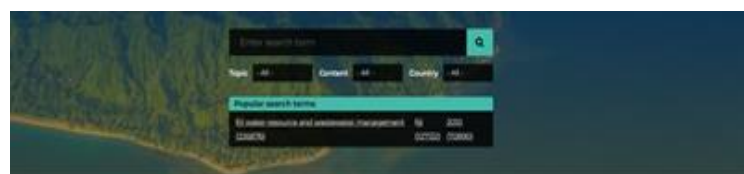


Validated Terminal Review of the UNEP-GEF project
'Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral
Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and
State of Environment Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific'
(GEF ID 5195)
2016-2023



UNEP Early Warning and Assessment Division

Validation date: January 2025



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This report has been prepared by an external consultant as part of a Terminal Review, which is a management-led process to assess performance at the project's operational completion. The UNEP Evaluation Office provides templates and tools to support the review process and provides a formal assessment of the quality of the Review report, which is provided within this report's annexed material. In addition, the Evaluation Office formally validates the report by ensuring that the performance judgments made are consistent with evidence presented in the Review report and in-line with the performance standards set out for independent evaluations. As such the project performance ratings presented in the Review report may be adjusted by the Evaluation Office. The findings and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of Member States or the UN Environment Programme Senior Management.

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(Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and State of Environment Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific - Inform)

SMAIPMR ID:31070 Umoja WBS:SB-006773.01

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Management Led Terminal Review (MLTR) is being conducted for the 'Inform' Project, Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and State of Environment Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific (long title), (also referred to throughout this report as 'the project'). The MLTR is being prepared for UNEP Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit, Early Warning and Assessment Division Nairobi, Kenya, by Tony O'Keeffe, Independent Review Consultant.

The review to date has been greatly assisted by inputs provided by personnel who were directly involved in project design, coordination, implementation, technical support or participating in, or actioning, aspects of the project including individuals in each of the Pacific Island Countries (PICs).

Gratitude is expressed to all persons who made time to contribute valuable perspectives toward the development of this report (as listed in Annex II). The inputs of the UNEP Task Manager Jochem Zoetelief and the Project Management Associate Ayda Maria Villalobos are particularly acknowledged for the information provision and clarifications provided to the external reviewer for this MLTR. The assistance of the Environmental Monitoring & Reporting Adviser Vainuupo Jungblut and the Pacific Environment Portal Systems Developer & Analyst Tavita Su'a based at the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) are also acknowledged for the specific contributions and practical support they provided to the review process. The external reviewer hopes that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations outlined in this report contribute to the successful completion of the MLTR and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in the Pacific region, and internationally.

EXTERNAL CONSULTANT BIOGRAPHY

Tony O'Keeffe is an expert project manager with a 35-year career in environmental management. His extensive skills base enables him to review and guide projects at strategic, technical, and operational levels. Since 2009, he has focused on supporting Pacific Island countries in protecting the natural resources on which they depend. Some of his recent work experience in the Pacific region includes:

- Five years based in Fiji as the Regional Protected Areas Coordinator for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in collaboration with SPREP and all Pacific Island countries.
- Producing the Pacific Regional World Heritage Action Plan 2021-2025, involving direct engagement and with 14 countries and all regional representatives for natural and cultural heritage, and ongoing mentoring (for IUCN and UNESCO).
- Specialist monitoring, evaluation, and learning consultant to: Ocean Country Partnership Program in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (Defra, UK); Pacific I2I Regional Blue Economy project and Adaptation Fund project, Kiribati (SPREP).
- Expert external reviewer for Climate Change and Disaster Resilience Strategy, PNGAUS Partnership Economic and Social Infrastructure Program.
- Specialist communication advisor to the Adaptation Fund (climate change) project for water security, health, and coastal infrastructure in the FSM (DECEM); FSM Ridge to Reef project (GEF, UNDP).
- Managed the Dugong and Turtle Management Project and Marine Ecosystem Monitoring Project (Torres Strait Regional Authority TSRA).
- Expert evaluator for: Periodic Reporting for the World Heritage Convention in the Asia-Pacific region (UNESCO); the Kiwa Initiative Pacific grants program in Oceania (IUCN).
- Expert external reviewer for the Reimaanlok: National Conservation Area Plan for the Republic of the Marshall Islands (IUCN).
- Developed a GEF funding proposal titled Ensuring resilient ecosystems and representative protected areas for the Government of Solomon Islands (EREPA)(IUCN and SPREP).
- Technical adviser and content review/writer, Public Sector Capacity Development Support Program, Government of Timor-Leste (AusAID/DFAT)

ABOUT THE REVIEW

Joint Review: No

Report Language(s): English.

Review Type: Terminal Review

Brief Description: This report supports a management-led Terminal Review (MLTR) of the 'Inform' Project, Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and State of Environment Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific (long title). It was a UNEP project, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by SPREP between 2017 and 2023. The project's overall development goal was to establish a Pacific Island Country (PIC) network of national and regional databases for monitoring, evaluating, and analyzing environmental information to support environmental planning, forecasting, and reporting requirements at all levels. This MLTR is managed by UNEP's Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit in the Early Warning and Assessment Division (EWAD). EWAD is responsible for analyzing the state of the global environment, providing early warning information, and assessing global and regional environmental trends to catalyze and promote international cooperation and action on the environment.

The review 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 review 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 executing agency (SPREP), and the relevant agencies of the project participating countries.

Key words¹: Environment Portal; Indicator; Data Ecosystem; Data Sharing; Environmental Monitoring².

Primary data collection period Progressive documentation review: March to May 2024, stakeholder consultation period April to June 2024

Field mission dates: 21 – 23 May 2024 to Apia, Samoa

UNEP Disclaimer *"This report has been prepared by an external consultant as part of a Terminal Review, which is a management-led process to assess performance at the project's operational completion. The UNEP Evaluation Office provides templates and tools to support the review process and provides a formal assessment of the quality of the Review report, which is provided within this report's annexed material. In addition, the Evaluation Office formally validates the report by ensuring that the performance judgments made are consistent with evidence presented in the Review report and in-line with the performance standards set out for independent evaluations. As such the project performance ratings presented in the Review report may be adjusted by the Evaluation Office. The findings and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of Member States or the UN Environment Programme Senior Management."*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
ABOUT THE REVIEW	4
TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	6
PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE	9
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	11
Lessons learned	15
Recommendations	17
I. INTRODUCTION	20
II. REVIEW METHODS	22
III. THE PROJECT	30
A. Project Title	30
B. Context	30
C. Objectives and components.....	30
D. Stakeholders	33
E. Project implementation structure and partners	37
F. Changes in design during implementation.....	38
G. Project financing	39
IV. THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW	41
V. REVIEW FINDINGS	44
A. Strategic Relevance	44
B. Quality of Project Design	47
C. Nature of the External Context.....	59
D. Effectiveness.....	60
E. Financial Management	73
F. Efficiency	75
G. Monitoring and Reporting.....	76
H. Sustainability	77
I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues	78
VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	82
A. Conclusions.....	82
B. Lessons learned.....	87
C. Summary of project findings and ratings	90
VII. RECOMMENDATIONS	97
VIII. ANNEXES	102
Annex I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS	102
Annex II. REVIEW FRAMEWORK/MATRIX	103
Annex III. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW	112
Annex IV. KEY DOCUMENTS REVIEWED	114
Annex V. REVIEW ITINERARY	116
Annex VI. PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES	117
Annex VII. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	119
Annex VIII. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TOOLS	121
Annex IX. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER	123
Annex X. REVIEW TORS (WITHOUT ANNEXES)	125
Annex XI. GEF PORTAL INPUTS (For GEF funded projects)	158
Annex XII. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF RECOMMENDATIONS	168
Annex XIII. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF REVIEW REPORT	175

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACP	African Caribbean and Pacific Countries
ADB	Asia Development Bank
BI	Birdlife International
BINGO	Big International NGO
BIOPAMA	Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCCD	Cross-Cutting Capacity Development
CD	Capacity Development
CI	Conservation International
CMCA	Common Multi-Country Analysis
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific
CSO	Civil Service Organisation
DEWA	Division of Early Warning Assessment
EA	Expected Accomplishment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EMG	Environmental Monitoring and Governance
EOU	Evaluation Office of UNEP
EU	European Union
EWAD	Early Warning and Assessment Division
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFA	Forum Fisheries Agency
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GCF	Global Climate Fund
GE	Green Economy
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
IRT	Indicator Reporting Tool
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millenium Development Goals

MEA	Multilateral Environment Agreement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MLTR	Management Led Terminal Review
MTR	Mid Term Review
MTS	Medium Term Strategy
NCSA	National Capacity Self Assessments
NEMS	National Environment Management Strategies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OACPS	Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific Island States
PCCP	Pacific Climate Change Portal
PEP	Pacific Environment Portal
PEIN	Pacific Environment Information Network
PDE	Pacific Data Ecosystem
PDH	Pacific Data Hub
PIC	Pacific Island Country
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIPAP	Pacific Islands Protected Area Portal
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PoW	Programme of Work
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
PRC	Project Review Committee (internal UNEP committee that approves new projects)
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
SC	Sustainable Consumption
SD	Sustainable Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SOEC	State of Environment and Conservation
SOE	State of the Environment
SOER	State of Environment Report
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SPC	Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
ToC	Theory of Change

ToR	Terms of Reference
UNCT	UN Country Teams
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UN	United Nations
USD	United States Dollars
USP	University of the South Pacific
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WHO	World Health Organization
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1. Project Identification Table

UNEP PIMS ID/SMA ³ ID:	SMAIPMR ID:31070 Umoja WBS:SB- 006773.01	Grant ID ⁴ : P1-33GFL-001061t
GEF ID:	5195	
Project title	Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and State of Environment Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific	
Project short title	Inform	
Duration	Planned	48 months
	Age	68 months
Project scope	Regional	
Region	Asia - Pacific	
Countries	14 x Pacific Island Countries (PICs) - Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu	
GEF focal area	Multi-focal Area	
GEF Agency / Implementing Agency	Science Division (since renamed as the Early Warning and Assessment Division) Nairobi, Kenya.	
Executing Partner	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme	
Sources of Funding:	14 x PICS per countries listed above	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) BIOPAMA programme European Union - African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) region ACP-MEA project
Relevant SDG(s):	SDG 13 (13.2.1, 13.3.1, 13.3.2, 13.b.1); SDG 15 (15.1.1, 15.1.2, 15.2.1, 15.3.1, 15.4.1/2, 15.9.1); SDG 16 (16.10.2); and SDG 17 (17.14.1; 17.16.1; 17.18.1) This project also links to SDG 14 (14.1, 14.2, 14.3, 14.5, 14.a, 14.c	
MTS and POW	Project implementation commenced during UNEPs 2017-2018 PoW under Sub Programme 7 (Environment Under Review) Expected Accomplishment (a) Governments and other stakeholders use quality open environmental data, analyses and participatory processes that strengthen the science-policy interface to generate evidence-based environmental assessments, identify emerging issues and foster policy action, and (a) (ii) Increase in the number of countries reporting on the environmental dimension of sustainable development through shared environmental information systems with country-level data made discoverable through UNEP. The project remained compliant with UNEPs 2022– 2025 medium term strategy for tackling climate change, loss of nature and pollution. The cross-cutting nature of this GEF capacity building project remained aligned with UNEPs 2022-2023 PoW integrated results frameworks designed to ensure countries apply sound science to inform policies, as a foundation for delivering climate stability, living in harmony with nature and a pollution-free planet.	
Sub-programme:	UNEP Foundational Science-Policy sub-programmes	
Date of CEO Endorsement/Approval	15 September 2016	

³ SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023.

⁴ For example, ID references from EC, IKI, UNDA, Adaptation Fund, GCF.

UNEP Project Approval Date (on Decision Sheet)	21 December 2016		
Expected start date - start of Implementation (PCA entering into force)	21 December 2016	Actual start date: (date of Inception Workshop)	20 – 24 November 2017
Planned completion date:	31 December 2021	Actual operational completion date:	31 July 2023
Planned total project budget ⁵ at approval:	USD11,295,911 (note that a cash co-finance of 1,000,000 via EU-ACP was reduced to 500,000 resulting in a total project budget of USD10,795,911)	Actual total expenditures reported as of 30 June 2023:	4,239,438
Planned Extra-budgetary Funds ⁶ :	Cash: 4,319,635 In-kind: 6,476,276		
First disbursement:	18 January 2017	Planned date of financial closure:	Estimated 1 year after operational completion.
No. of formal project revisions:	Three (3)	Date of last approved project revision:	21 April 2023
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	Seven (7)	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	28 April 2023
Mid-term Review (planned date):	October 2019	Mid-term Review (actual date):	October 2019
Terminal Review (planned date):	December 2023	Terminal Review (actual date):	June 2024

⁵ Total budget may include Regular Budget, Environment Fund, Extra-Budgetary, including 'softly-earmarked' etc.

⁶ Extra-budgetary funds may include co-finance (cash/in-kind)

Project background

The Inform project was developed as a unified, demand-driven response to the critical need for data-driven decision-making in the Pacific region and to address three common problems and vulnerabilities:

- The need for historical and current evidence of the status and trends of various environmental resources and drivers of environmental change.
- Challenges with information management, including the need for standard procedures for collecting and aggregating relevant environmental data.
- Lack of timely access to available information by those who need it, including local technical staff, governments, or communities and citizens, for national and international reporting and planning, and most importantly, for sound and informed decision making.

The projects' main goal was to establish a network of national and regional databases for monitoring, evaluating, and analyzing environmental information to support environmental planning, forecasting, and reporting requirements at all levels. This involved developing and enhancing environmental information management and use for informing planning and decision making, for reporting at the national and regional levels, and for reporting to the global environmental conventions and environment-related indicators of the sustainable development goals. In the GEF context the project was a Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) Full-sized project with the aim of providing targeted support to countries to strengthen their capacities to meet their commitments under the Rio Conventions and other Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs).

The project conceptualization, design, support-seeking and approvals phase began in 2012, culminating in final GEF and UNEP approvals in late 2016 (with budget of approximately USD 10.8 million in GEF financing + co-financing) and then ultimately spanning a seven-year inception and implementation period from 2017 and concluding in July 2023.

Through strategic partnerships between Pacific Island Countries (PICs), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and a key regional agency (the Pacific Community [SPC]) this project has provided a robust foundation for collating, centralizing, securely storing, accessing and utilizing environmental data. Together, UNEP and SPREP demonstrated their capacity to operate as a collaborative and effective team providing sound project direction and oversight on the Inform project. The project has activated a valuable process of improving knowledge, attitudes, habits and practices relating to environmental data. It is best considered as a valuable and largely successful foundational phase toward future actions on enhanced data collection and data application which paves the way for data-driven decision making.

Aim and scope of the review

This report was prepared by an external reviewer to support a management-led Terminal Review (MLTR) of the 'Inform' Project from its design and approval phase (2012 – 2016) and implementation phase (2017 – 2023). The review sought to assess project performance (relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability.

The review is intended to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, the GEF, SPREP, and the relevant agencies of the project participating countries. A reasonable cross section of project stakeholders was consulted (17

male, 11 female). The project's Theory of Change (ToC) and Results Framework was used as an analytical framework to assess outputs, outcomes and likelihood of impact.

Conclusions and recommendations

The following summation of conclusions and recommendations from the Inform project MLTR are further elaborated in Section VI *Conclusions and recommendations* of this report.

Conclusions

The essential elements of the Inform projects' four components and outcome areas (namely the design of national and regional databases; environmental data used for planning and reporting; capacity development to support the technical facility, and project management and evaluation) were largely, and to varying degrees, well delivered and achieved within the scope and context of a relatively modest budget and a range of challenging implementation circumstances.

This achievement is captured as follows as favorable findings, set against project challenges, moderated through matters for further reflection and informed by lessons learned. Key actions that could be considered or undertaken in the post-project termination period are provided as recommendations.

Favorable findings

1. The conceptualization and design of the Inform project responded purposefully to the key relevant issues, broad needs and gaps concerning environmental data and information and set a sound model for required resources and implementation for practical improvements.
2. There is unilateral recognition across key stakeholders and partners that the Inform project was a competently managed, cost effective, foundational initiative toward improving the security, centralization and accessibility of environmental data and information for the Pacific region.
3. The main physical project outputs were of a high standard. Functional technical apparatus comprising regional and national portals were housed within an information network known as the Pacific Environment Portal (PEP) <https://docs.pacific-data.sprep.org/>. The PEP was enhanced through guidance tools (standard procedure and practice on data governance and data management, data sharing templates, standard regional environmental indicators, indicator reporting tool, data collection options) and instructional resources showing users how to utilize these resources, <https://indicators.sprep.org/user/login>
4. A substantial body of data and information has been now transferred and preserved, and a robust, structured framework for continuing contributions and cross-harvesting, with publishing capacity, is in place with regional and national portal interfaces accommodated within the PEP. PICs can choose to host or not host (or alternatively host via SPREP) their national portal.
5. A major advance under the project was the crucial bond, and flagship partnership, established between the SPC Pacific Data Hub PDH and the Inform / SPREP Pacific Environment Portal to create the foundations for a wider 'ecosystem' of seamless, integrated data management – a good community of practice model.
6. The Inform project stimulated initial mobilization and open sharing of a critical mass of legacy and institutional environmental data and information that supported the

development and use of tools and sharing systems. It demonstrated its utility in the preparation of the Regional State of Environment and Conservation in the Pacific Islands Report, 2020 and the recent (last five years) suite of national State of the Environment (SoE) reports and National Environment Management Strategies (NEMS).

7. The development of SoE reports was perhaps the most successful and beneficial legacy output from the project, with considerable targeted support and resources allocated by the project and forming a critical, and well accepted, entry point for data seeking and collation. Although the available data quality underpinning these types of documents is generally recorded as being of a low to moderate confidence level, they do serve to draw attention to critical environmental evidence and indicators, drivers, trends, and areas of concern, equipping policymakers with sufficient insights to guide and develop targeted strategies to address environmental challenges.
<https://library.sprep.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/SoE-conservation-pacific-regional-report.pdf>
8. The Inform project, via its comprehensive capacity building actions, demonstrably strengthened the broad knowledge level across PICs concerning environmental data and information and equally, if not more importantly, assisted in promoting enhanced attitudes, habits and practices (and trust levels) relating to data management more generally. Stakeholders have been able to reflect on aspects of their environmental data and information circumstances and recognize critical gaps (particularly baseline data and specific information required for MEAs) that require more targeted attention if they are to achieve comprehensive, authoritative reference points for planning and decisions.
9. Agility in responding pro-actively to substantial challenges spanning 14 countries was a hallmark of the Inform project. Several testing circumstances were encountered particularly the Covid-19 pandemic and severe natural disaster events. The project had to contend with the array of conventional challenges (namely severe resource and capacity limitations) that beset projects in a region comprised of small island developing countries (including 3 least developed countries and one emerging economy).
10. Strong links (along with shared resources and joint activity) were recognized and established with foundational projects such as the EU ACP-MEA 2 project, related platforms such as UNESCO, GEO and SIO, and allied projects such as the GCF-funded UNEP CIS-Pac5 Project, the EU-OACPS BIOPAMA programme, the EU-OACPS Pacific BioScapes Project, the UNJP SESS project and the EU funded PacWaste Plus project, and with other related projects and initiatives in the region. Further, SPREP has wide ranging responsibilities for, and relationships with, multiple environmental programmes, projects and initiatives which provides substantial opportunity for ongoing population of the PEP with more current and wide-ranging data.
11. In planning ahead, a concept note has been prepared outlining a future iteration of 'Inform' and which has identified key focus areas such as the need for national environmental standards, monitoring and data collection standards, data management using the PEP, GIS mobilization and environmental data advocacy – all of which are elements that were beyond the full reach of the Inform project 2017 – 2023.

Main project challenges

12. PICs experience significant limitations in human and financial resourcing making closely applied external assistance a pre-requisite for most development initiatives.
13. Staffing structures and cohorts in PIC national government agencies undergo regular change, turnover and disruption, and with positions often unfilled, resulting in interrupted project participation, communication and participation.

14. PICS are highly vulnerable to external challenges and threats with lower capacity to respond to their impacts thus exposing the likelihood of disruptions with project attention and resources. This requires alternative work approaches, timing and outputs to be composed by project management units on a regular basis.
15. The increasing abundance of funding opportunities, interventions and organizations responding to environmental issues across the region is a positive situation yet is also fraught by stretching minimal national resources with unrealistic participation commitments.
16. Preparing responses to MEA reporting, and particularly the SDGs, and producing periodic state of the environment reports is a cross-sectoral collaboration process critically involving contribution of data and information from the full suite of environment thematic areas (biodiversity, all land uses, marine, waste, climate), yet remains an area experiencing variable commitment to unified efforts from key data and information holders.
17. Systemic, institutional or individual concerns about access to, or the sharing and use of data and information (sensitivity, effort required, competing priorities, data system familiarities and preferences, gatekeeping/control), is prevalent enough throughout the region to constitute a key barrier prolonging the building of an improved body of centralized regional and national environmental data and information.

Matters for further reflection

18. The project did not have the benefit of a well resolved TOC and results framework and importantly no consistent use of suitably expressed outcome statements and specific indicators to determine outcome progress. Project performance and results have largely been measured through activity and outputs.
19. The development, refinement and re-application of project implementation and performance indicators would have benefitted from annual re-examination for their suitability as new information and paradigms emerged.
20. The relatively modest GEF funding envelope for this project did not (mostly) provide resources for dedicated in-country data specialist positions and relied on such roles being deployed internally via co-financing contributions or with assistance from opportunistic funding sources, resulting in PIC internal data work being in some cases insufficient, lapsing, or not occurring.
21. The degree to which the Inform project has driven independent national capacity for reporting on MEAs and in producing SoEs, NEMS and the like, and has influenced decision-making, appears to be uneven across the region. Although a few specific instances of a data/decision-making connection are noted elsewhere in this report, there remains a broad weakness with ongoing forward movement on practical, independent uptake and application by PICs of the PEP, its enabling mechanisms (e.g., data sharing mechanisms) and related action areas such as MEA reporting.
22. While there were some overt examples of positive use cases emanating from the project (production of SoEs in particular), more concerted effort could have been undertaken to demonstrate other practical, compelling application and products that benefited (or could in the future benefit) from a centralized, populated environmental data repository and its allied tools.
23. SoEs were built up from data and information resources that ranged in quality between being imperfect to reasonable to good, in terms of availability, age, accuracy and specificity. Although 13 PICs were supported to produce a SoE report 'product' that gave general indications about environmental status and trends, there remain significant

information gaps in some thematic areas and scope for strengthening the confidence level around some conclusions and actions recommended.

24. The data and information pipeline relies on the supply of good quality, current and ongoing material and sound data management systems at the source locations (the portal is a subsequent pipeline point) and the project was not able to address this element as fully as desirable during its timeframe, with the focus being on capturing 'any and all' relevant available data in existence to give foundational life and content to the portal.
25. There was a lack of opportunity, or inability, to effectively engage some important data partners/owners and stakeholders, including some CROP agencies, national government sectors beyond a core environment sector, regional and international environment and conservation organizations.
26. While commitments to project co-financing are generally granted without undue hesitancy and often well in advance of a project approval point, how the stated financial/in-kind contributions are supplied in concrete terms can be a vague accounting zone and can negatively skew the picture of work achieved compared to the 'on-paper' total of project funding (grant and co-finance).
27. As the PEP has basic functions and most resources on the PEP are in pdf format and metadata is not consistently available, users need to manually 'trawl' documents, as they cannot be readily probed for the retrieval of specific data and information (the wider internet remains a vital source of information. Although mostly user friendly, the PEP still necessitates a degree of training, technical support and key word dexterity in data uploading and interrogation aspects and would be improved with further development of the navigation dashboard and data analysis and interpretation functions.
28. The existence of the PEP and the SPREP Virtual Library sharing close airspace remains a somewhat undefined portfolio relationship.
29. The Inform project endeavored to develop an open data culture and platform that is available to all Pacific Island people regardless of educational attainment, gender, or age. However, regard to gender was not strongly embedded initially as a fundamental project element (potentially because the project had a technical focus and was not overtly targeted at communities or on ground issues). In addition to participation records and gender promotion via the portal (which were done well) more attention could have been afforded to consideration of gender entry points, gender disaggregated indicators and consideration of specific budget lines and activities.

Lessons learned

30. The conceptual design of a ToC and results framework should commence at the beginning of project formulation and be treated as the fundamental project 'blueprint', reflection point, revision model and template, and monitoring tool, and comprise the full suite of contemporary ToC and results framework elements and attributes.
31. Project design documents should identify an 'inception' or 'establishment' period more formally during the first year (six to twelve months) of a multi-year project. The inception period to be distinguished from activity implementation work and associated budget allocations (i.e., inception work and costs should be identified in a separate 'inception' budget). The quantum of activity implementation work and associated budget allocations in the first year should be measured realistically against the availability of progressively developing human and other resources, systems, agreements, and donor funding flows that are required for programme management and coordination purposes.

32. Sufficient staffing / consultancy / contractor / advisory positions should be budgeted for in recognition of the minimal to non-existent resources PICs have internally to host or contribute to projects (despite co-finance aspirations) and the need to have dedicated in-country personnel as a pre-requisite to achieving project outputs/outcomes. Consideration should be given to recruiting from a wider pool than only national level – regional or international, although national applicants would be favored (yet still merit-based).
33. Setting up funding continuity should be considered well in advance of the project termination point particularly for projects that are in the realm of being pilot in nature (albeit a substantial pilot project such as Inform) as reductions or gaps in workflow and engagement (potentially exacerbated by extended ‘wind-up’ stages associated with no-cost extensions), can contribute to dropping participation levels from stakeholders. Additionally, the wind-down period toward the termination point should be well planned and executed to help stakeholders move through this point, and onward, more independently and within their realistic resource levels.
34. A high degree and quality of stakeholder engagement, together with competent project leadership and collective teamwork, are key for achieving project goals in a moderately unfavorable environment.
35. The notion of ‘data’ can be a daunting concept for most people, carrying with it foreboding about having to understand or use intricate technical systems and processes that are only possible under specialist minds and hands.
36. There is a need to promote the model that attention to SDGs, SOEs, NEMSS and the like requires evenly contributed participation and responsibility across multiple sectors and stakeholders and is not something that is the sole concern or implementation duty of specific ‘environment’ agencies (although a coordination role can be appropriate).
37. Participation cohorts to workshops, meetings, training and relevant forums can often consist of individuals who have been nominated to attend as the opportunity and funding presented, (but the most appropriate candidate was unavailable), resulting in positive numeric attendance records yet poor results as proxy participants may not be able to make decisions, or carry skills back to the workplace point where they will be most useful.
38. Maintenance costs increase with adoption and uptake of developed tools and should be factored into the sustainability and scaling up of project outputs and outcomes.
39. A monitoring and evaluation system, including information tools and progress tracker, should be established quite early in a project at project management level and national levels (if possible), providing more clinical progress visualization rather than narrative reporting, and be utilized as the formal, informative basis for regularly convened review sessions.
40. Key senior contact / focal points in the Pacific region invariably juggle multiple duties across their specific ‘day jobs’ as well as invariably holding designated roles for a range of national commitments and initiatives and can be stretched to provide timely responses or adequate support and attentiveness to a single project.
41. While the dispersed and remote nature of PICs (and challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic) make usage of virtual communication a necessity and are generally a successful communication method, in person modalities for key meetings, workshops, forums, training and engagement will remain by far the preferred and most effective way for interaction, trust and relationship-building in the region. However, this approach should be weighed thoughtfully against the downsides which include high travel costs, workplace and personal disruptions and aviation contributions to GHG emissions.

42. Conversely to the many challenging issues relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, work focus during the border closure periods were heightened in some respects due to the extended non-travel period placing less demand on individuals to be away from their workplaces.
43. PICS have an expectation that relevant regional bodies will also become increasingly major suppliers of important data and information to the PEP.
44. Gender equity and social inclusion needs additional shifts to move it from being a topic on the supplementary edges of project consideration, to being a fundamental component of project design and implementation.
45. Independent project reviews (MTR, MLTR) provide a wide array of useful project performance commentary and should be retained as a specifically stored and easily retrievable resource and used as a base reference in future project design and implementation processes.
46. As the PEP becomes increasingly well-populated and sophisticated, there is a risk that projects that would characteristically plan in, and utilize, interactive engagement and consultation activity with PICs (remote or in-country) could wane, as required information can instead be sufficiently acquired from the PEP.
47. Where large regional organizations are based (e.g., Apia, Samoa, or Suva, Fiji) or in countries where major allied projects are being implemented, there is an inadvertent tendency for project efforts to be more favorable to those national governments due to proximity or convenience, to the potential disadvantage of other PICs.

Recommendations

48. SPREP should prepare an 'Inform update' to outline to stakeholders where the project (and post-project phase) has now arrived, what services it continues to sustain, any technical developments of note, and provide a strategic snapshot of where it is intending to steer data and information service initiatives going forward over the next 5 to 10 years. This could include statements in regard to funding opportunities (phrased to the level of funding confidence), practical examples of important products arising from the collection of data, stories on provoking and interesting information, and even 'simulations of potential' usage and value.
49. It is essential that the content and language expressed in ToCs and results frameworks is well resolved and articulates the clearest possible project direction and intentions. UNEP should collate a widely thematic set of good practice examples of ToCs and results frameworks and develop accompanying guideline resources to inform both UNEP internally and other partner agencies involved in project design in their application, including for project monitoring and evaluation
50. In planning ahead, a concept note has been prepared outlining a future iteration of 'Inform' and which has identified key focus areas such as the need for national environmental standards, monitoring and data collection standards, data management using the PEP, GIS mobilization and environmental data advocacy – all of which are elements that were beyond the full reach of the Inform project 2017 – 2023. This concept should be subjected to further discussion and revision processes by UNEP and SPREP based on matters arising from organizational reflection and information provided by this MLTR.
51. The PEP requires the development and deployment of additional functions, automations, and analysis tools including consideration of AI (retrieval augmented generation tools), to move it from being a catalogued data repository and tidy dashboard

(a library) and toward having enhanced querying capacity where specific information can be retrieved and visualized.

52. To ensure the PEP is being populated with up-to-date data and information and continues to evolve into an authoritative platform, a tandem sub-activity/project should be implemented (within single or multiple PICs) to support routine monitoring and data collection according to environmental standards and key environmental indicators. Data collection would involve systematic gathering of quantitative and/or qualitative data with appropriate tools (the KoBoToolbox introduced through the Inform project could be revisited) and portal uploading linkages. This could be pursued through SPREPs current programme and project cluster, where opportunities arise.
53. Data and information gatekeeping points and blockage zones are a critical outreach area to identify, prioritize, engage, encourage. and resolve suitably (where realistically possible) if the PEP is to achieve its intended purpose and value.
54. While opportunistic activity is now the pragmatic route within SPREPs resources in the post-Inform project period (meaning connections and work with specific projects/sectors such as climate information, waste, protected areas, invasive species), consideration needs to be given to how and where other critical stakeholders and partners who collect and manage environmental data (and there are many), can be prioritized, engaged and encouraged to know about the data sharing network and become positive contributors to a community of (data) practice (CROP agencies in particular due to their cooperation remit).
55. In designing and implementing future projects, responsiveness to gender equity, and social inclusivity more broadly, should be expanded well beyond the rudimentary tracking of participation statistics and to more forthrightly identify the roles of all genders and social groups to support their potential as drivers of sustainable development. Future projects should align with contemporary perceptions and definitions of gender and social inclusiveness expressed in UN and other relevant policy frameworks
56. The Inform project is recognized by UNEP and SPREP as one of its 'successful' projects and one that can offer key lessons and approaches for other projects. To avoid any key project missteps or weaknesses being repeated (in a future iteration of Inform or any relevant project), all important project experiences (i.e., via MTR and MLTR reporting, organizational reflection sessions, project reports, and whether concerning technical, administrative, engagement or communication aspects), need to be distilled, recorded, conserved securely, and collated in an organized, retrievable format.

Table 1: Project Performance Ratings Table (further details on this rating table can be found in Section V. of this report)

Criterion	Rating
A. Strategic Relevance	HS/6
B. Quality & Revision of Project Design	MS/4
<i>C. Nature of external context (not included in overall rating of performance)</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>
D. Effectiveness	S/5 <i>(Evaluation Office of UNEP – EOU - uses a weighted ratings table. This gives an aggregate rating for Effectiveness at the Moderately Satisfactory level.)</i>
E. Financial Management	HS/6

Criterion	Rating
F. Efficiency	HS/6
G. Monitoring and Reporting	S/5
H. Sustainability	MS/4
I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues	HS/6 <i>(The EOU's weighted approach gives an aggregate rating for Factors Affecting Performance at the Satisfactory level.)</i>
Overall project rating	Highly satisfactory <i>(The EOU's weighted approach gives an aggregate rating for Overall Project Performance at the Satisfactory level.)</i>

1 (Highly Unsatisfactory)	< 1.83	4 (Moderately Satisfactory)	>=3.5 <=4.33
2 (Unsatisfactory)	>= 1.83 < 2.66	5 (Satisfactory)	>4.33 <= 5.16
3 (Moderately Unsatisfactory)	>=2.66 <3.5	6 (Highly Satisfactory)	> 5.16

Note: The EOU notes that a weighted approach is used within the sub-criterion, as well as in aggregating the review criteria themselves.

The Reviewer notes that, although a criterion may rate modestly (e.g., Quality and revision of project design / moderately satisfactory), a criterion may contain numerous sub-criterion, some of which rate very highly and others very poorly, however the total aggregated rating reflects a weighted average of the high and low ratings. Similarly, a high rated criterion may also include a quite poor rating on a particular sub-criterion, yet still rate highly once all sub-criterion are aggregated.

Validation

The report has been subject to an independent validation exercise performed by UNEP's Evaluation Office. The performance ratings for the UNEP-GEF project 'Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and State of Environment Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific' (GEF ID 5195), set out in the Conclusions and Recommendations section, have been adjusted as a result. The overall project performance is validated at the **Satisfactory** level. Moreover, the Evaluation Office has found the overall quality of the report to be **Satisfactory** (see Annex XIII).

In this instance, the EOU notes that erroneous calculations in the performance ratings have been corrected to reflect its weighted approach to aggregating sub-criteria and the criteria themselves to give an overall performance rating of **Satisfactory** (see table 9).

I. INTRODUCTION

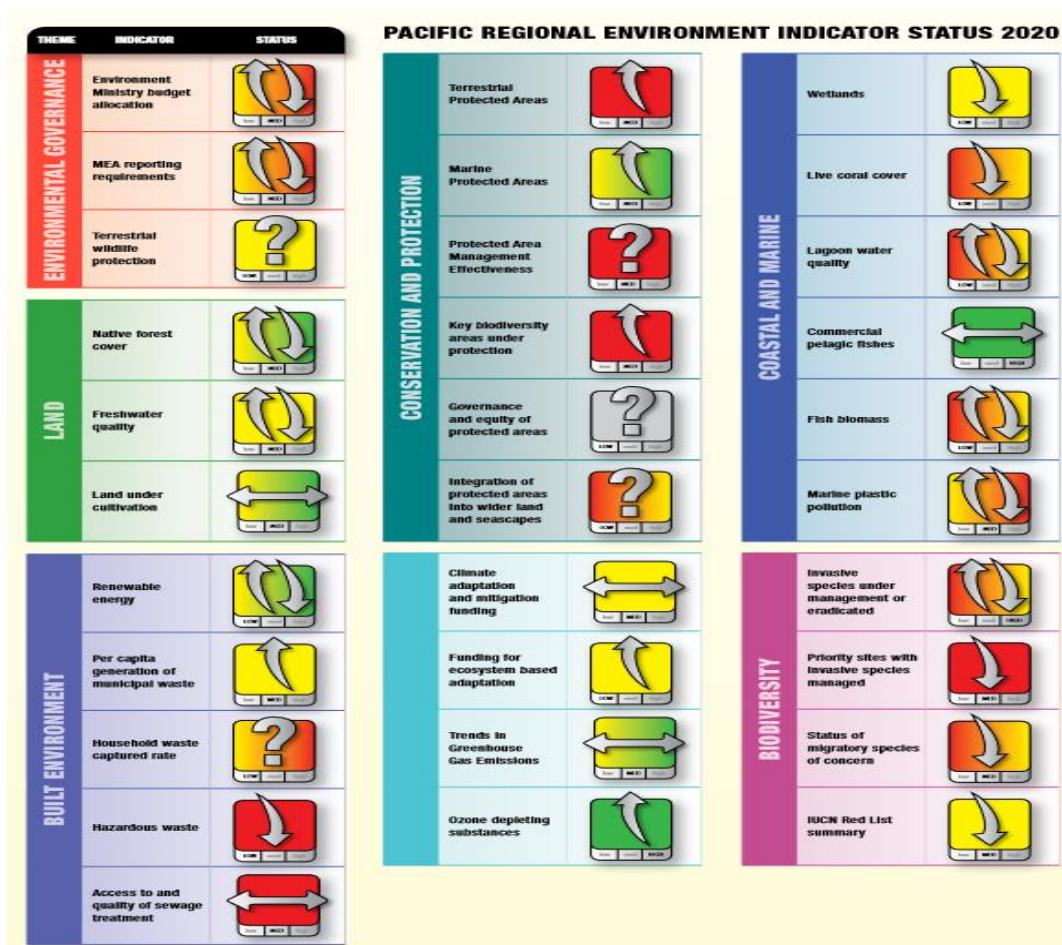
57. 'Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and State of Environment Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific' (short title - Inform project) developed in response to the critical need for data-driven decision-making in the Pacific region and to address three common problems and vulnerabilities, namely: need for historical and current evidence concerning environmental conditions; a need for standard collection and aggregation procedures for environmental data, and; lack of access to information by stakeholders who need it for reporting, planning, and decision making. The project built on an existing closely aligned, yet quite modest, regional project (ACP MEA 2) implemented by UNEP, with its Pacific hub residing at SPREP.
58. The Inform projects' main goal was to establish a network of national and regional databases for monitoring, evaluating, and analyzing environmental information to support environmental planning, forecasting, and reporting requirements at all levels and particularly for reporting to the global environmental conventions and environment-related indicators of the sustainable development goals. The geographic extent of the project encompassed 14 independent Pacific Island Countries (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu) who were each committed to the project formally through (in-kind) co-financing contribution and who actively participated in, or actioned, aspects of project implementation and governance.
59. In the GEF context the project was a Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) Full-sized project with the aim of providing targeted support to countries to strengthen their capacities to meet their commitments under the Rio Conventions and other Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs).
60. The Inform project was supported by UNEPs periodically refreshed Medium Term Strategy (MTS) and the Programme of Work (PoW) that accompanies the Strategy and which both accord with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The project aligned with the latter Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2025 and Programme of Work (POW) 2022-2023 and aligned with UNEP mandates under its MTS for national and regional capacity building in areas such as environmental data and information, and with UNEPs strong linkages to key strategic positions (e.g. Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building), to environmental bodies, and with knowledge management programmes. The project fell under the Foundational Science-Policy Sub-programme and contributes to indicators (i) and (ii).
61. The project conceptualization, design, support-seeking and approvals phase began in 2012, culminating in final GEF and UNEP approvals in late 2016 (with budget of approximately USD 10.8 million in GEF financing + co-financing). There followed a five-year inception and implementation period from November 2017 to December 2021, and subsequently three separate no-cost extension periods dating from September 2021 before concluding in July 2023.
62. Implemented by UNEP and funded by the GEF, the project was executed in the Pacific region by SPREP with working partnerships with PICs and a key regional agency (the Pacific Community [SPC]) this project provided a robust foundation for collating, centralizing, securely storing, accessing and utilizing environmental data.
63. The project underwent a mid-term review (MTR) in 2019 with the MTR report of October 2019 identifying areas for attention such as: adjustments and improvements to the ToC and results framework; the need for a no-cost extension and commencement of revised

work planning and budgets; increased focus on capacity support for national uptake of project outputs; a need for stronger reflection of gender considerations, and; experience sharing with other CCCD countries.

64. This report supports a Management-Led Terminal Review (MLTR) of the Inform project, The review included examination of a wide variety of project documents (design, proposals, reports, meeting minutes, communication materials, guides and manuals, tools) and consultation with a cross section of stakeholders to elicit their perspectives. The review 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, SPREP, and the relevant agencies of the project participating countries.

Image portraying the regional environmental situation

(State of Environment and Conservation in the Pacific Islands, 2020 Regional Report, SPREP)



II. REVIEW METHODS

Review purpose

65. This MLTR provides an assessment of project performance and judgments on actual and potential results, their sustainability and the operational efficiency of implementation and factors that affected performance. To achieve this, the MLTR specifically focus on the 'theory of change' or 'impact pathways' used by the project and review evidence of actual or potential achievements. In addition, it identifies lessons of operational and financial relevance for future project design and implementation by UNEP and/or SPREP. The MLTR was conducted in accordance with the GEF and UNEP requirements.
66. The primary purposes of the MLTR were to:
- Provide an assessment of the projects' performance in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and the operational efficiency of implementation, and factors that affected performance.
 - Provide judgments on actual and potential results and their sustainability.
 - Review the 'theory of change' or 'impact pathways' used by the project and review evidence of actual or potential achievements.
 - Identify operational and financial lessons
 - promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing and relevance for future UNEP project design and implementation.

Target audience for the MLTR report

67. The primary target audience for the terminal review will be the staff cohort in the Early Warning and Assessment Division at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. The secondary target audiences will be the project Executing Agency SPREP, the UNEP Evaluation Office, and the GEF secretariat. National focal points for the Inform project will also have the opportunity to receive information about the review.
68. Role of external reviewer the external reviewer was engaged by UNEP is to provide independent review and reporting for a MLTR for the UNEP GEF-funded project titled "Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and State of Environment Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific (ID#5195)" (Inform),
69. **Role of the external reviewer** The MLTR (also called the 'review' in this report) was conducted in accordance with the "UNEP Evaluation Policy, October 2022", "UNEP Evaluation Manual", with recognition of the GEF "Guidelines for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of Full-Size Projects", October 2023, and other relevant policies, procedures, and guidelines and provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable, and useful. The external reviewer made requests to UNEP (as required), for any relevant sample tables, templates and guidance notes associated with the documents listed above.

The external reviewer reviewed all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the project preparation phase, legal agreements, technical reports, mid-term review, inputs from key informants, and other sources as relevant.

70. The primary duties and responsibilities of the external reviewer were as follows:
- Desk review of relevant background documentation.

- Consult relevant individuals associated with the project currently, or previously.
- Produce an Inception Report following UNEP review guidance to:
 - provide a review approach framework, consultation products, and a review schedule.
 - advise the approach proposed to assess project design quality, develop a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project (only if required), and undertake a project stakeholder analysis.
- Produce a Preliminary Findings and Recommendations report as a basis for further development into the Draft Review Report and Final Main Review Report:
- Produce a Draft Review Report and Final Main Review Report including:
 - an Executive Summary that can act as a stand-alone document.
 - detailed analysis of the review findings, organized under UNEP review criteria categories and supported with evidence.
 - lessons learned and recommendations.
 - an annotated rating table.
 - Implementation Plan for the recommendations
- Deliver a virtual presentation to relevant stakeholders, as required.
- When finalizing all the documents mentioned above - receive, consider and, where appropriate, incorporate comments from the Implementing Agency (UNEP), Executing Agency (SPREP), National Government focal points, members of the project steering committee, other key stakeholders, such as individuals with good historical knowledge of the project.

71. The review framework included:

- A desk review
- Stakeholder consultation via virtual, in-person and written response modalities and using a survey form guideline
- Travel mission to the Executing Agency (SPREP) in Apia, Samoa and meeting with Samoan national government focal points
- Collation of all consultation inputs
- Analysis of findings
- Completion of review and assessment of Project Outputs and Outcomes, Quality of Project Design, Stakeholder Analysis, and Theory of Change.

Desk review

72. The external reviewer acquired and appraised all background documentation and information pertinent to the MLTR. UNEP was able to provide much of this material at the early stages of the MLTR and the external reviewer requested further information from UNEP where they believed it could assist the review. The external reviewer also made requests from various stakeholders to provide documentation that could assist in portraying implementation work and in illuminating issues. Final financial reporting for the project is still being concluded in collaboration between UNEP and SPREP.

73. The types of documentation and information sources that were made available/utilized for the review included:

- UNEP policies and procedures for Management-Led Terminal Reviews, and particularly those review guidance documents annexed to this report.

- 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 Theory of Change and the results framework, and project budget.
- Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) reports such as annual and six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence, and any other monitoring materials.
- Project deliverables (e.g. Pacific Environment Portal, publications, communication assessments etc.).
- Mid-Term Review of the project.
- Evaluations / reviews of similar projects.
- Project website information and news stories.
- Specific information that could help to fill any recognized information gaps.

Stakeholder consultation

74. Stakeholder engagement was a fundamental and critical component activity of this review. It was done effectively and courteously and yielded important insights and experiences from those from the 'front line' of project oversight, execution, and benefit or had allied contribution roles or connections with the project.
75. The aim of stakeholder consultation was to gather diverse views on the programme from a strong cross-section of stakeholders. Combined with project documentation this enabled the external reviewer to triangulate information and versions of events.
76. Stakeholder consultation managed to obtain inputs from an adequate gender-mixed cross section of project operatives, and particularly through virtual interviews and in-person meetings. Seventeen males and eleven females of varying working ages, backgrounds and roles were consulted.

Consultation methods

77. The external reviewer followed a collaborative and participatory approach and ensured that engagement occurred with:
 - Implementing Agency (UNEP) that facilitated the project (guidance, feedback, Steering Committee participation, reporting, finance).
 - Executing Agency (SPREP) that delivered the project (manage project and funds, accountability to UNEP, internal arrangements, regional coordination, technical development, capacity building, stakeholder support, advocacy and communication, reporting).
 - National Government focal points in Pacific Island Countries (leadership support, advise on needs and national stakeholders, internal arrangements, share information, participation, build capacity, advocacy).
 - Members of the project steering committee.
 - Other key stakeholders.
 - Specialist consultants associated with the project.
78. Additionally, the external reviewer conducted a field mission to the Executing Agency (SPREP) offices in Apia, Samoa. The primary rationale for this choice of mission (rather than missions to individual countries) is that the project was focused on supporting data availability and management, and capacity development, at the regional level and therefore an in-person mission to the regional Executing Agency, SPREP, would yield the best insights into these main project focus areas. This mission to Samoa provided

opportunity to meet directly with relevant Samoan national government personnel who have been involved in the project. All other consultation was conducted via virtual modality, which has proven to be increasingly effective over the last few years, as well as representing reductions in the high costs associated with regional travel missions and contribution to carbon emissions.

79. The general process for stakeholder consultation is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. Stakeholder consultation process (as described in the MLTR Inception Report)

1	<p>The external reviewer will develop an introductory note and survey form (see Annex G.) for stakeholders that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the purpose of the MLTR. • the external reviewers' details and role. • emphasizing the ethical aspects of the review and the external reviewer's independence. • the options to respond to a questionnaire (including written) or to have an 'interview' with the external reviewer (virtual and/or in-person). • the questions to be utilized in the interview (see 2 below). • the consultation timing period through which the external reviewer is available to conduct an interview or to submit written comments. • options for follow up contact and further information or providing responses to questions or concerns about the consultation process.
2	<p>The external reviewer to develop a series of questions to elicit relevant responses and information about all aspects of the project. These questions to be organized under 8 commonly applied review criteria categories, in line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy, the UNEP Programme Manual and the Guidelines for GEF Agencies. Questions may be modified / refined as consultations with stakeholder's progress. Proposed questions included the introductory note and survey form.</p>
3	<p>The Executing Agency (SPREP) will provide the external reviewer with a current stakeholder contact list for all 14 project countries (see Annex H.) and information about other potential stakeholders to be consulted. The external reviewer may be made aware of additional useful contact points as the consultation progresses. The UNEP Task manager will ensure that the external reviewer is aware of contact points in UNEP for consultation purposes.</p>
4	<p>Conduct stakeholder consultation via the following means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the stakeholders on the contact list provided by the Executing Agency (SPREP) and the UNEP Task Manager via individually written emails and with the introductory note and questions document attached. • Invite independent responses to survey questionnaires. • Offer, schedule, and conduct meetings (virtual or in-person) of semi-structured interviews with stakeholders - individuals and / or small groups. • Maintain an interview schedule (person, role, organisation, date, time). • Make written notes at time of interviews and record interview conversations, with permission. • Transcribe interview notes / recordings into refined format using review criteria categories as a text organisational tool.
5	<p>Arrange follow-up contacts, consultations or information provision as required.</p>
6	<p>Systematically collate and organise the record of interview notes and the content of written comments under the UNEP review criteria categories (see Annex I.).</p>

Ethical considerations

80. The MTR was undertaken in accordance with clear ethical principles that were designed to protect the privacy and wellbeing of stakeholders and ensure a wider ranging engagement process and to mitigate bias in reporting. These principles were as follows:

- The reviewer:
 - does not have any potential conflicts of interest, is impartial, and is free from external influence and bias.
 - has not been, or expected to be, directly responsible for the policy-setting, design or management of this project.
 - is not affiliated with any of the key stakeholders in any way that could invite bias.
 - works at 'arms-length' from the Task Manager (UNEP).
 - can exercise complete freedom to conduct the review work impartially and express their assessment freely.
 - has the requisite depth of experience, competencies and knowledge required to perform a review of this type.
- Participation was sought by a range of genders, ages, roles, sectors and relationships.
- Information from stakeholders and other sources of information was reported objectively.
- Participation and responses through questionnaires, meeting or interviews was:
 - voluntary.
 - supported with suitable explanation and opportunity for questions and clarification.
 - considerate of stakeholders existing workloads, commitments, social and personal needs, and cultural norms.
 - open to the choice to not respond to questions or information requests if desired.
 - limited to revealing only what is comfortable to be shared, and acknowledging if there are any sensitivities.
 - subject to checking that review topics and questions should not cause distress for respondents.
- To the extent possible, review findings were to be broadly outlined to key stakeholders to invite their reactions and interpretations.
- Anonymity and non-attributability of observations and statements was applied to reporting, except where stakeholders have given their permission, sought at the time of interview or meeting.
- No material inducement was offered to any stakeholders or to the reviewer.
- Information obtained was presented honestly and proportionately across the stakeholder cohort.

Limitations

81. As a terminal review and one that was being conducted almost 12 months after the project implementation had ceased (and this on top of no cost extension periods during which some of the central project activity had waned) the opportunity to attract comments from project stakeholders was challenging and for a range of practical reasons such as their accessibility, availability and timing, or the degree to which they were involved (or remained involved) in the project.
82. While key SPREP staff were obliging regarding consultation invitations, many of the original cohort members from the PICs who were involved in the project had since moved on to other roles or were involved in new responsibilities that consumed their time. Those PICs that had not responded to initial invitations to contribute to the MLTR were contacted a second time (sometimes three times) to encourage input even if it was only a 30-minute session. The reviewer ensured personal flexibility to any time that suited invitees from a PIC.

83. The reviewers' mission to Samoa provided a direct opportunity to speak with several individuals that may not have been easily available by virtual means.
84. The respondent's sample is considered to form a suitable critical mass to enable any unusual or contentious findings to be triangulated with other forms of data (other respondents' inputs and project documentation) to gauge significance.

Analyzing information, data and consultation input

85. Findings from desk review, stakeholder consultation and the country mission were notated and analyzed according to the processes and considerations identified in UNEP MLTR templates.
86. The UNEP matrix for rating each of its review criteria (Review Criteria Ratings Matrix 21.03.23.) was used to inform, assess, and organize the analysis of findings (also see Annex IV and V).
87. The desk review and stakeholder consultation yielded a large amount of information. To structure and organize this captured, notated information, the UNEP review criteria categories were used to provide an analytical framework for review. In addition, each of the project result areas and their incumbent activities were assessed in terms of their progress.
88. The Theory of Change and Results Framework provides both the fundamental 'backbone' and 'blueprint' for the project and its implementation. For example, the reviewer considered: were ToC pathways logical; was project implementation consistent with the theory of change; were output and outcome statements properly defined; did risks, barriers and assumptions hold/did not hold and how did they affect the achievement of results; what reflections on the theory of change could be required to make it more accurate and reflective of implementation realities?

LEARNING, COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

89. One of the primary purposes of a project terminal review is to facilitate a process of reflection and learning that can inform the way future iterations of the project under review, or similar projects, may be performed. The review will be particularly targeted to UNEP and SPREP personnel (in both project management and evaluation) and to assist their ongoing proficiency in these two areas.
90. The approach and methods that will be used to promote reflection and learning through the review process on the Inform project will include the following elements:
 - **Stakeholder consultation**
 - The external reviewer invited input from a wide cross -section of project stakeholders (see Annex 3) using a series of enquiry questions as a discussion guide to prompt respondents to reflect on aspects of the project and to provide their observations, in hindsight. The questions used and the interview technique utilized by the external reviewer, elicited responses that could assist stakeholders in re-considering the project, and commenting on it, in ways that they may not have previously taken the time to do (or had the confidential opportunity to do) when they were involved in the activities at functional levels. It is noted that some stakeholders who contribute to the review had not previously participated in such a process and that, inherently, it was a learning area for them, including the concept that projects are now strongly scrutinized for how well they have performed and contributed to real impact, and not simply conducting activity (outputs).
 - **MLTR reports**

- The findings report and the final main review report prepared for the review were developed from comprehensive review of project documents, from the contributions of stakeholders, with the independent observations and judgements of the external reviewer, and according to the latest UNEP MLTR guideline processes. The details of these reports were presented to relevant stakeholders in summative format (power-point) to enable them to receive, and have explained, the main review findings, performance ratings, lessons learned and recommendations.
- These reports were made available to relevant stakeholders to enable them to consider the reporting content and provide further comments, as appropriate. It is expected that the final main review report on the Inform project will be included in a suitably accessible resources repository of project/programme evaluations and reviews, from which can be extracted essential learnings for future projects and programmes.
- **UNEP / external reviewer dialogue**
 - The review entailed regular contact between UNEP and the external reviewer concerning aspects of the review, and this ongoing dialogue helped to form mutual understandings of project context, issues, and the way findings, performance ratings, lessons learned, and recommendations were shaped. It is noted that the external reviewer was independent from UNEP influence and that the dialogue mentioned here purely concerns the effective development of the review reporting and quality checking.

Table 3: Respondents' Sample

		# people contacted (M/F)		# respondent (M/F)
Project team (those with management responsibilities during the project implementation period)	Implementing agency UNEP	1M		1M
		2F		2F
	Executing agency SPREP	6M		6M
		3F		3F
	Executing agency SPREP (consultants)	2M		2M
	# entities involved	# entities contacted	# people contacted (M/F)	# respondent (M/F)
Project (collaborating/contributing) partners	Cook Islands: National Environment Service	✓	3M 2F	1M 1F
	Federated States of Micronesia: Office of Environment and Emergency Management.	✓	1M	0
	Fiji: Department of Environment.	✓	3F	0
	Kiribati: Environment and Conservation Division.	✓	2F	0
	Marshall Islands: Office of Environmental	✓	2M	0

	Planning and Policy Coordination			
	Nauru: Department of Commerce, Industry Environment.	✓	1M 1F	1M
	Niue: Department of Environment.	✓	2M	1M
	Palau: Office of Environmental Response and Coordination.	✓	1F	0
	Papua New Guinea: Department of Environment and Conservation.	✓	2M	0
	Samoa: Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment.	✓	3F	2F
	Solomon Islands: Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology.	✓	2M 3F	0
	Tonga: Ministry of Environment, Energy, Climate Change, Disaster Management, Meteorology, Information and Communications.	✓	1M 1F	0
	Tuvalu: Department of Environment.	✓	1M 4F	1M 1F
	Vanuatu: Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation	✓	2M	2M
Allied programmes (SPREP)	PacWaste Plus		1M	1M
	BIOPAMA		1M	
	Island and Ocean Ecosystems	✓	2F 1F	1F 1F
	Virtual Library services			
		Total	27M 28F	16M 11F

III. THE PROJECT

A. Project Title

91. 'Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and State of Environment Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific Islands' also known commonly by its short title - 'Inform'.

B. Context

92. The Inform project was conceived in response to three common problems and vulnerabilities in the Pacific region: a need for historical and current evidence of the status and trends of various environmental resources and drivers of environmental change; challenges with information management, including the need for standard procedures for collecting and aggregating relevant environmental data, and; lack of timely access to available information by those who need it, including local technical staff, governments, or communities and citizens, for national and international reporting and planning, and most importantly, for sound and informed decision making.
93. The conceptualization, design, support-seeking and approvals phase for the Inform project began in 2012, culminating in GEF approval in September 2016 and UNEP approval in December 2016. Although approved as a 48-month project, it ultimately spanned a seven-year period including preparatory mobilization/inception activity in 2016 and 2017 and then concerted implementation activity between 2018 and 2023. Three no-cost extensions were granted between 2021 and 2023 (of 20 months, 4 months and 3 months) which took the project through to a final implementation end date of July 2023. The project was independently reviewed at its mid-term stage with the review report submitted in October 2019. The total budget of approximately USD 10.8 million (GEF financing USD\$4,319,635 + co-financing USD\$6,476,276).
94. The project is supported by UNEPs Medium Term Strategy (MTS) and the Programme of Work (PoW) that accompanies the Strategy. Over the last decade or so (a period which covered the design, inception and implementation phases of the Inform project) the MTS and PoW has been redrafted and refreshed every few years to ensure currency and relevance with major themes and priorities for the global environment. However, the core themes of the MTS accord with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remain largely consistent over this ten year plus period. Also, with a focus on monitoring the state of the planet's health to gain a better understanding of the full extent of the challenges faced. The Inform project aligns with UNEP mandates under its MTS for national and regional capacity building in areas such as environmental data and information, and with UNEPs strong linkages to key strategic positions (e.g. Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building), to environmental bodies, and with knowledge management programmes. The project aligned with the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2025 and Programme of Work (POW) 2022-2023. As referenced in the last PIR, the project falls under the Foundational Science-Policy Sub-programme and contributes to indicators (i) and (ii).

C. Objectives and components

95. The Inform project was conducted with the goal of establishing a Pacific Island Country (PIC) network of national and regional databases for monitoring, evaluating, and analyzing environmental information to support environmental planning, forecasting, and reporting requirements at all levels. This goal involved developing and enhancing environmental information management and use for informing planning and decision making, for reporting at the national and regional levels, and for reporting to the global

environmental conventions and environment-related indicators of the sustainable development goals. Environmental data covered all thematic environment categories (i.e., biodiversity, atmosphere and climate, water, land, coastal and marine, waste and pollution and cross cutting elements such as governance, awareness and GEDSI).

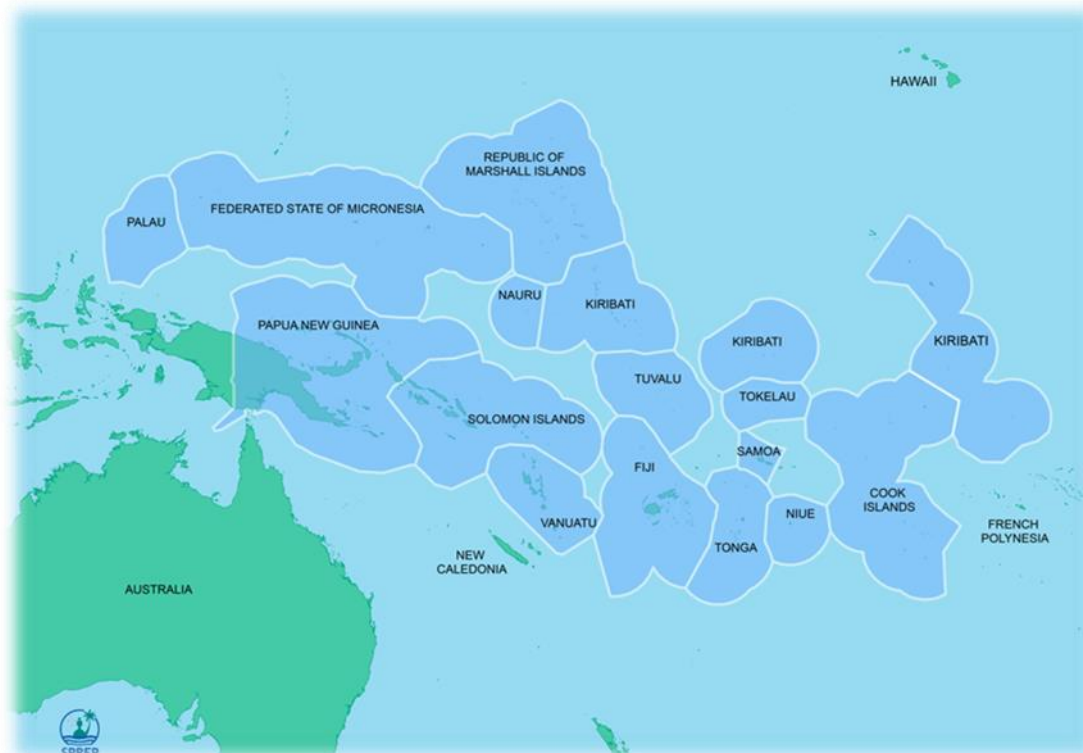
96. The project was a regional Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) Full-sized project and in the GEF context refers to the targeted support provided to countries to strengthen their capacities to meet their commitments under the Rio Conventions and other Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs). This type of capacity development focused on addressing systemic crosscutting national environmental management issues in GEF recipient countries.
97. The project comprised four components, as follows:
- **Component 1:** Design national and regional databases and networks to facilitate monitoring the state of the Pacific’s environment.
 - **Component 2:** Environmental data are efficiently and effectively used for environmental planning and reporting at all levels by strengthening national and regional legal, policy and planning frameworks.
 - **Component 3:** Capacity development to support the technical facility.
 - **Component 4:** Project management and evaluation. Note: this component was considered a cross-cutting element within Components 1 to 3.

Table 4. Post MTR Results Framework (simplified edit of version 31.01.2020) based on the original Request for GEF CEO Endorsement/ GEF project document

DESIGN AND NETWORK
<i>COMPONENT 1: Design national and regional databases and network to facilitate monitoring the state of the Pacific’s environment.</i>
Outcome 1.1: PICs and partner institutions have functional monitoring databases, that are networked, and users are largely dependent on them for their environmental monitoring and planning needs.
Output 1.1.1: NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT PORTAL NETWORK National and regional hosting solution identified and implemented including hardware needs. Develop and maintain and enhance regional network of data portals and pacific data ecosystem for member countries.
Output 1.1.2 INDICATOR REPORTING TOOL Assess the UNEP National Indicator Reporting Information System (IRIS) as the data collection, sharing and SoE reporting tool. Design national Indicator reporting tool to facilitate monitoring the state of the Pacific’s environment.
ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
<i>COMPONENT 2: Environmental data are efficiently and effectively used for environmental planning and reporting at all levels by strengthening national and regional legal, policy and planning frameworks.</i>
Outcome 2.1 Legislation, policy, planning and institutional arrangements support data collection, sharing, reporting and harmonization between agencies/ministries within PICs.
Output 2.1.1: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT Assess, develop, strengthen policies, legislation, licenses, and procedures that govern data collection and management for national and MEA reporting in PICs
Output 2.1.2: COORDINATING MECHANISM Strengthen and establish, where there is national demand, coordinating mechanisms and an institutional network of environmental data management agencies and organisations at the national levels including national statistics. Establish and grow regional pacific data ecosystem to improve country access and use of data.
Output 2.1.3: INDICATORS and SOE Develop core environment indicators for PICs and apply to SoE’s and national, regional international reporting requirements, SDGs, MEAs, SAMOA Pathway. Develop national SoE reports using core indicators and country priorities to assess environmental condition and identify priority actions.
CAPACITY BUILDING
<i>COMPONENT 3: Capacity development to support the technical facility</i>
Outcome 3.1 Capacity built to access to national and regional data simplified through a web-based system used to produce MEA national communications and strengthen national planning processes.
Output 3.1.1: CAPACITY BUILT ON IRT & INDICATORS Train relevant Government staff to use the indicator reporting tool and indicators.

Build capacity to understand and tailor indicators to national context, as well as map indicators to national, regional & international requirements.
<p>Output 3.1.2: CAPACITY BUILT ON SOE AND NEMSS</p> <p>Develop and provide training for collection of national environment data and the use of SoE Reporting templates for each country. Document solutions to address data gaps for environmental indicators</p> <p>Develop capacity to address implementation gaps identified in SoE through the NEMSS.</p>
<p>Output 3.1.3: CAPACITY BUILT ON PORTAL AND EIA</p> <p>Provide training on environmental data management using national environment data portals including best practices for meta data. EIA data management supported through National data portals including EIA dissemination.</p>
<p>Output 3.1.4: COMMUNICATIONS</p> <p>Develop a regional communication and visibility plan and tailored national communication plans for major Inform objectives.</p>
<p>Output 3.1.5: GENDER</p> <p>Empowering women in data for decision making</p> <p>Develop a gender balanced stakeholder group including the steering committee, national coordinating mechanisms, and meeting participants.</p>
PROJECT MANAGEMENT
COMPONENT 4: PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION
OUTCOME 4.1 Effective management and delivery of project, meeting agreed measurable output and outcome indicators
OUTPUTS
Output 4.1.1 Effective management and delivery of project, meeting agreed measurable output and outcome indicators.
Output 4.1.2. Project monitoring and evaluation methodology designed to align with GEF project and operating standards, including regular project audits.

Map 1. Depiction of the national boundaries (Exclusive Economic Zones) of the 14 PICs participating in the Inform Project (Note: Australia, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Hawaii, Tokelau not included). Source – Pacific Environment Portal)



D. Stakeholders

98. The key stakeholders associated with the Inform project include:
- UNEP Early Warning and Assessment Division (formerly named UNEP Climate Services and Capacity Building Unit).
 - SPREP Inform Project Team
 - SPREP Programmes (Climate Change Resilience, Island and Ocean Ecosystems, Waste Management & Pollution Control)
 - SPREP Services (Senior Leadership Team, Environmental Monitoring & Governance, Knowledge Management, Information Technology, Communications and Outreach, Strategic Partnerships/Donor Relations/Resource Mobilization, Finance and Administration, HR)
 - National government 'environment' sector (acted as the lead focal point for the project at the national levels)
 - Other National Government sectors (addressing agriculture, land development, fisheries, forestry, climate change, meteorology, water, disaster management, waste, customs, education, and health) and including specific services within or associated with those sectors such as IT
 - Regional (CROP) agencies – i.e., SPC, USP, FFA, PIF, and inc. SPREP
 - EU ACPMEA project implemented through UNEP
 - International organizations – EU, World Bank, WHO, ADB, JICA, GIZ
 - Regional BINGOs or NGOs (IUCN, BI, CI, FAO, WWF, WCS)
 - Consultants
 - National NGOs CSOs
 - National populations – by implication are the rights-holders with the project ultimately aimed at their benefit and the constant improvement of their well-being.
99. The types of stakeholders identified above fall into four main categories (either single or multiple categories). Those who hold official positions in which they may make decisions that affect others and from which they can promote change are known as 'duty-bearers'. These stakeholders are often critical for the dissemination of information and the inclusion of others in the project and are often considered as 'gatekeepers'. Given the positions they hold, these people can also be effective 'agents of change'.
100. Stakeholders may also include 'beneficiary' groups ('rights-holders') whose needs and interests are either targeted directly by the project or who benefit indirectly, or even unexpectedly, from the work. These may be locally affected communities, sub-groups in the population (specific sectors) or individuals. Likewise, marginalized or disadvantaged people may be affected (positively or negatively) by the project. These may include for example, women, children, youth, elderly, disabled, indigenous people, ethnic minorities and people who identify as LGBTIQ+. Tables 5. and 6. depicts these positions and relationships.
101. During the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) a national consultation programme (x 14 PICs) was rolled out with the support of each national GEF operational focal point. Key stakeholders identified as being a critical and added value partner for this project were identified and letters of invitation were extended for participation in the project (or as a minimum, their awareness of the project). Participants included representatives from national government ministries (and some equivalent provincial/state bodies) for agriculture, land development, fisheries, forestry, environment/conservation, climate change, meteorology, disaster management, waste, customs, education, and health, as

the primary sectors. Other national partners and actors from CSOs and NGO including development partners and project staff were involved to explore roles and inputs and ways of creating added value and synergies.

102. Early stakeholder involvement that ultimately led toward the project greenlight began with the NCSA process that took place between 2005 and 2010. The NCSA process was thorough and provided an in-depth analysis of cross-cutting capacity needs of PICs to meet obligations of the Rio Conventions. This included an extensive consultation process that involved government ministries and agencies, local government, research organizations, academia, NGOs, civil society, local communities, media, development partners, and other relevant stakeholders.
103. SPREP commissioned a regional analysis of 10 NCSA reports produced by its member countries in 2012. Its findings supported the demand already expressed through a separate parallel consultation process for the SPREP Strategic Plan 2011-2015: national and regional capacities need to be strengthened to assist PICs to implement and report on their MEA obligations. Although this CCCD project came several years after the NCSA, there is still institutional memory and commitment of stakeholders, many of whom were consulted in the development of the project during the project preparation phase.
104. The consensus among participants who were consulted agreed that the 'ministry of environment' or its national equivalent, would be the lead focal point for the project at the national levels. Engaging with stakeholders took place during project implementation, specifically when in-depth discussions to identify data collectors, users, storage and overall management of environmental data will take place at the inception workshop. While many stakeholders had identified some useful data gathering systems in operation at work, most were either obsolete or in need of immediate strengthening.
105. The main stakeholders for the project are the 14 PICs eligible for GEF funding. They are listed together with the respective ministry/department and acting as the national executing agency for the project. All 14 agreements were secured for the PIF from the national department where the PIC's GEF operational focal point is located:
 - Cook Islands: National Environment Service
 - Federated States of Micronesia: Office of Environment and Emergency Management.
 - Fiji: Department of Environment.
 - Kiribati: Environment and Conservation Division.
 - Marshall Islands: Office of Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination.
 - Nauru: Department of Commerce, Industry Environment.
 - Niue: Department of Environment.
 - Palau: Office of Environmental Response and Coordination.
 - Papua New Guinea: Department of Environment and Conservation.
 - Samoa: Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment.
 - Solomon Islands: Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology.
 - Tonga: Ministry of Environment, Energy, Climate Change, Disaster Management, Meteorology, Information and Communications.
 - Tuvalu: Department of Environment.
 - Vanuatu: Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation

Table 5. Stakeholder descriptors



Type A	High power/high interest = Key player	Note that A, B, C, D represent broad categories, and hold scope for finer interpretation regarding the specific degree of stakeholder power or interest
Type B	High power/low interest over the project = Meet their needs	
Type C	Low power/high interest over the project = Show consideration	
Type D	Low power/low interest over the project = Least important	

Stakeholder			Primary role associated with project			Notes
Group	Specific	Type per note above	Duty bearer	Rights holder	Both duty bearer and rights holder	Level of power held over the project results / implementation, and the level of interest
GEF Agency	UNEP Climate Services and Capacity Building Unit in the Early Warnings and Assessment Division	A	✓			As the GEF Agency for this project, this arm of UNEP holds significant power in project formulation, oversight of SPREPs implementation activity and keen interest in demonstrating its capabilities for these types of projects in the region
	World Conservation Monitoring Centre WCMC	C	✓			
Executing / Implementing Agency	SPREP Inform Project Team	A	✓			As SPREPs core project implementation resource, this team holds significant power in project formulation, the manner of implementation, and in seeing the project succeed
	SPREP Programmes (Climate Change Resilience, Island and Ocean Ecosystems, Waste Management & Pollution Control)	C			✓	Generally having lower influence on the project implementation itself (unless they are contributing specific funds or resources to the project), these programmes have a high interest in the collation of informative data relevant to their thematic areas
	SPREP Services (Senior Leadership Team, Environmental Monitoring & Governance, Knowledge Management, Information Technology, Communications and Outreach, Strategic Partnerships/Donor Relations/Resource Mobilisation, Finance and Administration, HR)	A / B / C	✓			These service provision areas held key roles to support the project at leadership, institutional and service level within the executing agency
	Consultants procured for specific project tasks – midterm review, SoERs, data analysis, technical systems	A	✓			Project consultants are contractually required to have high commitment to the project and can exert influence in project outcomes via the quality of their work and recommendations provided
National government 'environment' sectors (acted as the lead focal points for	Cook Islands: National Environment Service Federated States of Micronesia: Office of Environment and	A			✓	Contribute to the PSC and responsible for project uptake nationally and across sectors

the project at the national levels)	<p>Emergency Management</p> <p>Fiji: Department of Environment</p> <p>Kiribati: Environment and Conservation Division</p> <p>Marshall Islands: Office of Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination</p> <p>Nauru: Department of Commerce, Industry Environment</p> <p>Niue: Department of Environment</p> <p>Palau: Office of Environmental Response and Coordination</p> <p>Papua New Guinea: Department of Environment and Conservation</p> <p>Samoa: Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment</p> <p>Solomon Islands: Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology</p> <p>Tonga: Ministry of Environment, Energy, Climate Change, Disaster Management, Meteorology, Information and Communications.</p> <p>Tuvalu: Department of Environment</p> <p>Vanuatu: Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation</p>					
Allied National Government sectors	Agriculture, land development, fisheries, forestry, climate change, meteorology, water, disaster management, waste, customs, education, and health	B			✓	Critical contributors to environmental data and information provision
Specific services within or associated with allied National Government sectors	Information technology,	B	✓			Critical to ensuring the practical technical elements of the project occur and are maintained
Regional (CROP) agencies	SPC, USP, FFA, PIF, and inc. SPREP being key to this project		✓	✓	✓	CROP agencies work as an inter-organisational consultative process to reduce overlaps, or gaps, between the work-programmes of its members so it is in their interests to support a project such as Inform. These agencies also capture and hold significant data sets, which if not shared effectively can limit the

						efficacy of the Inform concept and its objectives.
International organisations	EU, World Bank, WHO, ADB, JICA, GIZ		✓	✓	✓	
Regional BINGOs or NGOs	(IUCN, BI, CI, FAO, WWF, WCS)		✓	✓	✓	

Table 6. INFORM Stakeholder relationship to project

 Influence / power of stakeholders	Meet their Needs Engage and consult on interest area Try to increase level of interest Aim to move into righthand box	Key Player Focus efforts on this group Involve in governance/decision making bodies Engage and consult regularly
	National government sectors - agriculture, land development, fisheries, forestry, climate change, meteorology, water, disaster management, waste, customs, education, and health Specific services within or associated with Allied National Government sectors - Information technology,	Key Player UNEP UNEP Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit SPREP Inform Project Team Cook Islands: National Environment Service Federated States of Micronesia: Office of Environment and Emergency Management Fiji: Department of Environment Kiribati: Environment and Conservation Division Marshall Islands: Office of Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination Nauru: Department of Commerce, Industry Environment Niue: Department of Environment Palau: Office of Environmental Response and Coordination Papua New Guinea: Department of Environment and Conservation Samoa: Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment Solomon Islands: Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology Tonga: Ministry of Environment, Energy, Climate Change, Disaster Management, Meteorology, Information and Communications. Tuvalu: Department of Environment Vanuatu: Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation
	Least important (yet still potentially valuable stakeholders) Inform via general communication Aim to move into right hand box	Show consideration Make use of interest via involvement in low risk areas Keep informed and consult on interest area Potential supporter / goodwill ambassador
	International organisations - EU, World Bank, WHO, ADB, JICA, GIZ (IUCN, BI, CI, FAO, WWF, WCS) Regional BINGOs or NGOs - IUCN, BI, CI, FAO, WWF, WCS	SPREP Programmes (Climate Change Resilience, Island and Ocean Ecosystems, Waste Management & Pollution Control) World Conservation Monitoring Centre WCMC SPREP Services (Senior Leadership Team, Environmental Monitoring & Governance, Knowledge Management, Information Technology, Communications and Outreach, Strategic Partnerships/Donor Relations/Resource Mobilisation, Finance and Administration, HR) Consultants procured for specific project tasks – midterm review, SoERs, data analysis, technical systems Regional CROP agencies SPC, USP, FFA, PIF, and inc. SPREP being key to this project
	Stakeholder interest level 	

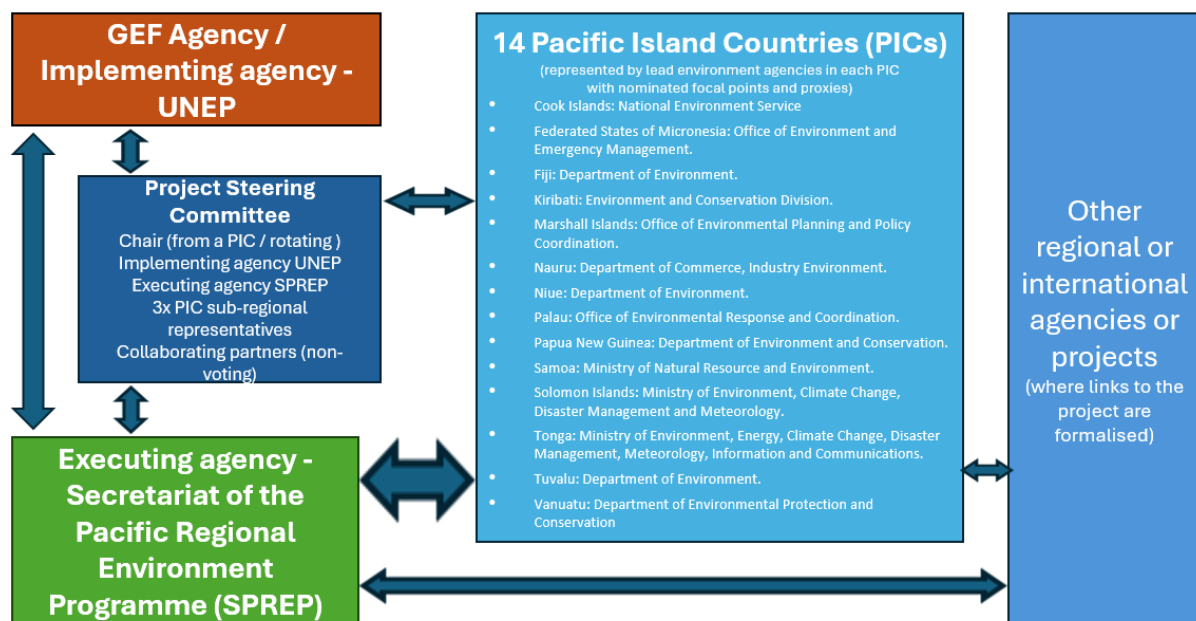
E. Project implementation structure and partners

106. UNEP served as the Implementing Agency for the project and specifically through its Science Division, (which later was re-named to UNEP Early Warning and Assessment

Division. Activities were undertaken by the Executing Agency which was the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and specifically through its Environmental Governance and Monitoring (EMG) Division, Apia, Samoa. National sectoral agencies in each of the fourteen PICs: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu participated in, or actioned, aspects of project implementation.

107. Other stakeholders became associated with the project as formal implementation partners through co-financing and/or technical contributions.

Figure 1: Organigram of the Project with key project implementation partners



F. Changes in design during implementation

108. The project conceptualization, design, support-seeking and approvals phase began in 2012, with a Project Identification Form (PIF) submitted in 2013. An updated ProDoc was developed by March 2016 with final GEF and UNEP approvals culminating in late 2016.
109. The project implementation starting date was delayed while preparatory mobilization and key PMU positions recruitment by SPREP occurred, resulting in the inception workshop being convened in November 2017, almost one year after the formal starting point of 21 December 2016. However, once the PMU was in place, implementation progress occurred swiftly and effectively as demonstrated by the record of technical, engagement and capacity support activity that occurred over the first few years of the project.
110. The design to final approval time span did result in some original outcomes becoming obsolete (and thus removed from the results framework) as non-Inform initiatives progressively completed work that had been proposed for Inform. A key example was the 'baseline analysis of institutional, sectoral and policy framework' output for Inform that was completed separately before the Inform project commenced implementation. Additionally, it was revealed after Inform commenced, that four PICs had already been part of a GEF-funded UNDP CCCD project which had outputs that overlapped with

Informs data base component and which required technical reconciliation actions to data management systems and software.

111. However, there were no major structural changes in project design during implementation, with most changes being limited to more discrete adjustments to address emerging information or situations or to progress with more granular implementation decisions. For example, decisions needed to be made regarding software deployment (DKAN vs Drupal) and how version upgrades would be handled and what resources would be required at future timepoints. Gaining endorsement for cloud hosting was another example of the more routine decision making used in choosing implementation pathways. Further, progress in development and deployment of the Indicator Reporting Tool IRT was impeded by the process of trialing/testing/proving useability and suitability and the requirement, ideally, to have dedicated positions in PICs to contribute to IRT development decisions and trained in application. Consequently, the IRT remains largely in the more-work-to-do category. The efficacy of an originally proposed data relationship with UNEP Live and the UNEP WCMC data and monitoring facility was also examined and subsequently downgraded from being an original project focus area.
112. The project was independently reviewed at its mid-term stage, with the review report submitted in October 2019. The MTR served as a principal trigger and timepoint to reflect on any deficiencies and to consider changes. It recommended the following key areas for project implementation improvement and, to varying degrees, these were actioned by SPREP:
- Planning for a no-cost extension (mainly in response to the delayed project implementation start point while key PMU positions were being recruited, and in recognition of the impositions and disruptions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic) including budget and work plan revisions.
 - Adjusting the existing, basic TOC and refining the Results Framework.
 - Remove actions from the Results Framework that had already been completed.
 - Resolve/ reconcile any technical development issues (software, systems – suitability, duplications, upgrades, lifespan).
 - Progress the Integrated Reporting Tool (IRT) with stronger piloting to determine usage and uptake issues.
 - Additional support and resources to PICs (data sharing, data management positions, targeted capacity building, national level awareness).
 - Step up attention to gender considerations.
 - Develop a project monitoring plan and tools that facilitate regular updating of work status and progress against indicators.
113. Although approved as a 48-month project, Inform ultimately spanned a seven-year period. Three no-cost extensions (of 20 months, 4 months and 3 months) were granted, enabling the project to continue from December 2022 and through to a final implementation end date of July 2023. The final 24 months exhibited some decline in project momentum (yet not quality), due in part to Covid-19 compelling PMU personnel to relocate and/or resign from positions, but also due to the more limited budget remaining for the project.

G. Project financing

114. The Inform project was implemented for a relatively modest budget and maximized its funding (cash – USD\$4,319,635) through astute partnerships, efficient approaches and

co-financing contributions. It did not run over budget. The co-financing component (a small grant and mostly in-kind contribution – USD\$5,976,266) was around 56% of the overall budget commitment for implementation – a relatively large proportion of a project budget.

Table 7. Project financing

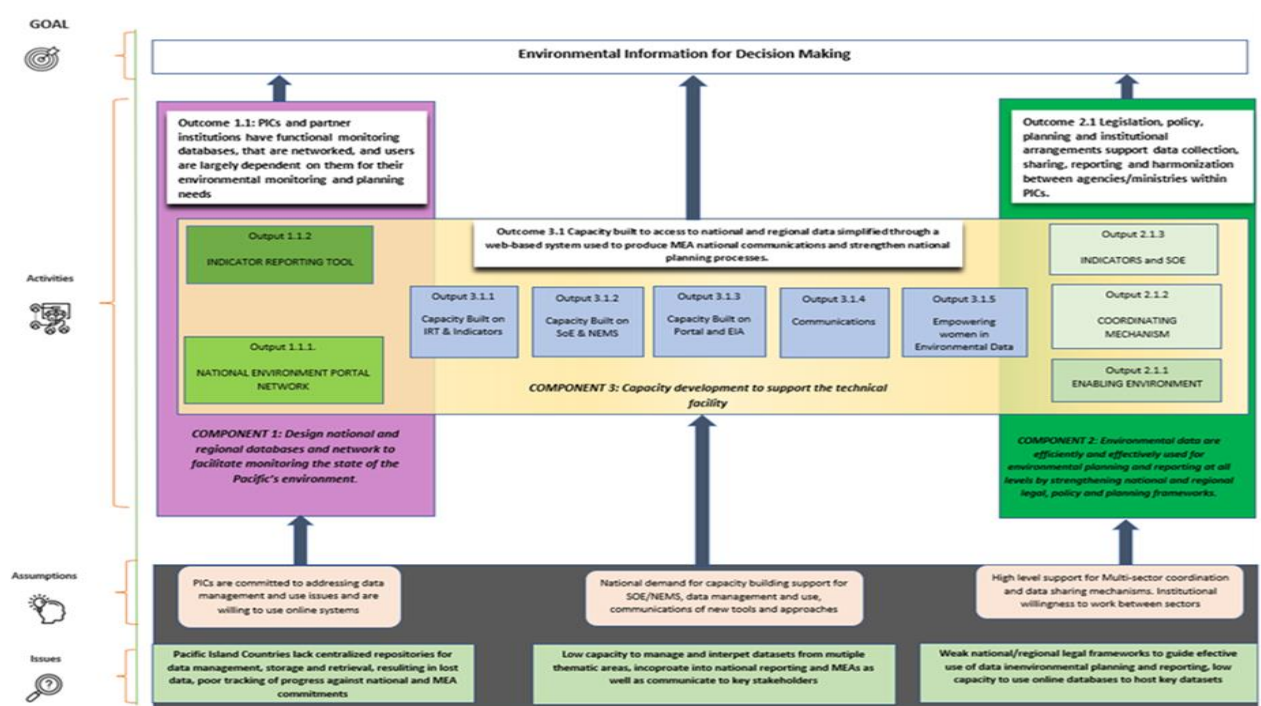
Sources of Funding (USD)	GEF Agency Grant	4,319,635	: International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) BIOPAMA programme - Grant	225,500 (grant)
	GEF Agency Fee	410,365	European Union - African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) region ACP-MEA project	500,000 (in-kind)
	UNEP	400,000 (in-kind)	SPREP	2,050,766 (in-kind)
	14 x countries	200,000 each – 2,800,000 (in-kind)		

Project financing			
GEF Agency Fee	410,365		
Cash for implementation	4,319,635		10,295,901
Co-finance for implementation (grant + in-kind)	225,500 (grant)	5,976,266	
	5,750,766 (in-kind)		
Actual total expenditures reported as of 30 June 2023	4,239,438		
Total disbursement as of 30 June 2023	4,027,039		

IV. THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW

115. At the Inform project mid-term review, the matter of a Theory of Change (ToC) was reviewed and determined that there was a weak existing ToC model for the Inform project. ToC was first introduced into the official UNEP project document template in late 2011 yet was still not a mandatorily used model at the time of Inform project design. The mid-term review recommended that a reconstructed ToC should be developed to illustrate the causal intentions of the project. The development of a ToC then occurred post MTR as it was an essential reference product on which the results framework was to be adjusted and as a framework for assessing project performance monitoring and results-achievement in reviews⁷. Key stakeholders (actors) that should have considered for inclusion in the ToC model iterations, are previously identified in this report under Section III, D. These stakeholders have varying degrees of influence over the project (i.e., high power/high influence, high power/low interest, low power/high interest, low power/low interest) and it is instructive to include them, and their respective characteristics, as key side notes to the ToC model.

Figure 2, Theory of Change Diagram - Reconstructed Theory of Change on 16 January 2020



¹ 1 A Theory of Change (ToC) of a project describes the processes of change by outlining the causal pathways from outputs (the availability, for intended beneficiaries/users, of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities, and awareness of individuals or within institutions) through project outcomes (the use - i.e., uptake, adoption, application - of an output by intended beneficiaries, observed as a change in institutions or behaviours, attitudes or conditions). through other 'intermediate states' towards impact, in UNEP's case - long-lasting results arising, directly or indirectly from a project that deliver (or lead to) environmental benefits and improved human living conditions.


The identified changes are mapped as a set of interrelated pathways with each pathway showing the required outcomes in a logical relationship with respect to the others, as well as with a broad chronological flow. Each 'step' in the pathway is a prerequisite for the next. The change processes between outcomes/intermediate states may require certain conditions to hold (assumptions - significant external factors or conditions that need to be present for the realization of the intended results but that are beyond the influence of the project and its partners) or may be facilitated by supporting actions or conditions (drivers - significant external factors that, if present, are expected to contribute to the realization of the intended results of a project and which can be influenced by the project and its partners). The TOC also clearly identifies the main stakeholders involved in the change processes and what role(s) they play in, and/or how they are affected by, the changes driven by the project.

116. Although generally adequate as a simplistic representation and depiction of logical causal flows, the reconstructed ToC remained deficient in some key elements. If the outcome statements are dismantled, they are shown to be composed of both output and quasi-outcome language⁸ (see Table 8). The outcome statements are closer to resembling outputs (or modest sub-outcomes) as they identify products, systems, arrangements, processes and capacities that will be developed or may occur, rather than the eventual outcomes or results of these actions, and that can be assigned an indicator and measurement/target.
117. This proposition is important because the project has been generally judged as a highly successful project, and this is a fair response, yet more to the level of activity and output. Having 12 outputs and 4 outcomes (which are largely phrased toward an output) means that the ToC (and the results framework) is weighted to the output level (i.e., what is done by the project team - delivered, provided, created, managed, supported, produced, or happens – via - mechanisms, systems, training, new skills, institutional support, products, guidelines, networks, dependencies/reliance's, tools). The Inform project demonstrated its capacity to get things done (outputs) extremely well.
118. The PIRs included updates on the attainment of components/outcomes, however the indicators and metrics used to report on those outcomes were those designated for the outputs in the results framework. The results framework did not establish indicators for outcomes (nor establish outcome statements that were an ideal reflection of what an outcome should comprise). As a result, the degree of uptake, adoption, utilization and application was not being judged against quantifiable markers in reporting, and instead by observational and anecdotal rating. This is not to say that outcome reporting in PIRs was incorrect, however the relationships between objectives, components, outputs, outcomes and indicators was somewhat jumbled starting from the earlier project PIRs (using the original ToC and results framework) to the latter and final PIRs (using the reconstructed ToC and amended results framework).
119. This outputs/outcomes anomaly affects reporting, as the outcome level becomes imprecisely considered in terms of ascertaining fundamental result, impact, change and behavioral/institutional shift, even at the point of immediate or short-term outcomes. While output success is noteworthy, the true test of project success is the degree to which outcomes occur and this project was deficient in not been able to categorically measure this important facet. The outcomes are the projects' driving purpose – what should project success look like? The inclusion of intermediate outcomes/changes of state (i.e., realistic immediate or short-term outcomes [steppingstone points and small wins]) would have assisted in being able to more justifiably report some degree of outcomes within the project duration.
120. Without wishing to overly complicate the ToC review, it is missing some useful base and cross layers, that could have been considered for the sake of completeness and clarity in guiding the results framework development, with these being: a problem/s statement, barriers, risks, stakeholders, inputs, pathways, activities, output adoption/output implementation, outcomes (immediate, intermediate, ultimate), impact and a vision.

⁸ An output statement conveys changes in skills or abilities and capacities of individuals or institutions, or the availability of new products, goods and services induced by the completion of activities. An outcome statement conveys how a specific situation is expected to be different from the current situation, articulating actual changes (uptake, adoption, application) rather than what is to be delivered (i.e. outputs) or undertaken (i.e. activities). It often relates to the utilization and appropriation of the output by the intended direct beneficiaries – specifically who are they, what are they doing differently, and by how much?

121. It is acknowledged that the development of ToCs and results frameworks is a specialized skill. It is also recognized that the main development work (or concerted revision work) of ToCs and results frameworks can sometimes occur ‘on the run’ by project implementing personnel and sometimes toward the middle or end of project design. It is further acknowledged that ToCs and results frameworks can require iterative formulation as new issues are revealed and are considered. However, it is essential that they are treated as the primary project ‘blueprint’ and critical in guiding the activities that happen, highlighting logical cause and effect flows, and being able to monitor and report outcomes with some degree of specificity.

Table 8: Outcome reformulation improvement pathway (sample)

Outcome formulation in original project document 2016	Outcome formulation post mid-term review 2019 (reconstructed)	Sample (general) outcomes proposed at final review
Products and services delivered  the effects of the products and services		
Outcome 1. A network of national and regional databases for monitoring the SoE (and meets national MEA and reporting obligations) is established	Outcome 1.1: PICs and partner institutions have functional monitoring databases, that are networked, and users are largely dependent on them for their environmental monitoring and planning needs.	National and regional agencies with environmental management portfolios use the Pacific Environment Portal as their primary data and information storage and reference system
Outcome 2. Legal, policy and planning frameworks to facilitate and support collection and sharing of environmental data is provided at the national and regional levels	Outcome 2.1 Legislation, policy, planning and institutional arrangements support data collection, sharing, reporting and harmonization between agencies/ministries within PICs.	Environmental data is collected, shared, reported and harmonized between regional and PIC agencies/ministries
	Outcome 3.1 Capacity built to access national and regional data simplified through a web-based system used to produce MEA national communications and strengthen national planning processes.	SOEs, NEMs, and MEA reports are produced independently by PICs according to agreed indicators using data and information from the Pacific Environment Portal

V. REVIEW FINDINGS

Note

Section VI. C. records the project analysis according to conventional evaluation criteria and ascribes criterion, and sub-criterion, ratings on a 1 (low) to 6 (high) scale.

A. Strategic Relevance

122. Given the paucity of environmental data and information and the wide array of organizational, national, regional and international strategic documents and action statements (both recent history and current) that recognize and declare responses to this fundamental problem and the need to improve upon it, it is not difficult to demonstrate the high strategic relevance of the Inform project and its aspirations in the Pacific region, both during its implementation period and as a platform of legacy tools, networks and capacities going forward.

Alignment to UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities

123. In responding to the major regional need to address a lack of coherent environmental data and information to inform reporting, planning and decision making, the Inform project was strongly aligned with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategies (MTS)⁹ spanning the 2016-2023 period. The project was developed and implemented under three different UNEP MTS: 2014-2017, 2018-2021, 2022-2025. Over the last decade or so (a time that covers the design, inception and implementation phases of the Inform project) the MTS's and accompanying Programmes of Work (PoW) have been redrafted and refreshed every few years to ensure currency and relevance with major themes and priorities for the global environment. However, the core themes have remained largely consistent (i.e., priorities focused on climate change, biodiversity, and pollution/waste and keeping global environmental conditions under review). UNEPs strategic approaches accord with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with a core focus on monitoring the state of the planet's health to gain a better understanding of the full extent of challenges faced. The Programmes of Work (POW) have maintained relevance to this project (e.g., supporting digital transformation and the use of indicators as performance measures).
124. The Inform project is well-aligned with UNEP mandates under its MTS for national and regional capacity building in areas such as environmental data and information, and through UNEPs strong linkages to key strategic positions from major environmental bodies, and with knowledge management programmes. In 2005, the UNEP Governing Council adopted the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building, with the objective of strengthening capacities of developing countries and economies in transition, among other things, "to achieve their environmental goals, targets and objectives" and "to develop national research, monitoring and assessment capacity to support national institutions in data collection, analysis and monitoring of environmental trends". Although some 10 years prior to the Inform project design period this Plan remained highly relevant as it aimed to provide a framework for capacity-

⁹ UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>.

building to ensure the effective participation of developing countries in negotiations concerning multilateral environmental agreements.

125. As a specific example, UNEP PoW 2018-2019 Sub-programme (SP)7 states that (a) governments and other stakeholders use quality open environmental data, analyses and participatory processes that strengthen the science-policy interface to generate evidence-based environmental assessments, identify emerging issues and foster policy action, and (b) (show an) increase in the number of countries reporting on the environmental dimension of sustainable development through shared environmental information systems with country-level data made discoverable through UNEP.
126. The Inform PIF document of 2013 has descriptions of UNEPs relevant key mandates, goals and expertise, as demonstration of the UNEP (GEF Agency) comparative advantage to implement the project. This information in total was not reproduced in the Project Document (ProDoc) of 2016 as it was more focused on the strengths and delivery competencies of the Executing Agency (SPREP). However broader UN functions and initiatives were given some mention in this final project design document.
127. Reference is made in the ProDoc concerning the Pacific Regional UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2013-2017. This Framework is the result of broad consultations with PICs and partners concerning several development challenges identified in a Common Multi-Country Analysis (CMCA) developed by the UN Country Teams (UNCT) based in Fiji, Samoa and Papua New Guinea in consultation with national and regional stakeholders and partners. The UNEP Early Warning and Assessment Division (DEWA/ former name) was also described in terms of its aligning capacities, and its role in the project, particularly those areas that concerned its capacities to work with scientific and technical communities and at the science-policy interface, including providing integrated environmental assessments for priority setting and decision-making.
128. As further specific strategic underpinning for the Inform project design, the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development recognized that there was a need for global, integrated and scientifically based information on sustainable development and declared resolutions concerning “bringing together environmental information and assessments and building national and regional capacity to support informed decision-making”.
129. The EU-UNEP project “Capacity Building related to MEAs in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Countries” (ACP MEA project phase II) was expressly noted as being a strong initiative on which the Inform project could build further capacity and to also draw on its contributory financing opportunity (this project was being administered by SPREP at the time of Inform project design and during its early implementation period). Mention is made in the ProDoc of the UNEP Live knowledge management platform which had potential to link with the Inform project, as did the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) data and monitoring facility.

Rating for Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities: 6

Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities

130. The ProDoc outlined the connection between the Inform project and the GEF 5 Cross Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) Strategy and refers to some of the existing or (then) pending GEF funded projects in the region. It notes that this project works towards CD Strategy Objectives 2 and 5, as identified in the GEF 5 Capacity Development Strategy.
131. The project at design stage was well fitted with the GEF 5 Focal Area Strategy of Cross-cutting Capacity Development, namely Objectives B (Generating, Accessing and Using

Information and Knowledge) and E (Capacities enhanced to monitor and evaluate environmental impacts and trends).

Rating for Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities: 6

Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities

132. The ProDoc effectively outlines an array of both general and specific links between the Pacific region and its sustainable development goals; a range of international summits, multi-lateral environment agreements (conventions), regional frameworks and decisions, and national planning agendas, both historic and current (at the time of project design); and the aspirations of the Inform project to support regional and national environmental priorities. ProDoc Section 2.3 *Institutional, sectoral and policy context* adequately outlines project linkages and intentions concerning regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities.
133. The Inform project specifically aligns with SDG 9 to “build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”, and Target 9.8 ‘to significantly increase access to information and communication technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to internet in least developed countries by 2020.’ By the time of Inform project implementation, its ability to fulfill this goal and target was heightened as technological innovation had become more common and was rapidly expanding every year.
134. The Samoa Pathway of 2014, and via its periodic reaffirmation declarations, articulates (among numerous statements relevant to the Inform Project) its “support for the development of information and communication technology, and science, technology and innovation”.
135. The Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development recognizes the lack of reliable and up-to-date data in and about the Pacific, which, in effect, is compromising planning, delivery, and monitoring and evaluation of development programmes. The ratification of MEAs and the rollout of SDGs (and before that the MDGs) across the Pacific region has brought further demand for data and statistical information. The Inform project’s objective is to support PICs in identifying and reporting against priority indicators relevant to national reporting, MEAs, and SDGs can, therefore, contribute to improved environmental data management.
136. At the 23rd SPREP Meeting in 2012, the SPREP Governing Council Meeting approved a regional framework for SoE monitoring and reporting that included setting up a network of national environment databases linked to a regional database housed at the SPREP Secretariat. The Secretariat was instructed to seek funds to implement this SPREP meeting decision. The Project Identification Form (PIF) was formulated and submitted to GEF as a response to this decision. The PIF received formal technical clearance on 20 February 2013, making way for the development of a comprehensive project document.
137. SPREP’s Strategic Plan 2012-2015, formally approved by SPREP member countries through decisions made in the Annual SPREP Governing Council Meetings, identifies environmental monitoring and governance as one of four strategic priorities. SPREP’s Secretariat was subsequently reorganized to include an Environmental Monitoring and Governance Programme to facilitate implementation of activities under this strategic priority and including supporting PICs with implementation and reporting on MEAs.
138. Under the SPREP Strategic Plan 2010-2015, SPREP worked with PICs on an on-going basis to revitalize NEMS and SoE Reporting including strengthening the use of EIA as an effective planning tool for better decision making and reporting. During national

consultations for this project, it was determined some databases with links to environmental reporting have either existed in the past but are now discontinued or are located in different ministries other than the 'ministry of environment'.

139. The SPREP Strategic Plan 2017–2026 clearly maintained the environmental monitoring principle as stated in SPREP organization goals and objectives, Objective 1, "information, knowledge, and communications systems that get the right information to the right people at the right time and influence positive organizational, behavioral and environmental change".
140. The Inform project had interconnections with the Global Partnership for Oceans, the Pacific Oceanscape Framework, the Strategy for Resilient Development in the Pacific, and the Pacific Framework for Regionalism.

Rating for Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities: 6

Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence

141. The ProDoc identifies numerous complementary interventions, some of which are noted above. The project was intended to add to and complement the work already being undertaken by the PICs and regional technical partners. Within the realm of environmental data management and generation, there are key SPREP hosted projects which are aimed at increasing data and information access and usability. These projects include:

- PEIN (Pacific Environment Information Network) which hosts some 40,000+ Pacific environment-related documents and resources as well as serving as the central hub for the 14 PIC national libraries
- PIPAP (Pacific Islands Protected Areas Portal) which serves as the protected and conserved areas community and data hub for the region and is supported by the EU-ACP BIOPAMA programme
- PCCP (the Pacific Climate Change Portal) which functions as a go to site for all climate change related discussion and resources within the Pacific.
- EU funded PacWaste and PacWaste Plus Regional Projects.
- Furthermore, the project has been coordinating internally with several significant SPREP implemented regional projects, including the GCF-funded UNEP CIS-Pac5 Project, the EU-OACPS Pacific BioScapes Project, the Pacific Regional Invasive Species Management Support Service PRISMSS, the Joint Programme on Building Forward Better by Safeguarding Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services project (UNJP SESS project) and with other related projects and initiatives in the region.

Rating for Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence: 6

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Highly satisfactory

B. Quality of Project Design

Notes

This sub-section responds to a range of sub-criteria that examine the adequacy of project formulation (both process and design documentation) components, rather than assessing the performance of the project implementation phase. A template summarizing these criterion and the review responses is provided as Annex IV.

142. The original PIF was produced with the support of an external consultancy, which did not adequately fulfill SPREPs expectations, and was terminated. From that point, the

responsibility for project design and documentation and producing the final ProDoc was largely via SPREPs internal resources and with UNEP support.

143. Cumulative project design scores for each criterion section, as follows, have utilized weightings in accordance with the UNEP template for the assessment of project design quality (shown in Annex V).

Operating context

144. The project documents do not identify any unusually challenging operational factors that were likely to negatively affect project performance regarding conflict, natural disaster or changes in national governments.
145. These factors, and their propensity for project impact, were not expressly articulated in the various versions of the developing project documents between 2013 and 2016. However, all the operating context scenarios listed directly above occurred to some extent in the 14 PICs and resulted in disruptions to project activity. Additionally, a health pandemic and various national health endemics did occur during the project, with resultant impacts on project activity ranging from modest to significant.

Rating for operating context: 2

Project formulation / preparation

Problem and situation analyses – Highly satisfactory / 6

146. Regionally and at UNEP level, the major problems, needs, and priorities were well understood. Initial drafts of a project document provided a reasonable account of the problems and situation analyses and via progressive iterations, were ultimately presented comprehensively and through a realistic and regionally accurate lens, within the ProDoc 2016, Section 2: *Background Analysis and Base Line Situation*. The project specifically responded to the major regional weakness concerning data availability and safe storage, low capacity, unsuitable technical platforms, lack of suitable data coordination mechanisms, a lack of a core set of indicators structured for more environmental monitoring and reporting, and skill building demands.
147. Prior to 2012 and onwards toward 2016, numerous relevant studies, forums and plans had identified these problems, although response interventions were at modest scales (i.e., the sub-regional ACP MEA 2 initiative). State of Environment reports had not been done for many years, National Environmental Management Plans (NEMS) were almost non-existent, some thematic plans such as NBSAPs had been produced sporadically, and where reporting on MEAs was being done, it lacked the benefit of accurate data that was available in a useful, centralized format. The fundamental problems were well acknowledged by successive regional forums and through various plans between 2012 and 2016 and accompanied by endorsement for priority responses, including through a project such as Inform. The NCSAs were a significant contributor toward articulating the problems that could be addressed through the Inform project.
148. As the project design process progressed, the need to report on SDGs (adopted by world leaders at a UN summit in 2015) emerged as a significant area for reporting and further advanced the need for clear baseline and trend data.

Stakeholder analysis (including by gender/minority groupings or indigenous peoples) Moderately satisfactory / 4

149. The ProDoc, Section 2.7. *Linkages with other GEF and non-GEF interventions*, identifies allied initiatives, projects, programmes and organizations that are involved in collecting

and/or managing relevant environmental information (across several thematic areas) and where the (Inform) project could/should make efforts to establish useful linkages.

150. The ProDoc, Section 5. '*Stakeholder Participation*', provides a generic list of the most obvious project stakeholders/groups, primarily those within government sectors responsible for thematic environmental matters. Whether a stakeholder group is a benefits recipient or a project 'duty bearer' (or both) is not clearly specified, nor is the relative importance or priority of a stakeholder (i.e., how essential could they be) in enabling the project to perform effectively and successfully or possibly to create difficulties. This type of assessment would have highlighted specific uptake and delivery points (potentially sectoral or programmatic) where limitations or blockages may have occurred, and where additional effort would be required to facilitate project outputs and outcomes.
151. The ProDoc does not provide a strong analysis of the respective roles, connections and needs of various stakeholder types, nor does it characterize or rank target groups. This could have been addressed more precisely through a communication and awareness annex to the ProDoc, however rudimentary communication and visibility/awareness guidance (at least in the form of a written 'approach' document) was not specifically developed until post MTR. The project does not appear to have had an engagement strategy (again, at least in the form of a written 'approach' document) and which would be closely linked, or combined with, a communication strategy, and which would have included a thorough analysis of stakeholders and their respective needs, roles and level of influence or control.
152. Gender and minority grouping / disaggregation was not overtly addressed in the ProDoc, although this was highlighted through the MTR and then with subsequent inclusion of gender consideration within the ToC and Results Framework. Reference was made to the Pacific Regional UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2013-2017, to reflect recognition that gender equality and human rights are an inherent and genuine concern and that this project contributes positively to alleviating gender and human rights challenges (albeit via indirect means).
153. The project is not targeted directly to indigenous peoples per se, but rather is concerned with contributing to the overall betterment of national populations in PICs via supporting better decisions concerning sustainable development.

Stakeholder consultation/participation in project design – Highly satisfactory / 6

154. An overall policy framework, formally noted by PICs at the 2012 SPREP annual meeting (as a key consultative forum) included high-level regional reporting (current efforts) and initiating the centralization of country data to support SOE reporting at national and regional levels. This framework was to support more effective use of environmental data in national planning, decision making, and policy setting.
155. In 2013, a GEF-5 PIF and PPG for this project were formulated via workshops and country consultations including letters of endorsement and approval submitted via the SPREP Meeting (SPREP Governing Council). The PIF and PPG were approved in 2013 by the GEF Secretariat. The round of national consultations undertaken as part of the PPG identified the need to "strengthen the enabling environment" as an additional focal area under the project. Mention was made of the EU funded ACP MEA project which would have included its own process of consultation and learnings which would have been relevant to the Inform project design.
156. The CEO endorsement request document of 2016 notes that national consultations coordinated through the SPREP national focal points (the project lead agencies in-country), involved national stakeholders such as NGOs, and private sector and academic

institutions. These national consultations identified existing coordination mechanisms that will be used by the project for implementation of the project. Participation of regional partners was carried out through existing CROP coordination mechanisms and direct discussions with key stakeholders SPC and the PIFS. NGO involvement (to some extent) was through discussions at the national level and inputs through the various SPREP roundtables and technical networks. These same mechanisms were noted to be used to coordinate and facilitate engagement during project implementation.

157. The CEO endorsement request of 2016 further notes that the project was formulated as a direct result of a regional decision of the 23rd SPREP Governing Council meeting, 2012 to seek funding to strengthen environmental monitoring and reporting. The draft project document was presented to and endorsed by the 2014 SPREP governing council meeting. It was given the highest priority through a specific reference in the ministerial declaration: *RECOGNISE the work carried out by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to strengthen environmental management and governance in partnership with Pacific Island countries and territories and encourage further collaboration through the EU funded ACP MEAs Phase 2 project, the proposed GEF MEA capacity building project, and other relevant initiatives.*
158. The UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2013-2017, which strategically support the project, was formulated as the result of broad consultations with PICs and partners around several development challenges (including data gaps) identified in a Common Multi-Country Analysis (CMCA).
159. The ProDoc cites various official assessments, frameworks, forums and plans wherein the need to address environmental data deficiencies has been highlighted and response actions proposed, thus constituting contributory consultation/participation by more indirect means. Anecdotally, the project design phase was supported, informed, and advocated for, through numerous informal and exploratory discussions across and within sectors (i.e., government, UNEP, regional organizations) and via mechanisms such as a GEF working group within SPREP.

Respect for human rights, including in relation to sustainable development – Satisfactory / 5

160. Human rights issues were not a significant matter articulated in the project design. As a project primarily focused on technical capacity support and improving data capture storage access and use, it does not undertake activities that directly impact on, or generally involve the active participation of, the broader civil populations of the 14 PICs. Indigenous people's rights, integrated approaches to human/natural systems and inclusion of gender perspectives and minority grouping / disaggregation were not overtly addressed in the ProDoc.
161. Reference is made in the ProDoc to the Pacific Regional UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2013-2017, and other key regional documents such as the Samoa Pathway, to reflect recognition that gender equality and human rights are an inherent and fundamental concern and that this project contributes in positive ways to alleviating gender and human rights challenges (albeit via indirect means - i.e., better information for better decision making supporting sustainable development outcomes).
162. Gender disaggregation was not overtly addressed in the ProDoc, although this was highlighted and reinforced via the MTR as a specific oversight and then with subsequent inclusion of heightened gender consideration within the ToC and Results Framework.

Strategic Relevance

UNEP MTS, PoW and Strategic Priorities - Highly satisfactory / 6

163. The PIF document of 2013 and the CEO endorsement request document of 2016 both include descriptions of UNEPs key mandates, goals and expertise, as demonstration of the UNEP (GEF Agency) comparative advantage to implement the project. This information was not reproduced in the ProDoc of 2016. The UNEP Division of Early Warning Assessment (DEWA / former name) was also described in terms of its capacities and role in the project.
164. Reference is made in the ProDoc concerning the Pacific Regional UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2013-2017. The Framework is the result of broad consultations with PICs and partners around several development challenges identified in a Common Multi-Country Analysis (CMCA) developed by the UN Country Teams (UNCT) based in Fiji, Samoa and Papua New Guinea in consultation with national and regional stakeholders and partners.
165. Mention is made of the UNEP Live knowledge management platform which had potential to link with the Inform project, as did the UNEP WCMC data and monitoring facility. The EU-UNEP project "Capacity Building related to MEAs in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Countries" (ACP MEA project phase II) was expressly noted as being a strong initiative on which the Inform project could build further capacity.

GEF strategic priorities Highly satisfactory / 6

166. The ProDoc outlines the connection with the GEF 5 Cross Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) Strategy and refers to some of the existing or (then) pending GEF funded projects in the region. It notes that this project works towards CD Strategy Objectives 2 and 5, as identified in the GEF 5 Capacity Development Strategy.

Regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities - Highly satisfactory / 6

167. The ProDoc effectively outlines an array of both general and specific links between the Pacific region and its sustainable development goals; a range of international summits, multi-lateral environment agreements (conventions), regional frameworks and decisions, and national planning agendas, both historic and current (at the time of project design); and the aspirations of the Inform project to support regional and national environmental priorities. ProDoc Section 2.3 Institutional, sectoral and policy context adequately outlines project linkages and intentions concerning regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities.

Complementarity with other interventions - Highly satisfactory / 6

168. The ProDoc identifies numerous complementary interventions, some of which are noted above. The project was intended to add to and complement the work already being undertaken by the PICs and regional technical partners.
169. In particular, the ProDoc notes that SPREP's Strategic Plan 2012-2015, formally approved by SPREP Member countries through decisions made in the Annual SPREP Governing Council Meetings, identifies environmental monitoring and governance as one of four strategic priorities. SPREP's Secretariat was reorganized to include a new Division of Environmental Monitoring and Governance, to facilitate implementation of activities under the strategic priority - a division dedicated to assisting countries with their environmental governance, including national implementation and reporting on MEAs.

Intended results and causality

Note

The original PIF of 2013 did not include a TOC (diagrammatic form) as it (the PIF) was formulated within a period prior to the instigation of these process description tools. The final ProDoc of 2016 included a basic ToC which was subsequently reviewed and updated as a reconstructed ToC following the mid-term review, and these are reviewed elsewhere in this report.

Description of causal pathways from project outputs (availability of goods and services to intended beneficiaries) through outcomes (change in stakeholder behavior) toward impact (long lasting, collective change of state) – Unsatisfactory / 2

170. The final ProDoc presented a basic, brief and simplistic TOC to elucidate the project's causal pathways. The flow path was muddled in that assumptions were presented after proposed activities rather than vice versa (conventionally), although the assumptions were quite valid and, in more detail, than in the subsequent post mid-term TOC. Some assumption statements were outcomes, and the outcomes stated were in fact outputs. This TOC design probably reflects the level of familiarity with TOC design that existed at the time.

Description of impact drivers and assumptions for each key causal pathway - Highly unsatisfactory / 1

171. The ProDoc ToC diagram does not state the main barriers / challenges / problems / constraints to be addressed by this project. However, these are subsequently identified as an 'issues' layer in the post MTR reconstructed ToC and from which relevant causal pathways emanate. Assumptions were portrayed in brief format and at a relatively high level (i.e., rather than identifying more specific, yet critical, assumptions (i.e., cross sectoral uptake, good data quality, national participation resources will prove to exist, important data will be agreeably released).

Description of the roles of key actors and stakeholder (including gendered/minority groups) for each key causal pathway - Highly unsatisfactory / 1

172. These are not described in the original ToC diagram nor the reconstructed ToC, although some mention is made in the ProDoc narrative sections.

Reality of outcomes being met in the timeframe and scale of the intervention – Moderately satisfactory / 4

173. To the extent that is possible at the project design stage, and not being fully aware or in control of certain significant issues that may emerge during the project (e.g., Covid-19), the outcomes could be reasonably assumed to occur, barring catastrophic circumstances affecting the project. It would have been reasonably assumed that the main project outputs would have been produced (i.e., data portals, reporting tools, targeted training, regional and national data sharing procedures). However, the degree of uptake (during the project period) and the post project endurance level, would remain a valid concern and one that is typical of many projects in the region once the momentum, external support and visibility of a project period has ceased.

Results framework and monitoring

Degree to which results framework reflects the TOC and scope of work and ambitions, uses SMART results at output and outcome levels – Moderately unsatisfactory / 3

174. The TOC in the final ProDoc was inadequate in its content and structure, so did not provide a useful model on which to base the results framework. However, a results

framework in the same final ProDoc was presented reasonably well (although still with room for improvement) and somewhat disregarding the elements of the TOC presented earlier in the same document. This results framework reflects the scope of work and presents an indicator/s for each output, accompanied by a baseline, mid-term target, end of project target, sources of verification and risks and assumptions. In terms of applying the SMART model (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound indicators) these indicator elements would need to be further refined and expanded to provide useful information for monitoring and evaluation. Outcomes were not accompanied by performance indicators.

Is there baseline information in relation to key performance indicators Satisfactory / 5

175. Baseline situations are identified in the results framework and are generally assigned a 0 or partial value for each indicator. Some quantifiable and measurable indicators and target statements have been identified, yet inconsistently.

Has the desired level of achievement (targets) been specified for indicators of outputs and outcomes – moderately satisfactory / 4

176. Outputs (not outcomes) have been assigned achievement targets, although these mostly concern having a finalized product, service or system in place rather than whether these products are demonstrating their intended use and benefit (outcome level).

Degree to which milestones in the monitoring plan appropriate and sufficient to track progress and foster management towards outputs and outcomes – Moderately satisfactory / 4

177. The ProDoc Appendix 7 presented a costed monitoring and evaluation plan identifying each type of monitoring that would occur – essentially via meeting minutes, project reporting, expenditure records, and formal project evaluations. This approach did not constitute a specific M&E plan with associated tools that would be sufficient to track progress more regularly and clinically and foster management towards outputs and outcomes.

Clarity on responsibilities for monitoring activities – Satisfactory / 5

178. The ProDoc Appendix 7 included the nomination of responsible parties that would collate and utilize meeting minutes, project reporting, expenditure records, and formal project evaluations as the means of undertaking project M&E.

Budget for monitoring project progress – Satisfactory / 5

179. The ProDoc Appendix 7 identifies costs associated with project inception workshop/s and the hiring of consultants to undertake independent project reviews at mid and terminal points.

Adequacy of workplan (timing, take-up) - Satisfactory / 5

180. The ProDoc Appendix 5 provides a project work plan indicating project components, activity and timing. Although ambitious, and assuming no major project implementation hurdles, the work plan is reasonable in terms of the timing and flow of activities.

Governance and supervision arrangements

Clarity and appropriateness of governance and supervision model - Satisfactory / 5

181. ProDoc Section 4: *Institutional framework and implementation arrangements* describes the proposed governance and supervision model, and it was a conventional and adequate approach for a project of this type.

Roles and responsibilities within UNEP clearly defined – Moderately unsatisfactory / 3

182. ProDoc primarily focusses on the executing agencies wide array of inputs the project with UNEP listed only where it has a specific process role. Roles and responsibilities within and across various internal arms of UNEP, as relevant to this project, are not described.

Partnerships

Assessment of partner capacities – Highly satisfactory / 6

183. The ProDoc outlines the respective merits and capacities of key partners (mostly the 14 PICs / also as stakeholders). Technical partners were expected to primarily include SPC, USP, IUCN and UNEP (as CROP members) and the capacities and the nature of the aligning initiatives that these entities were involved with, were briefly described. The ProDoc Results Framework identified the output of systematic assessments of existing technical capacity in-country using recent documentation and surveys of 14 countries and regional institutions including SPREP, SPC, USP. This output was to be done during inception and initial project mobilization and was intended to refine and confirm specific aspects of capacity gaps, needs, priorities and suitable intervention responses. It was subsequently removed as an output in the Post MTR Results framework as it had already been satisfactorily achieved via alternate interventions.
184. All 14 PICs were part of the NCSA exercise that was undertaken to gauge the status of national capacities to implement MEAs. The report, *Synthesis of National Capacity Self-Assessment Reports in the Pacific Region* (Mitchell 2012) summarized the findings of the PIC NCSAs. These NCSAs provided the baseline information on which the project would build. Each priority identified in the synthesis report was to be either directly addressed or otherwise supported by the project. The NCSA exercises revealed significant capacity constraints faced by PICs when implementing their MEA obligations. This project was to specifically answer the majority of declared country and regional capacity gaps, needs and priorities, including those for MEAs. The project was intended to address gaps identified through the NCSA process and support effective implementation of the Rio Conventions, other MEAs, and national policies and programmes.
185. The capacities of a primary project partner, SPC, were reasonably well known as an existing CROP agency, and due to its lengthy period of demonstrable work in the region. It was apparent on project inception that some prior support interventions (e.g., a GEF-funded UNDP CCCD project with 4 PICs) had occurred and included similarities to the action proposed in the ProDoc yet were not identified during project design.

Specification of external partners roles and responsibilities relevant to their capacities – Moderately unsatisfactory / 3

186. The roles, responsibilities, capacities and interaction potential of most external partners/stakeholders were not defined in the ProDoc or its annexes (apart from very brief mention in Section 5 Stakeholder Participation). However, as SPREP, SPC and USP are CROP agencies, their interaction inherently works under the jointly agreed mandate of working together to strengthen Pacific regionalism through consolidating regional knowledge, expertise and resources to deliver goods and services.

187. The EU funded ACP MEA project was referenced numerous times in terms of intervention its history and its outputs relevant to the project. The Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) was a potential key partner via the CROP, and as a collector and holder of valuable environmental information, however, is it not mentioned in the ProDoc. Commitments to responsibilities for in-kind co-financing (by SPREP, 14 PICs, UNEP, IUCN, EU/ACP) were identified in USD metrics in the ProDoc. During project implementation a partnership agreement was signed between SPREP and SPC (June 2019) to formalize the sharing of public data and knowledge products between the PEP, the PDH, and the PIC national data portals.

Learning, communication and outreach

Project knowledge management approach – Moderately satisfactory / 4

188. The Inform project comprised the development of a set of environmental knowledge management tools to improve data monitoring and reporting capabilities and technical systems to safely store and organize such information – it was a knowledge management project.
189. However, in terms of project design content to guide actual implementation roll-out, the ProDoc does not include an outline of an intended approach to project knowledge management (apart from Appendix 5: Project Work Plan, which indicates rudimentary activity associated with stakeholder communication, visibility products and training.
190. To some extent, the approaches shown in ProDoc Section 6: *Monitoring and Evaluation Plan* do perform as types of knowledge capture, recording and sharing procedures that should help to maintain a continual dialogue and retrospection cycle throughout the project and enable tracking of project progress, risks, learnings and corrective actions, if required.

Communication methods with key stakeholders, including gendered/minority groups – Unsatisfactory / 2

191. The ProDoc does not identify appropriate methods for communication with key stakeholders, including gendered/minority groups, during the project life. Minor mention of stakeholder communication, visibility products and training are found in ProDoc Appendix 5: Project Work Plan. It is assumed that communication methods would have then been subsequently discussed, and mobilized, in a more responsive, organic, needs based manner via SPREPs project implementation team meetings and internal liaison with SPREPs Communication and Outreach team. The project communication and visibility output was significant although not structured according to a specific upfront plan.
192. It is noted that a modest communication strategy was developed in response to the MTR. The cumulative extent of training and visibility material produced and made available over the course of the project was impressive, yet it is unclear to what degree the communication strategy enhanced roll-out. The post MTR communication strategy did not make mention of consideration for gendered / minority / disadvantaged groups.

Plans for dissemination of results and lesson sharing at project end – Moderately satisfactory / 4

193. In the ProDoc Section 6: *Monitoring and Evaluation Plan*, the proposed end of project dissemination of results and lesson sharing is outlined. However, it is not accompanied by, nor does it refer to, any analysis of existing communication channels and networks that would be utilized for dissemination.

Financial planning and budgeting

Adequacy of budgets and financial planning – Satisfactory / 5

194. The ProDoc clearly identifies the total budget requirements to plan and deliver the Inform project in USD amounts and allocation categories (i.e., PPG, project delivery components, management and evaluation). Staff (non-PIC) and consultancy costs and project management costs are identified. The budget appears to have been realistically estimated for the types of costs anticipated and based on SPREPs detailed knowledge of project operational costs in the region.
195. The budget breakdown is presented and recorded under generic expense type categories (i.e., 'rolled up/lumped' expenses, rather than by/for a specific activity expense) which results in difficulties in reviewing how a more specific activity was costed (e.g., a technical consultant operating in a specific country, a software license).
196. Co-financing from agreed sources and respective USD contribution amounts are also clearly identified in the ProDoc (although at the most generalized level of cost categories).
197. The percentage of co-financing (the in-kind component of the budget) was approx. 56 % of the total budget. This was a relatively significant amount compared to many projects and carrying with it some inherent risk of not being able to be fully mobilized. The budget has no broad allocation for supporting in-country based staff or consultants in each PIC (apart from a few specific cases) and relies on the co-financing identified by PICs to cover what is generally a critical resourcing requirement toward ensuring national involvement at anything more than a rudimentary level (due to in-country capacity challenges).

Resource mobilization strategy – Satisfactory / 5

198. To the extent that is possible at a project design stage, and not being fully aware or in control of certain significant issues that may emerge during the project (e.g., Covid-19), the ProDoc provided a resource mobilization strategy, and accompanying cost estimates, that was reasonable and realistic. Again, this reflects SPREPs experience with project management and operational challenges in the region. This is reflected in ProDoc Appendix 2b: Overall project budget and co-finance by outcome, output, and activity.

Efficiency

Project design and adaptation relevant to funding and timing – Satisfactory / 5

199. The project was appropriately and realistically designed in terms of maximizing the critical interventions (and costs for these) required to address the identified problems. Although each PIC presents slightly different circumstances and capacities, the rollout of a regional / 14 PIC project enabled significant efficiencies of scale (i.e., standardized SoE templates, regional indicator framework, regional portal for PICs that wished to have SPREP do the hosting, collaboration strength between multiple technical and project partners operating in the region).

Use of pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects – Highly satisfactory / 6

200. The ProDoc provides detailed elaboration about how the project would make use of, or build upon, pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects. There was one (later identified) allied project (a GEF-funded UNDP CCCD project with 4 PICs)

that was overlooked at project design however the scope of other allied interventions examined for potential collaborations was comprehensive.

Value for money strategies – Satisfactory / 5

201. The project was to be undertaken with a relatively modest, yet reasonable and realistic, budget utilizing GEF funds augmented by a satisfactory, cumulative co-financing component to meet proposed outcomes. The project premise was based on improving coordination and partnering structures for efficient environmental data management and using SPREP in house expertise and resources to help centralize systems and reduce financial and resource burdens on PICs to hold and use data.

Project extensions – Highly satisfactory / 6

202. Although not identified in the ProDoc (which originally indicated a project duration of 48 months between Nov 2016 – Dec 2020), the project had in reality an actual 'working' implementation period of September 2017 (when a Project Manager at SPREP commenced) to September 2021, then a 20-month extension followed by a 4-month extension and then a 3-month extension, with an implementation end point of July 2023. These extensions were considered entirely reasonable for the conditions that the project faced during implementation (largely relating to the Covid-19 period).

Risk identification and Social Safeguards

Risk identification in TOC, results framework and risk table - Moderately satisfactory / 4

203. Although not in the original ToC or in the reconstructed ToC version, the original results framework does, however, identify risks and assumptions associated with each output, as does the Post MTR Results Framework. The ProDoc includes Section 3.6. *Risk analysis and risk management measures* and a table specifying these elements. # Annual project implementation reports provide more granular summary of a wide range of risk factors and are given risk ratings.
204. A 'risk' layer component of a ToC provides opportunity to introduces important considerations and can serve to identify pragmatic/ moderating elements to the causal pathway that may otherwise be overlooked in developing aspirational project outcome scenarios. A risk (as distinct from issues or challenges) is a nominated event or condition with a possibility of uncertain occurrence that can impact the project goals and objectives either positively or negatively (i.e., a PIC may not designate and adequately resource a project coordination person). In project reflection and review phases, the reason something didn't occur as desired, or effectively, may be because a risk ultimately proved to be a critical limiting factor in achieving certain project outcomes. An 'assumption' is a notion that portrays possibility, yet without reliability, e.g., hoping that a project stakeholder will agree to, or undertake, a specific activity required to facilitate projects outputs or outcomes). Until an assumption is justified, it still signifies a risk.
205. The ProDoc ToC and the post MTR reconstructed ToC portray assumptions as the optimistic conditions that could occur to facilitate outputs/outcomes (i.e., the presence of desire, awareness, support, commitment, demand, willingness, investment, application, arrangements, collaboration). The premise is that a range of supportive circumstances will materialize in an effective manner on their own, or as a direct result of project interventions. However, in some cases they may not transpire due to unique national, institutional, sectoral, systemic or inter-personal challenges (and not lead to sufficient change) despite strong efforts from the project to facilitate them.

206. Risks and assumptions need to be separated in presentation. This is not done in the ProDoc Section 3.6. table.

Negative environmental, economic and social impacts of the project and mitigation – Moderately unsatisfactory / 3

207. ProDoc Appendix 13: Environmental and social issues checklist, provided an opportunity at project design to nominate potential impact issues (financial not included). This checklist was minimally populated, which is perhaps a reflection of the degree of attention placed on these considerations at the time of design. However, it is still a design weakness.

Mechanisms to reduce negative environmental footprint or project – Unsatisfactory / 2

208. The Pro Doc does not address this aspect in terms of identifying potential contributions to the project's environmental footprint (negatively) and proposing mitigation mechanisms (e.g., mitigating carbon emissions associated with project air travel).

Sustainability, replication and catalytic effects

Consideration of socio-political, financial, institutional and environmental sustainability issues – Moderately satisfactory / 4

209. The ProDoc maintains an inherent narrative throughout concerning the value of the project for broader socio-political, financial, institutional and environmental benefit and the measures to be undertaken via the project to enhance these commodities to the point where there is sufficient platform for them to be sustained by organisations and PICs. If all proposed project interventions were undertaken effectively then the opportunity for socio-political, financial, institutional and environmental is strong. However, there are numerous assumptions, questions, reliance's, risks and well-documented circumstances concerning the capacity of organisations and PICs to fully maintain project momentum and benefits after the project formally concludes (or even while it is underway).

Sustainability strategy and/or exit strategy – Moderately satisfactory / 4

210. The ProDoc Section 3.9 *Sustainability*, outlines in narrative fashion, the methods (somewhat optimistically due to inherent assumptions of capacity and uptake by PICs) by which the project will seek to establish, strengthen and embed an increased capacity, demand, sharing and usage of environmental data within the 14 PICs and across regional partners, and to establish national and regional networks of environmental data management organisations that could sustain a system of useful databases.
211. The ProDoc identifies a range of approaches and activities to be undertaken within the project duration, that would assist in sustaining outputs and outcomes (i.e., creating a centralized and curated [ongoing] data portal at SPREP, training, data sharing arrangements, adoption of tools, communities of practice, cross-sectoral government awareness and participation, legacy guideline resources [templates, e-learning], encouraging supportive institutional and legislative platforms in PICs, etc.)
212. One critical aspect of sustainability, and that is somewhat outside the project design remit, is that sufficient and ongoing human resources within PICs (either specifically dedicated positions or reasonably assigned duties within an existing position, and in the most appropriate agency) are available to maintain fundamental data management tasks and sectoral interactions concerning environmental data. This is perhaps the key assumption/risk/reliance for sustainability, albeit at its most basic, practical level.

Promoting or supporting scaling up, replication and/or catalytic action – Satisfactory / 5

213. One of the projects stated bases is to replicate and/or scale up existing, more preparatory/pilot allied interventions (i.e., ACPMEA2 project) concerning the better management and use of environmental data. Replication and/or scaling up was to be based on the success of capacity building efforts and the inherent linkages between improved data collation, management and usage for the purposes of MEA and SoE reporting.
214. Capacity to demonstrate catalytic potential is briefly mentioned in the ProDoc and relies predominantly on national education and training, outreach and awareness raising measures, cross – sectoral government sensitization and legacy platforms (national environmental data portals and a regional portal) and tools. Again, assumptions about the strengthened capacity and uptake by PICs post project will determine the degree of catalytic change that occurs.

Project design weaknesses / gaps

PRC recommendations adopted in final project design - Satisfactory / 5

215. Criteria 12 of the PRC review regarding LogFrame (results framework) failed (in some areas) to adequately refine the phrasing of certain outputs, outcomes and indicators and to specify suitable metrics for progress and performance tracking. This is a fundamental element of the project design that should have been of high quality, as it fundamentally underpins project planning, monitoring and reporting throughout the project.

Rating for Project Design:

See Annex IV

Moderately satisfactory

C. Nature of the External Context

216. All 14 PICs are inherently resource constrained and face major challenges in the implementation of projects and programmes. Some fundamental challenges that were applicable to this project include:
- small populations with limited human and financial resources and variable skill sets.
 - high turnover of personnel in government roles.
 - variable power and communication reliability (although improving).
 - the ever-increasing burden on a small number of individuals in each PIC who carry multiple responsibilities for participation, action and reporting obligations associated with numerous international, regional and national frameworks and agreements and externally funded projects.
217. These regionally consistent challenges can be exacerbated by specific external features of the project’s implementing context and particularly because PICs are more susceptible to external challenges and threats with less capacity to respond to their impacts.
218. The Covid-19 pandemic (effective from March 2020 in the Pacific region) was the most acute and long-lasting external situation to impact the project across all 14 PICs and for regional organizations. Resultant circumstances included: strict border closures and quarantine measures (internal and external travel restrictions); personal health

setbacks; national resources and attention were diverted; national systems and organizations suffered some disarray due to the prioritization of pandemic response; most programmes and projects unilaterally experienced disruptions and delays; and rising costs for items, transport and travel.

219. Other examples of key events that would have caused moderate to significant limitations to the project’s performance in relation to the participation of specific countries, are listed in footnote below.¹⁰

Rating for Nature of the external context: UNFAVOURABLE

D. Effectiveness

Availability of Outputs

(referring to the post MTR results framework)

Output 1.1.1: National environment portal network	Indicator	End of project target
<p>Output 1.1.1: National and regional hosting solution identified and implemented including hardware needs.</p> <p>Develop and maintain and enhance regional network of data portals and pacific data ecosystem for member countries.</p>	<p>The networks of data portals are in place and a two-way harvest established between regional data ecosystems.</p>	<p>Enhanced and streamlined network of data portals and pacific data ecosystem with over 6,000 available resources.</p>

Indicator Target Exceeded

220. The project successfully designed, developed, and deployed a fully effective data management and cataloguing tool (well organized data sets) in the form of a robust network of data portals (online data repositories) for each of the 14 project countries along with the regional Pacific Environment Portal (PEP) to facilitate a data collection, storage, management, and dissemination process. The PEP network is fully functioning and has an enhanced backend with DRUPAL 9 content management for longevity.
221. The capacities required (and technologies considered and selected) to enable this type of advanced (for the region) platforming is quite noteworthy. Much of it was resolved and established early in the project term with the inputs of both external IT experts and SPREP team members. These portals are best viewed as providing an excellent foundation for improved environmental data management and use – a starting point - and they hold as yet unrealized potential for the inclusion of technological analysis functions (building the intelligence of the system) that could significantly ease reporting burden and provide the level of higher quality data still required to accurately inform PICs.
222. Each PIC shared and contributed to this data collection. To varying extents, PICs have utilized these datasets for their national reporting obligations, including to MEAs and the SDGs, and to develop SoEs. Each specific portal in this network allows users to

¹⁰ In November 2019 Samoa experienced a measles outbreak resulting in deaths, illness, public institution closures and limits on events. Tropical cyclones Harold (April 2020) and Yasa (December 2020) affected Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga and came with strong winds, torrential rain, and storm surge resulting in widespread infrastructure damage, civilian deaths and broad civil disruption. Deadly riots broke out in the Solomon Islands capital of Honiara, Solomon Islands in November 2021- long-standing domestic tensions, corruption allegations, local conflict and riots, civic disruption and shortages, triggered by fractious domestic context and historical and current international influence and rivalries. The eruption of the Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha’apai volcano on 15 January 2022 in Tonga was the largest recorded globally since the eruption of Krakatoa in 1883. Impacts included tsunami waves, ashfall affecting almost the total population, damage to the international and domestic undersea telecommunications meant little information flow, significant damage to houses, roads, water tanks and other infrastructure, citizens displaced and civilian deaths.

upload, catalogue and share data with stakeholders. The portal/s also facilitate publication. Through this capability, linkages were established to provide PIC access to data collected and generated outside the region by other parties and that are relevant to that specific member country. Notable linkages made include data sharing between member country data portals, the Pacific Environment Portal (PEP), the SPC Pacific Data Hub, Google Dataset Search tool and the UNESCO Ocean InfoHub database. Establishing this degree of harmonization is a significant achievement. The network of data portals was periodically upgraded, and visualization capabilities integrated. The network remains stable (and using 'Cloud' data storage services) and has been supported and maintained past the project implementation end point. In essence, the portal/s are a dependable, user friendly, data and information storage facility at this point, which is a considerable advance on the status in 2016.

223. Portal 'overwhelm' and portal competition continues to be an issue, as existing and emerging projects desire to have, and brand, their own unique versions of a data holding/management system, or are simply unaware of the opportunities provided by existing comprehensive portal systems. It is noted that Vanuatu has advised the Defra program of the PEP and encouraged its usage for the program.
224. SPREP has responded decisively to this dilemma and has instigated an organizational 'moratorium' on new portals within the projects and programmes it manages or has strong influence over. The policy is to work with one portal that is known and encouraged within a SPREP service division. Some legacy, or current, projects (e.g., Pacific Islands Protected Areas Portal) have agreed and devised ways to ensure cross-population with the PEP, yet still maintaining an independent profile. New projects that are arising from the Waste and Climate Change Programs and some specific biodiversity projects, are actively looking at ways that their data can be uploaded to the PEP, and the concept of a singular portal seems well accepted.
225. One of SPREPs chief legacy services is the Virtual Library, which has been in operation for many years. There are obvious overlaps between this service and the Inform project, however the key distinction between the two is that the SPREP library mostly holds resources that are SPREPS own organizational publications and that have been produced by SPREP programs/projects. These include many paper-based resources and the Inform project invested in a digital scanner to enable these to be converted to digital form (e.g., invasive species data mobilization – paper records to digital) and thus available, as relevant, to the PEP. There is currently no system for automated harvesting of library documents to the PEP and it needs to be done via the manual upload method (while not overly complicated, it does involve a time investment).
226. Over the course of the project, the number of available datasets collated and shared in the network steadily increased with project countries and stakeholders eventually having access to more than 18,000 datasets. On 30 May 2024 there were around 19,000 datasets, not including underlying resources of about 60,000. The data is largely in the form of PDF documents (reports) as this is the predominant format of environmental information. It should be noted that while the total metric for available resources is strong and growing, the quality and value to be found within those datasets is variable – they could well be outdated, non-specific, unverifiable, inaccurate, or generally unsuitable for reporting needs.
227. While the project gave impetus and encouragement to gather and upload as much information and data as possible, the utility of this amassed information is still somewhat restricted as more clinical analysis functions to assist a user in finding and retrieving specific data from within a pdf document is still unavailable (although portal navigation by thematic categories, key words and tags is possible). A user must still 'trawl' through individual documents to find required information and data. The project

team was aware of this deficiency; however, a key project approach was to ensure that institutionalization of the concept / culture of sound information storage and using a catalogued system that was beneficial for reporting, planning and decision making, became strongly embedded, even if this involved an 'all and anything' capture approach. This facet of the project was achieved well.

228. Essentially, the project had a primary focus (a lower common denominator) on working to change attitudes and practices around data and information management. In rudimentary terms, this has resulted in the portal being utilized as a useful trigger for an information 'round-up' and as a centralized information 'dump' (a good, cheap, trustworthy storage facility where information would not be lost) for a wide range of collected material - yet still an extremely necessary process and a substantial shift from poorly / insecurely stored, or damaged / taken / lost / withheld data conditions. The information storage change-up amounts to moving scattered, unsafely stored data from paper versions (digitizing), USBs, personal laptops and hard drives, to the Cloud, while remaining fully accessible. While there was broad demand for the concept of having a centralized information portal, the general notion of 'data', and the complex technical and scientific connotations associated with that term, meant that it remains a somewhat daunting topic across the PICs, and perhaps considered to be more in the realm of an IT expert, rather than the average user.
229. While some PICs elected to host their own portal, especially if they had one that they were confident in and familiar with, most were grateful for SPREP to also host and curate a national portal on their behalf to alleviate national costs, hardware damage or malfunction, data management effort, hardware needs and data security concerns. Some PICs (or specific sectors within PICs) also have their own websites (defacto portals) which they continue to use (due to familiarity) even where SPREP is hosting their national portal within the PEP. Other sectors within national government may also continue to utilize their own discrete data collection and storage systems.
230. A documentation site (Inform Docs) was developed to provide project countries with ease of access to detailed descriptions of each project component and guidance on the function(s) of the deployed tools under the project.

Output 1.1.2: Indicator reporting tool	Indicator	End of project target
Assess the UNEP National Indicator Reporting Information System (IRIS) as the data collection, sharing and SoE reporting tool.	Decision made and communicated to UNEP regarding the IRIS system.	Develop support materials for IRT and test and validate software.
Design national indicator reporting tool to facilitate monitoring the state of the Pacific's environment.	Indicator reporting tool developed for Pacific countries.	

Indicator target completed

231. A core set of regional indicators has been endorsed and published in the Environmental Indicators Guidebook. These environmental indicators have been used, to some extent, in reporting to MEAs, including CBD and at the national level to assist in developing versions of indicators that the PICs see as being more targeted to their circumstances.
232. Initially the project gave due consideration to the potential offered by the UNEP Live online system known as the Indicator Reporting Information System IRIS that supported reporting on national, regional and global obligations by collecting, analyzing and publishing quality assured environmental information. However, it subsequently proved unsuitable for the purposes in the Pacific region. An Indicator Reporting Tool (IRT) was developed alongside the network of data portals to assist with the development, management and tracking of identified priority indicators for reporting purposes. These environmental indicators have been used in reporting to MEAs, including CBD, and at

the national level to assist in developing their national environmental indicators. The IRT tool itself was subject to concerted software design inputs.

233. The main objective for the IRT was to enable reporting responses to be shared via re-use of national indicators across multiple / similar questions presented in MEA reporting templates – to ease reporting burden and duplication of reporting effort by PICs in responding to MEAs. After a piloting phase, the software tool was not universally adopted or utilized, and most PICs have their own versions of these base indicators. The tool is perhaps more useful at this point as a tool for the SPREP secretariat and it is subject to ongoing scrutiny (by sectors and programmatic themes) as fit-for-purpose indicators evolve over time.

Output 2.1.1: Enabling environment	Indicator	End of project target
Assess, develop and strengthen policies, legislation, licenses, and procedures that govern data collection and management for national and MEA reporting in PICs	<p>Templates for policies, licenses, data sharing MOUs, discussion paper on open data available for country use.</p> <p>Number of environment ministries with data policies and MOUs and clear data sharing procedures.</p>	100% of countries which have requested support of policies and legislation are supported in doing so.

Indicator target completed

234. At the regional level, SPREP has worked to adopt standard procedure and practice on data governance and data management using the Environment Data Policy that was established under the project. Together with the data policy and the data license agreements developed under the project, countries such as PNG and RMI have adapted these documents and created their own national data sharing policies to empower ministries to request and share environmental data.
235. Other templates for data sharing were developed and made available on the PEP for use and adoption by PICs: Ministry Policy on Data Sharing; MoU - Ministry to Ministry; and MoU - SPREP to country.
236. The project assisted project countries to develop their data-sharing policies and standard operating procedures in Tonga, RMI and PNG. The project also supported the drafting and coordination of the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to further support the SPREP Data Sharing Policy.

Output 2.1.2: Coordinating mechanism	Indicator	End of project target
<p>Strengthen and establish, where there is national demand, coordinating mechanisms and an institutional network of environmental data management agencies and organisations at the national levels including national statistics</p> <p>Establish and grow regional pacific data ecosystem to improve country access and use of data.</p>	<p>Number of countries with coordinating mechanisms, either formal or informal, that have contributed to the improved use and management of environmental data.</p> <p>Number of TOR's for coordinating mechanisms.</p> <p>Number of LOAs / agreements between regional and global development partners.</p> <p>Number of shared datasets amongst the pacific data ecosystems.</p>	<p>Documented formal and informal coordinating mechanisms established or supported by the project.</p> <p>Regional coordinating mechanism has four or more parties. At least 5,000 datasets are shared within the pacific data ecosystems.</p>

Indicator target exceeded

237. Institutional collaboration and coordination occurred with SPC's Pacific Data Hub, which complements the Pacific Environment Portal by providing a broader scope of data resources. This collaboration between SPREP and SPC formed the Pacific Data Ecosystem (PDE) that represents a shared vision to empower the Pacific region with accessible, comprehensive, and high-quality data. By leveraging the strengths and

expertise of both organizations, the PDE has supported the sustainable development aspirations of Pacific Island communities and has continued to grow the volume of datasets available to project countries. The partnership aims to maximize the limited resources available to the Pacific by development partners, by building complementary systems and avoiding duplicate investments. It ensures that public data and knowledge products can be openly harvested between the PEP, the PDH, and the Pacific Island countries' national data portals.

238. Harmonizing data between SPREP and SPC is considered one of the Inform projects most significant accomplishments as these two CROP agencies are peak bodies for environmental data management in the region and have long been working in parallel yet not as formally as the open collaboration links now established, and operating effectively, via the PDE. The partnership demonstrates leadership in data management and sharing and strengthens the sustainability of Pacific information. It also promotes the use of open data, to ensure that public data is available, accessible and reusable. The partnership aims to maximize the limited resources available to the Pacific by development partners, by building complementary systems and avoiding duplicate investments. It also allows the two organizations to leverage each other's lessons and investments for regional and national benefit. This collaboration ensures that public data and knowledge products are openly, and regularly, harvested between the PEP, the PDH, and the PIC national data portals.
239. Furthermore, the project has been coordinating internally with several significant SPREP implemented regional projects, including the GCF-funded UNEP CIS-Pac5 Project, the EU-OACPS BIOPAMA programme, the EU-OACPS Pacific BioScapes Project, the Joint Programme on Building Forward Better by Safeguarding Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services project (UNJP SESS project). and the EU funded PacWaste Plus project, and with other related projects and initiatives in the region.
240. National coordinating mechanisms were progressively supported through the roll out of national data portals and outreach to other institutional stakeholders within project countries and through the development of national SoEs during the data collection, analysis and verification phases.
241. All 14 project member countries have developed their National Environment Management Strategies (NEMS) and 13 of them (Kiribati still in progress) have updated and published their State of Environment (SoE) Reports which have been used to report back on regional and international targets linked to MEAs and SDGs. Samoa has finalized its latest SOE, with printing waiting on final confidence from leadership in its findings. Vanuatu has also completed its SOE and is awaiting official endorsement. RMI have officially endorsed their SOE and are awaiting printing. The links between the national indicators and regional/global requirements are made clear in the Indicator Guidebook and SOEs. These indicators have also been used in reporting to MEAs.

Output 2.1.3: Indicators and SoEs	Indicator	End of project target
<p>Develop core environment indicators for PICs and apply to SoE's and national, regional and international reporting requirements, SDGs, MEAs, and SAMOA Pathway.</p> <p>Develop national SoE reports using core indicators and country priorities to assess environmental condition and identify priority actions.</p>	<p>Number of environmental indicators with clearly defined components.</p> <p>Indicators are mapped to all relevant national reporting requirements, MEAs and SDGs.</p> <p>National SoE's developed with input from a multi-sector stakeholder group and submitted to government for approval.</p> <p>Indicators are used in reporting for MEAs and SDGs</p>	<p>Core set of indicators used in four national SoE's.</p> <p>National SoE's supported and/or completed in 14 countries.</p> <p>Evidence of at least three cases of indicators reused in</p>

Indicator target exceeded

242. An Environmental Indicator Guidebook was developed through the project to provide a set of standardized indicators and was launched in 2021. The Guidebook outlines a standardized core set of indicators and articulates the linkages between the national indicators, and regional and global reporting requirements and SoEs. Tuvalu, RMI, Vanuatu, Nauru, Tonga, PNG, FSM, Niue, and Samoa adopted and tailored the environmental indicators in the guidebook that best suited the context of their SoE assessments and reporting. These indicators have been used in national SoE reporting and for reporting to MEAs, including to the CBD and on the SDGs. Hard copies of the guidebook were disseminated to project countries and shared with partners and can be accessed online on the PEP. The PEP currently does not have precise functionality to assist in making MEA reporting a 'click of the button' process, and thus reporting burden in responding to MEA reporting has not significantly reduced via the Inform project in this specific aspect.
243. National State of Environment reports were developed and updated with project support (PICs have severe lack of human and financial capacity to do SoEs and NEMS) with 13 PICs completing (or close to finalizing) their SoE reports. SoE reports have been produced and summarized with online, web-based reports developed for 5 countries – Tonga, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Tuvalu. These online reports focus on environmental factors at the national level and are an extension of the State of Environment and Conservation in the Pacific Islands: 2020 Regional Report (SOEC). A useful output from the SoEs are the visualization functions that enable specific metrics to be displayed in non-narrative format (i.e., graphs, charts, timelines).
244. The development of national SoE reports is a significant project achievement. The SoE reports process (and NEMS development as a closely allied process built on SoEs) gave a concrete reason for data acquisition and accessibility to be seen as beneficial and gave the project traction as a point of delivery and for application of the generic regional indicators. The SoEs helped to find and gather information and to identify where the gaps existed. Importantly, the SoEs provide a valuable reference point in developing policy, projects and cross sectoral coordination across thematic environment sectors. The SoEs provide partial value in easing MEA reporting burden in that national environmental status is cleanly documented in a concise report. SoE and NEMS are generally not adequately resourced within PICs so the Inform project provided the required resources to mobilize these initiatives. Additionally, SoEs incorporated interesting 'side-stories' (research-based and anecdotal, both positive and negative, based on specific information being provided from sectors during SoE consultations).
245. A key aim for SoEs in the region is to shift their content from expert based narrative observations to more quantitative based data. There are some limitations concerning the quality of the recently produced national SoEs. Many of the thematic reporting sections in both the national SoEs and regional SoEC advise that data confidence is low to medium. In some instances, the information from a previous SoE was reused without being able to be updated. This reflects the issue that data availability was often non-existent, out of date, not provided, or relied on regional or international level information to inform potential relevance at national level. These weaker levels of data confidence rating does not yet cultivate assurance for decision makers when they are looking to SoEs for authoritative guidance in policy setting, advocacy statements at high level fora, plan making or prioritizing budgets.

246. Furthermore, a key challenge for Inform, and thereby SoE reporting, were the blockages faced in encouraging wider sectors (e.g., fisheries, agriculture, forestry, water) to feel comfortable with sharing data. Historically, the notion that information is power has long prevailed, although the Inform project has assisted in softening this attitude to some extent. Alternative agendas and priorities could also limit contribution to SoE work (and the national portal). Further, SoEs and NEMS are often viewed as the being the sole, and narrow, responsibility of the 'environment' or even the 'biodiversity/conservation' sector of government, rather than inclusive of the holistic scope of all environmental resources and impacting issues and including governance, wellbeing and cultural facets.
247. The PEP was in existence at the time of the recent PIC SoEs being developed, however the PEP was/still is an emerging set of data and, while some themes could rely on reasonable data (e.g., waste, climate) in many cases conclusions had to be formed (or reused) from old data rather than current data. Additionally, the PEP is largely composed of 'grey' literature - pdf reports (annual, research, technical, project, etc.), government documents and evaluations produced government departments and agencies, civil society or non-governmental organizations, academic centres, and private companies and consultants. 'Trawling' wider internet information sources was a hallmark activity for the SoEs.

Output 3.1.1: Capacity built on IRT and indicators	Indicator	End of project target
Train relevant Government staff to use the indicator reporting tool and indicators. Build capacity to understand and tailor indicators to national context, as well as map indicators to national, regional & international requirements	Capacity built in using standardized core indicators for national and international reporting. Staff trained on the use of the indicator reporting tool for MEA reporting.	Indicators used in national reporting for four countries. Country capacity to tailor indicators built. National capacity to use the IRT tested and established in at least two countries.

Indicator target completed

248. Alongside the developed national data portals, the Indicator Reporting Tool (IRT) helped national environment data officers to track and manage identified indicators for national reporting priorities. The IRT is a technical tool aimed at assisting those individuals that work directly with environmental indicators as distinct to the data portals that can be accessed and utilized by any stakeholder or interested party (subject to access authority level) that wish to access shared datasets. The IRT assisted in consolidating user familiarity around the scope of thematic environmental topics and their respective indicators.
249. The IRT was piloted in association with training workshops and technical assistance in 5 PICs - Samoa, Cook Islands, PNG, FSM and Tonga. The user base for this tool is quite limited in each PIC (a fundamental and important task for MEA reporting and SoEs and NEMS, yet a very specific action area). The training was delivered in concert with the timing of national reporting and as such, there can be lengthy intervals between the reporting tasks, during which time previously gained skills can diminish. The IRT, together with the data portals and the environmental indicator guidebook launched under the project, have been used effectively (with technical support) to develop and launch multiple SoEs and MEA reports including the latest SoE reports for Tonga, Solomon Islands, PNG, FSM, and Tuvalu. All countries now have access to and use the standardized indicators published in the indicator guidebook for use and reuse in MEAs / voluntary national reviews and at national level reporting. As stated earlier in this report, and apart from the use cases described here, the IRT failed to be well adopted (potentially as indicator development and is a niche topic) yet it remains an important legacy tool from the Inform project.

Output 3.1.2: Capacity built on SoE and NEMSS	Indicator	End of project target
Develop and provide training for collection of national environment data and the use of SoE Reporting templates for each country.	SoE and NEMSS completed.	SoE and NEMS capacity built in 14 countries through workshops and South-South collaboration.
Document solutions to address data gaps for environmental indicators	Capacity built to address environmental data gaps.	Trial field data collection methodology to address 1 environment data gap.
Develop capacity to address implementation gaps identified in SoE through the NEMSS.		

Indicator target exceeded

250. The development of SoEs is one of the most significant project outputs. Although originally the project focus may have been more attuned to the technical development and application of the portals, the creation of SoEs substantially heightened PIC interest level on the practical use of data and information for tangible and necessary products. SoEs gave strong purpose to information collation and discussion, more so than the portal development would have done as a singular exercise. Virtual and in-person (highly preferred) workshops, and the availability of SoE consultants, supported PIC efforts toward data and information ‘roundups’ and as a way to give preliminary content (a critical mass) to the portal.
251. The SoE work opened questions for PICs concerning the whereabouts of historical data and more awareness about issues such as the importance and the need for baseline data in determining trends. Of critical importance was the reinforced notion that a portal is toward the end of the data and information pipeline and that without having effective data collection processes in place, a portal would become a lame resource. For most PICs the SoE process was the first time that concerted, cross sectoral efforts had been made to create a thorough, thematically organized collection of environmental data. Different national agencies had a reason to come together with joint purpose, with the Inform project acting as the mobilizing lever. Existing and emerging legislation in some PICs requires the production of a SoE every 3 – 5 years and while the specific ‘environment’ agencies in PICs are likely to continue carrying the reporting coordination mantle, all relevant sectors are essential participants in SoE reporting processes. While the practical outcomes of information collation and cross sector dialogue associated with the SoE processes are positive, there remains the underlying issue concerning the quality, age and relevance of the data available for PIC SoEs.
252. The project supported the development of NEMS for all fourteen project countries with Palau being the last to launch their NEMS in 2023. Capacity building activities associated with NEMS were undertaken for 13 PICs.

Output 3.1.3: Capacity built on portal and EIA	Indicator	End of project target
Provide training on environmental data management using national environment data portals including best practices for meta data.	National data portals in use with meta data best practices applied.	Capacity to use good data management data practices and the national environment data portal built in 14 countries.
EIA data management supported through National data portals including EIA dissemination.	EIA data management improved through use of national data portals	EIA data management capacity built in five countries.

Indicator target completed

253. Throughout the project, regular training workshops were conducted to introduce and reinforce good practices on data management, cataloguing and sharing. In the latter project stages, the integration of GIS and its application for environmental monitoring, planning, and reporting became a more prominent focus. The same 13 PICs that were engaged on SoE development were supported through virtual, on-line and in-country workshops to build capacity to utilize data management tools. Alternatively, self-paced

learning was facilitated via a range of supplementary learning materials, including on-line modules and detailed guidance documentation on how to utilize various tools.

254. As key capacity building examples: a data workshop in Solomon Islands to enhance spatial analysis of protected areas; a joint capacity building activity on drone mapping in Samoa in collaboration with allied SPREP projects to utilize new mapping technology skills in GIS and RS; the KoboToolbox suite of data management applications with cross-promotion and workshop activity with UN Joint Programme on Ecosystem Services, and; online, virtual data management training with Vanuatu and Niue on using data portals to catalogue existing (legacy) data.
255. E-learning modules developed by the project are key initiatives to assist in sustaining data management momentum in the post-project period. Additionally, an EIA practitioner network (Pacific Network for Environmental Assessment - PNEA) and data website were developed in partnership with Inform and strengthened EIA through access to improved data. GIS capacity building was provided for Samoa, Tonga, Nauru, Solomon Islands in partnership with the EU-OACPS Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA) phase II programme. The e-learning platform was also instrumental in raising the profile of SPREP's work on GIS and which has flowed on to resources provision from partners in the interests of strengthening their capacities.

Output 3.1.4: Communications	Indicator	End of project target
Develop a regional communication and visibility plan and tailored national communication plans for major Inform objectives.	Increase portal use demonstrating uptake of national environment data	Develop and tailor national communication plans highlighting the importance of indicator-based reporting, environmental data management and the multi-stakeholder nature of environmental data.

Indicator target completed

256. A communication and visibility plan was developed post MTR and assisted in continuing, and sharpening, the communications activity commenced at project inception (sans a plan). Initial communications activity had a focus on explaining the nature of the Inform project and the main thrust of the post MTR communication and visibility plan seemed to continue this path (i.e., a promotional focus). The Inform project has demonstrated an impressive quantum of communication (many news stories about product availability and events) and visibility activity and materials.
257. However, despite the volume and quality of materials produced and dissemination methods (including via newsletters, press releases, social media, on-line access to products, email blasts and YouTube) it is unclear to what degree this effort facilitated greater engagement and knowledge about what Inform offered or strengthened participation and commitment (measurable outcomes), particularly across wider critical sectoral groups.
258. The optimum avenues to promote uptake and involvement on improved data management is via in-person engagements, active learning by doing workshops, interactive two-way forums, direct technical support, and showcasing (and visualization) products that clearly display the practical usefulness of having good information and data.

Output 3.1.5: Gender	Indicator	End of project target
Empowering women in data for decision making Develop a gender balanced stakeholder group including the steering committee, national coordinating mechanisms, and meeting participants.	Composition of the steering committee, stakeholder group	The gender balance has been reached in all fora and stakeholder groups. Ensure equal access to data and its use.

Indicator target completed

259. The MTR noted that gender was largely omitted or afforded cursory attention in the ProDoc and absent from the ToC and Results Framework. Gender was subsequently woven into the ToC and Results Framework as evidenced by output 3.1.5. Fundamentally, there was no restriction on gender equity posed by any services, products or tools emanating from the Inform project. However, the extent to which gender considerations were observed in the project, either regionally or nationally, was largely limited to ensuring that project activity planning is alert to equitable gender participation and that attendance sheets allow for identification of gender, rather than any overt or conscious consideration of more wide-ranging facets of equitable gender inclusion.
260. The PEP and Inform project endeavored to develop an open data culture and platform that is available to all Pacific Island people regardless of educational attainment, gender, or age. Attendance records of Inform project engagements of all types and across varied stakeholder groups, indicated that the male to female ratio was leaning slightly higher to female representation. As one example, Samoa DNRME gave strong attention to gender and other social groups throughout the project (i.e., attendance sheets recorded gender and any other impairments, restrictions or disabilities) and noted that gender equity was evident in most participation events. Across the region, the environment sector has experienced a noticeable shift toward higher, and more equitable female involvement, interest and progression in key and/or senior positions in both government and non-government organizations.

Output 4.1.1: Project management	Indicator	End of project target
Effective management and delivery of project, meeting agreed measurable output and outcome indicators.	Approval inception report, annual workplan and budget, and the annual progress reports. Establishment of PMU.	Terminal evaluation report. Audit report. 1 Lessons learned and best practice report. 4 annual reports (one each year)

Indicator target completed

261. A commonality across many projects like Inform is that the initial 6-12 months of the project term is absorbed with general preparation and mobilization activities (i.e., the progressive recruitment of key project team members, agreeing on PCAs, regional and national inception meetings, establishing a PSC). Delivery activity does not commence on 'Day 1' This invariably leads to a compressed delivery period – a 4-year project implementation period could be reduced by 25%, thus condensing activity and expenditure into shorter timeframes and potentially leading to requests for no-cost project extensions (which transpired for the Inform project on three occasions). Additional unforeseen delivery challenges (Covid-19) can further erode actual implementation intentions. Despite these circumstances, delivery of project activities (i.e., detailed work planning, activity coordination, analyzing and solving issues, major technical systems and tools development, national engagement, capacity building) was conducted successfully, in relatively rapid timeframes, with multiple countries and numerous partners, and by applying adaptive management approaches.
262. Management of the Inform project occurred in an effective manner with both UNEP and SPREP acknowledging that this was a project strength and that there were few significant challenges or deficiencies arising in terms of management capacity and required outputs. The SPREP / UNEP partnership was on a direct communication line and proved highly effective and was respected by both parties. UNEP was responsive, helpful, flexible and cognizant of regional circumstances and idiosyncrasies that necessitated adaptive approaches and was willing to support SPREP in the approaches it recommended. In turn, SPREP appreciated UNEPS supportive oversight manner and

was able to proceed without any significant demands/barriers associated with implementing agency stipulations (or by the GEF). A regionally based Programme Management Unit (PMU) in Samoa within the SPREP campus was a critical coordination asset and provided a high standard of project reporting quality and timeliness (i.e., annual performance, 6-monthly, audit, financial, meeting minutes, lessons learned), gained strong visibility and created and maintained close contact and support with PICs. Good project consultants were procured.

- 263. A Project Steering Committee (PSC) was established at the project inception meeting in 2017 and convened on 7 occasions, providing strong project review and guidance, through to the final Inform Project Regional Meeting in June 2023.
- 264. The PSC provided a platform to highlight notable achievements and valuable lessons learned throughout the project’s implementation. The meetings presented an array of opportunities that strengthened collaborative partnerships between Member countries and SPREP.
- 265. Lessons learned and best practices have been documented and disseminated as communication material. Annual reports and half-yearly progress reports have been submitted on time and accepted by the implementing partner.
- 266. Annual audit reports have been submitted to UNEP and all audit reports have been unqualified without any issues. Lessons learned and best practices have been documented and will be presented together with the terminal evaluation. Annual reports and half-yearly reports have all been submitted on time and accepted by the implementing partner. Tracking of project implementation per country was presented using a traffic light rating system. GEF capacity-building monitoring tables were completed.
- 267. Outputs are measurable and available online (e.g., the SOEC; Interactive Websites for FSM, Tuvalu, PNG, Solomons Island, Tonga; Indicator Guidebook).

Output 4.1.2: Project monitoring	Indicator	End of project target
Project monitoring and evaluation methodology designed to align with GEF project and operating standards, including regular project audits.	Develop a traffic light system for major project outputs. Establish and assess country engagement. Inception Workshop completed. Evaluation Reports (Mid-Term and/or Terminal Evaluation). Project reports to Project Board. Asset Register. Site inspection by UNEP.	Audit Report. Terminal Evaluation Report. 2 traffic light document reports 2 country assessments of engagement. 4 Annual GEF capacity building monitoring tables.

Indicator target completed

- 268. The ProDoc M&E plan (and a slightly updated M&E plan post MTR) were based largely on reliance on the production of various reports, meeting minutes, audits, coordination activity, mid and terminal reviews, national engagement records and project publications to depict project issues in a generally narrative style. It is assumed that these resources would serve to articulate project performance levels. This approach was adequate but in no way represented a sophisticated, comprehensive project tracking system whereby regular information about each project indicator could be assigned a metric (few metrics in the results framework) or other status score/status and with M&E tool functions enabling automated updating and visualization of progress rates. A country status traffic light system was introduced post MTR and did go some way toward this approach yet was still a relatively crudely designed tool. SPREP has an internal monitoring and evaluation framework overseen by its Project Coordination Unit, however the influence of this aspect is not evident.

Rating for Availability of Outputs: Highly Satisfactory

Achievement of Project Outcomes

Availability of outcomes (referring to the post MTR results framework)

Notes

The results framework would have been improved by the inclusion of 'immediate' or 'short term / intermediate' outcomes which could have established outcome levels that were plausible within the project timeframe. The three outcomes that follow (from the post MTR results framework) portray elements that would naturally take time to mature and materialize and likely well beyond the project duration.

Additionally, as noted in Section IV of this report, the review has had difficulty in assessing outcome performance, as the stated project outcomes are not well worded as outcomes and are phrased more toward the output level (i.e., something is being done rather than what effects, results or impacts transpire from the 'thing' that is being done or delivered). Further, the outcomes that are provided have no indicators prescribed to assist in measuring progress toward targets.

Outcome 1.1: PICs and partner institutions have functional monitoring databases, that are networked, and users are largely dependent on them for their environmental monitoring and planning needs.

269. It is assumed that a 'monitoring database' stated in this outcome refers to the combination of data portals and indicator reporting mechanisms. The resources and tools for these were effectively established and networked by the project and introduced to stakeholders (output). The degree to which 'users are largely dependent on them for their environmental monitoring and planning needs' (a quasi-outcome) is highly variable across PICs (cross-sectoral) and other stakeholder groups. In recent consultations for this review, it was noted by respondents that usage of the 'monitoring databases' was ranging from almost nil to partial usage. Usage may have been slightly more active during the project period and when support levels were high but has waned since 2023.
270. PIC responsiveness to the Inform project and participation was patchy and erratic (i.e., active interest followed by non-responsiveness, high interest level in capacity building and training opportunities, lack of high-level support, competing demands on time, information sharing concerns and restriction levels, very low human resources levels). There is awareness of the portals and tools within specific national sectors (not widespread) and usage was catalysed via direct SPREP communication, capacity interventions and predominantly driven by SoE and or NEMS work. Some critical users at national level have opted out of the Inform portal as they have other preferred means of accessing, storing or managing data (which in most cases involves less reliable systems, but may be more familiar).
271. PICs and external consultants observe that currently they continue to derive information from a range of sources, (including from bodies that may not currently actively share information directly with the PEP (e.g., ADB, EU, FFA, FAO, international, regional and national NGOs) and including what they find on the PEP. This would be due to the portal not yet optimally populated and interrogable, familiarity issues, and the extensive range of alternate data and information sources available.

Partially achieved

Outcome 2.1 Legislation, policy, planning and institutional arrangements support data collection, sharing, reporting and harmonization between agencies/ministries within PICs.

272. Across the 14 PICs, there is wide disparity in the application of legislation, policy, planning and institutional arrangements that support data collection, sharing, reporting and harmonization between agencies/ministries within PICs. Some PICs have legislation requiring the development of a SoE, thus requiring effective data

collection, sharing and reporting procedures. Templates for data sharing and an Indicator Guidebook are available on the PEP for use and adoption by PICs if they wish.

273. Although the Inform project provided strong support and useful template resources to assist national modification and adoption of these types of arrangements, only a small number of PICs adopted data policy and the data license agreements and fewer still are still in the process of developing these procedures. Building faith with open data sharing across the full range of environment allied sectors was, and remains, one of the vexing issues besetting the project and is a significant limitation on the ability to capture and store the wide-ranging datatypes needed for planning, decision making and reporting.

Partially achieved

Outcome 3.1 Capacity built to access national and regional data simplified through a web-based system used to produce MEA national communications and strengthen national planning processes.

274. This outcome relates to capacity building in the areas of indicators, SoEs, NEMS, portals, EIA and gender. The capacity building support provided by the Inform project was thorough and dedicated and has enhanced the attitudes, knowledge base and capacity on these areas within PICs to varying degrees. Understanding what portals were intended to achieve, technical elements and access and data contribution processes, were plainly articulated and supported through the Inform project.
275. PICs observe that the development of SoEs were the most demonstrable activity benefitting from capacity support, which included the provision of direct expertise from SPREP technical personnel or by consultants.
276. Most PICs also seek assistance via other funding opportunities and external resources to develop their NEMS and to conduct their MEA reporting. Portal development was undertaken almost entirely via SPREP in-house expertise (including consultancy) and funding. The instigation of standardized indicators to be applied, or modified, by PICs was clearly utilized as an underpinning structure in the SoE development work. Gender equity continues to be a consideration that is increasingly 'less overlooked' in project work, although there is room for further consolidation and improvement on the practical application of gender entry points throughout projects.

Largely achieved

Outcome 4.1 Effective management and delivery of project, meeting agreed measurable output and outcome indicators.

277. Management, implementation and delivery of the Inform project was predominantly undertaken in a highly competent manner and within a challenging working context - an observation expressed positively across almost all stakeholder groups. Outputs were either completed or exceeded (based on the minimal indicator metrics applied). Project wide outcomes were either partially or largely achieved, with this comment not necessarily representing underachievement but more to do with a need to have longer timeframes (and potentially follow-up resources) in which to see change and impacts occur.

Largely achieved

Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes: Moderately Satisfactory

Likelihood of Impact

278. The Inform project strengthened awareness and recognition of the poor state of data and information quality and storage and the reasons for improving this situation (links to MEAs, SoEs, NEMS) and this success is a key plank for lasting impact.
279. Support provided by SPREP to PICs for the Inform project was of a high caliber (e.g., excellent responsiveness; personalized mentoring; alleviating responsibilities for project administration and many aspects of the technical development; provision of tools; templates and informative resources). This may however have overachieved to the point where PICs have been left with a reliance on a similar degree of external support, despite project capacity building interventions designed to build independence.
280. The Inform project has embedded strong systems, awareness and tools at a fundamental level, however the required extent of cross sectoral information collection (more current and ongoing collection) and accessibility, has a long way to progress before it is suitable to decisively inform SoEs, NEMS and many other processes and decisions. This was perhaps one of the weaker areas of the project (despite promotion of the KoboToolBox) compared to other project elements. While the PEP is being populated with a vast array of historic data, PICs will have considerable work to do to fully undertake systematic data collection procedures, particularly in areas where indicators do not have reliable (or any) baseline or trend information. Encouraging sectors to pass over important information remains a challenge for national environment agencies attempting to consolidate all thematic environmental information areas.
281. The likelihood of impact shows future promise due to rapid technological improvement and innovation (e.g., upgraded external telecommunication linkages to PICs, Cloud data storage, innovations such as StarLink, Artificial Intelligence). These more sophisticated opportunities, however, sit uneasily with the reality of on-ground conditions and low practical resources in PICs. Undoubtedly, PICs will continue to rely on allied supportive projects and funding to be able to carry forward initiatives and resources introduced by the Inform project.
282. As demonstration of some specific examples of where information has supported decision making, and can be attributed to the project: the Vanuatu Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation facilitated decision-making to regulate on single-use plastics (the first such legislation in the Pacific); provision of data for the development of the Samoa National Environment Sector Plan 2022–2027, linking to the national planning framework, and; RMI's 6th national report to CBD, and development of national data sharing policy and standard operating procedures for data management by the Ministry of Environment.

Achievement of Likelihood of Impact: Moderately Likely

Rating for Effectiveness: SATISFACTORY

E. Financial Management

Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

283. Overall, proper financial management standards were applied and SPREP and UNEP's financial management policies were adhered to with limited, if any, delays in clearances. By comparison with other major funding donors (i.e., GCF, EU) the GEF is less demanding and unbending, which is a critical enabling factor when dealing with operational conditions in PICs. As a large and long-term regional organization, SPREP's track record inspires confidence that procedures will be applied diligently.

Rating for Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures: Highly Satisfactory

Completeness of Financial Information

284. SPREP has extensive experience in project management in the Pacific region and can assign accurate and realistic costing to most budget categories. This assisted in ensuring that costs originally estimated remained largely consistent, or were neatly adjusted, through the project duration, alleviating the need for major variations.
285. Financial reporting at project mid-point (June 2019) identified a 33% funds utilization which was largely attributed to a delayed implementation start point due to the need to establish a project team and undertake inception activities and did not in any way reflect weak performance. By June 2021 the expenditure utilization was about 70%. The effects of Covid-19 border closures through this period had a moderating effect on the expenditure rate (relating to reductions in predicted travel demand) however funds were reallocated – with capacity support benefiting from the reallocations. Total cumulative expenditure reported in April 2023 was only modestly below the UNEP total approved budget for the project (by some 35K).
286. The Umoja budget category system uses broad categories to assign cost items (i.e., staff and personnel, contract services, operating costs, supplies, equipment, travel, etc.). This means that individual costs cannot be identified in the reports and specific information (such as the cost of an SoE consultant) needs to be tracked back to detailed accounting records.
287. The ProDoc included a relatively detailed table of project budget and co-finance by outcome, output and activity. While GEF funding to the project (cash) was monitored, recorded and reported accurately and at regular intervals, the co-financing contribution amounts (i.e., identified in 2015 as human resources, transportation, office space, internet, communications utilities) remained more obtuse to track (particularly in chasing PICs for details). The veracity of how agreed commitments were being interpreted, provided and reported is a challenging proposition, as these commitments were not contractually binding – being more like an institutional agreement via exchange of letters. Given the timepoint of original commitments and changing project start and end dates, some co-financing would prove hard to account for (e.g., ACP-MEA 2 project co-finance contribution). Apart from managing and advising on their co-financing commitments, the 14 PICs did not have to make undue financial effort for the project as this was coordinated by SPREP on their behalf. Any lack of clarity concerning co-financing weighs negatively on the project overall (i.e., what it did for the total project money/resources) as the co-financing commitment for Inform amounted to almost 60% of 'on-paper' funding.

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Highly Satisfactory

Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff

288. Having dedicated financial positions in both UNEP and SPREP (within Inform project team and within SPREP organizational services) proved highly beneficial in dealing with the flow of financial administration matters associated with the project (i.e., procurement, reporting, developing guidance information, briefings / trainings / explanations on financial procedures, approvals, funds disbursements, and cash advances). The direct communication links and flow between finance staff and the project team, and its leadership level, were clear and open, and were characterized by a high level of competency and sound financial planning and budget monitoring.
289. Early guidance to SPREP on UNEPs financial administration requirements and expectations, including the nature of the GEFs requirements, by the UNEP Task Manager and Funds Management Officer built an effective platform for good programmatic and financial reporting and sound working relationships between UNEP and SPREP

operatives. This relationship facilitated a comfortable dialogue when/where any queries arose and was further supported by the quality and timeliness of reports submitted by the executing agency. Any financial issues arising were raised without hesitation and resolved proactively.

Rating for Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff: Highly Satisfactory

Rating for Financial Management: Highly Satisfactory

F. Efficiency

290. SPREP is a highly experienced project management organization and understands the needs and challenges in the Pacific region very well. It also has firm connections with key government organizations in each of the PICs (including across more personal/working levels), making project access to those individuals much more possible. Correspondingly, SPREP is uniformly known in the region and largely a trusted organization for PICs to deal with on broad environmental matters, this again facilitating project interactions. SPREP also has the mandate and status to be able to engage with other CROP agencies on an equal footing. Combined with these organizational benefits, the Inform team itself proved to be adept at establishing strong connections with PICs, and in demonstrating specific skills and know-how that supported efficient use of project time and resources. As project implementation, budgets and timing of work was largely under the control of SPREP, it was important that PICs had a high degree of confidence in the work being done on their behalf.
291. The two main delaying factors associated with the Inform project were the late start of implementation due to the need to establish project team positions and conduct inception activities and the Covid-19 pandemic. Organizational recruitment processes are inherently lengthy and can take many months to be conducted appropriately, and to the point where a position is formally in place, commences duties, and begins planning preliminary tasks. In the case of the Inform project manager, this critical position took some 9 months to appoint and thus held back inception activity coordination which ultimately occurred one year after the original project commencement date.
292. The Covid-19 pandemic had potential to impact the project significantly and in some respects it did. Some project focal points were directed to support emergency response in some PICs. Some key project participants fell ill after contracting Covid-19 and some needed to take on responsibility for others / family that were disadvantaged by the pandemic. However, the Inform project team proved to be adept and agile in switching to virtual modes of engagement once border closures came into effect and technical delivery and engagement continued successfully via webinars, online meetings and remote consultation (although expenditure rates slowed). E-resources flourished (learning materials, guidebooks, templates, interactive web tools). Somewhat counter-intuitively, some work progressed more efficiently as the demand on PIC operatives to travel ceased completely, thus prohibiting lost time due to regular travel commitments.
293. The Inform project established a strong outreach commitment to allied projects. As one example, a partnership was formed with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)SDG Knowledge Hub to produce stories and updates in the context of the SDGs as it relates to the national data portals. This partnership was made possible through co-financing/ funding from the Swedish Fund through UNEP and represents additional investment mobilized by the project and identified in the co-financing documentation. The overall co-financing commitment was substantial thus maximizing the secured GEF contribution. The project was built on several pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships (BIOPAMA), data sources (SPC), synergies

and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects (ACP-MEA 2). The use of consultants that had strong working experience in the region represented good value for money.

294. Although the project went 2.5 years past its original planned timeframe, the extended time in no way represented inefficiencies and was justified due to the establishment phase inherent in Year 1, the lower expenditure rate due to Covid-19 and the opportunity to continue using unspent funds and maintain engagement support with PICs.

Rating for Efficiency: Highly Satisfactory

G. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring Design and Budgeting

295. A monitoring and evaluation plan identifying each type of monitoring that would occur (essentially via meeting minutes, project reporting, expenditure records, and formal project evaluations) was included with the ProDoc Appendix 7. It also included the nomination of responsible parties that would collate and utilize meeting minutes, project reporting, expenditure records, and formal project evaluations as the means of undertaking project M&E. This approach did not constitute a specific M&E plan with associated tools sufficient to track progress more regularly and clinically and foster management towards outputs and outcomes. The costs of each type of monitoring activity were clearly specified although the cost for the development of a 'whole of project' monitoring and evaluation tool was not, and thus one was not established. Costs associated with project inception workshops and the hiring of consultants to undertake independent project reviews at mid and terminal points were identified.
296. For a project that was focused on the collection of data, the use of indicators and reporting indicator status (and had internal technical skills and an organizational service to facilitate these processes), it seems a shortfall that the project did not develop and use a more specific M&E tool. This is particularly critical due to the periodic updating of budgets and workplans. It has also become apparent that the project outcomes did not have any measurable indicators or targets, and this oversight may have been detected via the development of an M&E tool.
297. In a more general project management manner, the project applied a robust monitoring system through periodic calls with UNEP, Half-Yearly Progress Reports, and Project Implementation Reviews (PIR), which included specific monitoring sections, and in-country missions to assess uptake. Additionally, the Project Steering Committee (PSC) provided rigorous oversight and ensured comprehensive tracking of project components.

Rating for Monitoring Design and Budgeting: Moderately Satisfactory

Monitoring of Project Implementation

298. It is understood that a project team member was responsible for tracking project implementation activity and ensuring other team members remained aware of tasks and timing. The tracking system used is not known to the review and it is presumed that there was also a degree of organic, intuitive based approaches utilized to review work and based on regular team dialogue and decisions. The project included a gender element post MTR.
299. Given the scale of the project and rollout of a wide range of activities in 14 PICs and involving some major partners, a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan would have been a useful tool to support project implementation and to identify and track

actions. This would have been based on the results framework and work plan, which again highlights the fundamental nature of a having a precisely drafted results framework in place.

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Satisfactory

Project Reporting

300. Project reporting was largely developed by using personal knowledge and general reflection of the project work undertaken, rather than through reference to results depicted on a systematic M&E tool based on all elements of the results framework. This style of reporting did not reflect a level of granularity showing progress in achieving outputs, outcomes, targets, and milestones in a systematic manner mapped to the project's results framework and monitoring plan. Project knowledge by team members was strong so this approach of narrative style reporting proved effective in completing reporting templates and portraying the projects progressive storyline.
301. However, this reporting style carries a risk of blurring the distinction between promotional reporting and more clinical, unbiased, objective indicator-based reporting (i.e., an output can be reported as occurring quite satisfactorily, yet a demonstrable outcome against a precise measurement may not be resulting, even at lower/intermediate levels). granular

Rating for Project Reporting: Highly Satisfactory

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Satisfactory

H. Sustainability

Socio-political Sustainability

302. The inherent nature of time bound projects and funding envelopes is that they stop and start. There was a dynamic and energetic atmosphere during the implementation of the Inform project. However, when the project eventually ceased (and even in the less dynamic no cost extension stages), the built momentum began to deflate. Other projects and priorities relentlessly compete for time and resources in PICs so while one project may get attention when the engagement levels are high and key positions are prompting action, another initiative or demand will swiftly fill its place once the formal project term concludes. This is despite the concerted efforts in building capacity for process and task independence. This competition is evident at both programmatic and political levels and is driven (partially) by the need to attract outside resources and shifting in-country resources around.
303. A consistent observation from PICs is that they have strong hope that the Inform project will be resuscitated to continue the high level of support provided to them during the project implementation period. There is also a generally phrased request from PICs for clarifying updates from SPREP concerning its ongoing approach to environmental data management and support to PICs in this regard.

Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Financial Sustainability

304. It is highly unlikely that PICs will ever have the necessary funding to enlist dedicated data and information / IT staff within government that have a focus on environmental themes. Most PICS were barely able to support this type of resource even during the Inform project, unless there was allied funding available. External funding either at national or regional level, will be a continuing pre-requisite.

305. It is noted that a Concept Paper has been developed for an 'Inform II' type project. UNEP is currently in communication with the GEF, to confirm the eligibility and availability of STAR allocations for the proposed concept on "Enhancing Pacific Island Countries and Territories access and use of environmental data". UNEP is interested in implementing the proposed concept; however, GEF needs to confirm its eligibility and availability of concept criteria for consideration by the GEF Council given that it falls outside of the current five GEF-8 focal areas.
306. While the funding source for this proposition is still highly unknown/uncertain, the main thrust to sustain the good achievements, momentum, interest garnered in the Inform (1) project remains strong across PICs (albeit there is likely to be a substantial time gap between the Inform project and any future iteration).
307. Key elements of an ongoing project would be revisiting elements that could not be addressed adequately by the Inform project, namely: embedding environmental standards more firmly through policy and legislation (particularly aimed at cross-sectoral collaboration); monitoring and data collection for environmental standards and standardized environmental indicators; production of tailored information products encapsulating existing data topics; and continuing technical capacity building.

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Institutional Sustainability

308. SPREP, via its EMG program is continuing to provide slightly 'reduced' services to maintain essential commitments from the Inform project, particularly: maintenance of the PEP; information security and Cloud hosting; continuation of the relationship with SPC; user guidance on data uploading; support to SPREP programmes that are/will be using the PEP as the dedicated data repository, and; responding to PIC requests for specific additions to national homepages on the portal and even including Timor-Leste on the PEP (due to links with PacWaste Plus. The Inform project gave the EMG program the resources and opportunity to demonstrate its capabilities and value and to strengthen its position as a service provider of consistent benefit to PICs, rather than as a project dependent Executing Agency.
309. A sustainability plan was prepared following the MTR. While it gave an honest account of successes, challenges, ongoing needs, and key actions, it did not identify the critical financing options to support sustainability and that would need to be pursued prior to the project end date.
310. At national levels, within environment agencies, the level of ongoing action on data management is patchy due to resourcing limitations, although the need to improve data quality is strongly understood and accepted. The matter of enhanced procedures for acquiring cross sectoral environment data (namely in the areas of forestry, fisheries, land use, agriculture and water resources) remains a challenge.

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: Moderately Satisfactory

Rating for Sustainability (Likelihood):	Moderately Satisfactory
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I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

Preparation and Readiness

311. Matters concerning project preparation are also reviewed in Section IV B.
312. The Inform project Inception & Planning Workshop was convened from 20-24 November 2017 – and was a valuable information gathering and input / consultation event for

UNEP, SPREP, PICs and potential partners. The range of information gathered was comprehensive and served to establish important context and facts relevant to the project and to define priority action areas as well as approaches and methods for delivery.

313. While recruitment of key project team positions took some months to commence and conclude, once these positions were in place, momentum was swiftly activated with the inception workshop, PSC formulation and technical consultancies ensuing almost immediately, thus paving the way for concerted and agreed implementation activity. UNEP provided early guidance on expectations and requirements enabling clarity on processes from the start of project implementation in earnest (late 2017).

Rating for Preparation and Readiness: Satisfactory

Quality of Project Management and Supervision

314. Stakeholder responses concerning the quality of project management and supervision are uniformly positive for the roles served by both UNEP/Implementing Agency and SPREP/Executing Agency. The quality of reports, documents, products, technical apparatus, communication materials and online resources developed by the project was high. PIC remarks concerning the responsiveness of the Inform project team articulates their overall appreciation for the quality of advice and support provided (to the extent that the appetite for this level of support was potentially beyond the reasonable capacity of the project team servicing 14 PICs). The agility of the Inform project team during Covid-19 to continue effective engagement and implementation was positively acknowledged. SPREP has not raised any concerns or issues regarding the oversight provided by UNEP and acknowledges that this working relationship was positive and supportive toward project achievement.
315. UNEP/Implementing Agency HIGHLY SATISFACTORY
316. SPREP/Executing Agency HIGHLY SATISFACTORY

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: Highly Satisfactory

Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

317. The principal stakeholders for the Inform Project were the national level environmental agencies. Their responsiveness to the project can be described as variable and somewhat unpredictable, ranging from strong and relatively even participation, through good participation punctuated by engagement absences, to minimal or discontinued participation. All 14 PICs made co-financing commitment to the project and had support to develop local workplans to guide their activities under the project. Given the wide disparities across the PICs in terms of participation, it is difficult to discern how co-financing of a flat 200k per PIC was equitably demonstrated. Within PICs, the involvement of sectors falling under the broader banner of environment resource management and protection was inconsistent at best, to not occurring at all. The SoEs information seeking processes provided optimum leverage and an entry point for drawing out engagement and integration across sectors, it being a tangible task involving the interests of multiple sectors. The need for baseline information remains critical. Breaking down the barrier of 'holding back' valuable information remains an ongoing objective.
318. The PSC was the principal mechanism to ensure that stakeholder's awareness about the project and their opportunity to contribute concerns, ideas and endorsements, was formally addressed.
319. The EU-BIOPAMA program executed by IUCN already had formal links with SPREP for its program delivery, so the commitment of funds and continuing engagement was

straightforward and occurred fruitfully. The ACP-MEA 2 project was similarly engaged and closely integrated thematically and financially with the Inform project. SPC proved to be a significant and constructive project partner, with collaboration with this stakeholder being one of the highpoints of the project and continuing proactively post-project. Other CROP agencies that would have had valuable inputs to the project, such as USP and FFA, did not engage in any overt way.

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Satisfactory

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

320. The project contributed to human rights indirectly, through informed evidence-based decision making on the environment and cross-cutting issues.
321. The project is not targeted directly to indigenous peoples per se, but rather is concerned with contributing to the overall betterment of national populations in PICs via data improvements that then support better decisions concerning sustainable development. However, the project did convene, or support, some specific and relevant activities (e.g., for PNG - enhancement of environmental laws and area management supporting customary landowner rights to preserve their heritage, maintain their livelihoods, and exercise autonomy over their lands).
322. Conceptually, the project recognizes that gender equality and human rights are an inherent and genuine concern and that this project contributed positively to alleviating gender and human rights challenges (albeit via indirect means). Gender and minority grouping / disaggregation was kept in mind and intentions and responses identified in PIRs throughout the project (although concrete outputs were limited in scope).
323. Gender mainstreaming was an important component in both the implementation and reporting phases of the project. Reporting required gender-disaggregated data for participants in capacity-building activities, ensuring the participation of women in project steering and decision-making processes. The PIR reports included specific on gender, highlighting this commitment. The rise in female engagement with the portal, systems, and environmental monitoring underscores the project's success in contributing positively to closing the gender gap in data management. By encouraging more women to participate actively, the platform's self-paced courses have facilitated increased female representation. Moreover, participation records from capacity-building trainings show a trend of higher representation of women, further demonstrating the project's success in promoting gender equity equality.

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: Moderately Satisfactory

Country Ownership and Driven-ness

324. Country ownership and 'driven-ness' may not always be highly visible at operational levels. National focal points were invariably government personnel in senior positions in conjunction with team members who were also in higher mid-level positions. A common characteristic of Pacific development work is that individuals who take on or are appointed to focal point positions, is invariably due to their senior positions, good capacities and experience, and involvement in similar positions. These individuals are sometimes stretched in their capacity to perform multiple, demanding roles (and can undertake regular work travel) and their responsiveness and availability for requests for input to projects may not be as timely as they intend it to be.
325. PICs have historically put significant time and investment into obtaining data and strongly value the notion of managing it securely and therefore the Inform project was a specific initiative to respond to that desire. The conceptual flow line of building good quality baseline information, storing it securely and centrally, being able to analyse it

efficiently for SoE reporting content, and SoEs then performing as guidance to planning, decisions and reporting, is well established. PICs have not yet taken complete ownership for their national portals (the content aspect) with reliance on SPREP support continuing.

326. Wide ranging demands on small national agencies and their personnel does apply and it is not always possible to get timely responses for information, participation or commentary, because these agencies are likely to be servicing multiple initiatives and have stretched resources.

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: Satisfactory

Communication and Public Awareness

327. A communication and visibility plan was developed post MTR and assisted in continuing, and sharpening, the communications activity commenced at project inception (sans a plan). Initial communications activity had a focus on explaining the nature of the Inform project and the main thrust of the post MTR communication and visibility plan seemed to continue this path (i.e., a promotional focus). The Inform project has demonstrated an impressive quantum of communication (many news stories about events) and visibility activity and materials. In terms of 'public' awareness it is unlikely that the average citizen would have any specific interest in this project and communication effort toward this broad sector would not have been a wise use of resources.
328. The volume and quality of communication and public awareness materials produced, and dissemination methods (including via newsletters, press releases, social media, on-line access to products, email blasts and YouTube), and showcasing in major climate conferences such as COP27 and SIDS-4 with focus on SoEs and Environmental Indicators, ensured that the Inform project had high potential to become widely known.
329. However, it is unclear to what degree this effort facilitated greater engagement and knowledge about what Inform offered or strengthened participation and commitment and the realization of project outcomes at ground level, particularly across wider critical institutional and sectoral groups.
330. What is apparent is that engagement activity throughout the project was of a high caliber. In-person engagements, active learning-by-doing workshops, interactive two-way forums, direct technical support, and showcasing (and visualization) products that clearly display the practical usefulness of having good information and data, appeared to be the optimum avenues to promote uptake and involvement on improved data management.
331. The development and dissemination of project resources (both online and hardcopy) is not included in this rating of communication and public awareness.

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Satisfactory

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance: Highly Satisfactory

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

Design and Network

332. The design and establishment of a secure, centralized information storage and dissemination network - the Pacific Environment Portal, has delivered a functional technical apparatus that provides users with a relatively easy and reliable way to upload, find, access, retrieve, share, and reuse a set of catalogued global, regional and national data. <https://pacific-data.sprep.org/>
333. Data and information previously held insecurely and less accessibly now has a valuable mechanism through which to be more directly available for the purposes of monitoring, analyzing and evaluating environmental conditions and trends to support planning, forecasting and reporting requirements at all levels.
334. A large initial body of date information has been now transferred and preserved, and a robust, structured framework for continuing contributions and cross-harvesting, with publishing facility, is in place with regional and national portal interfaces accommodated within the PEP, and with choice for PICs to host or not host (via SPREP) their national portal.
335. The most significant step forward from the Inform project was that there is now a central collation hub, thematically categorized, and with sound cross-sharing attributes, for environmental data and information for the Pacific region and with SPREP supporting 'back-end' technical management and data curation.
336. Each PIC has a dedicated instance of the PEP enabling them to manage and share data, and with each national portal and the regional portal capable of cross-sharing data and collecting new data through established linkages with other sources, with access controls and account permissions providing reassurance about private, restricted or sensitive information, and how potential data breaches or loss are mitigated.
337. The PEP is supported by guidance tools and instructional resources showing users how to utilize and maximize the network (overview page on the PEP, standard procedure and practice on data governance and data management, data sharing templates, standard operating procedures, standard environmental indicators, indicator reporting tool, data collection options). <https://docs.pacific-data.sprep.org/>
338. An Indicator Reporting Tool to track and manage national reporting indicators (MEAs), and to simplify reporting processes and reduce reporting burden by facilitating re-use of environmental indicators across multiple reporting obligations, was developed and piloted as a basis for future refinement. <https://indicators.sprep.org/user/login>
339. Some PICs were assisted in developing specific interactive websites linked to their national environment portals, to showcase their SoEs, with concise data visualization imagery (photographs, maps, graphs, charts, tables) or to present important thematic issues (e.g., climate change and disaster risk management).

Enabling Environment

340. The Inform project stimulated mobilization of an initial critical mass of legacy and institutional environmental data and information (and this is by no means yet exhausted), that supported the development and use of tools and sharing systems and demonstrated its utility in the preparation of SoEs and NEMs.
341. SPREP was an effective executing agency – having sound in-house expertise and a supportive engagement style for this project and being a trusted and familiar regional body with long-standing links with PICs (both formal and informal). The Inform project demonstrated the efficacy of SPREP's EMG programme, helped to promote its prospects as an important regional service provider to PIC members, and key outputs from the Inform project are being sustained via EMG through internal and allied project funding.
342. The MoU between SPREP and SPC to share data, and that this agreement was effectively operationalized, and continues, was a substantial forward shift in terms of the collation and accessibility of environmental data for the region and for PICs.
343. The project provided PICs with considerable targeted support and resources towards the development of their recent State of Environment Reports and National Environmental Management Strategies (and the regional State of Environment and Conservation report) which in turn proved to be the driving, practical, motivation levers to induce project traction and encourage interest and participation (including cross-sectoral) in finding, gathering and contributing relevant information for housing in the PEP. The development of SoEs was perhaps the most successful and beneficial output from the project, providing clearly summarized reference bases for MEA reporting responses and decision-making. <https://library.sprep.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/SOE-conservation-pacific-regional-report.pdf>
344. An Environmental Indicators Guidebook was developed under the project, providing a standardized set of common regional environmental indicators (34) along with indicator summaries and explanatory application notes, and providing PICs with opportunity to replicate or modify these indicators at national level, particularly for SoE reporting. <https://pacific-data.sprep.org/dataset/environmental-indicators-pacific-island-countries>
345. Strong links were recognized and established with foundational projects such as the EU ACP-MEA 2 project, related platforms such as UNESCO, GEO and SIO, and allied projects such as the GCF-funded UNEP CIS-Pac5 Project, the EU-OACPS BIOPAMA programme, the EU-OACPS Pacific BioScapes Project, the UNJP SESS project and the EU funded PacWaste Plus project, and with other related projects and initiatives in the region.
346. SPREP directly oversees, or is closely involved with or influences, a wide range of environmental programmes, projects and initiatives which provides substantial opportunity for ongoing population of the PEP with more current and wide-ranging data, and with SPREP mandating the PEP as the primary organizational data repository.
347. The replicability of the PEP model was demonstrated by the establishment of a national environment portal for Timor-Leste, as a country located just outside the core Pacific region, yet supported by a project funding envelope that includes this country and also uses the PEP as its primary data management repository. Building on the Inform project, UNEP was able to scale up its success and advantage and expand out through the development of the CISPac-5 project and the UN Joint Programme on Ecosystem Services.

Capacity Building

348. The Inform project demonstrably strengthened the broad knowledge level across PICs concerning environmental data and information and equally, if not more importantly, assisted in promoting enhanced attitudes, habits and practices and trust levels relating to data management more generally.
349. Stakeholders have been able to reflect on aspects of their environmental data and information situation and understand critical gaps (particularly baseline data and specific information required for MEAs) that require targeted action if they are to achieve comprehensive, authoritative reference points for planning and decisions.
350. The Inform project delivered a high standard of capacity support and responsiveness to PICs and other stakeholders and aided in simplifying technical dimensions for general application. The use of practical processes and activities (developing an SoE or a NEMs, CBD national reports, EIA training, data collection) was an essential technique in providing purposeful entry points to stimulate participation in the nomination of data resources, accessing that data, and uploading it to the PEP. Train the trainer approaches were utilized to expand the reach of base training provision.
351. Online, E-learning resources and resources kits specifically formatted for understanding aspects of the Inform project (data management, indicators, portal use, EIA, visualization) were developed and are being actively viewed and used.
352. Opportunities to tandem with allied projects were taken frequently to bring the concepts of information management together with specific topics such as protected areas or GIS and remote sensing training.
353. The project was supported by an impressive array of communication, visibility and promotional materials and this undoubtedly assisted in advocacy for the Inform project, in highlighting national issues that required greater visibility, and in providing important use cases in the value of the project and what it offered or implemented.
354. A legacy of personnel at SPREP and within PICs with expanded knowledge, strengthened capacities and confidence to continue similar work at both technical and management levels, was generated by the project.

Project Management

355. The project conceptualization, design and ProDoc portrayed, and responded to, the key relevant issues, the broad needs, and gaps, and set a sound model for required resources and implementation.
356. The Inform project team (including the SPREP PMU, UNEP personnel, specialist consultants and allied SPREP programs) was characterized by an effective blend of professionalism, technical expertise, engagement and facilitation skill, and project coordination and management capability.
357. The Inform project successfully, and relatively fairly, juggled its attention across 14 countries, adjusting and moving focus around when delays occurred in certain areas. The project management team demonstrated a high degree of skill in adopting adaptive management, flexibility and agility in being able to switch focus constructively when confronted by challenging circumstances, and this was supported by UNEP.
358. Delivery of a Project Steering Committee, inception workshops and inception reports, governance mechanisms (PSC) and all reporting from SPREP to UNEP was undertaken at a high-quality level and occurred according to required timing and within budget.

Project challenges

359. There is a significant lack of human and financial resources in PICs and external assistance is a pre-requisite for most development initiatives.
360. The region is characterized by an abundance of interventions and organizations (these are often quite similar at face value to the average stakeholder) that are responding to environmental issues and creating an ever-growing degree of competition for funding support, visibility, participation availability, and interest. Project focal points, delegates, proxies or nominees have numerous other responsibilities and demands on their time and responsiveness can vary widely. Portal proliferation is a further issue.
361. Covid-19 and natural disasters in specific locations had major impacts on the flow of project activity and participation availability and triggered a need to compose alternative work approaches, timing and outputs.
362. Staffing cohorts in national government agencies undergo continuous change, turnover and disruption (including workplace erosion via regional migration support programmes) and the average staffing base at national or institutional levels does not have access to sufficient individuals or skill sets, to easily / readily replace or backfill these instances or to be able to adequately brief new staff that have not had the benefit of previously provided capacity development and training.
363. Uptake of what the Inform project offered was variable and could be influenced by personnel availability, individual personalities, governance circumstances, system duplication concerns and political interests and most PICs have, have access to, or continue to a variety of data collection methods and utilize multiple data management systems.
364. At a broad level, the region tends to stay with familiar systems and habits (a common human trait) despite inefficiencies or exposure to alternate and potentially better systems (including social media) and altering this situation can require targeted demonstration and 'proof of change' benefits to provoke uptake of new approaches.
365. Data and information 'gatekeeping' or doubt and suspicion (systemically, institutionally or at the individual level, and including official data request and approval processes) were, and will continue to be, a critical delay or blockage area to the aim of building an improved body of regional and national environmental data and information.
366. Although project engagement at national level was strong (mostly the core environment sector), for PICs with a large provincial / states component, there remains a potentially large gap in the data and information provision network.
367. Preparing national responses to MEA reporting, and particularly the SDGs, is a task that involves contribution of data and information from across the full suite of environment thematic areas (biodiversity, land use, marine, waste, climate) and thus requiring active cross-sectoral collaboration and commitment to unified effort.
368. Some older, yet still important data and information (and these are held by a wide range of sectors and stakeholders - government, non-government and private sector), needs to be digitized from hard copy to electronic format.
369. There is a risk that the portal is perceived in simplistic terms as a 'dump' for reports rather than a source of verifiable, researchable data.

Areas for improvement or further reflection

370. The project did not have the benefit of a well resolved TOC and results framework and importantly no consistent use of suitably expressed outcome statements and specific indicators of outcome progress. Project performance has largely been measured through activity and outputs.

371. The relatively modest GEF funding envelope for this project did not (mostly) provide resources for dedicated in-country data specialist positions and relied on such roles being deployed internally or with assistance from opportunistic funding sources resulting in PIC internal data work being insufficient, lapsing, or not occurring.
372. The degree to which the Inform project has driven independent national capacity for reporting on MEAs and in producing SoEs, NEMSSs and the like, and has influenced decision-making, appears to be uneven across the region. While the project was conceptually commendable, and PIC interest and understanding around the positive initiatives introduced by the Inform project remains clear-sighted, there is a broad weakness with ongoing forward movement on practical, independent uptake and application by PICs of the PEP, its enabling mechanisms (e.g., data sharing mechanisms) and related action areas such as MEA reporting.
373. The development, refinement and re-application of indicators is a task requiring a degree of niche expertise, and some indicators currently in use (and originally formed as useful starting points) will need to be re-examined for their suitability as new information and paradigms have emerged.
374. While there were some overt examples of positive use cases emanating from the project (production of SoEs), more concerted effort could have been undertaken to demonstrate other practical, compelling application and products that benefited from a centralized, populated environmental data repository and its allied tools.
375. SoEs were built up from data and information resources that ranged between imperfect to reasonable to good in terms of availability, age, quality and specificity. Although 13 PICs were supported to produce a SoE report 'product' that gave general indications about environmental status and trends, there remain significant information gaps in some thematic areas and scope for strengthening the confidence level around some conclusions and actions recommended.
376. Although hard to portray as a weakness, the high standard of communication, engagement, support, resources (technical and financial) and guidance to PICs, combined with the strong appetite from PICs for technical support, potentially created an over reliance on SPREP to take care of issues and undertake work on their behalf rather than facilitating PICs independence and ownership.
377. The data and information pipeline relies on the supply of good quality, current and ongoing material and sound data management systems at the source locations (the portal is a subsequent pipeline point) and the project was not able to address this element as fully as desirable during its timeframe, with the focus being on capturing 'any and all' relevant available data in existence to give foundational life and content to the portal.
378. There was a lack of opportunity, or inability, to effectively engage some important data partners/owners and stakeholders, including some CROP agencies, national government sectors beyond a core environment sector, regional and international environment and conservation organizations and this potentially related to the way (or loss of control over) information may be displayed, interpreted, judged and contextually reported.
379. Despite a high-volume output of project communication, visibility and promotion, the Inform project and the concept of the portal and allied environmental data tools is still unknown, not required, or not of interest to some key stakeholders and potential users.
380. The project did not develop a specific monitoring and evaluation plan and tools for regularly tracking progress and performance against indicators. This was achieved via

a general administrative approach to task monitoring, narrative style reporting and the use of basic tools such as a country status traffic light table.

381. While commitments to project co-financing are generally granted without undue hesitancy and often well in advance of a project approval point, how the stated financial/in-kind contributions are supplied in concrete terms can be a vague accounting zone and can negatively skew the picture of work achieved compared to the 'on-paper' total of project funding (grant and co-finance).
382. As the PEP has basic functions and most resources on the PEP are in pdf format and metadata is not consistently available, users need to manually 'trawl' documents, as they cannot be readily probed for the retrieval of specific data and information (the wider internet remains a vital source of information. Although mostly user friendly, the PEP still necessitates a degree of training, technical support and key word dexterity in data uploading and interrogation aspects and would be improved with further development of the navigation dashboard and data analysis and interpretation functions.
383. The existence of the PEP and the SPREP Virtual Library sharing close airspace remains a somewhat undefined portfolio relationship.
384. The Inform project endeavored to develop an open data culture and platform that is available to all Pacific Island people regardless of educational attainment, gender, or age. However, regard to gender was not strongly embedded initially as a fundamental project element (potentially because the project had a technical focus and was not overtly targeted at communities or on ground issues). More attention could have been afforded to consideration of gender entry points, gender disaggregated indicators, consideration of specific budget lines and activities, in addition to participation records and gender promotion via the portal (which were done well).

B. Lessons learned

385. The following observations on lessons learned during the Inform project are common to many projects in the Pacific region, yet they reinforce key reflection points and advice toward the design and implementation of future projects and programmes.

Table 9. Key lessons learned

Key Lesson Learned 1	Attention to the design and use of a Theory of Change and Results Framework
Context/comment	<p>The ToC and results framework provide the fundamental blueprint, guide and gauge for project direction, implementation, review and adjustment. Weak ToC content, and subsequently a weakened results framework, will not facilitate confidence and clarity on whether project outputs provide optimum pathways toward desired outcomes, results and impacts. It may also result in 'false starts' in some aspects of implementation. The conceptual design of a ToC and results framework should be treated as a priority design task and then remain as the 'living' model for reflection and review throughout implementation. They form the base tools for a good monitoring and evaluation system to regularly track implementation and performance and need to comprise the full suite of contemporary ToC and results framework elements and attributes.</p> <p>Development of a well resolved and clearly articulated ToC and results framework may require the use of niche expertise in assisting project initiators and implementers with this important task. Further, a monitoring and evaluation system, including information tools and progress tracker, should be established quite early in a project at project management level</p>

	and national levels (if possible), providing clinical progress visualization rather than narrative reporting, and utilized as the formal, informative basis for regularly convened review sessions.
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Key Lesson Learned 2	Identification of a project implementation 'establishment/inception' phase
Context/comment	<p>Project workplans invariably identify implementation activity commencement from the date of a PCA entering into force (or similar formal commencement point). This does not reflect that, after this time point, essential project management personnel may then need to be recruited, inception workshops convened with stakeholders, and organisational systems and procedures understood and initiated before any substantive project implementation can realistically occur. Project design documents should formally identify an 'inception' or 'establishment' period during the first year (six to twelve months) of a multi-year project.</p> <p>The inception period should be distinguished from, and separately scheduled, from activity implementation work and associated budget allocations (i.e., inception work and costs should be identified in a separate 'inception' budget). The quantum of actual activity implementation work and associated budget allocations in the first year should be measured and staged realistically against the availability of progressively developing human and other resources, systems, agreements, and donor funding flows that are required for programme management and coordination purposes.</p>

Key Lesson Learned 3	Planning an exit strategy
Context/comment	<p>Projects in developing regions are often inclusive of a high level of capacity support with the intention that skills and resources deployed through the implementation period will assist in sustaining momentum in target countries post-project. The reality of national resourcing and capacity levels is that this objective may only be partially successful and there is a need to carefully consider how a project wind-down and 'hand-over' is managed.</p> <p>The project closure period should be well planned in advance and executed in ways that help stakeholders understand and move through this point, and onward, more independently and within their realistic resource levels. Exploring and sourcing funding continuity opportunities should be considered well in advance of the project termination point particularly for projects that are in the realm of being pilot in nature, as reductions or gaps in workflow and engagement (potentially exacerbated by extended 'wind-up' stages associated with no-cost extension/s), can contribute to dropping stakeholder participation.</p>

Other lessons learned

386. Extending Key Lesson 1, a diagrammatically depicted Theory of Change ideally comprises the following elements:

- Statement/s of the problem/s that exist.
- identify risks/barriers/constraints.
- identify inputs (funds, resources, partners).
- depict broad pathways.

- consider listing activities in lieu of, or in conjunction with outputs, to ensure that the 'doing' level is well constrained and defined.
 - ensure the output elements do not become the major project focus (and thus becoming a project success storyline) when the outcomes should serve as the main result/success/performance indicator.
 - propose realistic outcomes (immediate/short term/intermediate – these are the 'steppingstone' outcomes) that suit the scale and duration of a project (with potential for longer term outcomes to be stated if the project can embed strong sustainability factors).
 - suggest impacts and results desired.
 - have a clear ultimate vision / goal.
387. Extending Key Lesson 1, a Results Framework should observe the following attributes:
- note where baseline 'does not exist' and work to rectify.
 - ensure the phrasing of outcomes is about 'uptake, usage and application by project beneficiaries', even if it is at the preliminary or immediate level.
 - develop indicators that are sharp, relevant and accompanied by metrics that can clearly depict movement/progress from one state to another (and who by), both at regional level and national level (where possible).
388. Sufficient staffing / consultancy / contractor / advisory positions should be budgeted for in recognition of the minimal to non-existent resources PICs have internally to host or contribute to projects (despite co-finance aspirations) and the need to have dedicated in-country personnel as a pre-requisite to achieving project outputs/outcomes. Consideration should be given to recruiting from a wider pool than only national level – regional or international, although national applicants would be favored (yet still merit-based).
389. A high degree and quality of stakeholder engagement, together with competent project leadership and collective teamwork, are key for achieving project goals in a moderately unfavorable environment.
390. The notion of 'data' can be a daunting concept for most people, carrying with it foreboding about having to understand or use intricate technical systems and processes.
391. There is a need to promote the model that attention to SDGs, SOEs, NEMSS and the like requires evenly contributed participation and responsibility across multiple sectors and stakeholders and is not something that is the sole concern or implementation duty of specific 'environment' agencies (although a coordination role can be appropriate).
392. Participation cohorts to workshops, meetings, training and relevant forums can often consist of individuals who have been nominated to attend as the opportunity and funding presented, (but the most appropriate candidate was unavailable), resulting in positive numeric attendance records yet poor results as proxy participants may not be able to make decisions, or carry skills back to the workplace point where they will be most useful.
393. Maintenance costs increase with adoption and uptake of developed tools and should be factored into the sustainability and scaling up of project outputs and outcomes.
394. Key senior contact / focal points in the Pacific region invariably juggle multiple duties across their specific 'day jobs' as well as invariably holding designated roles for a range of national commitments and initiatives and can be stretched to provide timely responses or adequate support and attentiveness to a single project.
395. While the dispersed and remote nature of PICs (and challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic) make usage of virtual communication a necessity and are generally a successful communication method, in person modalities for key meetings, workshops, forums, training and engagement will remain by far the preferred and most effective way for interaction, trust and relationship-building in the region. However, this approach should be weighed thoughtfully against the downsides which include high travel costs, workplace and personal disruptions and aviation contributions to GHG emissions.

396. Conversely to the many challenging sides relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, work focus during Covid was heightened in some respects due to the extended non-travel period placing less demand on individuals to be away from their workplaces.
 397. PICS have an expectation that relevant regional bodies will also become increasingly major suppliers of important data and information to the PEP.
 398. Gender equity and social inclusion needs additional shifts to move it from being a topic on the supplementary edges of project consideration, to being a fundamental component of project design and implementation.
 399. As the PEP becomes increasingly well-populated and sophisticated, there is a risk that projects that would characteristically utilize interactive engagement and consultation activity with PICs (remote or in-country) could wane, as required information can instead be sufficiently acquired from the PEP.
 400. Where large regional organizations are based (e.g., Apia, Samoa, or Suva, Fiji) or in countries where major allied projects are being implemented, there is an inadvertent tendency for project efforts to be more favorable to those national governments due to proximity or convenience, to the potential disadvantage of other PICs.
- Independent project reviews (MTR, MLTR) should be retained as a specifically stored and easily retrievable resource and used as a base reference in future project design and implementation processes.

C. Summary of project findings and ratings

UNEP Evaluation Office Validation of Performance Ratings:

The UNEP Evaluation Office formally quality assesses (see Annex XIII) management led Terminal Review reports and validates the performance ratings therein by ensuring that the performance judgments made are consistent with evidence presented in the Review report and in-line with the performance standards set out for independent evaluations.

The Evaluation Office assesses a Terminal Review report in the same way as it assesses the initial draft of a Terminal Evaluation report. It applies the following assumptions in its validation process:

- That what is being assessed is the contents of the report and the extent to which it makes a consistent and justifiable case for the performance ratings it records.
- That the consultant has, within the report, presented all the evidence that was made available to them.
- That the Review has been based on a robust Theory of Change, reconstructed where necessary, which reflects UNEP's definitions at all levels of results.
- That the project team and key stakeholders have already reviewed a draft version of the report and provided substantive comments and made factual corrections to the Review Consultant, who has responded to them. The Evaluation Office assumes, therefore, that it has received the Final (revised) version of the report.

In this instance the Evaluation Office validates the overall project performance rating at the '**Satisfactory**' level.

Table 9: Summary of project findings and ratings¹¹

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Strategic relevance	Addresses critical gaps.	HS	Rating Validated	HS
Alignment to UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities	Strongly based on country needs and supporting target sectors and beneficiaries.	HS	Rating Validated	HS
Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities	Close alignment with numerous international, regional and national strategies, particularly those focused on improved environmental data and information availability.	HS	Rating Validated	HS
Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities	Builds on and complements allied initiatives.	HS	Rating Validated	HS
Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence		HS	Rating Validated	HS
Quality of project design (also see Annex V for review and ratings for quality of project design)	Highly challenging operating context (actual and potential) not well identified. Environmental data and information situation and problems well documented. Analysis of stakeholders not thorough in terms of completeness of types or categorisation relevant to how they may have positive or negative effects on the project. Key stakeholder consultation and participation well conducted through allied processes.	MS	Rating Validated	MS

¹¹ Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated, also on a six-point scale, from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU).

	<p>Capacities of project partners, including PICs, were well assessed</p> <p>Roles, responsibilities and interaction potential of most external partners/stakeholders not defined.</p> <p>Rudimentary attention to knowledge management and minimal development of communication/visibility approach</p> <p>Strong case made for strategic relevance (UNEP, GEF, regional, national levels) and complementarities with allied interventions clearly stated.</p> <p>Poorly modelled Theory of Change resulting in a somewhat weakened (yet initially functional) results framework and proposed project monitoring approach.</p> <p>Satisfactory depiction of project governance arrangements</p> <p>Budget and resource mobilisation planning well developed with moderate attention to risk issues.</p> <p>Collaborative arrangements and other efficiencies identified.</p> <p>Design focussed on capacity building and provision of tools and resources to foster project durability.</p>			
Nature of external context	<p>Region subject to major contextual challenges and low capacity and resources levels.</p> <p>Covid-19 pandemic, natural disasters and civil unrest instances caused delays pre and post inception.</p>	<p>U</p> <p>Unfavourable</p>	<p>Rating Validated</p>	<p>U</p>
Effectiveness	<p>Output indicator targets per results framework exceeded or completed.</p>	<p>S</p>	<p>The three sub-categories aggregate, using UNEP's weighted</p>	<p>MS</p>

	Outcome indicator targets not clearly prescribed in results framework.		ratings table, to MS (not the S the consultant has awarded).	
Availability of outputs	Observational review of outcomes indicates reasonable immediate achievements but with significant room for improvement over time if the necessary resources and capacities are provided.	HS	Rating Validated	HS
Achievement of project outcomes		MS	Rating Validated	MS
Likelihood of impact	Provision of awareness, technical systems, tools and capacity building elements provided a strong platform for impactful outcomes during project implementation. Sustained impact is conceivable if the necessary resources and capacities continue to be provided toward further developing and deploying these elements.	ML Moderately likely	Rating Validated	ML
Financial management	Financial management standards and processes were diligently applied.	HS	Rating Validated	HS
Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures	Cost estimates were forecast accurately.	HS	Rating Validated	HS
Completeness of Financial Information	Funds utilization rates were relatively consistent with some shifts due to the effects of Covid-19. Co-finance accounting was a somewhat grey area Dedicated financial positions in UNEP and SPREP facilitated clear lines of communication	HS	Under this sub-category, shortcomings with the accounting records and tracking of co-financing are identified. Additionally, the categories assigned in Umoja made it difficult to track expenditures and provide transparency on specific budget lines (para 286 states "This means that individual costs cannot be identified in the reports and specific information (such as the cost of an SoE consultant) needs to be tracked back to detailed accounting records"). Rating adjusted to S	S

Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff		HS	Rating Validated	HS
Efficiency	<p>SPREP is a highly experienced project manager in the Pacific region and understands how to anticipate, and adapt to, and manage emerging issues.</p> <p>Recruitment processes delayed a swift implementation commencement in Year 1, yet ground was quickly made via an effective PMU.</p> <p>Partnerships were formed with allied projects.</p>	HS	Rating Validated	HS
Monitoring and reporting	Rudimentary monitoring and reporting system developed for the ProDoc along with expected costings.	S	Rating is corrected to 'MS' based on a weighted aggregation of the scores given in the sub-categories.	MS
Monitoring design and budgeting	Project implementation monitored via close attention to regular technical reports, PSC meetings and contact with national focal points.	MS	Rating Validated	MS
Monitoring of project implementation		S	Rating Validated	S
Project reporting		HS	<p>The review indicates that although reporting was done regularly, the style of reporting did not support the level of detail needed to monitor progress in achieving outputs, outcomes, targets, and milestones in a systematic manner, and mapped against the project's results framework.</p> <p>"Promotional reporting" was largely used. Narrative reporting methods risk blending promotional content with objective progress assessments.</p> <p>Rating adjusted to MS</p>	MS
Sustainability	Socio-political desire is firm, however wide-ranging competing priorities for time, interest, involvement combined with limited	MS	The overall rating for Sustainability is aggregated at the lowest rating among the three sub-categories as	MU

	resources strongly influence this layer of sustainability.		the three factors are considered to be self-limiting.	
Socio-political sustainability	External funding is a pre-requisite to adequately sustaining momentum post project.	MS	Sustainability is rated on a 'likelihood' rather than 'satisfaction' score, hence MS is the same rating level as ML.	ML
Financial sustainability	SPREP is well structured and internally resourced to continue delivering data and information services to the region, with these services further enhanced where additional funding is successfully sought.	MS	The review does not provide a convincing argument or evidence to support the view that financial sustainability is moderately likely. On the contrary, it states that future funding sources are still largely uncertain (para 306, 309, 310) Rating adjusted to MU	MU
Institutional sustainability		MS	Likewise, the review indicates that ongoing actions to sustain the project outcomes will be challenging due to resourcing limitations (para 309, 310) and an ongoing reliance by PICs on SPREP support to manage their national portals (para 324 -326). Rating adjusted to MU	MU
Factors affecting performance and cross-cutting issues	Implementation was delayed as PMU recruitment processes took time to complete, yet moved swiftly once this was completed. UNEP provided clear guidance on expectations and was ready to support the executing agency as required.	HS	Rating is adjusted based on a weighted aggregation of the scores of the sub-categories. (The EOU notes that Environmental and Social Safeguards was assigned 'not rated')	S
Preparation and readiness		S	Rating Validated	S
Quality of project management and supervision	Project management and supervision at UNEP and SPREP levels was unilaterally considered by partners and stakeholders to	HS	Rating Validated	HS

Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	be of a high standard with agility in response to challenges demonstrated.	S	Rating Validated	S
Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity	Variable participation by stakeholders and some degree of inconsistency in attentiveness to the project, however cooperation sound while actively engaged.	MS	Rating Validated	MS
Country ownership and driven-ness	PSC functioned effectively. Strong cooperation between some allied projects and organisations. Consideration of gender equity, and social inclusivity more generally, became more evident as the project progressed, yet still with room for improvement. PICs viewed the project as highly necessary, yet competing demands on their limited resources, made their commitment energy somewhat inconsistent.	S	The review states that PICs have not yet taken complete ownership for their national portals with reliance on SPREP support continuing (para 326). Further, it states that the built momentum began to deflate after project closure as other competing priorities relentlessly compete for time and resources in PICs. (para 302). Rating adjusted to MS	MS
Communication and public awareness	There was no overt communication plan initially with a modest plan developed during the second half of the project. Engagement effort was strong, facilitating improved stakeholder awareness and numerous useful tools and resources developed.	S	Rating Validated	S
Overall Project Performance Rating	The EOU notes that erroneous calculations in the performance ratings have been corrected to reflect its weighted approach and giving an overall project performance of Satisfactory.	Highly satisfactory	The EOU notes that an error in the calculations of the performance ratings was made. This has been corrected to reflect its weighted approach. The Evaluation Office rates the overall project performance at the level of 'Satisfactory'	Satisfactory

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

401. Eight key recommendations have emerged from the MLTR in general and specifically the conclusions and lessons learned.

Table 10. Recommendations

Recommendation 1	Produce and disseminate an Inform 'update'
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation	<p>The Inform project concluded in July 2023 and some Inform- type work and engagement has continued under SPREP auspices, based on general internal capacity, other funding streams and specific stakeholder requests. Although target countries have indicated support for future funding to continue Inform work, there is variability in stakeholder information levels and understanding on how project initiated efforts will continue to be driven.</p> <p>It is recommended that SPREP prepare an update for stakeholders advising on its strategic and operational status and future intentions on 'information for decision making' platforms and services. Conceivably, this would include: an outline to stakeholders on where the project (and post-project phase) has arrived (concise reflection on outputs delivered and outcomes achieved); what services will continue to be sustained; any fresh technical developments of note and provide a strategic snapshot of where SPREP is intending to steer data and information service initiatives over the next 5 to 10 years.</p> <p>This update could also include suitably phrased notification in regard to funding opportunities (aligned to funding confidence); practical examples of important products arising from the collection of data; stories on provoking and interesting information; and even 'simulations of potential' wider use-cases and value arising from the Inform project.</p>
Priority level	Important
Type of recommendation	Project level
Responsibility	UNEP (to liaise with SPREP)
Proposed implementation timeframe	Before December 30 2024
Recommendation 2	Develop good practice resources for the development of ToCs and results frameworks
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation	<p>The development of Theories of Change and Results Frameworks are a specific skill, particularly for large and complex projects. As such, they can present a challenging task for those who do not have to prepare them, or provide input to their preparation, on a regular basis. It is essential that the content and language expressed in these products is well resolved and articulates the clearest possible project direction and intentions. Project proponents and executing agencies can benefit, as a minimum, from being able to view and consider good practice examples of these products to, as an optimum, receiving additional specialist support for their design.</p>

	It is recommended that UNEP collate, as an additional component of its current extensive project development guidelines, a widely thematic set of good practice examples of ToCs and results frameworks and develop accompanying guideline resources to inform both UNEP internally and other partner agencies involved in project design in their application, including for project monitoring and evaluation. Where necessary, ToCs and results frameworks developed by UNEP or partner agencies should be reviewed and advised by specialists in this field.
Priority level	Important
Type of recommendation	Project level
Responsibility	UNEP
Proposed implementation timeframe	Immediate and then with ongoing growth and refinement of these resources

Recommendation 3	Refinement of an 'Inform II' concept note
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation	<p>A concept note has been prepared outlining a future iteration of 'Inform'. This has identified key focus areas such as the need for national environmental standards, monitoring and data collection standards, data management using the PEP, GIS mobilization and environmental data advocacy – all of which are elements that were beyond the full reach of the Inform project 2017 – 2023.</p> <p>With the benefit of reflection time by UNEP and SPREP and the provision of a terminal report, there will be additional issues, key tasks and approaches to further consider in tailoring the initial concept note and in developing a more detailed project proposal, should potential funding processes reach that point.</p> <p>It is recommended that the initial Inform II concept note be subjected to further discussion and revision processes by UNEP and SPREP based on matters arising from organisational reflection and information provided by the MLTR.</p> <p>Revisions to the concept note should also include references to: the support indicated by PICs; potential support to the Montreal-Kunming Global Biodiversity Framework, notably Target 21; potential support to outcomes of the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, notably section G on data collection, analysis and use, and; options for support on resource mobilizations from UNEP notably from the perspectives of Science-Policy and Digital transformation.</p> <p>Recommendations 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of this MLTR should also be articulated, as appropriate, in the concept note and in developing a more detailed project proposal, should potential funding processes reach that point.</p>
Priority level	Important
Type of recommendation	Project level
Responsibility	UNEP (to liaise with SPREP)

Proposed implementation timeframe	Immediate and then continuing with ongoing dialogue involving UNEP and SPREP and joint project design processes.
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Recommendation 4	Enhance functionality of the PEP
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation	<p>The current PEP is a good on-line catalogued data repository with a tidy dashboard (a library) that has potential to be greatly strengthened toward having enhanced querying capacity where specific information can be retrieved and visualized.</p> <p>It is recommended that additional functions, automations, and analysis tools including consideration of Artificial Intelligence (i.e., retrieval augmented generation tools), are developed and incorporated into the PEP, along with accompanying usage guidelines.</p>
Priority level	Important
Type of recommendation	Project level
Responsibility	UNEP (to liaise with SPREP)
Proposed implementation timeframe	In conjunction with future funding enabling this recommendation to occur.

Recommendation 5	Collecting data and information to strengthen the PEP
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation	<p>To ensure the PEP continues to evolve into an authoritative platform for planning and decision-making, it needs to be continuously populated and strengthened with up-to-date data and information.</p> <p>It is recommended that routine monitoring and data collection according to environmental standards and key environmental indicators occur as pilot efforts within a single or a cluster of PICs. Data collection should involve systematic gathering of quantitative and/or qualitative data with appropriate tools (the KoBoToolbox introduced through the Inform project could be revisited) and portal uploading linkages.</p>
Priority level	Important
Type of recommendation	Project level
Responsibility	UNEP (to liaise with SPREP)
Proposed implementation timeframe	Planning to occur during 2024 and pursued through SPREPs current programme and project pool, where opportunities arise, or where future funding opportunities arise.

Recommendation 6	Conduct targeted outreach to improve the extent of regional and national data and information provision
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation	While opportunistic activity is now a pragmatic route within SPREPs resources in the post-Inform project period (meaning connections and work with specific projects/sectors such as climate information, waste, protected areas, invasive species), consideration needs to be given to how and where other critical stakeholders and partners who collect and manage environmental data (and there are many), can be prioritized,

	<p>engaged and encouraged to know about the data sharing network and become positive contributors to a community of (data) practice (CROP agencies in particular due to their cooperation remit). Further, data and information gatekeeping points and blockage zones remain a critical issue to resolve suitably (where realistically possible) if the PEP is to achieve its intended purpose and value.</p> <p>It is recommended that a targeted outreach program be planned and conducted whereby critical areas of data and information not currently accessible for the PEP are progressively mobilised.</p>
Priority level	Important
Type of recommendation	Project level
Responsibility	UNEP (to liaise with SPREP)
Proposed implementation timeframe	Planning stages to occur in 2024 with subsequent action taken in conjunction with future funding enabling this recommendation to occur.

Recommendation 7	Continue to strengthen gender dimensions within UNEP interventions
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation	<p>Although the importance of gender equity and social inclusion considerations were becoming increasingly clearly specified (per numerous policy frameworks) during the periods of Inform project design, inception and implementation, there remained gaps and weaknesses in addressing these matters in practice within the ToC and results framework and subsequently in project operations, monitoring and reporting.</p> <p>It is recommended that in designing and implementing future projects, responsiveness to gender equity, and social inclusivity more broadly, be expanded well beyond the rudimentary tracking of participation statistics and to more forthrightly identify the roles of all genders and social groups to support their potential as drivers of sustainable development. Future projects should align with contemporary perceptions and definitions of gender and social inclusiveness expressed in UN and other relevant policy frameworks.</p>
Priority level	Opportunity for improvement
Type of recommendation	Project level
Responsibility	UNEP
Proposed implementation timeframe	In conjunction with future planning for project or programme partnerships

Recommendation 8	Make records of project experiences readily available
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation	The Inform project is recognized by UNEP and SPREP as a 'successful' project (further confirmed by the overall project performance rating of this MLTR), and one that can offer key lessons and approaches for other projects and to assist in avoiding missteps and weaknesses.

	It is recommended that all important Inform project experiences (i.e., via MTR and MLTR reporting, organizational reflection sessions, project reports, and whether concerning technical, administrative, engagement or communication aspects), are distilled, recorded, conserved securely, and collated in an organized, retrievable format (i.e., UNEP portal)
Priority level	Opportunity for improvement
Type of recommendation	Project level
Responsibility	UNEP
Proposed implementation timeframe	2024

Annex I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS**Table 11. Response to stakeholder comments received**

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Reviewer Response
14	Suggestion to expand further on the SPREP Moodle platform and its role in raising SPREP's profile in the field of GIS.	Suggestion incorporated.
13	Suggestion to include contribution to the establishment of the Pacific Network of Environmental Assessment (PNEA) for EIA Practitioners in the Pacific Region.	Suggestion incorporated.

Annex II. REVIEW FRAMEWORK/MATRIX

No	Review Criteria	Sub Questions	Indicator/Means of verification	Data Sources
A. Strategic relevance				
i	Alignment to the UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities	To what extent has the project maintained consistency with, and contributed to, UNEP's MTS, PoW, strategic priorities during both design and implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with UNEP MTS's (2014-2017, 2018-2021, 2022-2025) (2018-2021), MTS (2022 to 2025) and accompanying PoW • Alignment with Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building (BSP) • Support toward the Pacific Regional UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2013-2017. • Alignment with relevant resolutions of the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ProDoc, including project design revision documents • PDQ Assessment (Annex IV of this report) • Interviews with senior UNEP personnel who were directly involved in the project
ii	Alignment to Donor/Partner Strategic Priorities	Does the project correspond to donor and partner priorities in design and implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of alignment with the GEF 5 Cross Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) Strategy, and its focal areas and objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ProDoc, including project design revision documents • PDQ Assessment (Annex IV of this report) • Relevant strategic documents associated with the donor and any key allied partners
iii	Relevance to Regional, Sub-Regional and National Environmental Priorities	How relevant was the project to Regional, Sub-Regional and National Environmental Priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with relevant SDGs and specific SDG targets • Contribution to Samoa Pathway 2014 and Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development • Relevance to SPREP strategic plans priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ProDoc, including project design revision documents • PDQ Assessment (Annex IV of this report) • Relevant strategic plans • Interviews with senior UNEP and SPREP personnel (including PM) who were directly involved in the project

iv	Complementarity with existing interventions	Did the project link well with, support, and complement existing interventions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of complementary interventions in project document • Evidence of connections or leveraging made with relevant interventions during implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ProDoc, including project design revision documents • PDQ Assessment (Annex IV of this report) • Interviews with senior UNEP and SPREP personnel (including PM) who were directly involved in the project, SPREP personnel from allied initiatives, and national government personnel who were directly involved in the project,
B. Quality of project design				
i	Relevance and logic of project Objectives, Activities, Outputs and Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the context, problems, needs and priorities well analysed during project formulation and comprehensively detailed in the PIF and ProDoc? • Did the project ToC and intervention logic ('results framework') prove to be appropriate and realistic – at inception, and then again at the mid-term point? • Did the project actively respond to findings and recommendations of the Mid-term Review? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity and detail afforded to operating context, potential risks, and problem and situation analysis • Extent and quality of stakeholder analysis and consultation and respect for human rights • Degree of strategic relevance and complementarity (see review criteria A above) • Clarity in framing intended results and causality and in modifying these if necessary • Clear articulation of outputs and outcomes in intervention logic, including setting and monitoring targets, supported by workplans • Establishment of project governance, supervision and partnership arrangements • Processes for communication, outreach and learning and sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDQ Assessment (Annex IV of this report)
C. Nature of external context				

i	Aspects related to external operating context (considering the prevalence of conflict, natural disasters, and political upheaval).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well was the project's external operating context assessed at project design, particularly in relation to national resourcing challenges, natural disaster, conflict, political change and health epidemics and pandemics? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree to which consideration was directed to the impacts that significant external influences (actual and potential) could have on the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ProDoc, including project design revision documents • PDQ Assessment (Annex IV of this report) • Interviews with senior UNEP and SPREP personnel (including PM) and national government personnel who were directly involved in the project • PIR documents • PSC minutes
D. Effectiveness				
i	<p>Availability of outputs</p> <p>Assessment in terms of quantity and quality, usefulness and timeliness of delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent did the planned outputs (including related assumptions and drivers) occur? • To what extent did the project deliver its planned outputs? • Are the outputs useful, of good quality, and available in the quantity anticipated? • To what degree were these made available to the intended beneficiaries? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned outputs compared to actual outputs per indicator verification • Outputs described in PIRs, regular progress reports and PSC minutes • Stakeholder and beneficiary responses to outputs • Accessibility of outputs and examples of effective uptake/use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final ToC and Results framework • PIR documents • Tools and resources created by the project • Interviews with senior UNEP and SPREP personnel (including PM), all project team members, and national government personnel who were directly involved in the project
ii	<p>Achievement of direct outcomes</p> <p>Assessment of performance against the direct outcomes as defined in the ToC,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent did the project deliver its planned outcomes? • What factors most influences achievement of outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of clearly defined outcome statements • Planned outcomes compared to actual outcomes per indicator verification • Stakeholder and beneficiary responses concerning outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final ToC and Results framework • PIR documents • Tools and resources created by the project

	and verify the contribution of the intervention and the outcomes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with senior UNEP and SPREP personnel (including PM), all project team members, and national government personnel who were directly involved in the project
iii	<p>Likelihood of impact</p> <p>Assessment of likelihood of achieving the planned (long term) impact and project objectives and their linkages to the project interventions and the contributions to high-level changes represented by inter-alia, the UNEP's expected accomplishments, SDGs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the ToC match the impact envisioned? How likely is it that the projects information tools and capacity improvements will demonstrably support environmental planning, forecasting, and reporting requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of achievement of project outcomes (cumulatively) Stakeholder and beneficiary responses concerning observed or experienced impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final ToC and Results framework PIR documents Tools and resources created by the project Interviews with senior SPREP personnel (including PM), all project team members, and national government personnel who were directly involved in the project
E. Financial management				
i	Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did financial management and reporting adhere to required policies and procedures (UNEP and/or SPREP), including procurement? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record of instances of non-compliance or need for revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PCA UNEP/SPREP Interviews with all SPREP project team members, SPREP financial personnel and UNEP financial personnel
ii	Completeness of financial information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did expenditure flow occur as forecast/planned, including co-financing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of alignment between planned budget amounts and timing and actual expenditure and timing Format, timeliness and accuracy of financial recording, reporting and submissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project budget documentation Project financial and expenditure reports PIR reports

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was financial reporting undertaken in a complete and timely manner? 		
iii	Communication between financial and project management staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did communication occur effectively between finance and project management staff? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PM and FMO's level of knowledge of the project's financial policies, systems and status Degree of two-way response to financial responsiveness to financial requests and to address/resolve financial issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with senior UNEP and SPREP personnel (including PM), all SPREP project team members, SPREP financial personnel and UNEP financial personnel
F. Efficiency				
i	Cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did project activity occur according to well organised priorities and in a good roll-out sequence? Were there instances of wasted resources? Were project extensions well justified and if so, were there any downsides to such extensions? Was the project fully implemented within the allocated budget? Were complementarities sought and duplication avoided? Did the expected in-kind project commitments prove to be accurate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of workplans and project organisation systems and processes Planned vs actual activities/resources and related costs Activity described in PIRs, regular progress reports and PSC minutes Financial records indicating project resource wastage or beneficial additions (in-kind contribution records, co-funding leveraged, cross-utilisation with cooperative partners) Evidence of synergies with related initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ProDoc, including project design revision documents PIR reports Project financial and expenditure reports Project supervision plan Project communication concerning initiatives, partnerships, events Interviews with all SPREP project team members, personnel from allied partner bodies and national government personnel who were directly involved in the project
G. Monitoring and reporting				

i	Monitoring design and budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the results framework sufficient to enable results-oriented monitoring? • Does the Project have a sound plan to monitor results & track progress towards achieving project activities and are M&E responsibilities clearly defined? • Are the data sources and data collection instruments appropriate and was the timeframe and frequency for M&E activities specified, and adequate? • Was sufficient budget allocated and used for mid-term and final reviews? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of SMART indicators • Use of outcome-oriented indicators and clear indicator targets and milestones • Budget allocation for mid-term and final reviews • Execution of mid-term review • Reliability and accuracy of baseline and monitoring data • Frequency & comprehensiveness of data gathering and analysis • Gender-disaggregation of data • Identification of risks and related mitigation measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ProDoc, including project design revision documents • PDQ Assessment (Annex IV of this report) • Logical framework • Interview with SPREP PM (successive personnel performed this role) and select national government personnel who were directly involved in the project
ii	Monitoring of project implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has project monitoring been sufficiently used as a management tool? • Were risks being regularly monitored and reported on and were adjustments made in response as required and showing adaptive management? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tangible examples of monitoring data leading to changes/adjustments in project approach and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIR reports
iii	Project reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was project reporting timely and of required quality? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeliness of report submissions • Realism and accuracy of information in project reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIR reports • Financial and expenditure reports • Interviews with senior UNEP and SPREP personnel

				(including PM), SPREP financial personnel and UNEP financial personnel
H. Sustainability				
i	Socio-political sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific elements are now contributing to the sustainability of project outputs and outcomes? • Did the Project have a clear exit strategy in place? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective engagement of individuals in key positions or with influence • Evidence of a clearly considered exit strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSC minutes • Interviews with SPREP PM (successive personnel performed this role), SPREP personnel from allied initiatives and national government personnel who were directly involved in the project
ii	Financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent is the continuation of project impact dependent on availability of relevant national policies, financial resources, local expertise, and capacity to adapt to changing (or additional) MEA requirements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key stakeholder and beneficiary responses concerning required support resources • Evidence of links to allied initiatives that could maintain elements of the projects' impetus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with SPREP PM (successive personnel performed this role), SPREP personnel from allied initiatives and national government personnel who were directly involved in the project
iii	Institutional sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the capacities and resources built through, and within, the project robust enough to continue delivering benefits beyond the lifetime of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key stakeholder and beneficiary responses concerning the status and sufficiency of relevant institutions and support resources realistically required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with national government personnel who were directly involved in the project
I. Factors and Processes Affecting Project Performance				
i	Preparation and Readiness (part of Project Design Quality Review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were appropriate measures undertaken to address weaknesses, changing circumstances or new information during the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance and comprehensiveness of outputs and outcomes • Adequate identification of stakeholders and assessment of their capacities, roles, and means of engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ProDoc, including project design revision documents • PDQ Assessment (Annex IV of this report)

		stages of project design, project approval, securing of funds, and project mobilization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely mobilisation of resources within SPREP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with senior UNEP and SPREP personnel (including PM)
ii	Quality of Project Management and Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the project management structure conducive for effective delivery on project milestones, outputs, and outcomes • Were project supervision plans in place, and adequate? • Did the project adapt to changing circumstances? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of coordination, staffing, resources, funding provision, technical skills, engagement and communication channels • An effectively functioning PSC contributing purposefully to project outcomes • Evidence of risk management, problem solving and adaptive management • Effective relationship between UNEP and SPREP • Evidence of project management plans and processes • Progressive application of lessons learned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIR reports • PSC minutes • Project supervision plan • Interviews with senior UNEP and SPREP personnel and all project team members and with national government personnel who were directly involved in the project
iii	Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the project collaborate with other CROP agencies and if so, to what extent were these linkages beneficial? • To what extent did relevant national government bodies participate in/contribute to the project? • Were there coordination mechanisms available to support synergised channels across stakeholders? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of involvement, support and uptake by stakeholders • Examples of the roles and inputs that relevant national government bodies had in the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIR reports • PSC minutes • Project communication resources • Interviews with senior SPREP personnel and all project team members, with personnel from allied CROP agencies and with national government personnel who were directly involved in the project
iv	Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the project adhere to UNEP's policies and strategies for human rights and gender equity? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of how the project supported women, youth, people with disability, and other marginalised groups to contribute to, participate in and benefit from the project (beyond disaggregated reporting of differentiated groups)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ProDoc, including project design revision documents • PDQ Assessment (Annex IV of this report)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was gender equity considered and pursued in earnest and how was it recorded? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PIR reports Interviews with SPREP project team members, and with national government personnel who were directly involved in the project
v	Responsiveness in Social and Environmental Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project adhere to UNEP guidelines for risk management? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental and social screening at project approval stage Response to and reporting on safeguard issues through risk avoidance, minimization, mitigation and described in PIRs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ProDoc, including project design revision documents PDQ Assessment (Annex IV of this report) PIR reports
vi	Country ownership and driven-ness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there support for the project at national leadership (political and organisational) levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of leadership support at national level shows strong ownership, commitment and cooperation in project implementation Envisaged in-kind contributions from partners occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PIR reports PSC minutes Interviews with SPREP project team members, and with national government personnel who were directly involved in the project
vii	Communication and public awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there a structured approach to project communication and public awareness? Were methods used effective in heightening the projects impact? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of a project communication plan List of public awareness activities Number of hits and downloads from project website Anecdotal evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PIR reports Project communication resources and statistics Interviews with SPREP project team members, and with national government personnel who were directly involved in the project

Annex III. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Table 12: People consulted during the Review

People consulted during the review					M	F	Contact type	
1	GEF Agency	UNEP Climate Services and Capacity Building Unit in the Early Warnings and Assessment Division, Nairobi, Kenya	Jochem Zoetelief	Head	M		Virtual	
2			Ayda Villalobos-Castro	Project Management Associate		F	Virtual	
3			UNEP Nairobi, Kenya	Florence Kahiro	Fund Management Officer		F	Virtual
4	Executing Agency	# SPREP personnel that had specific roles on the Inform Project)	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program SPREP	Sefanaia Nawadra	Director General (and formerly Director, Environmental Monitoring and Governance)	M		Virtual
5			Easter Chu Shing	Deputy Director General (and formerly Director, Environmental Monitoring and Governance)		F	In-person	
6			Jope Davetanivalu	Director, Environmental Monitoring and Governance	M		Virtual	
7			Vainuupo Jungblut	Environmental Monitoring & Reporting Adviser	M		Virtual and in-person	
8			Tavita Su'a	Pacific Environment Portal Systems Developer and Analyst (and formerly Acting Inform Project Manager for final year)	M		Virtual and in-person	
9			Lagi Reupena	Inform Project Environmental Data Officer		F	In-person	
10			Sela Soakai-Simamao	(former Finance Officer, Inform)		F	In-person	
11			Christian Slaven	Information Technology Manager	M		In-person	
12			Ainsof So'o	Systems Developer and Analyst	M		In-person	
13			# SPREP personnel that had allied links with the Inform Project)	Miraneta Williams-Hazelman	Knowledge Manager		F	In-person
14	Karen Baird	Threatened and Migratory Species Adviser			F	In-person		

15			Bradley Nolan	Programme Manager, PacWaste Plus	M		In-person
16		People that had specific roles on the Inform Project but are no longer employed by SPREP	Paul Anderson	(former) Inform Project Manager at SPREP	M		Virtual
17	Inform national focal point/s	Vanuatu	Trinison Tari	Principal Officer (Provincial Outreach, Information and Communication), Department of Environment Protection and Conservation	M		Virtual
18			Rontexstar Mogeror	Senior Officer (Provincial Outreach, Coordination and Communication), Department of Environment Protection and Conservation	M		Virtual
19		Samoa	Moira Faletutulu	Assistant CEO · Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment		F	In-person
20			Sailele Aimaasu	Principal Sector Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment		F	In-person
21		Niue	Haden Talagi	Director, Environment Agency	M		Virtual
22		Tuvalu	Moe Saitala Paulo	Director, Department of Environment, Ministry of Home Affairs, Climate Change & Environment		F	Virtual
23			Reuben Kausea	Information and Knowledge Management Officer, Department of Environment	M		Virtual
24		Nauru	Bryan Star	Director Environment, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment	M		Virtual
25		Cook Islands	Halatoa Fua	Director, National Environment Service	M		Virtual
26			Elizabeth Munro	Manager, Environmental Stewardship, National Environment Service		F	Virtual
27	Consultant	Data Analysis / Web Design	Tony Miller	Director, Eighty Options	M		Virtual
28		State of the Environment Reporting	Posa Skelton	Environmental Consultant	M		Virtual
Total					17	11	

Annex IV. KEY DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Table 13: Documents consulted and reviewed

Themes	Y/N
<i>Project Management</i>	
Project design documents that have been agreed with all donors (e.g. UNEP ProDoc, Full GEF Approved CEO Endorsement Request package, Individual Donor Agreements, and all appendices)	Y
Documents that approve any formal revisions to the project during implementation e.g. changes to results frameworks or the project duration	Y
Project progress reports, including regular reports to donors (both narrative and financial components)	Y
For projects funded by the GEF, Project Identification Form (PIF), annual Project Implementation Review reports (PIRs) and the GEF Tracking Tool for relevant Focal Areas	Y
All review/evaluation reports, including Mid-Term Reviews/Evaluations and/or external evaluations	Y
Recommendation Implementation Plans from any mid-point assessments	Y
<i>Financial Management</i>	
FMO Confirmation of Expenditure to date	N
A valid coding block to charge review/evaluation costs	N
High level project budget for secured and unsecured funds (by funding sources, including co-finance)	Y
Any revisions to budgets, including for no-cost extensions	Y
<i>Project Management</i>	
Key agreements and amendments relating to the project (funding: Small Scale Fund Agreements, Partner Cooperation Agreements, UN-to-UN Agreements, partner MOUs,)	Y
Minutes from Project Review Committee meetings (e.g. UNEP PRC, Scientific Technical Advisory Panel (STAP))	Y
<i>Financial Management</i>	
Detailed project budget (i.e. by result) for secured funds and co-finance, where applicable.	Y
Project expenditure sheets annual and/or by component for full project period.	Y
<i>Project Management</i>	
Full list of partners and other stakeholders, with up-to-date contact details	Y

Project preparation documents (e.g. minutes from design workshops, partner capacity assessments, etc.)	N
Documents from inception meetings (including agendas, participants lists, PowerPoint presentations, minutes etc.)	Y
Steering Committee meeting documents, including agendas, meeting minutes and any summary reports (as well as any other management memos, minutes or correspondence relevant to the effective delivery of the project)	Y
All project/country workplans, including revised versions	N
Project monitoring plan, with associated budget	Y
Supervision/monitoring mission reports	Y
Project deliverables, such as: technical project reports; country assessment/sector studies; training agendas and participant lists; project communications materials; links to relevant knowledge sharing platforms	Y
Operational Completion Report (i.e. Final/Project Report) - draft version if not yet finalized	Y
<i>Financial Management</i>	
All financial reports (i.e. UNEP financial reports submitted internally or to donors and/or financial reports received from partners)	Y
Cash advance requests documenting disbursements: disbursement (Funds Transfer) documents (cash statement) from a) funding source(s) to UNEP and b) UNEP to Partners	Y
Email exchanges that demonstrate joint (Project/Task Manager and Fund Management Officer) decision making (these are more likely where there have been complex issues)	N
Verification of delivery of co-finance (cash and in-kind) contributions, where applicable.	N
Verification of delivery of any in-kind contributions, where applicable.	N
Audit reports ¹² and Management Responses to audits, where applicable	Y

¹² For GEF funded projects audits are required for externally executed project in excess of USD 200,000.

Annex V. REVIEW ITINERARY

Table 14: Mission itinerary

Date	Name	Position and Organization	Location
21 May 2024	Sefanaia Nawadra	Director General (and formerly Director, Environmental Monitoring and Governance)	SPREP campus, Vailima, Apia, Samoa
	Jope Davetanivalu	Director, Environmental Monitoring and Governance	
	Vainuupo Jungblut	Environmental Monitoring & Reporting Adviser	
	Tavita Su'a	Pacific Environment Portal Systems Developer and Analyst (and formerly Acting Inform Project Manager for final year)	
	Lagi Reupena	Inform Project Environmental Data Officer	
	Karen Baird	Threatened and Migratory Species Adviser	
	Bradley Nolan	Programme Manager, PacWaste Plus	
22 May 2024	Easter Chu Shing	Deputy Director General (and formerly Director, Environmental Monitoring and Governance)	
	Tavita Su'a	Pacific Environment Portal Systems Developer and Analyst (and formerly Acting Inform Project Manager for final year)	
	Christian Slaven	Information Technology Manager	
	Ainsof So'o	Systems Developer and Analyst	
	Miraneta Williams-Hazelman	Knowledge Manager	
	Sela Soakai-Simamao	(former Finance Officer, Inform)	
	Moira Faletutulu	Assistant CEO · Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment	Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment, Apia, Samoa
	Sailele Aimaasu	Principal Sector Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	
23 May 2024	Tavita Su'a	Pacific Environment Portal Systems Developer and Analyst (and formerly Acting Inform Project Manager for final year)	SPREP campus, Vailima, Apia, Samoa
	Vainuupo Jungblut	Environmental Monitoring & Reporting Adviser	

Annex VI. PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

Table 15. Project Funding Sources Table

Funding Source		Planned funding (USD)	% of planned funding	Secured funding (Expenditure) (USD)	% of secured funding
Cash					
Funds from the Environment Fund		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Funds from the Regular Budget		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Extra-budgetary funding (listed per donor)		4,319,635	100%	4,319,635	100%
Sub-total: cash contributions					
In-kind					
Environment Fund staff-post costs		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Regular Budget staff-post costs		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Extra-budgetary funding for staff-posts (listed per donor)		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sub-total: In-kind contributions					
Co-financing*					
Co-financing cash contribution		225,000	100%	225,000	100%
Co-financing in-kind contribution		5,851,276	100%	5,851,276	100%
Sub-total: Co-financing contributions		6,076,276	100%	6,076,276	100%

*Funding from a donor to a partner which is not received into UNEP accounts but is used by a UNEP partner or collaborating center to deliver the results in a UNEP – approved project.

Table 16. Expenditure by Outcome/Output

Component/sub-component/output All figures as USD	Estimated cost at design	Actual cost/Expenditure
Component 1: Design national and regional databases and network to facilitate monitoring the state of the Pacific's environment	USD 1,140,507	USD 1,140,489
Component 2: Environmental data efficiently and effectively used for environmental planning and reporting at all levels by strengthening national and regional legal, policy and planning frameworks	USD 1,427,277	USD 1,426,493
Component 3: Capacity development to support the technical facility	USD 1,671,852	USD 1,672,161
Component 4: Project management and evaluation	USD 80,000	USD 77,232.11

Annex VII. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Table 17: Financial Management Table

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures:		HS	Systems, processes, and relationships between the project's financial and project management levels (within UNEP, within SPREP and between UNEP and SPREP) were established early in the mobilization period and supported adherence with UNEP's financial policies and procedures and in meeting donor requirements.
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence ¹³ to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	Interviews with relevant project management and financial personnel (at UNEP and SPREP) indicated a high degree of satisfaction with adherence to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules
2. Completeness of project financial information¹⁴:		HS	Financial reporting met standards for completeness and was provided in a timely manner.
Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below)			
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Letters of co-finance support were provided by relevant national government bodies indicating the amount of co-finance they would contribute to the project. Proposed project costs were identified by budget lines during design. Project cost and total budget including co-finance and grants were identified in ProDoc and PIRs. Additional -in-kind support to the project that occurred via negotiation during project implementation was identified via PIRs.
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	Revisions to the budget could be identified from information provided via regular financial status reports and from information provided by various personnel during interviews.
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	Original and revised/amended PCAs between SPREP and UNEP were provided.
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	Examples of funds transfers/cash advance statements were provided.
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes	Report statements of planned and actual co-finance (cash and in-kind) by UNEP budget lines were provided – USD 5,750,766 (in-kind), 225,500 (grant). 5,976,266 (total)
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Yes	[Periodic financial reports identifying expenditure by UNEP budget lines were provided. The Final PIR covering the fiscal year 2023 period identified the cumulative project expenditure of USD 4,239,438 at 30 June 2023 – USD 4,239,438 expended

¹³ If the review raises concerns over adherence with policies or standard procedures, a recommendation maybe given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.

¹⁴ See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference

G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (<i>where applicable</i>)	N/A	# A midterm review report was delivered in October 2019.
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	N/A	
3. Communication between finance and project management staff		HS	Dedicated finance positions for this project greatly assisted in strong and direct communication flow. UNEP provided early guidance to SPREP on financial expectations and this established clarity from the project outset.
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.		HS	Project Manager and Task Manager closely and regularly monitored project financial status and expenditure.
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.		HS	The UNEP FMO maintained a strong understanding of the projects financial position via quarterly statements provided by SPREP
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.		HS	Positive communication flow facilitated regular attention and exchange to raise and resolve issues as they arose.
Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.		HS	Positive communication flow facilitated regular attention and exchange to raise and resolve issues as they arose.
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the review process		HS	All financial relevant information was provided to the review process via documents or interviews.
Overall rating		HS	

Annex VIII. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TOOLS

Non-exhaustive list of communication and outreach tools used for disseminating results

Toolkits/Paper/Report/News

- [Inform Project Official Press Releases](#)
- International Institute for Sustainable Development: SDG Knowledge Hub - In collaboration with the Government of Sweden, stories that feature developments of the Inform project nationally and regionally were developed and published on the Sustainable Knowledge Hub
 - [Tuvalu](#)
 - [Papua](#)
 - [Vanuatu](#)
 - [Federated States of Micronesia](#)
 - [Papua New Guinea](#)
 - [Solomon Islands](#)
 - [Tonga](#)
 - [Palau](#)
 - [Kiribati](#)
 - [Region](#)
 - [Region](#)
 - [Tuvalu](#)
 - [Region](#)
 - [Region](#)
 - [Region](#)
- [State of Environment and Conservation in the Pacific Islands 2020](#)
- Federated States of Micronesia State of Environment Report 2018 - [National document – state of environment in FSM](#) + [its interactive webpage](#)
- [Niue State of Environment Report 2019](#)
- Solomon Islands State of Environment Report 2019 - [National document – state of environment in Solomons](#) + [its interactive webpage](#)
- Tonga State of Environment Report 2019 - [National document – state of environment in Tonga](#) + [its interactive webpage](#)
- [RMI State of Environment Report 2021](#)
- Tuvalu State of Environment Report 2022 - [National document – state of environment in Tuvalu](#) + [interactive webpage](#)
- [Papua New Guinea State of Environment Report 2020](#)
- [Cook Islands State of Environment Report 2018](#)
- [Niue State of Environment Report 2019](#)

- Vanuatu State of Environment Report - [to be published soon](#)
- Nauru State of Environment Report - [to be published soon](#)
- Environmental Indicator Guidebook - [A guide to regional core environmental indicators](#)
- Inform Tiles - Country Perspectives - [Email updates to country stakeholders](#)

Video/Social Media Toolkit

[Awareness and capacity building videos produced by the project](#)

Annex IX. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

Tony O'Keefe

Profession	Consultant
Nationality	Australian
Education	1997 Certificate IV Workplace Trainer and Assessor, Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE 1995 Graduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture, Queensland University of Technology 1984 Associate Diploma Rural Techniques – Wilderness Reserves and Wildlife, Queensland Agricultural College

Mr. Tony O'Keefe has over 35 years of experience in environmental management, nature conservation, and sustainability practices, with a broad range of expertise developed through involvement in diverse projects, clients, and interest groups both within Australia and internationally. Throughout his career, he has excelled as a senior adviser, project manager, and specialist consultant, as well as in leadership and principal contributor roles within multi-disciplinary teams.

His areas of expertise include protected areas, biodiversity, island ecosystems, Indigenous land and sea management, resource conservation, urban-regional planning, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

With extensive cross-cutting skills, Mr. O'Keefe is able to effectively manage projects at strategic, technical, and operational levels. His rational, intuitive, and personable approach consistently delivers proven results. A skilled communicator and process facilitator, his consultative, adaptive, and people-oriented style fosters collaboration and partnering. He is known for supporting others in developing their strengths and capacities, furthering the success of the teams he works with.

Key skills:

- Environmental planning and management
- Project monitoring, evaluation, learning and review
- Writing plans, reports, policy, and funding submissions
- Team leadership, mentoring, capacity building and training
- Coordinating needs analyses, surveys, research, and studies
- Project design, administration, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring
- Working autonomously with dispersed teams in complex circumstances
- Advocacy, organisational liaison, representation, partner relationships
- Designing and conducting engagement, consultation, and facilitation
- Operating in cross-cultural and multi-stakeholder settings
- Promoting and communicating environmental messages

Sample of projects completed:

- As an independent consultant, I undertake specific project briefs in support of the environmental programs of organisations in Australia, the Pacific and internationally.
- Review of Knowledge and Learning resources, DFAT Climate Resilient Communities Program
- Expert reviewer for the Climate Change and Disaster Risk Strategy, PNGAUS Partnership Economic Social Infrastructure Program

- Terminal review consultant to the GEF funded Inform project UNEP, SPREP
- Mid-term evaluation consultant for the Climate Information Services Pacific 5 GCF programme (UNEP)
- Practitioner mentoring programme for the Pacific World Heritage Action Plan 2021-2025 (UNESCO)
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning technical support to develop Theory of Change (ToC), log frame and associated indicators for the Ocean Country Partnership Program in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (Defra, UK)
- Specialist Communications Advisor for the Adaptation Fund (climate change) project for water security, health, and coastal infrastructure in the Federated States of Micronesia FSM (Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management)
- Monitoring and evaluation specialist for the Pacific I2I Regional Blue Economy project and the Adaptation Fund project, Kiribati (Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program, SPREP)
- Expert reviewer for: evaluation of the outcomes of the 3rd Cycle of Periodic Reporting for the World Heritage Convention in the Asia-Pacific region (UNESCO), and the ongoing Kiwa Initiative Pacific grants program (IUCN)
- Produced the Pacific Regional World Heritage Action Plan 2021-2025 and involving direct engagement with 14 countries and all regional representatives for natural and cultural heritage (for IUCN and UNESCO)
- Designed and delivered a monitoring and evaluation plan, tools, operating guidelines, and training for the Adaptation Fund project in the FSM (SPREP)
- Developed a communication plan for the GEF Ridge to Reef project in the Federated States of Micronesia and designed and delivered training to the project team to implement key actions (UN Development Program)
- Managed the Dugong and Turtle Management Project and Marine Ecosystem Monitoring Project (coral reef and seagrass ecosystems) including: community-based dugong and turtle management plans; marine turtle surveys on remote rookeries; 'reef-scanner' robotic survey tool and partnerships with research agencies with projects to AUD 1 million, (Torres Strait Regional Authority TSRA)
- Liaison, planning and reporting with Queensland State government Natural Resource Investment Program for pest animal projects (pigs, deer, horses, black rat, cane toads) and water quality across Torres Strait islands
- Facilitated consultation workshops and undertook technical review of the Reimaanlok: National Conservation Area Plan for the Republic of the Marshall Islands, to provide an updated plan to 2028, and delivered to the national Coastal Management Advisory Committee
- Developed a funding proposal titled Ensuring resilient ecosystems and representative protected areas for the Government of Solomon Islands for submission to the Global Environment Facility GEF, and which was subsequently approved in full (with value of USD 4.5 million in direct funding)
- Coordinated and facilitated a 5-day workshop (80 participants) in Apia, Samoa, to obtain partner and stakeholder input on island biodiversity priorities, and produced the summative workshop outcomes report, for International Union for Conservation of Nature IUCN and numerous project partners
- Prepared the summative forum outcomes report and an advocacy communique for the Oceania Planetary Health Forum in Nadi, Fiji, for University of Sydney
- Prepared guidelines for the selection of targeted regional grant funding projects for protected areas, for IUCN, October 2018 (with a total EUR 6 million grant funding competitively available)

Annex X. REVIEW TORS (WITHOUT ANEXXES)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Terminal Review of the UNEP project:

Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and State of Environment Assessments and Reporting in the Pacific 'Inform' (ID #5195)

Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1. Project General Information

Table 1. Project summary

UNEP PIMS/SMA¹⁵ ID:	31070		
Donor ID:	Global Environmental Facility (GEF) ID#5195		
Implementing Partners:	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)		
SDG(s) and indicator(s)	SDG 13 (13.2.1, 13.3.1, 13.3.2, 13.b.1); SDG 15 (15.1.1, 15.1.2, 15.2.1, 15.3.1, 15.4.1/2, 15.9.1); SDG 16 (16.10.2); and SDG 17 (17.14.1; 17.16.1; 17.18.1) This project also links to SDG 14 (14.1, 14.2, 14.3, 14.5, 14.a, 14.c)		
Sub-programme	Foundational Science-Policy subprogramme	Expected Accomplishment(s):	<p><i>SP (i): Number of countries and national, regional, and subnational authorities that, as a result of UNEP support, have strengthened capacity to develop sound environmental data, statistics, scientific assessments and early warning systems.</i></p> <p><i>SP (ii): Number of relevant global,</i></p>

¹⁵ Acronym for ID assigned by the Integrated Planning, Monitoring and Reporting (IPMR) system.

			<p><i>regional, and national forums, institutions and Governments using data, statistics, scientific assessments and early warning and foresight systems provided by UNEP for catalysing policymaking and action.</i></p>
<p>UNEP approval date:</p>	<p>21 December 2016</p>	<p>Programme of Work Output(s):</p>	<p><i>POW 2022-2023</i></p> <p><i>Outcome 1A: Decision-makers at all levels adopt decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience pathways.</i></p> <p><i>Outcome 1B: Countries and stakeholders have increased capacity, finance and access to technologies to deliver on the adaptation and mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement.</i></p> <p><i>Outcome 2B: Sustainable management of nature is adopted and implemented in development frameworks.</i></p> <p><i>Outcome 1C: State and non-State actors adopt the enhanced transparency framework arrangements under the Paris Agreement.</i></p>

<i>Expected start date:</i>	21 December 2016	<i>Actual start date:</i>	21 December 2016	
<i>Planned operational completion date:</i>	31 December 2022	<i>Actual operational completion date:</i>	30 July 2023	
<i>Planned total project budget at approval (show breakdown of individual sources/grants):</i>	US\$10,570,411	<i>Actual total expenditures reported as of 30 June 2023:</i>	US\$4,239,438	
<i>Expected co-financing:</i>	US\$6,476,276	<i>Secured co-financing¹⁶:</i>	US\$6,476,276	
<i>First disbursement:</i>	18 January 2017	<i>Planned date of financial closure:</i>	31 December 2024	
<i>No. of project revisions:</i>	3	<i>Date of last approved project revision:</i>	21 April 2023	
<i>No. of Steering Committee meetings:</i>	7	<i>Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:</i>	Last: 22 February 2023	Next: -
<i>Mid-term Review/ Evaluation¹⁷ (planned date):</i>	22 October 2019	<i>Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):</i>	22 October 2019	
<i>Terminal Review (planned date):</i>	30 December 2023	<i>Terminal Review (actual date):</i>	-	
<i>Coverage - Country(ies):</i>	Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga,	<i>Coverage - Region(s):</i>	Pacific region	

¹⁶ State whether co-financing amounts are cash or in-kind.

¹⁷ UNEP policies require projects with planned implementation periods of 4 or more years to have a mid-point assessment of performance. For projects under 4 years, this should be marked as N/A.

	Tuvalu and Vanuatu		
Dates of previous project phases:	-	Status of future project phases:	-

2. Project Rationale

The 'Inform' project (ID#5195) aimed to strengthen the enabling legal, policy, institutional and planning framework and establish a network of national and regional databases for monitoring, evaluating, and analysing environmental information to provide for environmental planning, forecasting, and reporting requirements at all levels. These activities are essential to ensure environmental conditions in the Pacific region do not continue to deteriorate, but instead can be improved, monitored, and assessed. It also contributed to better integration of environmental priorities into the national sustainable development planning process.

The 'Inform' project (ID#5195) a regional multi-country project implemented in 14 Pacific Island Countries (PICs): Cook Islands, Fiji, FSM, Kiribati, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. SPREP as the Executing Agency (EA) provided project management, implement regional activities, and provide technical support for implementation of in-country activities. All these countries are members of SPREP. SPREP has a well-established network of national and technical focal points with all its member states that will be utilized for implementation of the project. 'Inform' aimed to establish a Pacific Island Country (PIC) network of national and regional databases for monitoring, evaluating, and analysing environmental information to support environmental planning, forecasting, and reporting requirements at all levels.

This project supported the following key deliverables:

- A National Reporting System that stores data and/or connects to existing databases.
- Improvements in monitoring and reporting capacities for environmental data to better guide decision making and development planning in PICs.
- Improvement of capacity of PICs to monitor, review, and report on national development plans.
- Improvement of the capacity of PICs for national reporting to Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA).

The project addressed the following common problems and vulnerabilities in The Pacific region:

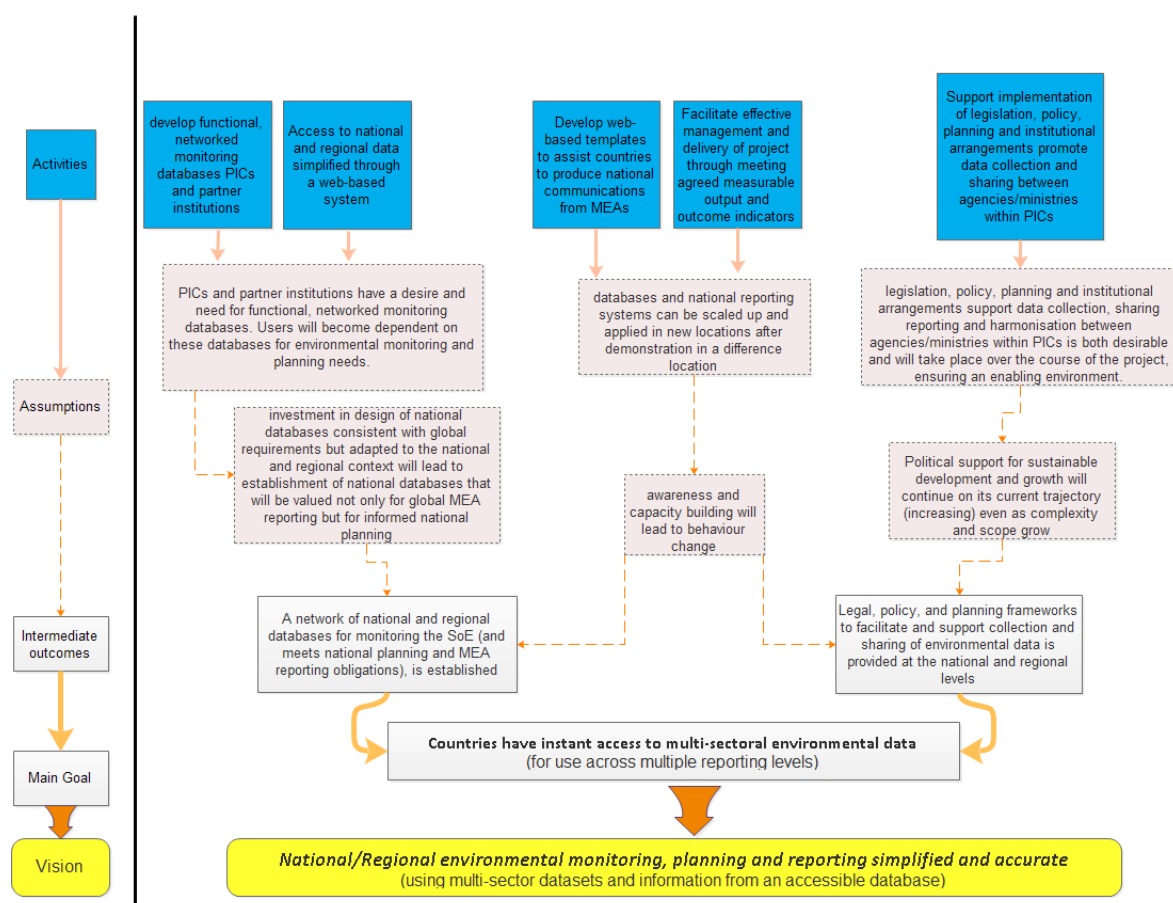
- A lack of historical and current evidence of the status and trends of various environmental resources and drivers of environmental change
- Information management problems, including lack of standard procedures for collecting and aggregating relevant environmental data
- Dissemination problems where available information does not always get into the hands of local technical staff, governments, or citizens

SPREP has also been implementing the European Union (EU)-funded African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) MEAs over the last five years aimed at strengthening capacity for national implementation of MEAs. This work provided a solid foundation for the work carried out through the Inform project.

3. Project Results Framework

Theory of change: The project embarked on a pathway for bringing transformation change in 14 Pacific Island Countries. The theory of change started with the project vision where Pacific Island Countries have strong capacities to monitor and report on the health of their environment. This theory of change started with a search for understanding the existing baseline of the 14 Pacific Island Countries capabilities to monitor and report on the health of the environment at the national and global level. Although each country is different, there were commonalities shared between countries such as limited institutional capacities, outdated, weak or no laws that govern the management of environmental information and data, inadequate expertise found in-country to do monitoring and reporting of the environment, limited funding resources, lack of strategic partnership between agencies, and limited coordination and sharing of environmental data among end-users and decision makers. As a point of departure, the theory of change started by injecting valuable technical assistance in all participating countries to bolster institutional, systemic and individual capacities to do proper monitoring and reporting functions either to meet national obligations or MEA obligations prescribed under the Rio Convention.

There were four (4) stages of intervention for this project. These were: (1) set-up functional network of environmental databases; (2) accessing national and regional environmental data; (3) MEA reporting; (4) strengthening national laws for collecting environmental data. See below theory of change diagram as in the results framework:



Project components and expected results:

The Inform project aimed to establish a Pacific Island Country (PIC) network of national and regional databases for monitoring, evaluating, and analysing environmental information to support environmental planning, forecasting, and reporting requirements at all levels. The ultimate goal was supporting the increased use of data in national decision making.

Project Component (PC) 1: *Design national and regional databases and network to facilitate monitoring the state of the Pacific’s environment and expected results (Note – wherever possible data to be gender disaggregated)*

DESIGN AND NETWORK
<i>COMPONENT 1: Design national and regional databases and network to facilitate monitoring the state of the Pacific’s environment.</i>
Outcome 1.1: PICs and partner institutions have functional, networked monitoring databases. Users are largely dependent on these databases for environmental monitoring and planning needs.

Output 1.1.1: Systematic assessments of existing technical capacity in-country using recent documentation and surveys of 14 PICs and regional institutions including SPREP, SPC-SOPAC, USP, and consultations to facilitate endorsement by the SPREP Meeting of regional environmental targets and indicators.

Expected Results: Rapid desktop assessments of regional and national technical capacities for monitoring and reporting of environmental indicators completed. Recommended environmental indicators defined for SPREP Meeting endorsement.

Output 1.1.2: Design national and regional databases and network to facilitate monitoring the state of the Pacific’s environment. Assess the UNEP Indicator Reporting Information System (IRIS) as the data collection, sharing and SoE reporting tool.

Expected Results: National and regional environmental databases designed in consultation with PIC established, active and networked.

Output 1.1.3: Guidance on data management and sharing protocols at national and regional levels (including data ownership and sharing, compatibility with existing national and regional systems),).

Expected Results: Guidance on Data Sharing Protocol available for use in PICs and regional data sharing protocols endorsed and in use.

A key outcome for the project is assuring the PICs and partner institutions have access to functional monitoring databases that are networked, with users able to rely on these databases for their environmental monitoring and planning needs.

As part of this Project Component, SPREP will gather existing raw (meta) data (again noting wherever possible data will be gender disaggregated) and then establish a baseline of information on the status of national and regional environmental conditions. Possible examples of data which may be gathered separately by gender include – environmental disaster risk assessments, disaster impacts, anthropogenic impacts on the environment, use

of ecosystem services etc. Other actions will include creating a programme for detecting change and tracking/determining trends, including emerging impacts on environmental planning and sustainable development. (Current data are not in a usable form.) The database(s) to be designed and developed will integrate information with convention reporting processes (Rio 20+ and others) and other databases.

Capacity development outcomes will develop the institutions, skills, infrastructure, technical support, information management, linkages, networks, and exchanges required to collect and manage SoE data effectively and efficiently. Under this Project Component, systems and processes for environmental monitoring in the Pacific region as a single entity and for individual PICs will be developed.

Project Component (PC) 2: *Environmental data are efficiently and effectively used for environmental planning and reporting at all levels by strengthening national and regional legal, policy and planning frameworks.*

As part of this PC, SPREP will advocate that appropriate legislation, protocols, policies, and procedures be in place and operating, to underpin the effective management of capacity development.

A key outcome of this PC is ensuring access to national and regional data (including gender disaggregated data) is made easy through a web-based system. The resulting output will be to establish a web-based national minimum environment indicators interface.

Another outcome of this PC will be creating and making available web-based templates at national and regional levels to meet the MEA reporting needs of each PIC. The resulting output will be web-based templates to assist countries to produce national communications from MEAs.

National and regional access will be ensured by reducing metadata to usable form/database(s) at regional and national levels. These data will be used to improve planning and management of environmental planning and reporting during the activities of this project.

Reporting requirements can be burdensome for many of the PICs. An important outcome of this PC will be to significantly decrease the reporting burden on PICs compared to the situation at the start of the project.

SPREP will use an iterative process to continuously improve data collection, analysis, and management and build on this process to strengthen centralised and national databases and access to information used for environmental planning and management.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
<i>PROJECT COMPONENT 2: Environmental data are efficiently and effectively used for environmental planning and reporting at all levels by strengthening national and regional legal, policy and planning frameworks.</i>
Outcome 2.1 Legislation, policy, planning and institutional arrangements support data collection, sharing, reporting and harmonization between agencies/ministries within PICs.

Output 2.1.1: Assess, strengthen and monitor of existing legislation, protocols, policies, and procedures that govern data collection and management for MEA reporting in PICs.

Expected Results: Environmental data collection and management carried out effectively for MEA reporting by Pacific Island Countries. Note – this includes gender disaggregated data wherever possible.

Output 2.1.2: Establish and strengthen the institutional network of environmental data management agencies and organizations at the national and regional levels. **Expected Results:** Community of Practice collaborating to support robust environmental data management systems at the national and regional level.

Output 2.1.3: Monitoring guidelines developed and agreed for the capture of data for all national and regional environmental indicators.

Expected Results: Collection and collation of national and regional environmental data are managed in accordance with the approved monitoring guideline for capturing data from partners.

Output 2.1.4: Develop approaches and tools – (assessing the viability of using the IRIS) to assist countries to implement and monitor RIO +20 outcomes (*The Future We Want*) and SAMOA Pathway and SDGs.

Expected Results: Adoption of approaches and tools for implementing and monitoring of RIO + 20 outcomes, SAMOA Pathway and SDGs through the indicator reporting information systems (IRIS)

Project Component 3: *Capacity development to support the technical facility*

Capacity development is a key benefit of this project.

The project will address regional and national capacity requirements for supporting the system. The outputs will be improved national and regional training and capacity building in the areas of data capture, database management, data analysis and reporting, end-user interpretation, and uses for environmental planning and management.

Another outcome is identifying baseline information and indicators for agreed variables. SPREP will assist PICs with collecting valid baseline data against which to measure achievements towards global environmental objectives, aligned with MEAs. The outputs of this part of the project will be a validated set of baseline data for measuring regional and national achievements.

The project will support PICs in development of capacities at the individual and organizational level, strengthening technical skills to collect data and transform information into knowledge. The result will be rationalized databases at regional and national levels.

Coordination and integration: Improve management information and decision support systems for the national, regional, and global environments and develop effective strategies to use data.

Management of PIC activities: Identify baseline information and indicators for agreed variables. Assist PICs with collecting valid baseline data against which to measure achievements towards global environmental objectives, aligned with MEAs.

Capacity development: Support PICs in development of capacities at the individual and organizational level, strengthening technical skills to collect data and transform information into knowledge.

Process improvement: Establish mechanisms to institutionalize (including capacity development) and regularly upgrade the system.

Change management: Create and use a change management process.

CAPACITY BUILDING
<i>COMPONENT 3. Capacity development to support the technical facility.</i>
Outcome 3.1 Access to national and regional data simplified through a web-based system.

Output 3.1.1: Identify equipment, software and hardware needs for each country and purchase to enable establishment of national environment database and network of data providers. Data collection

- Data capture
- Database management, including ongoing maintenance
- Data analysis and reporting
- End-user interpretation, including SoE formulation and reviews
- Train relevant staff on the use of the web-based tools including national minimum environment indicators interface

Expected Results: National environmental database and indicators developed and managed effectively through a web-based system and offline alternative options.

<i>COMPONENT 3. Capacity development to support the technical facility.</i>
Outcome 3.2 Develop web-based templates to assist countries to produce national communications from MEAs.

Output 3.2.1: Train relevant Government staff to use the indicator reporting information system and web-based templates for integrating SoE and NEMS with national MEA commitments drawing from national environmental reporting (*including SAMOA Pathway, Rio + 20 outcomes, and SDGs*).

Expected Results: Pacific island countries effectively use their indicator reporting information system for national and regional reporting. Pacific island countries' SoE and NEMS report are aligned with international MEA commitments.

Output 3.2.2. Develop and provide training for collection of national environment statistics and SoE Reporting templates for each country.

Expected Result: *SoE reporting templates and environmental statistics are available and used by each country.*

Output 3.2.3. Develop and provide training for NEMS which integrate national MEA commitments, and draw from national environmental reporting.

Expected Results: Relevant staff trained on how to integrate MEA commitments into NEMS reporting and format.

Output 3.2.4. Develop and provide training on EIA protocols and procedures based on regional EIA guidelines as well as EIA monitoring protocols that may contribute data that could be integrated into national environmental databases.

Expected Results: Relevant staff trained on EIA protocols and procedures based on the regional EIA guidelines and monitoring protocols for capturing data for use by the indicator reporting information systems.

- **Expected Results:** Pacific island countries are using their national environmental database to prepare MEA reporting.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT
COMPONENT 4: PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION
Outcome 4.1 Effective management and delivery of project, meeting agreed measurable output and outcome indicators.

Under this PC, the project will provide effective management and delivery of the project, meeting agreed measurable output and outcome indicators. The outputs will be: Creation of PMU; establishment of regional and national project steering committees; establishment of oversight structure and clear linkages to long term strategic plans, creating a project monitoring and evaluation methodology designed to align with GEF project and operating standards, including regular project audits; putting mechanisms in place to enable regular upgrading of systems and personnel involved at national and regional levels based on a well designed M&E system; putting relevant statutes/regulations in place to institutionalize the systems and processes for the PICs and at the regional level.

Output 4.1.1: Effective management and delivery of the project, meeting agreed measurable output and outcome indicators.

Expected Results: Project managed in accordance to the approved logical framework and budget.

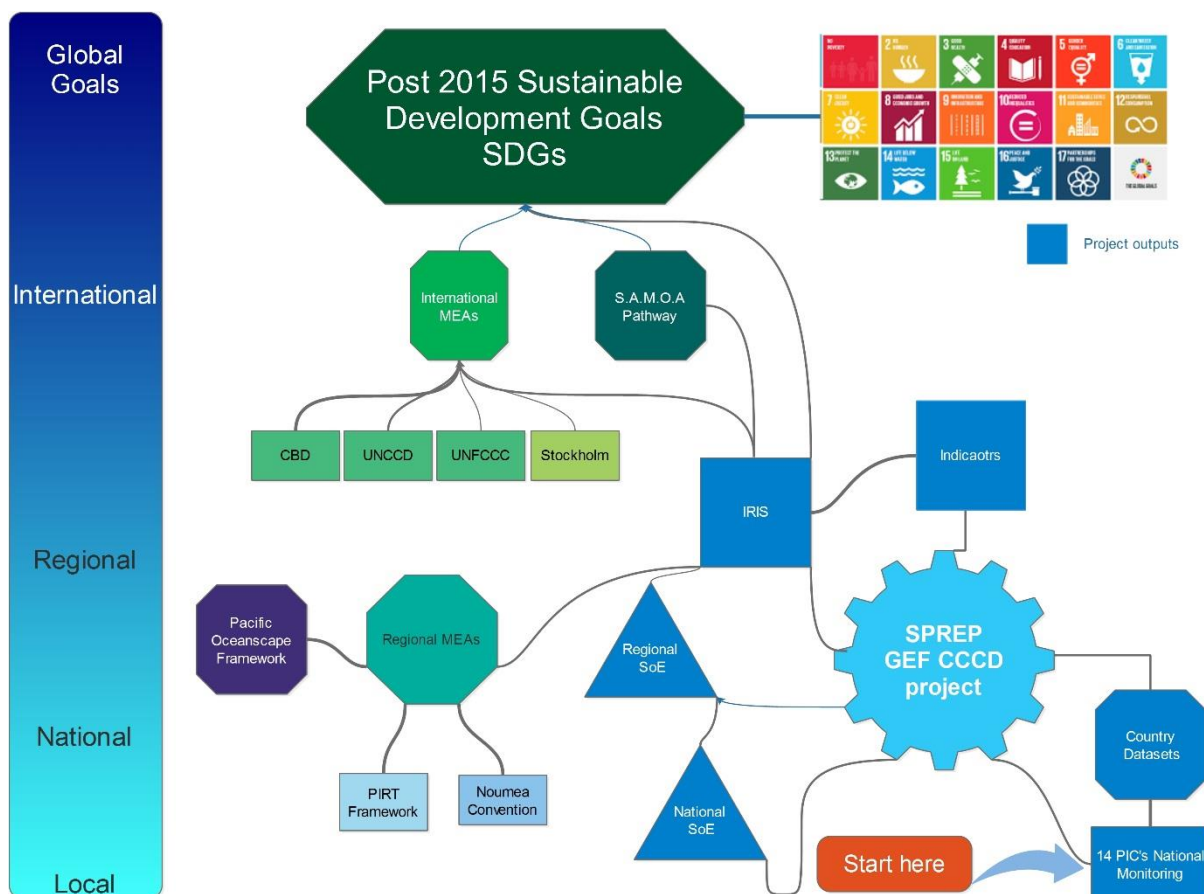
Output 4.1.2: Project monitoring and evaluation methodology designed to align with GEF project and operating standards, including regular project audits.

Expected Results: Project meets GEF reporting requirements for regular monitoring, evaluations and audit.

Output 4.1.3: Develop communication and visibility materials for education and awareness.

Expected Results: Public awareness and knowledge about the project improved within each participating pacific island country.

The following diagram summarises how the project facilitates generating environmental data (new and existing) and their use at national, regional and global levels:



4. Executing Arrangements

The GEF Implementing Agency for all of the projects was the UNEP Early Warning and Assessment Division (EWAD) - formerly Science Division-, Climate Services and Capacity Building Unit. As the Implementing Agency, UNEP EWAD was responsible for overall project supervision, overseeing the project progress through the monitoring and evaluation of project activities and progress reports, including technical issues. UNEP was responsible for overseeing and monitoring the project implementation process, to ensure both GEF and UNEP standards were met, organize evaluations and audits as well as provide technical support. UNEP worked in close collaboration with the Executing Agency (EA) as described below.

This project was executed by SPREP as the EA with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the GEF Implementing Agency (IA). This project was fully integrated into the *SPREP Strategic Plan* and organizational structure to ensure the project met regional and national priorities as well as commitment and ownership by SPREP and its members. Commitment and ownership are crucial for sustainability once the project is completed. Similarly, the project was aligned to UNEP's Programme of Work and other business planning and ongoing related activities (e.g. UNEP Live). This will be facilitated by at least DEPI, DEWA, DELC and the ROAP.

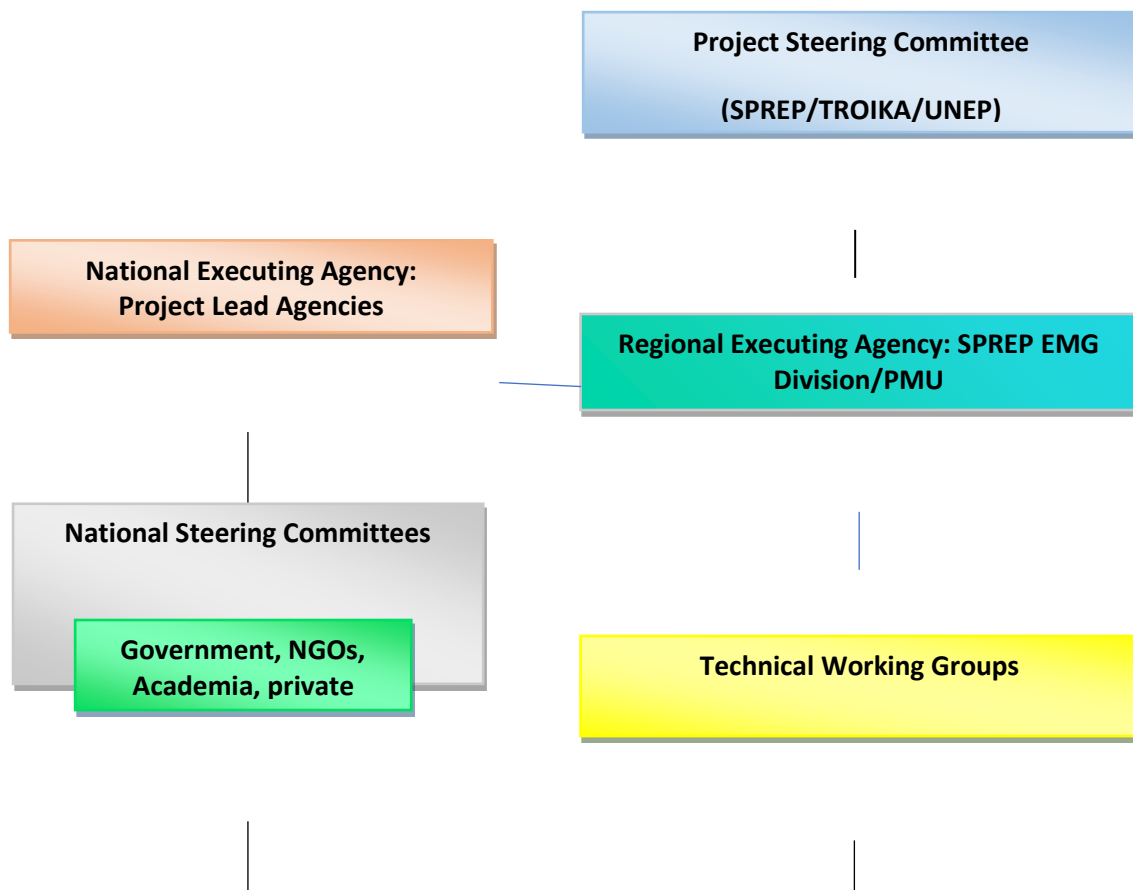
The SPREP Governing Council provided oversight and act as the forum for endorsement of project activities and provide guidance since its membership includes national focal points of all PICs. These national focal points are often also the GEF focal points. The SPREP Governing Council provided a forum for endorsing annual work plans and reporting on implementation directly to countries.

The project established a Project Steering Committee (PSC) made up of representatives from SPREP, UNEP and SPREP country members represented through the TROIKA. The TROIKA is made up of the previous, current and next chair of the SPREP Governing Council as established through agreed SPREP protocols. The TROIKA represents the SPREP membership when issues need to be discussed out of session. Thus, the PSC provided guidance on project implementation in addition to what has been approved through the SPREP Council. SPREP as EA and UNEP as IA ensured that gender balance was maintained in the PSC and staff recruitment having gender-balance and issues addressed during the roll-out of the project.

A Project Management Unit (PMU) was established within the Environmental Monitoring and Governance Division of SPREP. Coordination with the other divisions of SPREP was provided through the establishment technical working groups for specific project outputs. Again, gender balance and considerations were ensured to meet related policy requirements of UNEP and SPREP in this regard.

Prior to any meeting, the PMU ensured that all communication and planning for preparations of PSC meetings were coordinated between the PMU and the UNEP Task Manager.

The 14 PICs designated their SPREP national focal points as the lead for delivering project outputs, reporting on substantive project results, and providing financial reporting. During the national consultation process it was discussed, the establishment of national steering committees with wide consultative representation. In many countries such committees exist and were used for coordination and guidance of project implementation. See below the top-level implementation and execution framework for the project.



Capacity Development Activities

SPREP, as the EA, was responsible for the implementation of the project in accordance with the objectives and activities outlined in the project logical framework. SPREP is a regional intergovernmental agency with 25 member countries, including all 14 PICs participating in this project, and five metropolitan countries which should provide support via the SPREP Council. SPREP is mandated by its member countries to lead and coordinate environmental policy and management on their behalf. SPREP has been designated EA wholly or partially in more than 10 GEF projects.

UNEP, as the GEF IA, was responsible for overall project supervision to ensure consistency with GEF and UNEP policies and procedures, and will provide guidance on linkages with related UNEP and GEF funded activities. The UNEP/GEF Coordinator monitored implementation of the activities undertaken during the execution of the project and be responsible for clearance and transmission of financial and progress reports to the GEF.

SPREP, as the EA, cooperated with UNEP to allow the organization to fulfil its responsibility as the IA accountable to GEF. To this end, free access to all relevant information will be provided by SPREP.

The PMU established reporting guidelines for all partners and ensure they submit quality reports and prepare biannual progress reports, quarterly financial reports, and annual summary progress reports for UNEP. The PMU carried out a programme of regular visits to the PICs and visit regional stakeholder meetings being hosted by participating PICs on a rotating basis, to share experiences and visit each other's pilot sites. In addition, the PMU maintained strategically located specialists to support activities in each cluster of three to five participating PICs.

Each PIC appointed or assigned a national coordinator based within the national executing agencies. The national coordinator ensured the PIC project activities are fully implemented according to the project document.

5. Project Cost and Financing

Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and State of Environment Assessments and Reporting in the Pacific 'Inform' (ID #5195)

GEF Agency		Focal Area		(in \$)
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	Type of Trust Fund		Country Name/ Global	Grant Amount (a)	Agency Fee (b) ²	Total c=a+b
UNEP	GEFTF	Multi-focal	Global	4,319,635	410,365	4,730,000
Total Grant Resources						4,730,000

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier (source)	Type of Co-financing	Co-financing Amount (\$)
Other Multi-National Agencies	IUCN	Grant	225,500
	SPREP	In-kind	2,050,776
National Government	Participating PICS		
	Cook Islands		200,000
	Federated States of Micronesia		200,000
	Fiji Islands		200,000
	Kiribati		200,000
	Micronesia		200,000
	Nauru		200,000
	Niue		200,000
	Palau		200,000
	Papua New Guinea		200,000
	Samoa		200,000
	Solomon Islands		200,000
	Tonga		200,000
	Tuvalu		200,000
	Vanuatu		200,000
	Regional Organization		
Donor	EU/ACP implemented through UNEP	In-Kind	1,000,000
GEF Agency	UNEP	In-Kind	400,000
Total Co-financing			6,476,276

Total Project Funds: \$11,206,276

* This includes agency fees. Actual available budget for implementation is US\$10,570,411.

Budget per component

Project Component	GEF financing (USD)	Co-financing (USD)
1. PICs and partner institutions have functional monitoring databases, that are networked, and users are largely dependent on them for their environmental monitoring and planning needs. Establish a network of national and regional databases for monitoring the state of the Pacific's environment.	1,181,925	2,306,279
2. Environmental data are efficiently and effectively used for environmental planning and reporting at all levels by strengthening national and regional legal, policy and planning frameworks.	1,438,651	517,519
3. Capacity development to support the technical facility.	1,208,424	3,647,343
4. Project management and evaluation	490,635	219,365
Total	4,319,635	6,690,506

6. Implementation Issues

Mid-Term Review Findings and Recommendations

1. FINDING: Project Management and Design. The Inform project started with a delay but has since picked up and delivered on all key outputs. The intervention logic of the results framework is not all plausible. Outcome indicators are missing, and many output indicators are not workable. At the time of the MTR, the project was in need of day-to-day monitoring tools that can be continuously updated.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Inform should be granted a twelve months no-cost extension in order to be able to conclude activities.
- The project team needs to a) revise the results framework to properly link outputs to outcomes and to correct and add indicators and targets, b) develop a monitoring plan,

and c) do a new work plan with activities in a timetable or amend the country status table in order to have an up-to-date monitoring tools for the whole PMU.

- In reviewing the ToC, the project team should try to revise the results framework to sharpen the objective (*Improved MEA reporting...*) and its two outcomes (e.g. *improved reporting through online tools*, and *effective data use through an enabling environment*). Training and communication could be mainstreamed into these outcomes. Outcome 4 on 'Project Management' should be taken out.¹⁸
- The project needs to decide whether assessment/ data collection should be an outcome of the project so that activities on e.g. mobile data collection can be linked and strategically planned for.
- The induction training by TM and FMO at project start translated into good programmatic and financial reporting. This should be recorded as 'best practice' for UNEP project management.
- UNEP and the Inform PM need to start the project extension process. A budget revision should be done as soon as possible to reflect the planned extension and changes in the work plan.
- An updated costed work plan should guide budget planning and monitoring.
- UNEP needs to prepare co-financing reports.

2. FINDING: Data portal and IRT. At project beginning the Inform team was not aware that Samoa, PNG, Vanuatu and Kiribati had already been part of GEF-funded UNDP CCCD project implementation with overlapping database components (maybe other SPREP staff was aware). Additionally, Cook Islands, Palau, FSM and RMI reported that their countries already have data management system of some sort and their wish to merge or link them to the Inform Data Portal. No participating country has an environmental indicator reporting legacy system. The Inform IRT has been launched after several rounds of feedback but it has not had a complete test round.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Inform needs to quickly proceed in reconciling existing data management systems to avoid duplication and/ or perceived competition. Where DKAN software is not compatible with existing systems, Inform can look into data harvesting.
- The used DKAN platform will eventually require a major upgrade once Drupal version 7 reaches end of life and Drupal 8 is introduced (approximately in 2021). The Inform team should assist PICs in planning for technical and financial resources required for the upgrade, which may happen after Inform ends.
- In order to identify areas of improvement and glitches of the IRT, one of the countries that is in the process of doing a SoE or MEA report should be closely accompanied by the Inform team in doing the entire process in the IRT. If possible, no international consultants should be hired for this process.

3. FINDING: Experience sharing. UNEP has a portfolio of CCCD projects, some of them have already had their mid-term review. As they are all similar in design, the Inform project could benefit from their experience and lessons learnt, e.g. from the development of [Saint Lucia's](#)

¹⁸ This will not constitute a major amendment that requires resubmittal to the GEF Secretariat for re-endorsement because the proposed modification has no significant impact on the project's objective or scope or requires an increase of the GEF project financing.

[National Environmental Information System \(NEIS\)](#) that combines both, a data portal and an indicator reporting system.

RECOMMENDATION:

- UN Environment Programme could facilitate exchange of experience and information between CCCD project countries. Countries that have already gone through the process of developing data sharing agreements, like Saint Lucia, who also belongs to the SIDS, could provide their lessons learnt. This would also encourage South-South cooperation.

4. FINDING: Sustainability. At the time of the MTR, the Inform project had delivered most of the outputs that related to centralized tasks. During the second half of the project, more focus has to be on the PICs and in-country uptake. Active engagement of the PICs to move output level results towards sustainable outcomes will be needed. Sustainability efforts need to be of institutional, financial and political nature.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Resources for in-country support are available but limited. The Inform team should invest most in those PICs that show the most commitment and drive. Conversely, a decision needs to be taken about PICs that show little uptake at midpoint of the project.
- Project team and SPREP need to start revising individual work plans with PICs, which need to include working on data sharing agreements.
- National plans should include the creation or continuation of a data management position in charge of the Data Portal and the IRT, as already proposed in several PICs under the above-mentioned GCF project.
- A communication plan needs to aim at advocacy with national governments to ensure their awareness, buy-in and commitment. At the same time, the plan would need to provide guidance to national focal points on how to best promote the project in-country with information and success stories.
- In order to ensure a critical number of users, more capacity building needs to be conducted. In order to avoid overstretch, the Inform team could look into Training of Trainer (ToT) approach/ options.
- Now, that project has sufficiently introduced its objectives and launched its tools, capacity building meetings should be held sub-regionally with more homogenous groups¹⁹ to reduce travel time, costs and carbon footprints.

5. FINDING: Gender. The project has given little consideration to gender-sensitive data collection and indicator formulation yet. Understanding how gender data can reinforce any analysis on trends in the environment is important, especially if there is correlation to gender roles and the impacts on the environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

¹⁹ Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia vary in size, culture, linguistics, topography and capacity of their administrations.

- Where possible environmental indicators should produce sex and age disaggregated data.
- Groups or organizations that hold data on traditional knowledge should be included in national data sharing networks.
- PICs should be encouraged to pay more attention to gender issues in their SoE reports and NEMS.
- The 2017 [GEF Policy on Gender Equality](#) responds to the increased attention to gender equality and women's empowerment by the conferences of the parties to the MEA that the GEF serves. The policy could be used by Inform as a guiding document as it summarizes the gender objectives of each MEA and provides examples of gender-sensitive indicators.

1. The Inform project has had three no-cost extensions, the initial revision was due to the delays in the project's initial implementation in 2017, compounded by subsequent setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Revision number 02 represents the completion of a crucial phase, resulting in the production of the final deliverable – a State of Environment (SOE) report for Samoa, intended for submission to the National Cabinet for endorsement.

2. Furthermore, revision number 03 has been allocated to facilitate the organization and convening of a final regional meeting, which serves as the project closure event. This significant gathering brought together all 14 Pacific Island countries, along with representatives from SPREP and UNEP. During this meeting, the project will showcase its achievements, engage in discussions to glean valuable lessons learned, and finalize plans for ensuring the project's sustainability. <https://www.sprep.org/news/improving-data-collection-and-management-for-informed-decision-making-in-the-pacific-through-the-inform-project>

Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

7. Objective of the Review

In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy²⁰ and the UNEP Programme Manual²¹, the Terminal Review (TR) 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 Review 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 SPREP. Therefore, the Review will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation, especially for future phases of the project, where applicable.

8. Key Review principles

²⁰ <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies>

²¹ <https://wecollaborate.unep.org>

Review findings and judgements will be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the Review 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.

The “Why?” Question. As this is a Terminal Review and 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 consultant(s)’ minds all through the review exercise and is supported by the use of a theory of change approach. This means that the consultant(s) need 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.

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 reviews. 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.

Communicating Review Results. A key aim of the Review is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and key project stakeholders. The consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the review process and in the communication of review findings and key lessons. Clear and concise writing is required on all review deliverables. Draft and final versions of the main review report will be shared with key stakeholders by the UNEP Project Manager²². There may, however, be several intended audiences, each with different interests and needs regarding the report. The consultant will plan with the UNEP Project Manager which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key review findings and lessons to them. This may include some or all of the following: a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of a review brief or interactive presentation.

9. Key Strategic Questions

In addition to the review criteria outlined in Section 10 below, the Review will address the **strategic questions**²³ listed below (no more than 3 questions are recommended). These are questions of interest to UNEP and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution:

²² For GEF funded projects, UNEP Project Manager refers to the Task Manager.

²³ The strategic questions should not duplicate questions that will be addressed under the standard review criteria described in section 10.

- (a) i. Use of Environmental data for decision-making; ii. building capacities for governments to share data and knowledge for streamlined reporting; and iii. responding to the needs of environmental information to address the triple planetary crisis – climate, nature, and pollution
- (b) (Where relevant) What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?

For GEF-funded projects there are a series of questions that need to be uploaded to the GEF Portal. The consultant should complete the table in Annex 5 of these TOR and append it to the Final Review report.

10. Review Criteria

All review criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Sections A-I below, outline the scope of the review criteria. The set of review 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.

A suite of various tools, templates and guidelines that can help Review Consultant(s) to follow a thorough review process that meets all of UNEP's needs is available via the UNEP Project Manager.

A. Strategic Relevance

The Review 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 Review 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's Medium-Term Strategy²⁴ (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities

The Review 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 Building²⁵ (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

²⁴ UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>

²⁵ <http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction/about/bsp.htm>

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/Partner Strategic Priorities

Donor strategic priorities will vary across interventions. The Review 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

The Review 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 also be considered. Examples may include: UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) or, 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/Coherence²⁶

An assessment will be made of how well the project, either at design stage or during the project inception or mobilization²⁷, 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 Review 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 work within Cooperation Frameworks 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.

Adaptation Fund	To encourage utilization, each evaluation should optimize <u>relevance</u> by ensuring (i) that the primary intended users of the evaluation and their intended uses are clearly identified and engaged at the beginning of the evaluation process; (ii) that “intended users” include funding, implementing, and beneficiary stakeholders; and (iii) that evaluators ensure these intended users contribute to decisions about the evaluation process.
Green Climate Fund	<u>Coherence</u> in climate finance delivery with other multilateral entities.

²⁶ This sub-category is consistent with the new criterion of ‘Coherence’ introduced by the OECD-DAC in 2019.

²⁷ 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.

B. Quality of Project Design

The quality of project design is assessed using an agreed template during the review 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 Review Inception Report. Later, the overall Project Design Quality rating²⁸ should be entered in the final review ratings table (as item B) in the Main Review Report and a summary of the project's strengths and weaknesses at design stage should be included within the body of the Main Review Report.

C. Nature of External Context

At review inception stage a rating is established for the project's external operating context (considering the prevalence of conflict, natural disasters and political upheaval²⁹). This rating is entered in the final review 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 Review Consultant and UNEP Project Manager together. A justification for such an increase must be given.

D. Effectiveness

i. Availability of Outputs³⁰

The Review 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 Review will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards.

ii. Achievement of Project Outcomes³¹

²⁸ In some instances, based on data collected during the review process, the assessment of the project's design quality may change from Inception Report to Main Review Report.

²⁹ 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. From March 2020 this should include the effects of COVID-19.

³⁰ Outputs are the availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness of individuals or within institutions (UNEP, 2019)

³¹ Outcomes are the use (i.e. uptake, adoption, application) of an output by intended beneficiaries, observed as changes in institutions or behavior, attitude or condition (UNEP, 2019)

The achievement of project outcomes is assessed as performance against the outcomes as defined in the reconstructed³² 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 to show where substantive amendments to the formulation of project outcomes is necessary to allow for an assessment of performance. The Review 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.

iii. Likelihood of Impact

Based on the articulation of long-lasting effects in the reconstructed TOC (*i.e. from project outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact*), the Review 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 reviews is outlined in a guidance note 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.

The Review 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.

The Review will consider the extent to which the project has played a catalytic role³³ 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.

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

³² UNEP staff are currently required to submit a Theory of Change with all submitted project designs. The level of 'reconstruction' needed during a review will depend on the quality of this initial TOC, the time that has lapsed between project design and implementation (which may be related to securing and disbursing funds) and the level of any changes made to the project design. In the case of projects pre-dating 2013 the intervention logic is often represented in a logical framework and a TOC will need to be constructed in the inception stage of the review.

³³ The terms catalytic effect, scaling up and replication are inter-related and generally refer to extending the coverage or magnitude of the effects of a project. Catalytic effect is associated with triggering additional actions that are not directly funded by the project – these effects can be both concrete or less tangible, can be intentionally caused by the project or implied in the design and reflected in the TOC drivers, or can be unintentional and can rely on funding from another source or have no financial requirements. Scaling up and Replication require more intentionality for projects, or individual components and approaches, to be reproduced in other similar contexts. Scaling up suggests a substantive increase in the number of new beneficiaries reached/involved and may require adapted delivery mechanisms while Replication suggests the repetition of an approach or component at a similar scale but among different beneficiaries. Even with highly technical work, where scaling up or replication involves working with a new community, some consideration of the new context should take place and adjustments made as necessary.

broad-based changes. However, the Review 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).

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the evaluand is reaching Strategic Results Framework indicator targets.
Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the intervention demonstrates that Climate Change Adaptation can be increased or replicated at a broader scale, as well as in other contexts.
Green Climate Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the project’s <u>Innovativeness</u> in result areas – the extent to which interventions may lead to paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways.
Global Environment Facility	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the evaluand is reaching Core Indicator targets (from GEF-6 onwards).
Global Environment Facility	The Review will determine, under Effectiveness, the project’s <u>additionality</u> by comparing the benefits of GEF support to a scenario without GEF support. It will identify specific areas where GEF support has contributed additional results and what these additional results were. It will provide quantitative and qualitative evidence to support the findings.

E. Financial Management

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 Review 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 Review 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 Review will record where standard financial documentation is missing, inaccurate, incomplete or unavailable in a timely manner. The Review will assess the level of communication between the UNEP Project 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.

Global Environment Facility	The Review will determine, under Financial Management, i) time from CEO endorsement (FSP) / CEO approval (MSP) to first disbursement; ii) disbursement balance; iii) whether the project has secured co-financing higher than 35% and iv) time between CEO Endorsement and (likely) end of Terminal Review.
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F. Efficiency

Under the efficiency criterion, the Review 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.

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 Review 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 Review 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.

The Review 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 complementarities³⁴ with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency.

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

G. Monitoring and Reporting

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

i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting

Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART³⁵ results towards the achievement of the project's outputs and outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender, marginalisation or vulnerability, including those living with disabilities. In particular, the Review 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 Review 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, where applicable.

ii. Monitoring of Project Implementation

The Review will assess whether the monitoring system was operational and facilitated the timely tracking of results and progress towards project 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

³⁴ Complementarity with other interventions during project design, inception or mobilization is considered under Strategic Relevance above.

³⁵ SMART refers to results that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented. Indicators help to make results measurable.

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 Review should confirm that funds allocated for monitoring were used to support this activity.

iii. Project Reporting

UNEP has a centralised Project Information Management System (PIMS) in which project managers upload six-monthly progress reports against agreed project milestones. This information will be provided to the Review Consultant(s) by the UNEP Project Manager. Some projects have additional requirements to report regularly to funding partners, which will be supplied by the project team. The Review 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.

Global Environment Facility	For internally executed projects the Review Consultant should review the quality of regular reports and confirm they have been submitted on a timely basis.
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H. Sustainability

Sustainability³⁶ 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 Review 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 direct outcomes may also be included.

i. Socio-political Sustainability

The Review 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 Review will consider whether individual capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

ii. Financial Sustainability

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 Review 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

³⁶ As used here, ‘sustainability’ means the long-term maintenance of outcomes and consequent impacts, whether environmental or not. This is distinct from the concept of sustainability in the terms ‘environmental sustainability’ or ‘sustainable development’, which imply ‘not living beyond our means’ or ‘not diminishing global environmental benefits’ (GEF STAP Paper, 2019, Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment)

relevant to financial sustainability where the project 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

The Review 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 Review will consider whether institutional capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

<p>Adaptation Fund</p>	<p>The Review should consider, under <u>Human and ecological sustainability and security</u> – the extent to which the intervention is likely to generate continued positive or negative, intended and unintended impacts beyond its lifetime, taking into consideration, social, institutional, economic, and environmental systems. Is the intervention sensitive to conflict and fragility, i.e., to what extent does it consider the political context and the sharing of natural resources? Is it contributing towards targeted communities’ livelihoods and to the health or well-being of the ecosystems on which they depend?</p>
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I. Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

i. Preparation and Readiness

This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilisation stage of the project (i.e. the time between project approval and first disbursement). The Review 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 Review 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

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 it may refer to the project management performance of an implementing partner 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/Implementing Agency; Partner/Executing Agency) and the overall rating for this sub-category established as a simple average of the two.

The Review 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.

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider the extent to which the evaluand was <u>adapted in response to lessons and reflections during implementation</u> ; and the extent to which the intervention supported the use, development, or diffusion of innovative practices, tools, or technologies to improve or accelerate Climate Change Adaptation.
Global Environment Facility	For internally executed projects the Review Consultant should review whether the segregation of responsibilities met the GEF requirements ³⁷ (the GEF Agency must separate its project implementation and execution duties and establish each of the following: (a) A satisfactory institutional arrangement for the separation of implementation and executing functions in different departments of the GEF Agency; and (b) Clear lines of responsibility, reporting and accountability within the GEF Agency between the project implementation and execution functions.

iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

Here the term ‘stakeholder’ should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs, target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP and the implementing partner(s). 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.

iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

The Review 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 Review will assess to what extent the intervention adheres to UNEP’s Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment³⁸.

The report should present the extent to which the intervention, following an adequate gender analysis at design stage, has implemented the identified actions and/or applied adaptive management to ensure that Gender Equality and Human Rights are adequately taken into account. In particular the Review will consider to what extent project design, 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 women, youth and children and those living with

³⁷ GEF Minimum Fiduciary Standards: Separation of Implementation and Execution Functions in GEF Partner Agencies (2019).

³⁸ The Evaluation Office notes that Gender Equality was first introduced in the UNEP Project Review Committee Checklist in 2010 and, therefore, provides a criterion rating on gender for projects approved from 2010 onwards. Equally, it is noted that policy documents, operational guidelines and other capacity building efforts have only been developed since then and have evolved over time. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7655/-Gender_equality_and_the_environment_Policy_and_strategy-2015Gender_equality_and_the_environment_policy_and_strategy.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

disabilities) in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

<p>Adaptation Fund</p>	<p>The Review should consider the extent to which the project’s design and implementation includes input of the designated authority (DA) and vulnerable groups such as women, youth, persons with disability, Indigenous Peoples, minorities, and other potentially marginalized groups or locations. It also encompasses the degree to which the intervention reduced or perpetuated inequalities, and how equitably benefits were accrued to vulnerable groups.</p>
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v. Environmental and Social Safeguards

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, or mitigation of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities. The Review will confirm whether UNEP requirements³⁹ 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 reviewed above under Quality of Project Design).

The Review will also consider the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP’s environmental footprint.

vi. Country Ownership and Driven-ness

The Review 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 Review will consider the involvement 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 term impact to be realised. Ownership should extend to all gender and marginalised groups.

vii. Communication and Public Awareness

The Review 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

³⁹ For the review of project concepts and proposals, the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) was introduced in 2019 and replaced the Environmental, Social and Economic Review note (ESERN), which had been in place since 2016. In GEF projects safeguards have been considered in project designs since 2011.

at large. The Review 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 Review will comment on the sustainability of the communication channel under either socio-political, institutional or financial sustainability, as appropriate.

Section 3. REVIEW APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

The Terminal Review will be an in-depth review using a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the review process. Both quantitative and qualitative review 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 review implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the review findings. Where applicable, the consultant(s) should 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.)

The findings of the Review will be based on the following:

(a) A **desk review** of:

Relevant background documentation, inter alia;

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 any other monitoring materials etc.;

Project deliverables (e.g. publications, assessments etc)

Mid-Term Review or Mid-Term Evaluation of the project;

Evaluations/Reviews of similar projects.

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

UNEP Task Manager⁴⁰ [TM team];

Project management team;

UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO);

Portfolio Manager or Sub-Programme Coordinator;

Project partners;

⁴⁰ For GEF funded projects, UNEP Project Manager refers to the Task Manager.

Relevant resource persons.

Representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's, farmers and trade associations etc).

(c) **Field visits**

11. Review Deliverables and Review Procedures

See Annex 1 of these TOR for a list of tools and guidance available, see Annex 2 for a list of review criteria and sub-categories to be assessed. The Review Consultant will prepare:

Inception Report: (see Annex 3 of these TOR) containing an assessment of project design quality, a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, review framework and a tentative review 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.

Draft and Final Review Report: (See Annex 4 of these TOR) containing an Executive Summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the review findings organised by review criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

A **Review Brief** (a 2-page overview of the evaluand and review findings) for wider dissemination through the UNEP website may be required. This will be discussed with the UNEP Project Manager no later than during the finalization of the Inception Report.

Review of the Draft Review Report. The Review Consultant will submit a draft report to the UNEP Project Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. The UNEP Project Manager will then forward the revised draft report 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 UNEP Project Manager for consolidation. The UNEP Project Manager will provide all comments to the Review Consultant for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.

The UNEP Evaluation Office provides templates and tools to support the review process and provides a formal assessment of the quality of the final Terminal Review report, which is provided within this report's annexed material. In addition, the Evaluation Office formally validates the report by ensuring that the performance judgments made are consistent with evidence presented in the Review report and in-line with the performance standards set out for independent evaluations. As such the project performance ratings presented in the Review report may be adjusted by the Evaluation Office.

At the end of the review process, the UNEP Project Manager will prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals, and circulate the **Lessons Learned**.

12. The Review Consultant

The Review Consultant will work under the overall responsibility of the UNEP Portfolio Manager Jochem Zoetelief, in consultation with the Fund Management Officer Florence Kahiro.

The Review Consultant will liaise with the UNEP Task Manager on any procedural and methodological matters related to the Review. It is, however, the consultants' 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 Review as efficiently and independently as possible.

The Review Consultant will be hired over a period of 6 months [October/2023 to March/2024] and should have the following: a university degree in Environmental studies, environmental management, environmental protection, international development, environment, or other relevant area is required and an advanced degree in the same areas is desirable; a minimum of 8 years of technical / evaluation experience is required, preferably including evaluating large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach. A broad understanding of the Pacific Region is required, specific experience within the Pacific region is highly desirable. 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.

The Review Consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the UNEP Project Manager, for overall quality of the review and timely delivery of its outputs, described above in Section 11 Review Deliverables, above. The Review Consultant will ensure that all review criteria and questions are adequately covered.

13. Schedule of the Review

The table below presents the tentative schedule.

Table 3. Tentative schedule for the Review

Milestone	Tentative Dates
Inception Report	November 2023
Review Mission	December 2023
E-based interviews, surveys etc.	December 2023
PowerPoint/presentation on preliminary findings and recommendations	January 2024
Draft Review Report to UNEP Project Manager	January 2024
Draft Review Report shared with wider group of stakeholders	February 2024
Final Main Review Report	February 2024
Final Main Review Report submitted to the UNEP Evaluation Office for validation and quality assessment	February 2024

Final Main Review Report shared with all respondents	March 2024
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14. Contractual Arrangements

The Review Consultant(s) will be selected and recruited by the UNEP Project Manager under an individual Special Service Agreement (SSA) on a “fees only” basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UNEP/UNON, the consultant certifies 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.

Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance and approval by the UNEP Project Manager of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:

Schedule of Payment:

Deliverable	Percentage Payment
Approved Inception Report (<i>as per Guidance Note</i>) and Approved Draft Main Review Report (<i>as per Guidance Note</i>)	50%
Approved Final Main Review Report (<i>as per Report Template</i>)	50%

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 UNEP Project Manager and on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion.

The consultant may be provided with access to UNEP’s information management systems (e.g. PIMS, IPMR, 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 Review Report.

In case the consultant is not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the UNEP Project Manager, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Head of Branch/Unit until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UNEP’s quality standards.

If the consultant fails to submit a satisfactory final product to the UNEP Project Manager in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, UNEP reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultant’s fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by the project team to bring the report up to standard or completion.

Annex XI. GEF PORTAL INPUTS (For GEF funded projects)

Table 18. GEF portal inputs

<p>Question: What was the performance at the project’s completion against Core Indicator Targets? (For projects approved prior to GEF-7⁴¹, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided⁴²).</p>
<p>Response: <i>(Might be drawn from Monitoring and Reporting section)</i></p> <p>Given the project focus on improving environmental governance and management in the Pacific region through better data, capacity building, and effective project execution, it did not make a direct and measurable contribution to the GEF 7 Core Indicator Targets. Nonetheless, an indirect contribution was made through the enabling environment with improving environmental data and information through GEF investment and 2,600 people were benefiting directly from GEF-financed investments (based on MTR report).</p>
<p>Question: 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></p>
<p>Response: <i>(Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section)</i></p> <p>The principal stakeholders for the Inform Project were the national level environmental agencies. Their responsiveness to the project can be described as variable and somewhat unpredictable, ranging from strong and relatively even participation, through good participation punctuated by engagement absences, to minimal or discontinued participation. All 14 PICs made co-financing commitment to the project and had support to develop local workplans to guide their activities under the project. Given the wide disparities across the PICs in terms of participation, it is difficult to discern how co-financing of a flat 200k per PIC was equitably demonstrated. Within PICs, the involvement of sectors falling under the broader banner of environment resource management and protection was inconsistent at best, to not occurring at all. The SoEs information seeking processes provided optimum leverage and an entry point for drawing out engagement and integration across sectors, it being a tangible task involving the interests of multiple sectors. The need for baseline information remains critical. Breaking down the barrier of ‘holding back’ valuable information remains an ongoing objective.</p> <p>The Project Steering Committee was the principal mechanism to ensure that stakeholder’s awareness about the project and their opportunity to contribute concerns, ideas and endorsements, was formally addressed.</p> <p>The EU-BIOPAMA program executed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature-IUCN already had formal links with SPREP for its program delivery, so the commitment of funds and continuing engagement was straightforward and occurred fruitfully. The ACP-MEA 2 project was similarly engaged and closely integrated thematically and financially with the Inform project. The Pacific Community - SPC proved to be a significant and constructive project partner, with collaboration with this stakeholder being one of the highpoints of the project and continuing proactively post-project. Other agencies from the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) that would have had valuable inputs to the project, such as USP and FFA, did not engage in any other way.</p>

⁴¹ 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)

⁴² This is not applicable for Enabling Activities

Question: 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)

Response: (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section)

The project contributed to human rights indirectly, through informed evidence-based decision making on the environment and cross-cutting issues. The project is not targeted directly to indigenous peoples per se, but rather is concerned with contributing to the overall betterment of national populations in PICs via data improvements that then support better decisions concerning sustainable development. However, the project did convene, or support, some specific and relevant activities (e.g., for PNG - enhancement of environmental laws and area management supporting customary landowner rights to preserve their heritage, maintain their livelihoods, and exercise autonomy over their lands).

Conceptually, the project recognizes that gender equality and human rights are an inherent and genuine concern and that this project contributed positively to alleviating gender and human rights challenges (albeit via indirect means). Gender and minority grouping / disaggregation was kept in mind and intentions and responses identified in PIRs throughout the project (although concrete outputs were limited in scope). Gender mainstreaming was an important component in both the implementation and reporting phases of the project. Reporting required gender-disaggregated data for participants in capacity-building activities, ensuring the participation of women in project steering and decision-making processes. The PIR reports included specific on gender, highlighting this commitment. The rise in female engagement with the portal, systems, and environmental monitoring underscores the project's success in contributing positively to closing the gender gap in data management. By encouraging more women to participate actively, the platform's self-paced courses have facilitated increased female representation. Moreover, participation records from capacity-building trainings show a trend of higher representation of women, further demonstrating the project's success in promoting gender equity equality.

Question: 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)

Response: (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section)

This being a predominantly cross-cutting capacity development (CCCD)/ building project - in which no interventions involving activities that potentially would pollute/degrade the environment or physically disrupt or alter existing ecosystems, animals habitats, people livelihoods or other cultural establishments – it had been assessed and approved as a low risk project at GEF CEO approval and has remained as such throughout implementation.

Although not in the original ToC or in the reconstructed ToC version, the original results framework does, however, identify risks and assumptions associated with each output, as does the Post MTR Results Framework. The ProDoc includes Section 3.6. Risk analysis and risk management measures and a table specifying these elements. Annual project implementation reports provide more granular summary of a wide range of risk factors and are given risk ratings.

A 'risk' layer component of a ToC provides opportunity to introduces important considerations and can serve to identify pragmatic/ moderating elements to the causal pathway that may otherwise be overlooked in developing aspirational project outcome scenarios. A risk (as distinct from issues or challenges) is a nominated event or condition with a possibility of uncertain occurrence that can impact the project goals and objectives either positively or negatively (i.e., a PIC may not designate and adequately resource a project coordination person). In project reflection and review phases, the reason something didn't occur as desired, or effectively, may be because a risk ultimately proved to

be a critical limiting factor in achieving certain project outcomes. An 'assumption' is a notion that portrays possibility, yet without reliability, e.g., hoping that a project stakeholder will agree to, or undertake, a specific activity required to facilitate projects outputs or outcomes). Until an assumption is justified, it still signifies a risk.

The ProDoc ToC and the post MTR reconstructed ToC portray assumptions as the optimistic conditions that could occur to facilitate outputs/outcomes (i.e., the presence of desire, awareness, support, commitment, demand, willingness, investment, application, arrangements, collaboration). The premise is that a range of supportive circumstances will materialize in an effective manner on their own, or as a direct result of project interventions. However, in some cases they may not transpire due to unique national, institutional, sectoral, systemic or inter-personal challenges (and not lead to sufficient change) despite strong efforts from the project to facilitate them.

ProDoc Appendix 13: Environmental and social issues checklist, provided an opportunity at project design to nominate potential impact issues (financial not included). This checklist was minimally populated, which is perhaps a reflection of the degree of attention placed on these considerations at the time of design. However, it is still a design weakness.

Mechanisms to reduce negative environmental footprint or project are considered unsatisfactory since the Pro Doc does not address this aspect in terms of identifying potential contributions to the project's environmental footprint (negatively) and proposing mitigation mechanisms (e.g., mitigating carbon emissions associated with project air travel).

Question: 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)*

Response: *(Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section)*

A communication and visibility plan was developed post MTR and assisted in continuing, and sharpening, the communications activity commenced at project inception (sans a plan). Initial communications activity had a focus on explaining the nature of the Inform project and the main thrust of the post MTR communication and visibility plan seemed to continue this path (i.e., a promotional focus). The Inform project has demonstrated an impressive quantum of communication (many news stories about events) and visibility activity and materials. In terms of 'public' awareness it is unlikely that the average citizen would have any specific interest in this project and communication effort toward this broad sector would not have been a wise use of resources.

The volume and quality of communication and public awareness materials produced, and dissemination methods (including via newsletters, press releases, social media, on-line access to products, email blasts and YouTube), and showcasing in major climate conferences such as COP27 and SIDS-4 with focus on SoEs and Environmental Indicators, ensured that the Inform project had high potential to become widely known. However, it is unclear to what degree this effort facilitated greater engagement and knowledge about what Inform offered or strengthened participation and commitment and the realization of project outcomes at ground level, particularly across wider critical institutional and sectoral groups.

What is apparent is that engagement activity throughout the project was of a high caliber. In-person engagements, active learning-by-doing workshops, interactive two-way forums, direct technical support, and showcasing (and visualization) products that clearly display the practical usefulness of having good information and data, appeared to be the optimum avenues to promote uptake and involvement on improved data management.

The development and dissemination of project resources (both online and hardcopy) is not included in this rating of communication and public awareness (see paragraphs 327 – 331, page 81 - 82).

Question: What are the main findings of the evaluation?

Response:

Conclusions

The essential elements of the Inform projects' four components and outcome areas (namely the design of national and regional databases; environmental data used for planning and reporting; capacity development to support the technical facility, and project management and evaluation) were largely, and to varying degrees, well delivered and achieved within the scope and context of a relatively modest budget and a range of challenging implementation circumstances.

This achievement is captured as follows as favorable findings, set against project challenges, moderated through matters for further reflection and informed by lessons learned. Key actions that could be considered or undertaken in the post-project termination period are provided as recommendations.

Favorable findings

1. The conceptualization and design of the Inform project responded purposefully to the key relevant issues, broad needs and gaps concerning environmental data and information and set a sound model for required resources and implementation for practical improvements.
2. There is unilateral recognition across key stakeholders and partners that the Inform project was a competently managed, cost effective, foundational initiative toward improving the security, centralization and accessibility of environmental data and information for the Pacific region.
3. The main physical project outputs were of a high standard. Functional technical apparatus comprising regional and national portals were housed within an information network known as the Pacific Environment Portal (PEP) <https://docs.pacific-data.sprep.org/>. The PEP was enhanced through guidance tools (standard procedure and practice on data governance and data management, data sharing templates, standard regional environmental indicators, indicator reporting tool, data collection options) and instructional resources showing users how to utilize these resources, <https://indicators.sprep.org/user/login>
4. A substantial body of data and information has been now transferred and preserved, and a robust, structured framework for continuing contributions and cross-harvesting, with publishing capacity, is in place with regional and national portal interfaces accommodated within the PEP. PICs can choose to host or not host (or alternatively host via SPREP) their national portal.
5. A major advance under the project was the crucial bond, and flagship partnership, established between the SPC Pacific Data Hub PDH and the Inform / SPREP Pacific Environment Portal to create the foundations for a wider 'ecosystem' of seamless, integrated data management – a good community of practice model.
6. The Inform project stimulated initial mobilization and open sharing of a critical mass of legacy and institutional environmental data and information that supported the development and use of tools and sharing systems. It demonstrated its utility in the preparation of the Regional State of Environment and Conservation in the Pacific Islands Report, 2020 and the recent (last five years) suite of national State of the Environment (SoE) reports and National Environment Management Strategies (NEMS).
7. The development of SoE reports was perhaps the most successful and beneficial legacy output from the project, with considerable targeted support and resources allocated by the project and forming a critical, and well accepted, entry point for data seeking and collation. Although the available data quality underpinning these types of documents is generally

recorded as being of a low to moderate confidence level, they do serve to draw attention to critical environmental evidence and indicators, drivers, trends, and areas of concern, equipping policymakers with sufficient insights to guide and develop targeted strategies to address environmental challenges. <https://library.sprep.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/SOE-conservation-pacific-regional-report.pdf>

8. The Inform project, via its comprehensive capacity building actions, demonstrably strengthened the broad knowledge level across PICs concerning environmental data and information and equally, if not more importantly, assisted in promoting enhanced attitudes, habits and practices (and trust levels) relating to data management more generally. Stakeholders have been able to reflect on aspects of their environmental data and information circumstances and recognize critical gaps (particularly baseline data and specific information required for MEAs) that require more targeted attention if they are to achieve comprehensive, authoritative reference points for planning and decisions.
9. Agility in responding pro-actively to substantial challenges spanning 14 countries was a hallmark of the Inform project. Several testing circumstances were encountered particularly the Covid-19 pandemic and severe natural disaster events. The project had to contend with the array of conventional challenges (namely severe resource and capacity limitations) that beset projects in a region comprised of small island developing countries (including 3 least developed countries and one emerging economy).
10. Strong links (along with shared resources and joint activity) were recognized and established with foundational projects such as the EU ACP-MEA 2 project, related platforms such as UNESCO, GEO and SIO, and allied projects such as the GCF-funded UNEP CIS-Pac5 Project, the EU-OACPS BIOPAMA programme, the EU-OACPS Pacific BioScapes Project, the UNJP SESS project and the EU funded PacWaste Plus project, and with other related projects and initiatives in the region. Further, SPREP has wide ranging responsibilities for, and relationships with, multiple environmental programmes, projects and initiatives which provides substantial opportunity for ongoing population of the PEP with more current and wide-ranging data.
11. In planning ahead, a concept note has been prepared outlining a future iteration of 'Inform' and which has identified key focus areas such as the need for national environmental standards, monitoring and data collection standards, data management using the PEP, GIS mobilization and environmental data advocacy – all of which are elements that were beyond the full reach of the Inform project 2017 – 2023.

Main project challenges

1. PICs experience significant limitations in human and financial resourcing making closely applied external assistance a pre-requisite for most development initiatives.
2. Staffing structures and cohorts in PIC national government agencies undergo regular change, turnover and disruption, and with positions often unfilled, resulting in interrupted project participation, communication and participation.
3. PICS are highly vulnerable to external challenges and threats with lower capacity to respond to their impacts thus exposing the likelihood of disruptions with project attention and resources, This requires alternative work approaches, timing and outputs to be composed by project management units on a regular basis.
4. The increasing abundance of funding opportunities, interventions and organizations responding to environmental issues across the region is a positive situation yet is also fraught by stretching minimal national resources with unrealistic participation commitments.
5. Preparing responses to MEA reporting, and particularly the SDGs, and producing periodic state of the environment reports is a cross-sectoral collaboration process critically involving contribution of data and information from the full suite of environment thematic areas (biodiversity, all land uses, marine, waste, climate), yet remains an area experiencing variable commitment to unified efforts from key data and information holders.
6. Systemic, institutional or individual concerns about access to, or the sharing and use of data and information (sensitivity, effort required, competing priorities, data system familiarities and

preferences, gatekeeping/control), is prevalent enough throughout the region to constitute a key barrier prolonging the building of an improved body of centralized regional and national environmental data and information.

Matters for further reflection

1. The project did not have the benefit of a well resolved TOC and results framework and importantly no consistent use of suitably expressed outcome statements and specific indicators to determine outcome progress. Project performance and results have largely been measured through activity and outputs.
2. The development, refinement and re-application of project implementation and performance indicators would have benefitted from annual re-examination for their suitability as new information and paradigms emerged.
3. The relatively modest GEF funding envelope for this project did not (mostly) provide resources for dedicated in-country data specialist positions and relied on such roles being deployed internally via co-financing contributions or with assistance from opportunistic funding sources, resulting in PIC internal data work being in some cases insufficient, lapsing, or not occurring.
4. The degree to which the Inform project has driven independent national capacity for reporting on MEAs and in producing SoEs, NEMS and the like, and has influenced decision-making, appears to be uneven across the region. Although a few specific instances of a data/decision-making connection are noted elsewhere in this report, there remains a broad weakness with ongoing forward movement on practical, independent uptake and application by PICs of the PEP, its enabling mechanisms (e.g., data sharing mechanisms) and related action areas such as MEA reporting.
5. While there were some overt examples of positive use cases emanating from the project (production of SoEs in particular), more concerted effort could have been undertaken to demonstrate other practical, compelling application and products that benefited (or could in the future benefit) from a centralized, populated environmental data repository and its allied tools.
6. SoEs were built up from data and information resources that ranged in quality between being imperfect to reasonable to good, in terms of availability, age, accuracy and specificity. Although 13 PICs were supported to produce a SoE report 'product' that gave general indications about environmental status and trends, there remain significant information gaps in some thematic areas and scope for strengthening the confidence level around some conclusions and actions recommended.
7. The data and information pipeline relies on the supply of good quality, current and ongoing material and sound data management systems at the source locations (the portal is a subsequent pipeline point) and the project was not able to address this element as fully as desirable during its timeframe, with the focus being on capturing 'any and all' relevant available data in existence to give foundational life and content to the portal.
8. There was a lack of opportunity, or inability, to effectively engage some important data partners/owners and stakeholders, including some CROP agencies, national government sectors beyond a core environment sector, regional and international environment and conservation organizations.
9. While commitments to project co-financing are generally granted without undue hesitancy and often well in advance of a project approval point, how the stated financial/in-kind contributions are supplied in concrete terms can be a vague accounting zone and can negatively skew the picture of work achieved compared to the 'on-paper' total of project funding (grant and co-finance).
10. As the PEP has basic functions and most resources on the PEP are in pdf format and metadata is not consistently available, users need to manually 'trawl' documents, as they cannot be readily probed for the retrieval of specific data and information (the wider internet remains a vital source of information. Although mostly user friendly, the PEP still necessitates a degree of training, technical support and key word dexterity in data uploading and interrogation

aspects and would be improved with further development of the navigation dashboard and data analysis and interpretation functions.

11. The existence of the PEP and the SPREP Virtual Library sharing close airspace remains a somewhat undefined portfolio relationship.
12. The Inform project endeavored to develop an open data culture and platform that is available to all Pacific Island people regardless of educational attainment, gender, or age. However, regard to gender was not strongly embedded initially as a fundamental project element (potentially because the project had a technical focus and was not overtly targeted at communities or on ground issues). In addition to participation records and gender promotion via the portal (which were done well) more attention could have been afforded to consideration of gender entry points, gender disaggregated indicators and consideration of specific budget lines and activities.

Lessons learned

1. The conceptual design of a ToC and results framework should commence at the beginning of project formulation and be treated as the fundamental project 'blueprint', reflection point, revision model and template, and monitoring tool, and comprise the full suite of contemporary ToC and results framework elements and attributes.
2. Project design documents should identify an 'inception' or 'establishment' period more formally during the first year (six to twelve months) of a multi-year project. The inception period to be distinguished from activity implementation work and associated budget allocations (i.e., inception work and costs should be identified in a separate 'inception' budget). The quantum of activity implementation work and associated budget allocations in the first year should be measured realistically against the availability of progressively developing human and other resources, systems, agreements, and donor funding flows that are required for programme management and coordination purposes.
3. Sufficient staffing / consultancy / contractor / advisory positions should be budgeted for in recognition of the minimal to non-existent resources PICs have internally to host or contribute to projects (despite co-finance aspirations) and the need to have dedicated in-country personnel as a pre-requisite to achieving project outputs/outcomes. Consideration should be given to recruiting from a wider pool than only national level – regional or international, although national applicants would be favored (yet still merit-based).
4. Setting up funding continuity should be considered well in advance of the project termination point particularly for projects that are in the realm of being pilot in nature (albeit a substantial pilot project such as Inform) as reductions or gaps in workflow and engagement (potentially exacerbated by extended 'wind-up' stages associated with no-cost extensions), can contribute to dropping participation levels from stakeholders. Additionally, the wind-down period toward the termination point should be well planned and executed to help stakeholders move through this point, and onward, more independently and within their realistic resource levels.
5. A high degree and quality of stakeholder engagement, together with competent project leadership and collective teamwork, are key for achieving project goals in a moderately unfavorable environment.
6. The notion of 'data' can be a daunting concept for most people, carrying with it foreboding about having to understand or use intricate technical systems and processes that are only possible under specialist minds and hands.
7. There is a need to promote the model that attention to SDGs, SOEs, NEMSS and the like requires evenly contributed participation and responsibility across multiple sectors and stakeholders and is not something that is the sole concern or implementation duty of specific 'environment' agencies (although a coordination role can be appropriate).
8. Participation cohorts to workshops, meetings, training and relevant forums can often consist of individuals who have been nominated to attend as the opportunity and funding presented, (but the most appropriate candidate was unavailable), resulting in positive numeric

attendance records yet poor results as proxy participants may not be able to make decisions, or carry skills back to the workplace point where they will be most useful.

9. Maintenance costs increase with adoption and uptake of developed tools and should be factored into the sustainability and scaling up of project outputs and outcomes.
10. A monitoring and evaluation system, including information tools and progress tracker, should be established quite early in a project at project management level and national levels (if possible), providing more clinical progress visualization rather than narrative reporting, and be utilized as the formal, informative basis for regularly convened review sessions.
11. Key senior contact / focal points in the Pacific region invariably juggle multiple duties across their specific 'day jobs' as well as invariably holding designated roles for a range of national commitments and initiatives and can be stretched to provide timely responses or adequate support and attentiveness to a single project.
12. While the dispersed and remote nature of PICs (and challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic) make usage of virtual communication a necessity and are generally a successful communication method, in person modalities for key meetings, workshops, forums, training and engagement will remain by far the preferred and most effective way for interaction, trust and relationship-building in the region. However, this approach should be weighed thoughtfully against the downsides which include high travel costs, workplace and personal disruptions and aviation contributions to GHG emissions.
13. Conversely to the many challenging issues relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, work focus during the border closure periods were heightened in some respects due to the extended non-travel period placing less demand on individuals to be away from their workplaces.
14. PICS have an expectation that relevant regional bodies will also become increasingly major suppliers of important data and information to the PEP.
15. Gender equity and social inclusion needs additional shifts to move it from being a topic on the supplementary edges of project consideration, to being a fundamental component of project design and implementation.
16. Independent project reviews (MTR, MLTR) provide a wide array of useful project performance commentary and should be retained as a specifically stored and easily retrievable resource and used as a base reference in future project design and implementation processes.
17. As the PEP becomes increasingly well-populated and sophisticated, there is a risk that projects that would characteristically plan in, and utilize, interactive engagement and consultation activity with PICs (remote or in-country) could wane, as required information can instead be sufficiently acquired from the PEP.
18. Where large regional organizations are based (e.g., Apia, Samoa, or Suva, Fiji) or in countries where major allied projects are being implemented, there is an inadvertent tendency for project efforts to be more favorable to those national governments due to proximity or convenience, to the potential disadvantage of other PICs.

Recommendations

1. SPREP should prepare an 'Inform update' to outline to stakeholders where the project (and post-project phase) has now arrived, what services it continues to sustain, any technical developments of note, and provide a strategic snapshot of where it is intending to steer data and information service initiatives going forward over the next 5 to 10 years. This could include statements in regard to funding opportunities (phrased to the level of funding confidence), practical examples of important products arising from the collection of data, stories on provoking and interesting information, and even 'simulations of potential' usage and value.
2. It is essential that the content and language expressed in ToCs and results frameworks is well resolved and articulates the clearest possible project direction and intentions. UNEP should collate a widely thematic set of good practice examples of ToCs and results frameworks and develop accompanying guideline resources to inform both UNEP internally and other partner

agencies involved in project design in their application, including for project monitoring and evaluation

3. In planning ahead, a concept note has been prepared outlining a future iteration of 'Inform' and which has identified key focus areas such as the need for national environmental standards, monitoring and data collection standards, data management using the PEP, GIS mobilization and environmental data advocacy – all of which are elements that were beyond the full reach of the Inform project 2017 – 2023. This concept should be subjected to further discussion and revision processes by UNEP and SPREP based on matters arising from organizational reflection and information provided by this MLTR.
4. The PEP requires the development and deployment of additional functions, automations, and analysis tools including consideration of AI (retrieval augmented generation tools), to move it from being a catalogued data repository and tidy dashboard (a library) and toward having enhanced querying capacity where specific information can be retrieved and visualized.
5. To ensure the PEP is being populated with up-to-date data and information and continues to evolve into an authoritative platform, a tandem sub-activity/project should be implemented (within single or multiple PICs) to support routine monitoring and data collection according to environmental standards and key environmental indicators. Data collection would involve systematic gathering of quantitative and/or qualitative data with appropriate tools (the KoBoToolbox introduced through the Inform project could be revisited) and portal uploading linkages. This could be pursued through SPREPs current programme and project cluster, where opportunities arise.
6. Data and information gatekeeping points and blockage zones are a critical outreach area to identify, prioritize, engage, encourage, and resolve suitably (where realistically possible) if the PEP is to achieve its intended purpose and value.
7. While opportunistic activity is now the pragmatic route within SPREPs resources in the post-Inform project period (meaning connections and work with specific projects/sectors such as climate information, waste, protected areas, invasive species), consideration needs to be given to how and where other critical stakeholders and partners who collect and manage environmental data (and there are many), can be prioritized, engaged and encouraged to know about the data sharing network and become positive contributors to a community of (data) practice (CROP agencies in particular due to their cooperation remit).
8. In designing and implementing future projects, responsiveness to gender equity, and social inclusivity more broadly, should be expanded well beyond the rudimentary tracking of participation statistics and to more forthrightly identify the roles of all genders and social groups to support their potential as drivers of sustainable development. Future projects should align with contemporary perceptions and definitions of gender and social inclusiveness expressed in UN and other relevant policy frameworks
9. The Inform project is recognized by UNEP and SPREP as one of its 'successful' projects and one that can offer key lessons and approaches for other projects. To avoid any key project missteps or weaknesses being repeated (in a future iteration of Inform or any relevant project), all important project experiences (i.e., via MTR and MLTR reporting, organizational reflection sessions, project reports, and whether concerning technical, administrative, engagement or communication aspects), need to be distilled, recorded, conserved securely, and collated in an organized, retrievable format.

Table 1: Project Performance Ratings Table (further details on this rating table can be found in Section V. of this report)

Criterion	Rating
viii. Strategic Relevance	HS/6
ix. Quality & Revision of Project Design	MS/4
x. <i>Nature of external context (not included in overall rating of performance)</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>

xi. Effectiveness	S/5 <i>(Evaluation Office of UNEP – EOU - uses a weighted ratings table. This gives an aggregate rating for Effectiveness at the Moderately Satisfactory level.)</i>
xii. Financial Management	HS/6
xiii. Efficiency	HS/6
xiv. Monitoring and Reporting	S/5
xv. Sustainability	MS/4
xvi. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues	HS/6 <i>(The EOU's weighted approach gives an aggregate rating for Factors Affecting Performance at the Satisfactory level.)</i>
Overall project rating	Highly satisfactory <i>(The EOU's weighted approach gives an aggregate rating for Overall Project Performance at the Satisfactory level.)</i>

1 (Highly Unsatisfactory)	< 1.83	4 (Moderately Satisfactory)	>=3.5 <=4.33
2 (Unsatisfactory)	>= 1.83 < 2.66	5 (Satisfactory)	>4.33 <= 5.16
3 (Moderately Unsatisfactory)	>=2.66 <3.5	6 (Highly Satisfactory)	> 5.16

Note: The EOU notes that a weighted approach is used within the sub-criterion, as well as in aggregating the review criteria themselves.

The Reviewer notes that, although a criterion may rate modestly (e.g., Quality and revision of project design / moderately satisfactory), a criterion may contain numerous sub-criterion, some of which rate very highly and others very poorly, however the total aggregated rating reflects a weighted average of the high and low ratings. Similarly, a high rated criterion may also include a quite poor rating on a particular sub-criterion, yet still rate highly once all sub-criterion are aggregated.

Annex XII. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Project Title and Reference No.: Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and State of Environment Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific and GEF ID 5195

Contact Person (TM/PM): Jochem Zoetelief

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
1. Produce and disseminate an Inform 'update'	Yes	As part of knowledge sharing efforts and provide updates, SPREP organized a Knowledge Sharing – unveiling remarkable achievements, valuable lessons, and opportunities. Similarly, UNEP produced a web story on the contributions of the project. Looking ahead, the UNEP Chief Digital Office is preparing for a multistakeholder consultation on the Global Environmental Data Strategy (GEDS). An additional consultation, focused on the Pacific Islands, is tentatively scheduled for December 11, 2014, and will include an update on Inform.	December 11, 2024	UNEP Chief Digital Office
2. Develop good practice resources for the development of ToCs and results frameworks	Yes	In 2023, the UNEP Policy and Programme Division developed a corporate Programme and Project Management Manual , accompanied by webinars and additional resources.	Completed in 2023	UNEP Policy and Programme Division (PPD)

	PLANS			
RECOMMENDATIONS	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
		Accordingly, the Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit develops funding proposals that incorporate results frameworks and Theories of Change, which subsequently inform project monitoring and evaluation.		
3. Refinement of an 'Inform II' concept note	Yes	<p>A concept note has been prepared outlining a future iteration of 'Inform'. This has identified key focus areas such as the need for national environmental standards, monitoring and data collection standards, data management using the PEP, GIS mobilization and environmental data advocacy – all of which are elements that were beyond the full reach of the Inform project 2017 – 2023.</p> <p>Recommendations 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of this MLTR will also be articulated, as appropriate, in the concept note and in developing a more detailed project proposal.</p>	December 2024 - Concept Approval Group (CAG) meeting planned for December 3, 2024.	UNEP Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit
4. Enhance functionality of the PEP	Yes	<p>The current PEP is a good on-line catalogued data repository with a tidy dashboard (a library) that has potential to be greatly strengthened toward having enhanced querying capacity where specific information can be retrieved and visualized.</p> <p>Additional functions, automations, and analysis tools including consideration of Artificial</p>	December 2024 - Concept Approval Group (CAG) meeting planned for December 3, 2024.	UNEP Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit

	PLANS			
RECOMMENDATIONS	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
		Intelligence (i.e., retrieval augmented generation tools), will be incorporated as part of the concept note of Inform II to enhance the Pacific Environment Portal.		
5. Collecting data and information to strengthen the PEP	Yes	<p>Routine monitoring and data collection, in accordance with environmental standards and key environmental indicators, will take place as pilot efforts within a single or a cluster of Pacific Island Countries (PICs). Data collection should involve the systematic gathering of quantitative and/or qualitative data using appropriate tools (the KoBoToolbox, introduced through the Inform project, could be revisited), along with portal uploading linkages.</p> <p>The population and strengthening of data and information for the PEP will be incorporated as part of the concept note for Inform II.</p>	December 2024 - Concept Approval Group (CAG) meeting planned for December 3, 2024.	UNEP Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit
6. Conduct targeted outreach to improve the extent of regional and national data and information provision	Yes	The United Nations Environment Assembly adopted Resolution 4/23 and a Ministerial Declaration, calling on UNEP to develop and prioritize the Global Environmental Data Strategy (GEDS). The overarching goal of GEDS is to ensure that high-quality, accessible environmental data is available to support global, regional, and national efforts to address the triple planetary environmental crises of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. The strategy is being developed through a	December 11, 2024	UNEP Office of the Chief Digital Officer

	PLANS			
RECOMMENDATIONS	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
		<p>multistakeholder consultation and focuses on five key areas: data quality, interoperability, access, governance, and capacity-building.</p> <p>The UNEP Chief Digital Office is preparing for a multistakeholder consultation focused on the Pacific Islands, engaging governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector. These discussions will guide the strategy's development by addressing challenges and opportunities related to environmental data, including the extension of reach and the enhancement of regional and national data provision and quality.</p>		
7. Continue to strengthen gender dimensions within UNEP interventions	Yes	<p>In 2023, the UNEP Policy and Programme Division developed a corporate Programme and Project Management Manual, with a strong gender component across all the project management life-cycle.</p> <p>Accordingly, the Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit will continue to ensure responsiveness to gender equity and social inclusivity in project development and implementation, as outlined in the UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability (ESS) Framework and UNEP's Programme and Project Management Manual.</p>	Completed in 2023	UNEP Policy and Programme Division (PPD)

	PLANS			
RECOMMENDATIONS	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
8. Make records of project experiences readily available	Yes	<p>The Inform project is recognized by UNEP and SPREP as a 'successful' project (further confirmed by the overall project performance rating of this MLTR), and one that can offer key lessons and approaches for other projects and to assist in avoiding missteps and weaknesses.</p> <p>Inform project experiences (i.e., via MTR and MLTR reporting, meetings sessions, project reports, and whether concerning technical, administrative, engagement or communication aspects), are distilled, recorded, conserved securely, and collated in the UN-wide Open Data Portal, the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting (IPMR), and the GEF Individual Project Implementation Records (publicly available).</p>	December 2024	UNEP Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit

The following is a summary of lessons learned from some of the project's experiences and based upon explicit findings of the review. They briefly describe the context from which the lessons are derived, and the potential for wider application:

Lesson Learned #1:	Attention to the design and use of a Theory of Change and Results Framework
Context/comment:	The ToC and results framework provide the fundamental blueprint, guide and gauge for project direction, implementation, review and adjustment. Weak ToC content, and subsequently a weakened results framework, will not facilitate confidence and clarity on whether project outputs provide optimum pathways toward desired

	<p>outcomes, results and impacts. It may also result in ‘false starts’ in some aspects of implementation. The conceptual design of a ToC and results framework should be treated as a priority design task and then remain as the ‘living’ model for reflection and review throughout implementation. They form the base tools for a good monitoring and evaluation system to regularly track implementation and performance and need to comprise the full suite of contemporary ToC and results framework elements and attributes.</p> <p>Development of a well resolved and clearly articulated ToC and results framework may require the use of niche expertise in assisting project initiators and implementers with this important task. Further, a monitoring and evaluation system, including information tools and progress tracker, should be established quite early in a project at project management level and national levels (if possible), providing clinical progress visualization rather than narrative reporting, and utilized as the formal, informative basis for regularly convened review sessions.</p>
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Lesson Learned #2:	Identification of a project implementation ‘establishment/inception’ phase
Context/comment:	<p>Project workplans invariably identify implementation activity commencement from the date of a PCA entering into force (or similar formal commencement point). This does not reflect that, after this time point, essential project management personnel may then need to be recruited, inception workshops convened with stakeholders, and organisational systems and procedures understood and initiated before any substantive project implementation can realistically occur. Project design documents should formally identify an ‘inception’ or ‘establishment’ period during the first year (six to twelve months) of a multi-year project.</p> <p>The inception period should be distinguished from, and separately scheduled, from activity implementation work and associated budget allocations (i.e., inception work and costs should be identified in a separate ‘inception’ budget). The quantum of actual activity implementation work and associated budget allocations in the first year should be measured and staged realistically against the availability of progressively developing human and other resources, systems, agreements, and donor funding flows that are required for programme management and coordination purposes.</p>

Lesson Learned #3:	Planning an exit strategy
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Context/comment:	<p>Projects in developing regions are often inclusive of a high level of capacity support with the intention that skills and resources deployed through the implementation period will assist in sustaining momentum in target countries post-project. The reality of national resourcing and capacity levels is that this objective may only be partially successful and there is a need to carefully consider how a project wind-down and 'hand-over' is managed.</p> <p>The project closure period should be well planned in advance and executed in ways that help stakeholders understand and move through this point, and onward, more independently and within their realistic resource levels. Exploring and sourcing funding continuity opportunities should be considered well in advance of the project termination point particularly for projects that are in the realm of being pilot in nature, as reductions or gaps in workflow and engagement (potentially exacerbated by extended 'wind-up' stages associated with no-cost extension/s), can contribute to dropping stakeholder participation.</p>
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Annex XIII. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF REVIEW REPORT

Review Title: 'Inform' Project, Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and State of Environment Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific

Consultant: Tony O'Keeffe

All UNEP Reviews are subject to a quality assessment by the UNEP Evaluation Office. This is an assessment of the quality of the review product (i.e. Main Review Report).

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Review Report Rating
Report Quality Criteria		
<p>Quality of the Executive Summary Purpose: acts as a stand alone and accurate <u>summary</u> of the main review product, especially for senior management. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concise overview of the review object • clear summary of the review objectives and scope • overall review rating of the project and key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) against exceptional criteria • reference to where the review ratings table can be found within the report • summary response to key strategic review questions • summary of the main findings of the exercise/synthesis of main conclusions • summary of lessons learned and recommendations. 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions): The Executive Summary covers most of the required elements, with the exception of the key strategic questions.</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The Executive Summary discusses the main strengths and challenges experienced in project implementation, the performance ratings of the main criteria as well as the overall performance, lessons learned and recommendations. The text is, however, quite extensive and would have benefitted from having a more concise presentation. The recommendations are quite numerous and not formulated in a manner that clearly indicates what the proposed action is, its agency and timeframe, and what level of priority it should be given (note that this is also the case in the main report (i.e. in Chapter IV). Additionally, responses to the key strategic review questions have been omitted from both the executive summary and the main report.</p>	3
<p>Quality of the 'Introduction' Section Purpose: introduces/<u>situates</u> the evaluand in its institutional context, establishes its main parameters (time, value, results, geography) and the purpose of the review itself. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • institutional context of the project (sub-programme, Division, Branch etc) • date of PRC approval, project duration and start/end dates • number of project phases (where appropriate) • results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. POW Direct Outcome) • coverage of the review (regions/countries where implemented) 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions): The section is complete except for minor omissions</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The introduction provides an overview of the project's goal, timelines, coverage, budget, previous reviews and aspects of its institutional context. Although the Implementing Division/Branch and the key intended audience for the findings are not identified in the introduction section, they are covered in Chapter II of the report.</p>	5

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementing and funding partners • total secured budget • whether the project has been reviewed/evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, external agency etc.) • concise statement of the purpose of the review and the key intended audience for the findings. 		
<p>Quality of the 'Review Methods' Section</p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> provides reader with clear and comprehensive description of review methods, demonstrates the <u>credibility</u> of the findings and performance ratings.</p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • description of review data collection methods and information sources • justification for methods used (e.g. qualitative/ quantitative; electronic/face-to-face) • number and type of respondents (see <i>table template</i>) • selection criteria used to identify respondents, case studies or sites/countries visited • strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and consultation • methods to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. vulnerable, gender, marginalised etc) • details of how data were verified (e.g. triangulation, review by stakeholders etc.) • methods used to analyse data (scoring, coding, thematic analysis etc) • review limitations (e.g. low/ imbalanced response rates across different groups; gaps in documentation; language barriers etc) • 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 review process and in the compilation of the Final Review 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> 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions):</p> <p>Most of the required elements have been addressed, with the exception of a description of how data were verified.</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</p> <p>This section discusses the main data collection methods and sources, including the rationale for their selection. Gender and ethical considerations are mentioned, including efforts to meet directly with project participants at the local level. A table summarising the respondents' sample is included and is disaggregated by gender. Limitations to the review have also been discussed.</p> <p>The section could have benefitted from more detailed explanation of how data were verified / triangulated.</p>	5
<p>Quality of the 'Project' Section</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"> • <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) 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions):</p> <p>This section is complete. All required elements are addressed.</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</p> <p>The section could have benefitted from less duplication of text already covered elsewhere (e.g. institutional context of the project is already covered under sections I and V.A.), and from presenting the full version of acronyms and abbreviation upon their first use within the text (e.g. in</p>	5

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Results framework</i>: summary of the project's results hierarchy as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised) • <i>Stakeholders</i>: description of groups of targeted stakeholders organised according to relevant common characteristics • <i>Project implementation structure and partners</i>: description of the implementation structure with diagram and a list of key project partners • <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 • <i>Project financing</i>: completed tables of: (a) budget at design and expenditure by components (b) planned and actual sources of funding/co-financing 	<p>section 'III.D. Stakeholders' such instances are numerous).</p>	
<p>Quality of the Theory of Change</p> <p><u>Purpose</u>: to set out the TOC at Review 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"> • description of how the <i>TOC at Review</i>⁴³ was designed (who was involved etc) • confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions • articulation of causal pathways • identification of drivers and assumptions • identification of key actors in the change process • 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'. This table may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear somewhere in the Main Review report.</i> 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions):</p> <p>The TOC is presented in diagrammatic format and there is an accompanying narrative. However, the review focuses on the TOC that was developed during the MTR and a narrative that critiques it. There is no TOC reconstruction at the Terminal Review included in this section.</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</p> <p>The TOC diagram has remained unchanged from its previous formulation at MTR. The review discusses the deficiencies noted in the TOC at MTR but does not proceed to present a reconstruction of the TOC at Terminal Review stage.</p> <p>The discussion identifies, correctly, that the formulation of Output and Outcome statements in the TOC at MTR is not consistent with their proper definition, and also critiques it for not including intermediate outcomes/changes of state, yet no effort was made to revise the TOC at Review as a way of amending these shortcomings.</p> <p>The Review does not provide a well-reasoned analysis of the project's causal logic i.e. systematically elaborating on the results chains/ pathways from Output level though to the longer-term Impact.</p> <p>The section would have benefited from a reconstruction of the TOC at Terminal Review, accompanied by a narrative that helps to articulate the project's the causal</p>	<p>2</p>

⁴³ During the Inception Phase of the review process a *TOC at Review 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 review process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the *TOC at Review*.

	pathways, and the respective Drivers and Assumptions.	
<p>Quality of Key Findings within the Report</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 review criterion or a strategic question from the TOR. A finding should go beyond description and uses analysis to provide insights that aid learning specific to the evaluand. 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>Final report (coverage/omissions): There are no stand-alone finding statements within the report. Findings are embedded within the report under the relevant review criteria.</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Although statements of findings that are specific to each review criterion were not included, examples and sources of evidence have been used to provide useful insights on the project's performance under the various review criteria.</p>	5
<p>Quality of 'Strategic Relevance' Section</p> <p><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.</p> <p>To include:</p> <p>Assessment of the evaluand's relevance vis-à-vis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities • Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities • Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities • Complementarity with Existing Interventions: complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation⁴⁴), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups. 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions): The section is complete and discusses all the required aspects of relevance.</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Alignments to various strategies, priorities and existing interventions are well analysed with linkages to evidence and sources of information.</p>	6
<p>Quality of the 'Quality of Project Design' Section</p> <p><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>Final report (coverage/omissions): This section is complete</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The quality of project design has been analysed in depth, to include ratings, strengths and weaknesses under each of the sub-criteria. The calculation of the</p>	6

⁴⁴ 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.

	overall design score is presented in an annex.	
<p>Quality of the 'Nature of the External Context' Section</p> <p><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 upheaval⁴⁵), and how they affected performance.</p> <p>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>Final report (coverage/omissions): The review identifies the main external features of the project's implementing context that adversely impacted project implementation, including the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Some particularly significant and country-specific disrupting events that occurred during implementation have, however, been presented in the footnotes section; these should preferably have been brought to the forefront by presenting them in the main text.</p>	5.5
<p>Quality of 'Effectiveness' Section</p> <p>(i) Availability of Outputs:</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"> • a convincing, evidence-supported and clear presentation of the outputs made available by the project compared to its approved plans and budget • assessment of the nature and scale of outputs versus the project indicators and targets • assessment of the timeliness, quality and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries • 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). 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions): This section comprehensively covers the project outputs, providing detailed evidence of achievements such as national data portals, the Indicator Reporting Tool (IRT), enabling policies, coordinating mechanisms, and national State of Environment (SoE) reports. Each output is fully assessed against indicators and targets, with a detailed justification for performance ratings offered.</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report highlights the challenges encountered during implementation and presents an evidence-based assessment of the outputs delivered to beneficiaries. However, while it notes limited uptake of some outputs like the IRT, this issue is not explored in depth, which could have provided valuable insights for future interventions.</p>	5.5
<p>ii) Achievement of Project Outcomes:</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"> • a convincing and evidence-supported analysis of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions): This section provides a satisfactory overview of the project's achievements and constraints, with detailed and balanced assessments of the outcomes at the project's end, supported by evidence. The successes and constraints associated with outcome achievement are well-discussed, including a specific assessment of gender equity considerations under Outcome 3.1.</p>	5

⁴⁵ 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.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets discussion of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself any constraints to attributing effects to the projects' work 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). 	<p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</p> <p>While the outcomes have been assessed in detail, the report lacks the depth and rigor necessary for a comprehensive evaluation. Additionally, the justification for the moderate satisfaction (MS) rating could be more robust, especially in explaining the significance of partially achieved outcomes and their impact on overall project objectives.</p>	
<p>(iii) Likelihood of Impact:</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"> an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and change processes can be shown an explanation of the roles played by key actors and change agents explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out 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). 	<p>Final report:</p> <p>This section provides a good summary. However, it lacks explicit detail regarding the project's drivers and assumptions, which limits its effectiveness in evaluating how these elements supported or hindered progress. The report offers a summative justification for the "moderately likely" performance rating but falls short in analyzing causal pathways, change processes, the roles of key change agents, and the status of drivers and assumptions.</p>	4
<p>Quality of 'Financial Management' Section</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"> <i>adherence</i> to UNEP's financial policies and procedures <i>completeness</i> of financial information, including the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used <i>communication</i> between financial and project management staff 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions):</p> <p>The section is complete; all three sub-sections are analysed to varying levels of detail.</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</p> <p>This section identifies difficulties in tracking co-financing contributions and issues with the completeness of financial information, such as challenges in accounting records.</p> <p>Although this section could have benefitted from the inclusion of more supporting evidence to corroborate the ratings given for the financial management sub-categories, evidence to support the project's adherence to financial policies and procedures, completeness of financial information, and communication between financial and project staff is detailed in Annex VII of the report.</p>	5

<p>Quality of 'Efficiency' Section</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"> time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe 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. implications of any delays and no cost extensions the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint. 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions): This section is complete</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): This section provides an analysis of project efficiency, providing examples of challenges and corresponding actions taken by the project team to maintain timeliness and cost-effectiveness. However, it fails to address UNEP's environmental footprint minimization, a required aspect under this section, which leaves a critical component of the evaluation unexamined.</p>	5
<p>Quality of 'Monitoring and Reporting' Section</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"> quality of the monitoring design and budgeting (<i>including SMART results with measurable indicators, resources for MTE/R etc.</i>) quality of monitoring of project implementation (<i>including use of monitoring data for adaptive management</i>) quality of project reporting (<i>e.g. PIMS and donor reports</i>) <i>I will schedule some time for us to connect.</i> 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions): The section is complete. All the sub-categories are addressed.</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The review provides a good analysis of project monitoring including actual examples to corroborate the assessment. The ratings are somewhat inconsistent, however. For instance, the review highlights significant shortcomings in that the tracking system was unclear (para 298-299) and style of reporting did not support the level of detail needed to monitor progress in achieving outputs, outcomes, targets, and milestones in a systematic manner, and mapped against the project's results framework. (para 300 -301).</p>	5
<p>Quality of 'Sustainability' Section</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>Consider how well the report addresses the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> socio-political sustainability financial sustainability institutional sustainability 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions): The section is complete. All the sub-categories are addressed.</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report provides a general analysis of sustainability, assessing important aspects and identifying potential risks effectively. However, it lacks specific examples, actionable recommendations, and detailed financial strategies, which diminishes its effectiveness. Despite stating that financial and institutional sustainability are "Moderately Likely," the report itself highlights significant concerns, such as uncertain future funding sources and ongoing resource limitations that challenge the sustainability of project outcomes. Additionally, it notes that the PICs have not fully taken ownership of their national</p>	5

	portals, indicating a continued dependence on SPREP support, which further questions the project's sustainability.	
<p>Quality of Factors Affecting Performance Section</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 review report, either in this section or in cross-referenced sections, covers the following cross-cutting themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparation and readiness • quality of project management and supervision⁴⁶ • stakeholder participation and co-operation • responsiveness to human rights and gender equality • environmental and social safeguards • country ownership and driven-ness • communication and public awareness 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions): All sub-areas are analysed and elaborated in a standalone section (with the exception of 'Environmental and social safeguards')</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The summaries, resented by sub-criteria, provide useful insights into cross-cutting issues that have influenced the project's overall performance.</p>	5
<p>Quality of the Conclusions Section</p> <p>(i) Conclusions Narrative:</p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> to present summative statements reflecting on prominent aspects of the performance of the evaluand as a whole, they should be derived from the synthesized analysis of evidence gathered during the review process.</p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compelling narrative providing an integrated summary of the strengths and weakness in overall performance (achievements and limitations) of the project • clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions • human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention should be discussed explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on) 	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions): This section is missing key responses to the review questions</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The conclusions section of the report is detailed, thoroughly discussing the main achievements, successes, challenges, and risks of the project, including suggestions for improvement. However, the section could have been enhanced by a more succinct presentation. Also, an explicit coverage of the Key Review Questions that were raised in the TOR, should ideally have been included in this section</p>	4.5
<p>ii) Utility of the Lessons:</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>Consider how well the lessons achieve the following:</p>	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions): Lessons learned and their contextual background have been included in the review.</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</p>	3

⁴⁶ 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.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> are rooted in real project experiences (i.e. derived from explicit review findings or from problems encountered and mistakes made that should be avoided in the future) briefly describe the context from which they are derived and those contexts in which they may be useful do not duplicate recommendations 	<p>The lessons learned section of the report does not effectively formulate the insights in a way that facilitates broader application, lacking specific cause-and-effect details. While these lessons are derived from the report's findings, they need to be read in context to understand their broader implications fully.</p>	
<p>(iii) Utility and Actionability of the Recommendations:</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 lessons achieve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions represent a measurable performance target in order that the UNEP Unit/Branch can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. <p><u>NOTES:</u></p> <p>(i) 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>(ii) 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>Final report (coverage/omissions): This section is addressed</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The Recommendations section of the report adheres to the required format and includes at least one recommendation addressing gender issues. However, the recommendations lack detailed information on the specific actions to be taken by identified individuals or positions to address concrete problems within the project.</p>	4.5
<p>Quality of Report Structure and Presentation</p> <p>(i) Structure and completeness of the report:</p> <p>To what extent does the report follow the UNEP Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included and complete?</p>	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions): The report is well-written and complete</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Correct format and structure guidelines are followed</p>	5
<p>(ii) Writing and formatting:</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? Do visual aids, such as maps and graphs convey key information?</p>	<p>Final report (coverage/omissions): The report is clear with clearly marked tables</p> <p>Final report (strengths/weaknesses):</p>	5
<p>OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING</p>		4.7

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 review report is calculated by taking the mean score of all rated quality criteria.