluation Consultants will be selected and recruited by the Evaluation Office of UNEP under an individual Special Service Agreement (SSA) on a “fees only” basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UNEP /UNON, the consultant(s) certify that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, they will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project’s executing or implementing units. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

86) Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance by the Evaluation Manager of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:

**Schedule of Payment for the [Evaluation Consultant]:**

Deliverable	Percentage Payment
Approved Inception Report (as per annex document #9)	30%
Approved Draft Main Evaluation Report (as per annex document #10)	30%
Approved Final Main Evaluation Report	40%

87) Fees only contracts: Where applicable, air tickets will be purchased by UNEP and 75% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for each authorised travel mission will be paid up front. Local in-country travel will only be reimbursed where agreed in advance with the Evaluation Manager and on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion.

88) The consultants may be provided with access to UNEP's information management systems (e.g PIMS, Anubis, Sharepoint etc) and if such access is granted, the consultants agree not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the evaluation report.

89) In case the consultants are not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the UNEP Evaluation Office, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Director of the Evaluation Office until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UNEP's quality standards.

90) If the consultant(s) fail to submit a satisfactory final product to UNEP in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, the Evaluation Office reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultants' fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by the Evaluation Office to bring the report up to standard.

## ANNEX 7: BRIEF CV OF CONSULTANT

Name Justine Braby  
Nationality Namibia (and Germany)  
Languages English, German, Spanish

### Academic Qualifications

PhD Zoology, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa, June 2011

Postgraduate Diploma (International) Environmental Law, University of Cape Town, February 2007

Postgraduate Certificate Education (Senior Phase and Further Education), University of Cape Town, December 2005

Bachelor of Science (Zoology), University of Cape Town, December 2004

[Training certificate in the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, GIZ and Government of Namibia (2011)]

### Summary of Professional Background

Professional expertise ranges from project development, implementation to evaluation of GEF and other donor-funded projects for agencies like UNDP, UN Environment, FAO and IUCN; communication strategy development, implementation and evaluation for various institutions; capacity-building interventions and facilitation of participatory processes; development of NAPAs, national development plans, strategies and action plans. Justine has thematic expertise and extensive experience in international environmental law (reporting and implementation), climate change (adaptation mostly), sustainable land management, biodiversity and ecosystem services, alternative development paradigms (alternative economics), coastal zone management, water resource management, and renewable energy as it pertains to climate change. She has worked for African governments and international and national development agencies all over Africa, and had experience working in several countries in Latin America, Europe, and Asia.

### Regional Experience

Africa (West, East, South, Central), Latin America, Europe, Asia

### Professional Associations

Appointee to the High Level Panel on the Economy advising the President of Namibia (2019-2020)

Steering Committee Member of the Balaton Network on Sustainability ([www.balatongroup.org](http://www.balatongroup.org)) (2018-2022)

Steering Committee Member of the Namibia Small Grants Programme (2018-2021)

Advisory Panel Member of the NUST PAC Regional and Rural Development Honours Programme (2019-ongoing)

BIOPAMA Regional Advisor (2019-2021)

Member and Task Force Member of the Wellbeing Economy Africa Research Action Network ([www.wellbeing-economy.org](http://www.wellbeing-economy.org))

Core Team Member of the Research Group of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance ([www.wellbeing-economy.org](http://www.wellbeing-economy.org))

Founder of the Namibia Youth Coalition on Climate Change ([www.youthclimate-namibia.org](http://www.youthclimate-namibia.org))

Climate Change Focal Point and Member of the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication ([www.iucn.org/cec](http://www.iucn.org/cec))

Roster of Experts of UNDP Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Management Portfolio

### Publications experience

Wellbeing Economy, Climate Change Adaptation, Community Resilience, Communication, Education and Public Awareness, Zoology, Marine Biology, Ecology, Alternative Economics/Beyond GDP

## ANNEX 8: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Note: Questions highlighted in orange are strategic higher-level questions, questions in green are GEF-portal questions.

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
<b>Criterion A: Strategic Relevance</b>		
<b>A.1. Alignment to MTS and POW</b>		
1. Were the project objectives and outcomes consistent with UNEP's Medium Term Strategy, its Sub-programmes and Expected Accomplishments, as well as the PoWs? What were the linkages (indicators)?	Fit to UNEP mandate – qualitative Alignment and continuation to MTS and PoWs – qualitative	Comparison of CEO ER and annual reports with UNEP MTS and PoWs, PIRs, interview with Task Manager
2. What was the level of alignment to the Bali Strategic Plan?	Fit to Bali Strategic Plan	Comparison with documents
<b>A.2. Alignment to GEF Priorities</b>		
3. What was the level of alignment to the GEF LD3 strategic priorities (BD-1, BD-2, LD-3, SFM/REDD-1, IW-1)?	Level of alignment GEF	Comparison of CEO ER and annual reports
<b>A.3. Relevance to regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities</b>		
4. Did the project respond to the environmental concerns and needs of the country?	Descriptive input on match, evidence of stakeholders' participation and cooperation; ownership	
<b>A.4. Complementarity with existing interventions</b>		
5. To what extent did the project take into account and collaborate with ongoing projects identified in the CEO ER, How did the project learn from previous interventions on coordination to improve coordination and sustain coordination-related results in the project (for strengthened PAN and SLM)?	Evidence of synergies, collaboration	Review of CEO ER, interviews with partners
6. Were cross cutting issues including human rights and gender equality adequately considered in project design and implementation?	Qualitative	CEO ER, interviews / questionnaires with country level and other internal/ external stakeholders, project products
7. How well did the project improve on any lessons learnt from previous projects?	Qualitative	Interviews with project partners, project implementation documentation
<b>Criterion B. Quality of Project Design</b>	See quality of design matrix attached – Annex A	
<b>Criterion C. Nature of External Context</b>		

<b>Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions</b>	<b>Evaluation Indicators</b>	<b>Means of Verification</b>
8. Did the political, environmental, social or institutional context change during the project implementation and how did the project adapt to this?	Descriptive; potential to measure effect in months of delay	Interviews with key project partners
9. Did the change in government have any influence on the project results attainment (presidential in 2021, and change in ministerial structure)?	Level of influence	Interviews with project partners
10. How has COVID-19 affected project implementation? (also related to Factors affecting Project Performance)	Level of influence / measures of adaptiveness	Interviews with project partners
<b>Criterion D. Effectiveness</b>		
<b>D1. Availability of Outputs</b>		
11. Was the project successful in producing its programmed outputs and milestones as per the logical framework, as well as its usefulness and timeliness?	Logframe indicators	PIMs, annual reporting, final project report, as well as interview with project leaders and partners
12. What were the reasons behind any failures/successes of the project in producing its different outputs?	Consider preparation and readiness; quality of project management and supervision, external context	Interviews with all project partners involved in implementation
13. Were stakeholders appropriately involved in producing programmed outputs?	Stakeholder participation and cooperation	Interviews with cross section of internal and external stakeholders
14. Were activities relevant to outputs and most appropriate, check also appropriateness or possible maladaptiveness of SLM interventions, were PAN sites selected on scientific merit, how was coordination improved for both?	Level of appropriateness, check TOC Level of SLM and PAN appropriateness in area	Interviews and PIRs (and project deliverables)
<b>D2. Achievement of Project Outcomes</b>		
15. What evidence is available to show that the project strengthened the PAN network through enhanced capacity and overall improved management (Outcomes 1.1. and 1.2, investigate assumptions/drivers a, c, h, g, d, j)	Logframe indicators; documents showing improved METT scores, PAN strategy, capacity enhanced and applied	PIRs, interviews, project outputs, output verification, stakeholder interviews, PAN coverage
16. To what extent has the SLM policy been improved and effectively implemented, how has the coordination mechanism improved the implementation across sectors? (Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2, investigate assumptions/drivers a, h, k, f, b)	Logframe indicators; policy review; evidence of implementation, best practice demonstration at site level; evidence of coordination mechanism in practice	Interviews, PIRs, meeting documentation; field visits

<b>Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions</b>	<b>Evaluation Indicators</b>	<b>Means of Verification</b>
17. To what extent has MoAFE improved on its capacity to coordinate and how has cross-sector coordination improved through project interventions? (Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2, investigate assumptions/drivers e, j, a)	Evidence improved coordination	Interviews, meeting notes, progress documentation
<b>D3. Likelihood of impact</b>		
18. What evidence is there to suggest that PAN has been expanded and strengthened for conservation effectiveness?	Level of PAN expansion based on scientific reporting	Interviews, documentation
19. What evidence is there to suggest that SLM has integrated into decision-making processes with regard to land use and tourism development?	Decision-making instruments	Interviews, documentation
20. What evidence is there to suggest that there is improved coordination and cross-sector collaboration on SLM and PAN?	Level of SLM uptake, level of spread	Interviews, exit strategy
21. To what extent is there evidence to suggest that project results will sustain towards the impact of ecosystem and biodiversity conservation?	Qualitative	Interviews
<b>E. Financial Management</b>		
<b>E.1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures</b>		
22. How did the financial reporting and management adhere to the policies and procedures of UNEP?	Descriptive with reference to norms as benchmarks	Interviews with Task Manager, FMO, Review of contracts /agreement Financial reports
23. Were audits done, and what were the results?	Audit reporting, management responses	Interview with Task Manager, FMO, documentation
24. The MTR highlighted lack of financial records and management, was this resolved?	Reporting	Interview with FMO
<b>E.2. Completeness of financial information</b>		
25. What is the level of completeness of financial information?	Level of documentation in order	FMO and partners - documentation
26. A lot of co-financing was committed to the project - how has this been reported, especially the expenditure (and large cash contribution by PAN)	Completedness of information on co-financing	FMO interview and final co-financing report
<b>E.3. Communication between financial and project management staff</b>		
27. Were there any aspects of financial management that affected project performance?	Descriptive, with reference to timing	Interviews with Task Manager/FMO Interviews with Implementing Partners Review of income

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
<b>F. Efficiency</b>		
28. To what extent did the project build on existing institutions, lessons of other initiatives and ongoing projects (how well did the project align to the greater programmatic approach i.e. follow on from previous projects)?	Descriptive	Background documentation, partner interviews
29. To what extent did the project leverage efforts of partners and of possible champions towards achievement of its outcomes, impact and sustainability	Qualitative	Interviews with partners, PSC
30. What have been the main reasons for delay/changes in implementation, if any? What were the reasons for the 3 year project extension? What lessons can be learnt from this? To what extent did the delays have an impact on the delivery of project outcomes?	Comparison of actual and planned deliverables timing	Interviews with Project implementers, Members of Steering Committee Review of documentation related to extensions
31. Were financial means sufficient to deliver planned project outputs? (check here issues highlighted in the design review)	Review of income and expenditure relative to original budget	Review of income and expenditure relative to original budget
32. Were available human resources (skills, number) sufficient to deliver planned project outputs in a timely manner? How did the SC contribute to steering the project efficiently and effectively? (were MTR recommendations on the PMU taken forward?)	Review of staffing arrangements relative to original plans and to actual requirements	Review of staffing arrangements relative to original plans and to actual requirements (check with UNEP and MoAFE)
33. Was the governance structure of the project (PMU) the most efficient way to produce project results and enhance sustainability?	Review of staffing arrangements relative to original plans and to actual requirements	Review of staffing arrangements relative to original plans and to actual requirements (check with UNEP and MoAFE)
<b>G. Monitoring and Reporting</b>		
<b>G.1. Monitoring Design and Budgeting</b>		
34. What tools and procedures are in place for project monitoring?	Availability of logframe, PIRs and quarterly reports, workplans, roles of oversight bodies	Availability of monitoring tools, interviews with Project Team
<b>3. Monitoring of Project Implementation</b>		
35. How has monitoring been conducted, and how have results been used to adapt implementation approach? Did the plan come to fruition?	Review of monitoring practice Review of oversight arrangements	Availability of monitoring results, project team interviews, Steering Committee
36. Was the monitoring budget used appropriately?	Level of budget use	Financial records, FMO interview
37. How well was the MTR taken on board, given its critical nature and practical recommendations?	MTR implementation plan and execution	Review of plan, interviews, SC meeting minutes

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
38. What was the performance at the project's completion against Core Indicator Targets? (For projects approved prior to GEF-7, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided)	Check contribution to core Indicators (already listed) and PMAT	Core indicator framework
<b>G.3. Project reporting</b>		
39. To what extent have UNEP reporting requirements been fulfilled - all reports as planned are there?	Comparison of actual reporting to requirements	Availability of reporting
<b>H. Sustainability</b>		
<b>H.1. Socio-political sustainability</b>		
40. Are there any social or political factors that may influence positively or negatively the sustenance of project results and progress towards impact?	Qualitative	Interviews with Steering Committee
41. Is there championship within MoAFE? What evidence is there of longer term take up based on built capacity and other results from the project? What championship exists in SLM?	Qualitative	Interviews with Steering Committee, stakeholders
<b>H.2. Financial sustainability</b>		
42. How has the project intervention on diversified funding streams for PAN resulted in financial sustainability?	Financial records, project documentation	Interviews, PMU, PSC
43. What is the level of financial sustainability that is placed in the exit strategy?	Level of budget allocations to PAN, PAN fund	Interviews, review of PAN strategy
44. What is the likelihood that adequate financial resources will become available to upscale the work (i.e. spread to other parts of country)?	Qualitative, possible data on onward funding	Interviews with Steering Committee, key agencies, project implementers
<b>H.3. Institutional sustainability</b>		
45. Has the institutional context been strengthened for the long-term?	Qualitative	Interviews with Steering Committee, other project partners
46. Has communication and collaboration among the institutions responsible and capacitated been strengthened and will this be sustained?	Qualitative	Interviews with Steering Committee, other project partners
<b>I. Factors Affecting Project Performance (x-cutting)</b>		
<b>I.1. Preparation and readiness</b> (included in design)		
47. How did UNEP go about choosing this particular project (what were the original motives) - was the project demand led, or driven by UNEP?	Qualitative	Interview with Task Manager and/or project designers, if possible

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
48. Were learnings from the Terminal Evaluations of previous projects absorbed into this project design?	Qualitative	Interview with Task Manager and/or project designers, if possible
<b>I.2. Quality of Project Management and Supervision</b>		
49. Was leadership and (adaptive) direction towards achieving planned outcomes sufficient in the project? (includes Steering Committee) Note any changes in adaptiveness and other linked to the MTR and its recommendations.	Qualitative, adaptation mechanism	Interviews with all project implementers
50. How well was the PMU capacitated and positioned to produce effective results - how well did it engage the key stakeholders - how was the composition (appropriate)?	Qualitative	Review of project implementation docs, interviews with project partners
51. What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?	Qualitative, adaptation mechanism	Interviews with all project implementers
52. What other adjustments were necessary - how well did the project adapt (linked to some of the questions in External Context)?	Qualitative, adaptation mechanism	Interviews with all project implementers
53. In what ways, and to what extent, were the recommendations from the Mid Term Review actioned upon?	Level of uptake	MTR Recommendations, Management Responses
54. In what ways and to what extent can the project management capacity/PMU be identified prior to the project implementation?	Qualitative	Interviews, evaluator experience
<b>I.3. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation</b>		
55. What has been the degree and effectiveness of partnership collaboration with stakeholders? How has the project brought institutions and stakeholders together to work in an effective, collaborative and efficient manner to support SLM and PAN in Palau? In what ways, and to what extent, have the needs and interests of differentiated groups been considered in the implementation and monitoring of the project?	Participation and involvement, ownership, qualitative	Interviews with all project implementers

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
56. What were the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program as evolved from the time of the MTR? <i>(This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval)</i>	Level of engagement	CEO Endorsement Request, and project implementation documentation
<b>I.4. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity</b>		
57. Were cross cutting issues including human rights and gender equality adequately considered in project design and implementation? What opportunities has the evaluation identified to improve the integration of gender and human rights considerations in the sustainable management of resources and to maintain ecosystem goods and services in Palau, and with what foreseeable benefits to the sustainability of results?	Qualitative	Project implementation documentation, interviews with project team and partners
58. Has the project appropriately considered the uniqueness and rights of indigenous people?	Qualitative	Project implementation documentation, interviews with project team and partners
59. What were the completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas? <i>(This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent)</i>	Level of gender response	Project implementation documentation
<b>I.5. Environmental and social safeguards</b>		
60. To what extent did the project adhere to the environmental and social safeguards laid out in UNEP policy?	Level of implementation	Project implementation documentation, interviews with project team and partners
61. Risk table at design outlines various risks - how were these mitigated?	Risk mitigation action	Risk table, PIR, mitigation, output delivery, interviews

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Evaluation Indicators	Means of Verification
62. Did the ESG plan hold up, and how was it implemented? (What was the progress made in the implementation of the management measures against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval? The risk classifications reported in the latest PIR report should be verified and the findings of the effectiveness of any measures or lessons learned taken to address identified risks assessed. (Any supporting documents gathered by the Consultant during this review should be shared with the Task Manager for uploading in the GEF Portal)	Level of implementation	Project implementation documentation, interviews with project team and partners
<b>I.6. Country ownership and drivenness/championship</b>		
63. To what extent has the project created opportunities for particular individuals or institutions (champions) to catalyse change (without which the project would not have achieved its results)? What level of support was given to these actors?	Level of national leadership	Interviews
64. Are there lessons and experience coming out of the project that are replicated and scaled up? What are the factors that may influence replication and scaling up of project experience and lessons?	Qualitative	Interviews
<b>I.7. Communication and Public Awareness</b>		
65. What was the level of learning and sharing among project partners?	Qualitative	Interviews with project implementers
66. What public awareness activities took place, and how effective were they in supporting the realization (and further sustaining) of project results?	Level of events, event impact	Interviews with project implementers
67. What were the challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions? (This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)	Level of knowledge management	Interviews, project documentation

## ANNEX 9: QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

Evaluand Title:

Terminal Evaluation: "Advancing Sustainable Resource Management to Improve Livelihoods and Protect Biodiversity in Palau" (GEF ID 5208)

Evaluator: Justine Braby

All UNEP evaluations are subject to a quality assessment by the Evaluation Office. This is an assessment of the quality of the evaluation product (i.e. evaluation report) and is dependent on more than just the consultant's efforts and skills.

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
<b>Report Quality Criteria</b>		
<p><b>Quality of the Executive Summary</b>  <u>Purpose:</u> acts as a stand alone and accurate <u>summary</u> of the main evaluation product, especially for senior management.            To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concise overview of the evaluation object</li> <li>• clear summary of the evaluation objectives and scope</li> <li>• overall evaluation rating of the project and key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) against exceptional criteria</li> <li>• reference to where the evaluation ratings table can be found within the report</li> <li>• summary response to key strategic evaluation questions</li> <li>• summary of the main findings of the exercise/synthesis of main conclusions</li> <li>• summary of lessons learned and recommendations.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i>            All required elements are addressed and includes a summary response to the key strategic questions.</p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i>            The Executive Summary represents a stand-alone and accurate summary of the evaluation report.</p>	5.5
<p><b>Quality of the 'Introduction' Section</b>  <u>Purpose:</u> introduces/<u>situates</u> the evaluand in its institutional context, establishes its main parameters (time, value, results, geography) and the purpose of the evaluation itself.            To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• institutional context of the project (sub-programme, Division, Branch etc)</li> <li>• date of PRC approval, project duration and start/end dates</li> <li>• number of project phases (where appropriate)</li> <li>• results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. POW Direct Outcome)</li> <li>• coverage of the evaluation (regions/countries where implemented)</li> <li>• implementing and funding partners</li> <li>• total secured budget</li> <li>• whether the project has been evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, external agency etc)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i>            All elements are well addressed.</p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i>            The Introduction well situates the evaluand identifying the main parameters.</p>	5.5

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concise statement of the purpose of the evaluation and the key intended audience for the findings.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Quality of the 'Evaluation Methods' Section</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> provides reader with clear and comprehensive description of evaluation methods, demonstrates the <u>credibility</u> of the findings and performance ratings.</p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• description of evaluation data collection methods and information sources</li> <li>• justification for methods used (e.g. qualitative/quantitative; electronic/face-to-face)</li> <li>• number and type of respondents (<i>see table template</i>)</li> <li>• selection criteria used to identify respondents, case studies or sites/countries visited</li> <li>• strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and consultation</li> <li>• methods to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. vulnerable, gender, marginalised etc)</li> <li>• details of how data were verified (e.g. triangulation, review by stakeholders etc.)</li> <li>• methods used to analyse data (scoring, coding, thematic analysis etc)</li> <li>• evaluation limitations (e.g. low/ imbalanced response rates across different groups; gaps in documentation; language barriers etc)</li> <li>• ethics and human rights issues should be highlighted including: how anonymity and confidentiality were protected. Is there an ethics statement? E.g. <i>Throughout the evaluation process and in the compilation of the Final Evaluation Report efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups. All efforts to provide respondents with anonymity have been made.</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Final report (coverage/omissions):</b></p> <p>All elements are well addressed. A table with the respondents to the TE is also included.</p> <p><b>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</b></p> <p>The section provides a clear and comprehensive description of the evaluation methods.</p>	5.5
<p><b>Quality of the 'Project' Section</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> describes and <u>verifies</u> key dimensions of the evaluand relevant to assessing its performance.</p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Context:</i> overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address, its root causes and consequences on the environment and human well-being (i.e. synopsis of the problem and situational analyses)</li> <li>• <i>Results framework:</i> summary of the project's results hierarchy as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised)</li> <li>• <i>Stakeholders:</i> description of groups of targeted stakeholders organised according to relevant common characteristics</li> </ul>	<p><b>Final report (coverage/omissions):</b></p> <p>All elements are well addressed.</p> <p><b>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</b></p> <p>The report presents a comprehensive analysis of the key dimensions of the evaluand required.</p>	5.5

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Project implementation structure and partners:</i> description of the implementation structure with diagram and a list of key project partners</li> <li>• <i>Changes in design during implementation:</i> any key events that affected the project's scope or parameters should be described in brief in chronological order</li> <li>• <i>Project financing:</i> completed tables of: (a) budget at design and expenditure by components (b) planned and actual sources of funding/co-financing</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Quality of the Theory of Change</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> to set out the TOC at Evaluation in diagrammatic and narrative forms to support consistent project performance; to articulate the causal pathways with drivers and assumptions and justify any reconstruction necessary to assess the project's performance.</p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• description of how the <i>TOC at Evaluation</i><sup>78</sup> was designed (who was involved etc)</li> <li>• confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions</li> <li>• articulation of causal pathways</li> <li>• identification of drivers and assumptions</li> <li>• identification of key actors in the change process</li> <li>• summary of the reconstruction/results re-formulation in tabular form. <i>The two results hierarchies (original/formal revision and reconstructed) should be presented as a two-column table to show clearly that, although wording and placement may have changed, the results 'goal posts' have not been 'moved'.</i> This table may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear somewhere in the Main Evaluation report.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p> <p>All elements well addressed.</p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>The ToC at Evaluation is well presented both in narrative and diagrammatic forms. The causal pathways are articulated, and the drivers and assumptions presented.</p>	5.5
<p><b>Quality of Key Findings within the Report</b></p> <p><u>Presentation of evidence:</u> nature of evidence should be clear (interview, document, survey, observation, online resources etc) and evidence should be explicitly triangulated unless noted as having a single source.</p> <p><u>Consistency within the report:</u> all parts of the report should form consistent support for findings and performance ratings, which should be in line with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix.</p> <p><u>Findings Statements (where applicable):</u> The frame of reference for a finding should be an individual</p>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>Although the report does not contain specifically labelled 'Findings Statements' it does provide considerable feedback and insights into the challenges faced by the project and verifies its achievements. Nature of evidence is also clear.</p>	5.5

<sup>78</sup> During the Inception Phase of the evaluation process a *TOC at Evaluation Inception* is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions), formal revisions and annual reports etc. During the evaluation process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the *TOC at Evaluation*.

<p>evaluation criterion or a strategic question from the TOR. <b>A finding should go beyond description and uses analysis to provide insights that aid learning specific to the evaluand.</b> In some cases a findings statement may articulate a key element that has determined the performance rating of a criterion. Findings will frequently provide insight into 'how' and/or 'why' questions.</p>		
<p><b>Quality of 'Strategic Relevance' Section</b>  <u>Purpose:</u> to present evidence and analysis of project strategic relevance with respect to UNEP, partner and geographic policies and strategies at the time of project approval.  <u>To include:</u>  Assessment of the evaluand's relevance vis-à-vis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities</li> <li>• Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities</li> <li>• Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities</li> <li>• Complementarity with Existing Interventions: complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation<sup>79</sup>), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>All elements are covered to a satisfactory level.</p>	5.5
<p><b>Quality of the 'Quality of Project Design' Section</b>  <u>Purpose:</u> to present a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the project design, on the basis that the detailed assessment was presented in the Inception Report.</p>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>The section presents a good summary of the project design's strengths and weaknesses.</p>	5.5
<p><b>Quality of the 'Nature of the External Context' Section</b>  <u>Purpose:</u> to describe and recognise, when appropriate, key <u>external</u> features of the project's implementing context that limited the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval<sup>80</sup>), and how they affected performance.   While additional details of the implementing context may be informative, this section should clearly record whether or not a major and unexpected disrupting event took place during the project's life in the implementing sites.</p>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>The section well describes the events that affected the project implementation.</p>	5.5
<p><b>Quality of 'Effectiveness' Section</b></p>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p>	

<sup>79</sup> A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

<sup>80</sup> Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team.

<p><b>(i) Availability of Outputs:</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the outputs made available to the intended beneficiaries.</p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a convincing, evidence-supported and clear presentation of the outputs made available by the project compared to its approved plans and budget</li> <li>• assessment of the nature and scale of outputs versus the project indicators and targets</li> <li>• assessment of the timeliness, quality and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries</li> <li>• identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).</li> </ul>	<p>All elements well addressed.</p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>A complete and detailed analysis on the availability of the project outputs is presented, including tables that indicate the degree of achievement of their respective targets.</p>	<p>6</p>
<p><b>(ii) Achievement of Project Outcomes:</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the uptake, adoption and/or implementation of outputs by the intended beneficiaries. This may include behaviour changes at an individual or collective level.</p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a convincing and evidence-supported analysis of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries</li> <li>• assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets</li> <li>• discussion of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself</li> <li>• any constraints to attributing effects to the projects' work</li> <li>• identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).</li> </ul>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p> <p>All elements are well addressed.</p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>A detailed evidence-based assessment of the achievement of project outcomes is presented, including tables that indicate the degree of achievement of their respective targets.</p>	<p>6</p>
<p><b>(iii) Likelihood of Impact:</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to likelihood of impact, including an assessment of the extent to which drivers and assumptions necessary for change to happen, were seen to be holding.</p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and change processes can be shown</li> <li>• an explanation of the roles played by key actors and change agents</li> <li>• explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out</li> </ul>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>The section presents an integrated analysis following the three causal pathways.</p>	<p>5.5</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identification of any unintended negative effects of the project, especially on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Quality of 'Financial Management' Section</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under financial management and include a completed 'financial management' table (may be annexed).</p> <p>Consider how well the report addresses the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>adherence</i> to UNEP's financial policies and procedures</li> <li>• <i>completeness</i> of financial information, including the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used</li> <li>• <i>communication</i> between financial and project management staff</li> </ul>	<p><b>Final report (coverage/omissions):</b></p> <p><b>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</b></p> <p>The section presents a detailed and integrated analysis of the three dimensions evaluated under financial management.</p>	5.5
<p><b>Quality of 'Efficiency' Section</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under efficiency (i.e. the primary categories of cost-effectiveness and timeliness).</p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe</li> <li>• discussion of making use, during project implementation, of/building on pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc.</li> <li>• implications of any delays and no cost extensions</li> <li>• the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Final report (coverage/omissions):</b></p> <p>All elements are well addressed.</p> <p><b>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</b></p> <p>The section discusses the challenges that affected the timeliness of project execution. Overall, the project had two no-cost extensions which extended the project duration by almost four years.</p>	5.5
<p><b>Quality of 'Monitoring and Reporting' Section</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> to present well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the evaluand's monitoring and reporting.</p> <p>Consider how well the report addresses the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quality of the monitoring design and budgeting (<i>including SMART results with measurable indicators, resources for MTE/R etc.</i>)</li> <li>• quality of monitoring of project implementation (<i>including use of monitoring data for adaptive management</i>)</li> <li>• quality of project reporting (e.g. <i>PIMS and donor reports</i>) \</li> </ul>	<p><b>Final report (coverage/omissions):</b></p> <p><b>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</b></p> <p>The section presents a detailed and integrated analysis of the three dimensions evaluated under 'Monitoring and Reporting'.</p>	5.5
<p><b>Quality of 'Sustainability' Section</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under sustainability (i.e. the endurance of benefits achieved at outcome level).</p>	<p><b>Final report (coverage/omissions):</b></p> <p>Elements addressed to a satisfactory manner.</p>	5.5

<p>Consider how well the report addresses the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• socio-political sustainability</li> <li>• financial sustainability</li> <li>• institutional sustainability</li> </ul>	<p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>An integrated analysis of the three dimensions under sustainability is provided with sufficient evidence.</p>	
<p><b>Quality of Factors Affecting Performance Section</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> These factors are not always discussed in stand-alone sections and may be integrated in the other performance criteria as appropriate. However, if not addressed substantively in this section, a cross reference must be given to where the topic is addressed and that entry must be sufficient to justify the performance rating for these factors.</p> <p>Consider how well the evaluation report, either in this section or in cross-referenced sections, covers the following cross-cutting themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• preparation and readiness</li> <li>• quality of project management and supervision<sup>81</sup></li> <li>• stakeholder participation and co-operation</li> <li>• responsiveness to human rights and gender equality</li> <li>• environmental and social safeguards</li> <li>• country ownership and driven-ness</li> <li>• communication and public awareness</li> </ul>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>All elements addressed well and discussed as stand-alone sections.</p>	5.5
<p><b>Quality of the Conclusions Section</b></p> <p><b>(i) Conclusions Narrative:</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> to present summative statements reflecting on prominent aspects of the <u>performance of the evaluand as a whole</u>, they should be derived from the synthesized analysis of evidence gathered during the evaluation process.</p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compelling narrative providing an integrated summary of the strengths and weakness in overall performance (achievements and limitations) of the project</li> <li>• clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions</li> <li>• human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention should be discussed explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p> <p>A succinct response to the key strategic questions is included in this section.</p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>Well-structured conclusions. The section presents a good and adequate summary of the project strengths and weaknesses, findings and ratings.</p>	5.5
<p><b>ii) Utility of the Lessons:</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> to present both positive and negative lessons that have potential for wider application and use (replication and generalization)</p>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p> <p>Three lessons learned were identified.</p>	5

<sup>81</sup> In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UNEP. This includes providing the answers to the questions on Core Indicator Targets, stakeholder engagement, gender responsiveness, safeguards and knowledge management, required for the GEF portal.

<p>Consider how well the lessons achieve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are rooted in real project experiences (i.e. derived from explicit evaluation findings or from problems encountered and mistakes made that should be avoided in the future)</li> <li>• briefly describe the context from which they are derived and those contexts in which they may be useful</li> <li>• do not duplicate recommendations</li> </ul>	<p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>The lessons learned are derived from project experiences and challenges identified.</p>	
<p><b>(iii) Utility and Actionability of the Recommendations:</b></p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> to present proposals for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results.</p> <p>Consider how well the recommendations achieve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when</li> <li>• include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions</li> <li>• represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTES:</b></p> <p><b>(i)</b> In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance.</p> <p><b>(ii)</b> Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.</p>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p> <p>Five recommendations were identified.</p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>The recommendations are feasible to implement and have a measurable performance target.</p>	5.5
<p><b>Quality of Report Structure and Presentation</b></p> <p><b>(i) Structure and completeness of the report:</b></p> <p>To what extent does the report follow the Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included and complete?</p>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p> <p>The report is complete and follows the Evaluation Office guidelines.</p>	5.5
<p><b>(ii) Writing and formatting:</b></p> <p>Consider whether the report is well written (clear English language and grammar) with language that is adequate in quality and tone for an official document?</p>	<p><i>Final report (coverage/omissions):</i></p> <p><i>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</i></p>	5.5

Do visual aids, such as maps and graphs convey key information?	The report is clear and well written. The tone is adequate.	
<b>OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING</b>		<b>5.5</b>

A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1. The overall quality of the evaluation report is calculated by taking the mean score of all rated quality criteria.

At the end of the evaluation, compliance of the evaluation process against the agreed standard procedures is assessed, based on the table below. *All questions with negative compliance must be explained further in the table below.*

Evaluation Process Quality Criteria	Compliance	
	Yes	No
<b>Independence:</b>		
1. Were the Terms of Reference drafted and finalised by the Evaluation Office?	X	
2. Were possible conflicts of interest of proposed Evaluation Consultant(s) appraised and addressed in the final selection?	X	
3. Was the final selection of the Evaluation Consultant(s) made by the Evaluation Office?	X	
4. Was the evaluator contracted directly by the Evaluation Office?	X	
5. Was the Evaluation Consultant given direct access to identified external stakeholders in order to adequately present and discuss the findings, as appropriate?	X	
6. Did the Evaluation Consultant raise any concerns about being unable to work freely and without interference or undue pressure from project staff or the Evaluation Office?		X
7. If Yes to Q6: Were these concerns resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both the Evaluation Consultant and the Evaluation Manager?		
<b>Financial Management:</b>		
8. Was the evaluation budget approved at project design available for the evaluation?	X	
9. Was the final evaluation budget agreed and approved by the Evaluation Office?	X	
10. Were the agreed evaluation funds readily available to support the payment of the evaluation contract throughout the payment process?	X	
<b>Timeliness:</b>		
11. If a Terminal Evaluation: Was the evaluation initiated within the period of six months before or after project operational completion? Or, if a Mid Term Evaluation: Was the evaluation initiated within a six-month period prior to the project's mid-point?	X	
12. Were all deadlines set in the Terms of Reference respected, as far as unforeseen circumstances allowed?	X	
13. Was the inception report delivered and reviewed/approved prior to commencing any travel?	X	
<b>Project's engagement and support:</b>		
14. Were the project team, Sub-Programme Coordinator and identified project stakeholders given an opportunity to provide comments on the evaluation Terms of Reference?	X	
15. Did the project make available all required/requested documents?		X
16. Did the project make all financial information (and audit reports if applicable) available in a timely manner and to an acceptable level of completeness?		X
17. Was adequate support provided by the project to the evaluator(s) in planning and conducting evaluation missions?	X	
18. Was close communication between the Evaluation Consultant, Evaluation Office and project team maintained throughout the evaluation?	X	
19. Were evaluation findings, lessons and recommendations adequately discussed with the project team for ownership to be established?	X	
20. Were the project team, Sub-Programme Coordinator and any identified project stakeholders given an opportunity to provide comments on the draft evaluation report?	X	
<b>Quality assurance:</b>		
21. Were the evaluation Terms of Reference, including the key evaluation questions, peer-reviewed?	X	
22. Was the TOC in the inception report peer-reviewed?	X	
23. Was the quality of the draft/cleared report checked by the Evaluation Manager and Peer Reviewer prior to dissemination to stakeholders for comments?	X	
24. Did the Evaluation Office complete an assessment of the quality of both the draft and final reports?	X	
<b>Transparency:</b>		
25. Was the draft evaluation report sent directly by the Evaluation Consultant to the Evaluation Office?	X	
26. Did the Evaluation Manager disseminate (or authorize dissemination) of the	X	

cleared draft report to the project team, Sub-Programme Coordinator and other key internal personnel (including the Reference Group where appropriate) to solicit formal comments?		
27. Did the Evaluation Manager disseminate (or authorize dissemination) appropriate drafts of the report to identified external stakeholders, including key partners and funders, to solicit formal comments?	<b>X</b>	
28. Were all stakeholder comments to the draft evaluation report sent directly to the Evaluation Office	<b>X</b>	
29. Did the Evaluation Consultant(s) respond adequately to all factual corrections and comments?	<b>X</b>	
30. Did the Evaluation Office share substantive comments and Evaluation Consultant responses with those who commented, as appropriate?	<b>X</b>	

**Provide comments / explanations / mitigating circumstances below for any non-compliant process issues.**

<b><u>Process Criterion Number</u></b>	<b><u>Evaluation Office Comments</u></b>