Reimaanlok–Looking to the Future: Strengthening Natural Resource Management in Atoll Communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands Employing Integrated Approaches (RMI R2R)

Terminal Evaluation Report









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Disclaimer

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this terminal Evaluation Report are of the evaluator, hence do not necessarily reflect the official views of donor agency viz. GEF, implementing agency viz. UNDP and various implementing partners. For more information, please contact at Dr. Dhruba Gautam, International Evaluator at drrgautam@gmail.com.

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Acronyms

ACWA	Address Climate Vulnerability in the Water Sector
AS	Associate of Science
AWP	Annual work plan
BTOR	Back-to-office report
CBO	Community-based organization
CCD	Climate Change Directorate
CDR	Combined delivery report
CMAC	Coastal Management Advisory Council
CMI	College of Marshall Islands
CO	Country Office
CSO	Civil society organization
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DIM	Direct implementation modality
DPS	Direct project services
EA	Executing agency
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
FGD	Focus group discussion
FIA	Forest inventory analysis
FNU	Fiji National University
GAP	Gender action plan
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GIS	Geographical information system
GoRMI	Government of RMI
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers
IOM	International Organization for Migration
Jo-Jikum	Jodikdik in Jipañ Ãne Eo Ekūtok Maroro
IP	Implementing partner
iSEC	Integrated science environment
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
KBA	Key biodiversity area
LoA	Letter of agreement
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MCO	Multi Country Office
MCT	Micronesia Conservation Trust
MICOC	Marshall Islands Chamber of Commerce
MICS	Marshall Islands Conservation Society
MIMA	Marshall Islands Mayors Association
MIMRA	Marshall Islands Marine Resource Authority
MIS	Management information system
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoNRC	Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
MPA	Marine protected area
MTR	Mid-term review
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIM	National implementation modality
NPD	National Project Director
NRMP	Natural resource management plan
O&M	Operation and maintenance
OEPPC	Office of Environmental Policy & Planning Coordination
PA	Protected area
PAN	Protected Area Network
PIC	Pacific Island Countries
PICASC	Collaborating with the Pacific Islands Climate Adaptation Science Center
PIF	Project identification form
PIF	Project identification form
PIMS	Project Information Management System

PIU	Project implementation unit
POPP	Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures
PROP	Pacific Islands Oceanscape Project
PROVIA	Programme of Research on Climate Change Vulnerability, Impacts and Adaptation
PSC/PB	Project steering committee/project board
PSS	Public school system
R2R	Ridge to Reef
RMI	Republic of Marshall Islands
RPCU	Regional Program Coordination Unit
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
SEM	Socio-economic Monitoring
SESP	Social and environmental screening process
SFDRR	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPC	South Pacific Community
TE	Terminal evaluation
TEK	Traditional ecological knowledge
ToC	Theory of change
ToR	Terms of reference
TPA	Terrestrial protected area
UAV	Unmanned aerial vehicles
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNEG	United Nation Evaluation Group
USP	University of South Pacific

Glossary of local terms

Local term	**Elaborative meaning**
Alap	*Alap* is a landowner, head of commoner and worker clan.
Irooj	It is a traditional system of outer islands. Article III of the Constitution of the Marshall Islands recognizes the title, and establishes a Council of Iroij, composed of holders of the title of Iroij-laplap, or other analogous traditional titles, chosen from holders of the chieftainship among the several constituent islands.
Manit	Manit means "more-than-culture" in the Marshallese language and is at the heart of what it means to be a Marshallese person. Marshallese describes "manit" as core of their being, the spirit in their walk, and their mannerisms. It is the way they authentically connect with their ancestors, heritage, and the essence of their being.
Mo	It is traditional no-take areas governed by *Iroij* (the Chiefs).
Rijerbal	They are the workers responsible for all daily work on the farm or land.

1. Executive Summary

1. This report summarizes the findings of the terminal evaluation (TE) of the project entitled "Reimaanlok-Looking to the Future: Enhancing Natural Resource Management in Atoll Communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands Employing Integrated Approaches (Ridge to Reef, R2R)", hereinafter referred to as "the project," conducted between June 2023 to August 2023. The report summarizes the key findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned from the TE and covers the period of implementation of the project, i.e. from February 1, 2018 to July 31, 2023.

1.1 Project summary table

Project Details		**Project Milestones**	**Dates**
Project Title	Reimaanlok-Looking to the Future: Enhancing Natural Resource Management in Atoll Communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands Employing Integrated Approaches (Ridge to Reef, R2R)	PIF Approval Date:	Oct 21, 2015
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	PIMS 5685	CEO Endorsement Date /Approval date:	Sep 27, 2017
GEF Project ID:	5544	Project Document Signature Date (Project start date):	Feb 1, 2018
UNDP Atlas Business Un it, Award ID, Project ID:	FJI10 Award # 00076246 Project # 00087749	First disbursement date in Atlas	Apr 18, 2018
Country/Countries:	The Republic of Marshall Island (RMI)	Inception workshop date:	Mar 9, 2018
Region:	The Pacific	MTR review completion date:	Feb 1, 2021
Focal Area:	Biodiversity (BD) and International Waters (IW)	TE completion date:	17 August 2023
GEF Operational Programme or Strategic Priorities/Objectives	*Strategic Focal Area: Biodiversity (BD)*: The project focuses on Objectives 1 and 2 of the GEF 5 Biodiversity Results Framework. *Strategic Focal Area: International Waters (IW):*	Planned operational closure date:	1 November 2023
Trust Fund:	GEF		
Implementing Partner (GEF Executing Entity):	UNDP		
NGOs/CBOs involvement:	n/a		
Private sector involvement:	n/a		

Financial Information		
PDF/PPG	At approval (US$ million)	At PPG/PDF completion (US$ million)
GEF PDF/PPG grants for project preparation	0	0
Co-financing for project preparation	0	0
Project	At CEO Endorsement (US$ million)	At TE (US$ million)
[1] UNDP contribution:	126,371	126,371
[2] Government:	3,452,768	3,452,768
[3] Other multi-/bi-laterals:	0	0
[4] Private Sector:	0	0
[5] NGOs:	478,000	478,000
[6] Total co-financing [1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5]:	4,057,139	4,057,139
[7] Total GEF funding:	3,927,981	3,927,981
[8] Total Project Funding [6 + 7]	7,985,120	7,985,120

1.2 Project description:

2. The Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI[1])'s population of 42,050 people (2021 World Bank Census) is spread out over four of five inhabitable islands and 22 of 29 inhabitable coral atolls. 73.3% of the population of RMI were defined as urban. RMI relies heavily on its natural resources and biodiversity for sustenance and economic opportunities. The Marshallese people have a deep connection with their islands, and their culture and way of life have evolved in harmony with the environment over thousands of years. Despite global challenges such as climate variability and frequent natural disasters, RMI still possesses pristine waters and coral reefs that provide vital ecosystem services and support local livelihoods. Recognizing the significance of its natural assets, RMI, along with other small island developing states (SIDS), has responded to global conservation targets by participating in the Micronesia Challenge. As part of this initiative, RMI developed Reimaanlok, a comprehensive and clear roadmap for the future. This project aims to operationalize Reimaanlok, which is the National Conservation Area Plan adopted in 2008. The plan's objective is to effectively conserve at least 30% of the near-shore marine resources and 20% of the terrestrial resources across Micronesia by 2020.

3. The project aimed to support the Government of RMI (GoRMI) by enhancing understanding of the biophysical, socioeconomic, and cultural aspects of the terrestrial and marine resources on the five outer islands. It sought to provide benefits to 2,000 residents, establish protected areas, activate the Protected Area Network (PAN) Office, and support education and training for local people. In addition, it delivered online training, piloted an agroforestry certificate program, facilitated ecosystem-based land-use arrangements, strengthened the biodiversity management information system, incorporated traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), raised public awareness about biodiversity conservation, and initiated the replication of successful strategies to promote long-term sustainability.

4. The primary aim of the project is to preserve biodiversity of global importance and the valuable ecosystem goods and services it offers to the society of the RMI. With this in mind, the project sets out to sustain biodiversity and livelihoods by enhancing community and ecosystem resilience against threats and destructive influences through the integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources in prioritized atolls and islands. In order to attain the project's objective, following three outcomes, referred to as project components, have been envisioned:
   - *Outcome 1: Conservation areas delineated, declared and efforts sustained in up to 5 priority atolls to meet Reimaanlok targets and contributing to the Micronesia Challenge and Aichi targets.*
   - *Outcome 2: Supportive policies, institutions, and communities in place to ensure successful implementation of the Reimaanlok vision.*
   - *Outcome 3: Accessible data and information systems and improved linkages and collaboration with regional initiatives to support adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI.*

5. Actual outcomes of this project are summarized in Table A in comparison with intended outcomes.

Table A: Comparison of intended project outcomes to actual outcomes

Intended outcome	Actual outcomes as of June 2023
Objectives: The primary aim of the project is to preserve biodiversity of global importance and the valuable ecosystem goods and services it offers to the society of the RMI.	The project successfully facilitated the development and endorsement of the PAN Act by the Cabinet and Marshall Islands Marine Resource Authority (MIMRA). In June 2021, the PAN Regulations were approved by the MIMRA Board, and the PAN Office officially launched its program in March 2022. Commendably, the project continues to provide financial support to the PAN Office.
Outcome 1: Conservation areas delineated, declared and efforts sustained in up to 5 priority atolls to meet Reimaanlok targets and contributing to the Micronesia Challenge and Aichi targets.	The project facilitated the establishment of 26,691 ha of marine protected area (MPA) and 472 ha of terrestrial protected area (TPA). In Wotho atoll, the total nearshore MPA covers 13,406.26 ha. In Likiep atoll, plans for MPA network delineation are in the drafting phase while delineation of Likiep's TPA network will be finalized after the outputs of a terrestrial survey. In Mejit atoll, both MPA and TPA network delineation were completed and the atoll has approved the creation of two additional terrestrial protected areas, covering a total of 40.42 ha. The project completed and obtained approval for three resource management plans, a step which brings it closer to achieving the end-of-project target of five NRMPs completed and adopted.

[1] Small island developing states (SIDS) are a distinct group of 39 states and 18 associate members of United Nations regional commissions that face unique social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities.

Outcome 2: Supportive policies, institutions, and communities in place to ensure successful implementation of the Reimaanlok vision.	The project has been providing financial support to the PAN Coordinator and involved in the formulation of PAN regulation (2021). It engaged the College of Marshall Islands (CMI) to build the capacity of four graduates of Land Grant and Agriculture Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce and provided Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.
Outcome 3: Accessible data and information systems and improved linkages and collaboration with regional initiatives to support adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI.	The National Spatial Analytical Facility (NSAF) server is operational and is now hosted by MIMRA. Some tasks, such as completing the datasets, defining user and access protocols, and preparing case studies are under completion. It developed to capture and prepare easily understood formats of awareness materials about local and traditional knowledge and make them readily accessible. It also undertaking the construction and handover of the Ebon Virgin Coconut Oil Facility, and the construction of additional raceway tanks for clam farming in Likiep and Aur atolls.

1.3 Evaluation ratings table

1. Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)	**Rating[2]**
M&E design at entry	5
M&E plan implementation	5
Overall quality of M&E	5
2. Implementing Agency (IA) Implementation & Executing Agency (EA) Execution	**Rating**
Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight	5
Quality of Implementing Partner Execution	5
Overall quality of Implementation/Execution	5
3. Assessment of Outcomes	**Rating**
Relevance	5
Effectiveness	5
Efficiency	5
Overall Project Outcome Rating	5
4. Sustainability	**Rating[3]**
Financial sustainability	4
Socio-political sustainability	4
Institutional framework and governance sustainability	4
Environmental sustainability	4
Overall Likelihood of Sustainability	4

1.4 Conclusions and lessons learned

6. The project played a crucial role in promoting sustainable development in fragile outer island ecosystems and fostering good governance for global environmental benefits. Lessons learned from communities refined the Reimaanlok process, and funding support to the RMI PAN Office enhanced capacity and raised awareness among stakeholders. Success relied on collective commitment to integrating biodiversity conservation into socio-economic priorities. The project's multi-focal-area approach improved the socio-economic statuses of beneficiaries and instilled confidence through livelihood improvement plans. Stakeholders are enthusiastic about replicating successful initiatives. Gender considerations were integrated into local government plans, thereby empowering women to make decisions. Financial management was good, and co-financing leveraged additional resources. At the same time, however, the project faced challenges related to administrative issues, political and traditional influences, out-migration, the lack of an

[2] Evaluation rating indices: 6=Highly Satisfactory (HS), 5=Satisfactory (S), 4=Moderately Satisfactory (MS), 3=Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), 2=Unsatisfactory (U), 1=Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Ranking is same for Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, Implementation/Oversight, Execution, and Relevance.

[3] 4 = Likely (L): negligible risks to sustainability; 3 = Moderately Likely (ML): moderate risks to sustainability; 2 = Moderately Unlikely (MU): significant risks to sustainability; 1 = Unlikely (U): severe risks to sustainability; and Unable to Assess (U/A): Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability

exit strategy, and data management. Delays in human resource management and procurement also impacted implementation. The project actively promoted gender equality, but periodic assessments of its progress were not in place. Timely payments and logistical matters were also problematic. The limited pool of qualified individuals and high rate of staff turnover adversely affected the project's quality and institutional memory. Institutional development support is still required for groups and committees. Opportunities to leverage external resources were not fully explored. Overall, the project achieved positive impacts but faced several challenges that should be addressed for future success.

Lessons learned

7. Lessons learned from implementing the project include:

- LL #1: Trainings are most effective if they are short and then followed up on with drills and refresher training: Effective training is short initially and then is followed up with periodic drills and refresher sessions Community meetings and training sessions played a vital role in helping LRCs, groups, and committees understand project-related issues. Creative methods like street theatre and video documentaries enhance learning and engagement, while capacity-building initiatives strengthen local government abilities, foster project ownership, results in competent dispute management, and access to resources. Having local government staff act as local resource persons (LRPs) promoted commitment and ownership during implementation.
- LL #2: Capacity-building initiatives should be seen as a process: Capacity-building is a continuous process which evolves to meet participants' needs and interests. Engaging the elderly, youth, and students in TEK documentation is a valuable approach that resulted in knowledge dissemination within families and increased training impacts.
- LL #3: Sufficient awareness is required before introducing any new technology: Before introducing new technologies like refined coconut oil extraction or raceway tanks, creating awareness and empowering communities is essential. Presentations and interactive sessions generate enthusiasm for technology that utilizes local resources, is cost-effective, and incorporates TEK.
- LL #4: Transparency and accountability are necessary to win the trust of communities: Transparency and accountability, by, for example, disseminating knowledge through various media channels, are key to gaining community trust. Using information education and communication (IEC) materials also promotes transparency. Managing the demands of non-targeted communities is important as is adhering to policies like do-no-harm and political neutrality.
- LL #5: Existing social platforms helped in the selection of needs-based and demand-driven schemes: Utilizing and collaborating with existing social platforms facilitated the identification of needs-based and demand-driven schemes. This approach promoted active community participation and contributions, saving time and resources and accelerating the project's progress while minimizing the duplication of efforts.
- LL #6: Participation of multiple stakeholders reduced the duplication of works: The active participation of diverse stakeholders, including local governments, IPs, stakeholders, academia, women's groups, and cooperatives, facilitated the selection of suitable schemes, conflict resolution among beneficiaries, and local ownership and reduced work duplication. Moreover, high stakeholder engagement contributed to the sustainability of capacity-building initiatives and awareness activities.
- LL #7: Socio-political influences can be managed by adjusting activities and funds: To prevent socio-political influences from impacting project implementation and community support, project activities and funds need to be adjusted to meet genuine local needs while still aligning with the project's overall goals. The project's plans and financial approaches effectively resolved socio-political conflicts and facilitated smooth implementation.
- LL #8: Timely sharing of project's activities and plans helped the project leverage more resources from government entities and other stakeholders: By sharing its activities and plans in a timely and detailed fashion, the project readily secured additional services resources from government entities and stakeholders more than agreed amount as co-financing. Collaborative efforts and sharing mandates promoted cooperation as well as boosting project ownership and long-term sustainability.
- LL #9: Project schemes are likely to be sustainable if they are low-cost and based on TEK: The project's schemes are designed to be sustainable because they are affordable and based on TEK. While nature-based solutions are valuable, however, minor technical and financial support can also enhance community participation, interest, and ownership and thereby increase the sustainability of initiatives.
- LL #10: Gender-friendly livelihood schemes encouraged the involvement of women: Women were encouraged to participate by selecting gender-friendly livelihood schemes through participatory discussions and decision-making processes. This approach fostered women's empowerment and self-confidence. Choosing training sites and venues within communities also facilitated women's participation.
- LL #11: Valuing traditional leaders helped to resolve local issues: Acknowledging the importance of traditional leaders and cultural protocols was vital in resolving local issues. By involving traditional leaders

and local government mayors in the preparation of integrated resource management plans, the project built trust within communities and encouraged active participation in other project activities as well.

- LL #12: Impact of staff turnover could be minimized by mapping human resources in advance: Proactive human resource mapping can help mitigate the adverse impacts of high staff turnover. Challenges arose due to insufficient and unskilled technical staff, but consultancy contracts were used to manage delays. The transition to a new accounting system affected payment timeliness, which could have been mitigated with better training for administrative and finance staff to ensure the continuation of smooth financial operations.
- LL #13: Periodic review-and-reflection sessions at the local level helped to resolve difficulties: Periodic review-and-reflection sessions at the local level were instrumental in resolving project difficulties and achieving indicators within the designated timeframe. Involving IPs and stakeholders in these sessions facilitated overcoming emerging challenges. Project-capacitated IPs and stakeholders played a crucial role in addressing procurement and activity implementation issues. Effective knowledge and data management also enabled the project to tackle complex implementation challenges successfully.
- LL #14: Coordination meetings help to mainstream project plan with local government plan: Coordination meetings with local governments enabled the project to align and integrate its plans seamlessly with the local government plans. These meetings minimized gaps and facilitated the merging of objectives effectively. Moreover, the coordination meetings played a crucial role in managing emergency situations, such as those caused by COVID-19, Zika virus, and dengue fever, including the challenges of travel bans.

1.5 Recommendations summary table

8. Key recommendations of TE are as follows:

Rec. #	TE Recommendations	Agencies responsible	Timeframe *(start data and duration)*
1	Employ a strategic approach in order to effectively deploy implementation partners (IPs) and streamline pending tasks so that all tasks can be successfully completed. Clearly monitor each IP's roles and responsibilities to enhance their execution of remaining tasks *(linked to finding # 35)*.	*UNDP, IPs and Government Stakeholders*	Sep 2023, within the project's tenure
2	Regularly conduct socio-economic and gender assessments and incorporate the gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) approach into local government plans. Address the rights of deprived populations and integrate cross-cutting issues like GESI, climate change, and the environment into training curricula *(linked to finding # 33)*.	*UNDP, IPs and Government Stakeholders*	Sep 2023, in one year
3	Align the scope and volume of activities with the human resources available to ensure future success. Monitoring activities minutely and narrowing their scope will allow the project to fine-tune and institutionalize completed activities before moving on to new ones, thereby ensuring that each undertaking in turn receives the attention and resources it needs to achieve sustainable and impactful outcomes *(linked to finding # 170)*.	*UNDP, IPs and Government Stakeholders*	Sep 2023, in one year
4	Develop a comprehensive exit strategy and sustainability plan to institutionalize policy support and promote the replication of successful project aspects *(linked to finding # 224)*.	*UNDP, IPs and Government Stakeholders*	Sep 2023, in 6 months
5	Design training curricula based on comprehensive needs assessments. View capacity-building as a continuous process, offer practical short-term training, and create a pool of LRPs through training of trainers (ToT) session *(linked to finding # 225)*.	*UNDP*	Sep 2023, in one year
6	Design locally suitable livelihood schemes that keep in mind climate and disaster risk considerations. Support market assessments and value chain analyses and introduce simple processing technologies to increase economic viability *(linked to finding # 245)*.	*UNDP, IPs and Government Stakeholders*	Sep 2023, in one year
7	Capture traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in accessible platforms such as Google Drive, online archives, and other similar data repositories for future use to counter the potential for out-migration associated risks *(linked to finding # 94)*.	*UNDP*	Sep 2023, in 6 months
8	Develop robust procurement plans to expedite processes and enhance logistics management. Create activity-specific implementation guidelines and provide training to staff to transition to new systems like Quantum *(linked to finding # 184)*.	*UNDP*	Sep 2023, in one year
9	Document best practices and lessons learned through comprehensive case studies to promote replication and scaling up in similar geographical contexts *(linked to finding # 25)*.	*UNDP*	Sep 2023, in one year

2. Introduction

1. Reimaanlok-Looking to the Future: Enhancing Natural Resource Management in Atoll Communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands Employing Integrated Approaches (Ridge to Reef, R2R), hereinafter referred to as "the project," is entering its final phase. In line with the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) guidelines, a terminal evaluation (TE) was carried out following the directives for conducting TEs of projects executed by UNDP.[4]

2.1 Purpose and objective of the TE

2. The main purpose of conducting this TE was to assess the project's success in accomplishing its goal, objectives, and outcomes and to compare the actual achievement with the expected results. The TE also sought to enhance UNDP programming by pinpointing areas that could be improved. Furthermore, it intended to promote accountability and transparency by evaluating the level of achievement and the overall performance of the project.

3. As specified in the terms of reference (ToR, see **annex**-1), the objectives of the evaluation were to:

- assess the evidentially proven achievement of project results (i.e. progress in meeting outcome targets)
- evaluate the project's contribution to and alignment with relevant national development plans or environmental policies,
- gauge the contribution that the project's results made towards relevant outcomes and outputs of the Multi-Country Program Document and United Nation Pacific Strategy (CPD/UNPS),
- assess any cross-cutting or gender results and impacts,
- measure the use of funds and value for money,
- assess the impact of COVID-19 on the project's implementation, and
- draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of the benefits of this project and aid in enhancing UNDP programming as a whole.

2.2 Scope

4. The TE evaluated the project's performance by comparing it to the expectations outlined in the project's "results framework". The assessment was carried out based on the criteria specified in the GEF guidelines. The TE assesses the project's performance based on the OECD-DAC's six evaluation criteria —relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact, and the integration of human rights, gender, and other cross-cutting issues—and in comparison with the expected achievements. The TE report encompasses the period from the project's initiation in 2017 to its second-to-last month of activity, July 2023.

2.3 TE approach and methods

5. The TE utilized a "summative approach", "formative approach" and "constructive and participative approach." To achieve the primary purpose and objectives of the TE, the TE consultant employed a mixed methods approach[5] with a strong emphasis on qualitative tools and techniques (see **Annex**-2 for detail).

2.4 Data collection and analysis

6. The collection and creation of qualitative data, information, and evidence involved the use of the tools and techniques (result matrix and evaluation questions/sub-questions) such as (i) initial briefings/introductory meetings, (ii) document review (see **Annex**-3), (iii) key informant interviews (KIIs), (iv) most significant change technique, and (v) case studies. During the desk review process, the TE consultant collected quantitative information and organized it into tables to facilitate validation during KIIs. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the TE consultant employed triangulation techniques, comparing and cross-referencing information from multiple sources. This approach helped to strengthen the credibility of the findings and the validity of the conclusions. The TE conducted a 16-day in-country mission from July 15 to 30, 2023, with a focus on visiting Majuro, the capital city of the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), to engage with stakeholders at various levels (see **Annex**-4). The TE consultant adopted a mixed approach to data analysis, one which examined both quantitative and qualitative data and then cross-referenced the findings

[4] http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guidance.shtml#handbook.
[5] The review methodology used for this project TE was based on the UNDP-GEF's monitoring and evaluation policies and includes multiple methods rooted in the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data wherever possible.

from each type. To ensure the credibility and reliability of the data, the TE consultant triangulated the findings by comparing and cross-checking primary information with secondary data (see **Annex**-5).

2.5 Ethics

8. As called for in the ToR, the conduction of the TE was an independent, impartial, and rigorous process which upheld standards of personal and professional integrity and adhered to the principles outlined in the United Nation Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations and the UNDP GEF M&E policies, specifically the "Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF financed Projects (August, 2020)." See **Annex**-6 for detail.

2.6 Limitations to the evaluation

9. The TE consultant faced various constraints when gathering data and information, including (i) his inability to access the outer atolls to collect data, (ii) the unavailability of focus group discussions (FGDs) and participatory observation tools for use in empirical data collection, (iii) the challenge of recruiting national consultant for support to TE consultant, (iv) the fact that a UNDP gender assessment was being conducted during the data collection phase of this TE, and due to competing priorities, it was difficult to get staff quality time to verify the data/information, (v) difficulty in obtaining organized data because the management information system (MIS) lacked robustness, (vi) the limited ability of IPs and stakeholders to provide quality time for interviews, and (vii) limited capacities due to change management leads to the lapse in the scheduling of meeting with the RTA. Nevertheless, TE consultant adeptly address these challenges using alternate methods to guarantee the provision of high-quality data and evidenced information (see **Annex**-7).

2.7 Structure of the TE report

10. As called for in the Guidance for conducting terminal evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects (2020) and the provided outline in the ToR, the TE report is structured into five key chapters and annexes (see **Annex**-8).

3. Project description

3.1 Project start and duration, including milestones

11. Originally, the project was to run for five years, commencing from February 1, 2018. However, in response to external challenges and suggestions from the mid-term review (MTR), GEF accepted to extend its duration until November 1, 2023, an additional nine months.

3.2 Development context

12. During the project's design phase, particular attention was given to incorporating RMI's overall development context and including (a) environmental, (b) socio-economic, (c) institutional, and (d) policy factors. Moreover, national priorities and UNDP global obligations, specifically the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Outcome were also taken into account while crafting the project's objectives and scopes (see **Annex**-9 for detail of this section).

3.3 Challenges, barrier and opportunities

13. The project document elegantly addressed the primary challenges, barriers, and opportunities, some of which remain relevant within the context of the RMI (see **Annex**-10 for detail of this section).

3.4 Immediate and development objectives of the project

14. The main objective of the project was to safeguard biodiversity of global significance as well as the valuable ecosystem goods and services it provides to the society of RMI. To achieve this objective, the project aimed to promote the sustainability of biodiversity and livelihoods by strengthening community and ecosystem resilience against threats and harmful impacts. Biodiversity and ecosystems will be preserved and protected through the integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources in selected atolls and islands. The UNDP-GEF Project provides assistance to this Project, aiding in the development and implementation of a planning process. This initiative is being carried out through the Climate Change Directorate (CCD), which operates under the Office of Environmental Policy & Planning Coordination (OEPPC) of Ministry of Environment (MoE).

3.5 Expected results

15. To achieve the project's objective, three outcomes were envisioned.
    - Outcome 1: Conservation areas are delineated and declared and efforts are sustained in up to five *priority atolls to meet Reimaanlok targets and contributing to the Micronesia Challenge and Aichi targets.*
    - *Outcome 2: Supportive policies, institutions, and communities are in place to ensure the successful implementation of the Reimaanlok vision.*
    - *Outcome 3: Accessible data and information systems and improved linkages and collaboration with regional initiatives are in place to support the adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI.*
16. The successful attainment of these three primary outcomes was anticipated through the implementation of twelve specific outputs (see **Annex**-11). The project's interventions were strategically designed to strengthen local capacities and empower communities, enabling them to implement integrated plans for natural resource management. Moreover, the project aimed to showcase scalable demonstrations of the sustainable utilization of ecosystem goods and services in the vicinity of the outer islands where the project operates.

3.6 Main stakeholders

17. During the project formulation stage, the project document categorized 43 main stakeholders into six distinct groups: (i) direct beneficiaries and community-based stakeholders, (ii) project-implementation stakeholders, (iii) national-level stakeholders, (iv) local non-governmental organizations, (v) state-owned enterprises, and (vi) regional stakeholders. The quick assessment with project's stakeholders revealed that out of 43 stakeholders themselves, 12 were highly important, 4 were moderately important, and the remaining 27 had limited roles during project implementation (see **Annex**-12). In addition, few stakeholders were identified later and included as the project progressed, indicating that the project had adopted a flexible approach to identifying relevant agencies for specific tasks based on the evolving needs of the project.

18. The project documentation indicated varying levels of progress across the atolls. Ebon and Likiep atolls have achieved approximately 75% of their planned activities, while Mejit atoll has completed over 60% of its tasks. However, in the case of the remaining two atolls, Wotho and Aur, there is a need for the PIU to accelerate their implementation pace, as only 40% of the tasks have been accomplished there (see Table 1 in **Annex**-14).

19. Over the past 5-7 years, a series of projects have been carried out within the project's atolls. These initiatives were funded by GEF, GCF, and the World Bank, and covered various thematic areas including biodiversity, international waters, water security, and infrastructure resilience. These endeavors were undertaken in collaboration with partners such as SPREP/CCD/MoNRC, CCD, UNDP/SPC/RMI-EPA, UNDP/CCD, MIMRA, UNDP/RMI-EPA, and OEPPC (now CCD). These prior initiatives have contributed to the capacity-building of both national and local governments, as well as the beneficiaries of the project. Moreover, these earlier projects have laid a solid foundation for this project by establishing a strong social platform, leading to favorable outcomes (see Table 3 in **Annex**-14).

4. Findings

4.1 Project design/formulation

4.1.1 National priorities and country driven-ness

20. The project was designed explicitly to address national priorities and align with Government of RMI (GoRMI)'s country-driven approach. The design centered on the Reimaanlok process, the national strategic plans of 2015-2017 and 2020-2030, and the SDGs of RMI and contributed to the formulation of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP). Among RMI's key priorities are developing atoll-level resource management plans. The project also aimed to promote alternative livelihood initiatives to effectively implement the Reimaanlok process, which serves as a national conservation plan for RMI. Despite its having encountered financial constraints during the project's planning phase, this project is pertinent as it takes into account GoRMI's endeavors to execute Reimaanlok[6].

[6] "The government has made progress in building national capacity particularly those related to implementing Reimaanlok through the CMAC which has been active over the past decade in atoll biodiversity protection, conservation and integrated resource management. Budgetary sources for implementing the Reimaanlok appear limited as the Compact and Trust Fund prioritizes health, education and infrastructure outlays. An alternative financing mechanism for natural resource management has been developed in 2010 with the Sustainable Finance Plan that called for doubling of government contributions and raising a USD 13 million endowment fund to achieve the Micronesia Challenge goals." (p.8).

21. The project's alignment extended to various strategies and programs, including the National Strategic Plan (2020-2030), which focuses on environment, climate change, and resilience. It also incorporated elements from the National Strategic Plan (2015-2017) and Vision 2018 (Goal 10). The later emphasizes achieving environmental sustainability by establishing an enforceable regulatory system to promote sustainable development and protect natural resources and the environment from adverse impacts. Furthermore, the project was linked to the GEF Pacific R2R Program.

22. As one of its outcomes, the project successfully facilitated the creation of digital elevation maps and flood inundation models for four of the five main islands. Collaborating with the Pacific Islands Climate Adaptation Science Center (PICASC), RMI aimed to enhance understanding of potential flood risks and support climate adaptation. Moreover, the project contributed to the establishment of alternative livelihood options, particularly for neighboring island communities. These ongoing initiatives bolster government priorities.

4.1.2 Theory of Change

23. The TE's thorough assessment found that the project's results framework, which has three components categorized into three outcomes and 12 outputs, was robust and effective. The assessment also found that the project strategy outlined in the project document remained largely unchanged throughout the duration of the project. Only a few modifications were made, and only to specific activities. Throughout the project's execution, two activities underwent significant modifications to address specific requirements. Firstly, rather than establishing a PAN Office, the project allocated resources to refurbish the GEF/PIU Team office. Secondly, the focus shifted from developing PAN legislation to directing resources towards enhancing food security. Both of these adjustments were deemed reasonable, as they aligned with the principle of ensuring "value for money" (see Table 5 in **Annex**-14). Analysis of the theory of change (ToC) revealed that it was both well-structured and logical. It followed a systematic approach, making the following connecting Barriers ➔ Outputs ➔ Outcomes ➔ Impact Drivers and Assumptions ➔ Intermediate States ➔ Impacts. The project's financial resources were allocated to implement a set of activities planned to overcome barriers to achieving the 12 expected outputs, which, in turn, were to contribute to attaining the three desired outcomes and, through them, the overall objective of the project. Each outcome is accompanied by a set of indicators and targets to be achieved during the MTR and TE phases. These indicators and targets are crucial for monitoring the project's overall performance.

24. The project strategy and ToC[7] were established and validated during the inception phase and consistently applied throughout the project's duration. Adjustments were made only to Outcome 3 and Output 3.3, and, as detailed in **Annex**-13, these adjustments were minor. The project document emphasizes that the project's ultimate goal was to conserve globally significant biodiversity and that objective was to be achieved by identifying and addressing socio-ecological challenges at the community level. The project aimed to design community-driven resource management plans that would promote the sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services. These measures are crucial for promoting the socio-economic wellbeing of local communities and reducing pressure on scarce natural resources. Achieving impactful outcomes takes time and relies on specific impact drivers and assumptions which ensure progress from intermediate states to the ultimate impact. The project's ToC illustrates this pathway for the project. It adopts a conservation support strategy which focuses on garnering community support for biodiversity conservation by enhancing benefits to communities through measures such as sustainable-use arrangements and other supportive measures.

25. The success of this approach hinges on the collective commitment of a broad stakeholder community to effectively integrate biodiversity conservation into socio-economic development priorities. The government at both the local and the national levels plays a crucial role in establishing enabling policies and incentives that encourage the participation of various sectors in biodiversity conservation. Ensuring the involvement of supporting service providers like academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and consultants requires that there be adequate capacity and resources for these agents to actively contribute toward sustaining capacity-building and awareness activities. Private enterprises and other actors within the production sector must adopt sustainable practices to contribute to biodiversity conservation. Local residents need to dedicate time to learning and implementing integrated approaches to natural resource management in their communities. To support these processes, continuous technical and advocacy assistance from CMAC and multilateral agencies, including UNDP, is necessary. Such support involves

[7] UNDP Project Document. Section III. Strategy: Theory of Change, and Figure 1: Theory of Change Diagram.

disseminating lessons learned, promoting international best practices, facilitating dialogue within the international community, and identifying opportunities for further assistance.

26. In general, the project has adopted a positive and supportive approach to helping communities address their unmet needs. While there is still much work to be done, some key areas that require attention include finalizing and endorsing management plans, particularly in Likeip and Aur atolls, mobilizing and managing resources to put these plans into action, and building the capacities of communities to overcome barriers and effectively plan sustainable solutions that align with their management goals. On a national scale, the project benefited from GoRMI's international commitments such as SFDRR (2015-2030) and SDGs as well as other national obligations, all of which enabled it to learn from and replicate best practices. The project also played a significant role in shaping national biodiversity policy, National Bio-diversity Strategy and Action Plan and other relevant national policies viz. National Adaptation Plan (NAP), and Local government ordinances by addressing various issues and concerns gathered over time. Notably, the project played a pivotal role in operationalizing the Reimaanlok process. In addition, it contributed toward formulating/modifying NAP through joint advocacy as IPs have been working as NAP technical working group.

27. There are several opportunities for enhancing ToC. The project's impacts are defined as recognizing and tackling social-ecological issues within communities, lessening the strain on natural resources, and ensuring the sustainable utilization of ecosystem benefits for community development needs. A thorough evaluation and discussions with IPs indicated that some challenges were not completely resolved and that others were not even pinpointed through surveys and research. As outlined in section 3.3 above, barriers 2 to 5 persist, albeit in differing degrees. It would be advantageous to integrate the "human element" and consider "socio-cultural aspects and economic inclusivity" within the ToC to yield improved outcomes.

4.1.3 Gender equality and women's empowerment

a. Maintained gender diversity

28. Considering the local context and practices, it is noteworthy that at least a few women stepped forward and actively participated in the decision-making process, thereby contributing to the enhancement of natural resources management in atoll communities. It is important to assess the project's impact not solely based on numbers but also by evaluating whether or not it effectively reached previously underrepresented groups, including women and poor, and disadvantaged sections of the community.

29. Stakeholders stated that the project's engagement of women's groups to find out their needs and requirements, its promotion of gender equality in LRCs, and its formulation of strategic planning documents based on women's ideas and issues. The project's efforts to involve girls and women in training and skills-building initiatives yielded positive results by actively promoting inclusive representation in capacity-building workshops, training sessions, and various committees and groups.

30. The project successfully diminished the gender gap through a comprehensive feasibility assessment that incorporated the nuances of Marshallese culture specific to each atoll community. This approach ensured that interventions and activities were devised to provide equal benefits for both men and women. Training included both genders and curricular were tailored to address their unique needs and interests. The project design took into careful consideration the requirements for catering to the wellbeing of both men and women.

31. Despite the project's earnest endeavors and resource allocation to enhance women's involvement, certain challenges persisted. For instance, cultural duties related to "*manit*" or traditional responsibilities often led women to become more engaged in tasks like preparing workshop refreshments or attending their children's school events, which, in turn, hindered their full participation. In addition, there were instances where women found it difficult to openly express their opinions, voice concerns, and share their thoughts publicly.

b. Adhered to an affirmative approach

32. The project demonstrated a proactive approach to bolstering women's participation in its activities. A sum of USD $125,000 has been designated for project activities targeting women only. These initiatives encompassed (i) the commencement of the Likiep clam farm, (ii) the establishment of the Aur Women's Handicraft association, and (iii) the replanting of food crops in Mejit Akim. Stakeholders have indicated that the effects of these activities have been substantial in providing an alternative livelihood, thereby contributing to the preservation of the local environment (see Table 20 in **Annex**-14). Stakeholders stated that the

project's resources had played a crucial role in addressing the immediate needs and priorities of women. The project's targeted budgeting and its implementation of a gender action plan also enhanced women's resilience and fostered their ability to cope with adverse climatic variations.

c. Prepared and operationalized the gender assessment and action plan

33. Table 21 in **Annex**-14 presents the achievements of the following four activities of the gender plan based on their respective indicators: (i) increasing project awareness, (ii) promoting gender awareness, (iii) developing skills, and (iv) implementing livelihood initiatives. One positive aspect of the plan was that the activities were not formulated in isolation but were instead based on gender analysis. Upon reviewing the gender action plan, the comparison between set targets and actual accomplishments indicates that a significant portion of the projected indicators has been successfully achieved. However, the project encountered difficulties in fostering the development of campaigners for their involvement in organizing various campaigns. Additionally, the goal of achieving a 50:50 representation among PIU staff, consultants, and contractors could not be realized due to its ambitious nature (see Table 21 in **Annex**-14). That said, some areas do need improvement. In addition, the gender action plan should be periodically revised to account for changes in women's needs and priorities over time and in varying contexts. Unfortunately, the fact that the project faced external adversities that rendered it unable to carry out detailed assessments and had a human resources so limited that the burn-out rate was very low. To enhance the effectiveness of GESI, the project should conduct gender assessments periodically and adjust its action plans based on the results. While it is commendable that a gender analysis and action plan provided a gender-related baseline for key categories of activities and gender-specific SMART indicators, the TE noted that these indicators did not entirely align with the project's outputs.

d. Involved women through different social platforms

34. The matrilineal structure of Marshallese culture gives women the right to own assets, and they frequently hold positions as traditional leaders at various levels, including the *irooj*, *alap*, and *rijerbal* levels. However, significant challenges arose in obtaining approval regarding related to land matters, buy-in, implementation process, and identifying beneficiaries. The low levels of educational achievement among women posed communication barriers during consultations and the LEAP workshop, but these obstacles were successfully addressed by local field staff.

35. The project used various social platforms, such as review-and-reflection meetings, training sessions, and decision-making processes, including Reimaanlok, and encouraged women to play an essential role as members of LRCs. It is worth noting that women's involvement in these committees went beyond mere representation; they also held positions as landowners, mayors, and members of local council members. Moreover, women lead the activities like the production of handicrafts and diversification of alternative livelihoods, thereby showcasing their diverse and evolving roles. Stakeholders interviewed consistently praised the entirely positive impact of women's involvement in the process. For instance, on Likiep atoll, clam farming has made significant progress under the leadership of women, while on Aur atoll, women established a successful handicraft cooperative, and these are just a few examples among many. The project's approach, which entailed selecting gender-friendly livelihood schemes, was instrumental in encouraging women's participation and instilling a "we can do" attitude within them. By strategically choosing training sites and venues within communities, the project succeeded in increasing the number of women participants. In addition, the project's series of social mobilization efforts in the project atolls helped bring attention to the issue of equal payment for men and women who perform similar types of work.

e. Involved women in project planning and decision-making regarding resource management

36. During TE interviews, stakeholders confirmed that the project's approach to addressing GESI in the project's design was relevant. They acknowledged that women face the same sorts of vulnerabilities that men do when it comes to the overuse of resources and impacts of climate change. However, women also have specific additional concerns that are linked to their crucial roles in households and communities. The project has skillfully involved women in planning and decision-making processes related to resource management for special interventions. However, there were some shortcomings in systematically collecting data and identifying barriers to women's effective participation in these trainings as well as in developing action plans to address these barriers. Moreover, the monitoring mechanisms used to measure gender-specific changes resulting from the project's interventions are still somewhat limited in their adequacy. Women who actively participated made valuable contributions by offering inputs, ideas, and knowledge that influenced the planning and subsequent implementation of activities through their involvement in the decision-making process. In addition, they played an integral role in the prioritization of livelihood schemes based on the outcomes of feasibility assessments.

4.1.4 Social and Environmental Safeguards

37. During the development phase, the UNDP utilized its social and environmental screening process (SESP) to identify potential social and environmental risks. It conducted a comprehensive assessment using the prescribed "SESP toolkit." This analysis both integrated certain overarching principles to enhance social and environmental sustainability as well as identified and managed social and environmental risks using five key questions.[8] Interviewed stakeholders acknowledged the validity of the SES assessment, which categorized the project risk as low. They also praised the highly consultative approach of the assessment, one involving both national and local stakeholders as well as the subsequent validation of the data.

38. The risk remained low throughout the project, thanks to several initiatives, including (i) supporting the documentation of TEK, (ii) allocating substantial resources for capacity-building initiatives and focusing on non-structural approaches, (iii) taking into consideration that local resource committees (LRCs) are the primary supervisory bodies at the local level, and (iv) overcoming challenges and effectively sourcing local staff, including site coordinators, from each atoll. The project's careful safeguarding of TEK[9] ensured that communities responded positively to its efforts. Stakeholders approved of the project's allocation of substantial resources for training and awareness-raising, particularly in promoting biodiversity-friendly land-use practices through agro-forestry and protecting scarce ocean-based resources, and, as a result, increasingly trusted the project. Mechanisms were established to involve LRCs as supervisory bodies and have then collaborate closely with local government units, traditional institutions, and other stakeholders to identify and manage risks effectively. Having staff, including site coordinators, be locals made it easy to address minor day-to-day risks in a mutually beneficial manner. Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MoNRC) successfully formulated contractual service and work plans for individual local governments. Despite these plans, however, the MoNRC found it hard to get each local government to submit timely progress reports, making monitoring difficult.

39. Furthermore, the project implemented a mechanism to gather and address serious grievances: they were reported in annual project implementation reports (PIRs) based on their severity, which was established using a five-tier set of questions. [10] The inclusion of an SES section in the PIR, a step introduced by the Project Manager with support from the Project's Safeguards Officer and UNDP Country Office, was considered a commendable practice even though this project had not designated such a post of Project's Safeguards Officer.

40. Two issues were addressed in the PIRs. The first pertains to land-related disputes, which still remain a concern to some extent though they were successfully resolved through town hall meetings and consultations with the community, local traditional leaders, and political figures. The second issue was the impact of COVID-19. To mitigate these impacts, the project developed a "readjustment plan" that changed some project activities.

41. While in the Majuro, the TE consultant did not hear of any SES-related concerns nor have the existing SES risks grown any more severe. Consequently, the project's SES categorization is still low, as it was at the outset. UNDP typically ensures compliance environmental legislation and mitigates environmental impacts in large construction-related projects, but since this project is primarily non-structural and focuses on software, it did not anticipate significant environmental risks.

42. There are areas that could be improved. The TE consultant did not, for instance, come across any evidence that the project has engaged in periodic risk reassessment, a fact suggesting that the risk identification conducted during project design and inception may have been a one-time-only exercise. The project encountered several external challenges, including COVID-19, Zika virus, and Dengue fever, but except for

[8] (i) potential social and environmental risks, (ii) level of significance of the potential social and environmental risks, (iii) overall project risk categorization, (iv) requirements of the SES are relevant, and (v) social and environmental assessment and management measures required to address moderate and high risks

[9] It is in line with the Sub-Regional Program Pacific Island Countries and Territories (2013-2017) and UNDAF Outcome 5.1.

[10] (i) Were any new social and/or environmental risks identified during project implementation?, (ii) Did any existing social and/or environmental risks grow, say from low to moderate or moderate to high, during the reporting period?, (iii) Were the required social and environmental assessments and/or management plans, for example, an updated Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) or Indigenous People's Plan, prepared in the reporting period? For example, (iv) Has the project received any SES impacts (actual or potential)? and (v) Is this project on track with preparation for and/or implementation of all the safeguards required for compliance with the UNDP SES?

COVID-19, no adjustment plan, whether robust or not, was put in place to reduce the impacts of these adversities.

43. Ideally, because risks are dynamic and change over time, SES assessments should be conducted periodically. The project did not have a short-term SES expert who could have performed quick assessments during project implementation, making for a missed opportunity to regularly update the SES. In consequence, the project's risks and issues logs were not adequately updated in the ATLAS system. Moreover, it would be beneficial for SES assessments to include gender issues so that the project could periodically gain insight into how various risks affect men and women differently and therefore develop a more comprehensive understanding of the project's impact.

44. The project's initiatives were strategically devised and executed to collectively promote both social and environmental safeguards. For instance, through LEAP exercises, local communities gained a deeper comprehension of their most valued resources while at the same time considering the potential impacts of disasters and climate change, such as droughts and inundations. The implementation of livelihood interventions played a pivotal role in ensuring the equitable distribution of benefits among community members. To illustrate, the allocation of funds to Ebon communities for utilizing their coconuts to produce virgin coconut oil, as well as the establishment of governance structures such as the Likiep Kabin Lep Women Farmers Association offered significant opportunities for women to engage with giant clams. Regarding 'feasibility risk management' (point 121, page 39), the identified risks to the project remain relevant. However, when evaluating all these risks collectively, the levels of both impact and probability are reasonably low. Notably absent from the risk assessment is consideration of the political environment and external challenges that might impede implementation.

45. TEK pertaining to the management of natural resources was meticulously recorded through a series of community-level consultations, workshops, anthropological surveys by Historic Preservation Office (HPO), LEAP exercises, and socio-economic monitoring (SEM). One notable event was the 'cultural survey retreat' organized by International Office of Migration (IMO) in June 2020. This retreat enabled CMAC members to contribute their insights into enhancing the Reimaanlok planning process, refining resource allocation and integration, and conducting exercises focused on TEK. The promotion of TEK was further facilitated through livelihood projects such as handicraft training in Aur atoll and the cultivation of bwiro in Mejit, among others.

4.1.5 Analysis of the project's results framework: Logic, strategy, and indicators

46. The analysis of the project's results framework, encompassing the project logic, strategy, and indicators, indicates that the project's objectives and components were well-defined and strongly correlated with each other. They were also practical and capable of being implemented within the designated timeframe even with external challenges that reduced the project's total duration from 69 to real 45 months. Furthermore, the project was strongly aligned with country priorities, and its actions were driven by the needs and context of the country, fact reflecting its sound design. The project's 12 outputs effectively contributed to the achievement of the project's three main outcomes, thus affirming their consistency with its ToC which as consultations with IPs and stakeholders confirmed, well-defined and robust. The ToC included a clear definition of the problem to be addressed and its underlying causes, the desired outcomes, an analysis of barriers and enablers for achieving the outcomes, and a comprehensive plan for dealing with barriers. In addition, the project outlined a phased withdrawal strategy, thereby ensuring a thoughtful and organized conclusion to its activities.

47. During the inception workshop, slight modifications were made to the results framework. The project's overarching objective can be achieved through the meticulous implementation of its various activities, such as income generation, gender equality, women's empowerment, governance improvement, and livelihood benefits. To ensure that it can effectively evaluate its own efforts, the project employs socioeconomic co-benefits and sex-disaggregated and/or gender-responsive indicators and targets. To gather gender-disaggregated data, the project conducted community consultations, utilizing tools like SEM and LEAP survey. SEM surveys provided valuable insights into the socio-economic landscape of each community, thereby collating crucial information for planning purposes. LEAP surveys, for their part, played pivotal roles in addressing the income disparity between men and women, empowering women economically, and enhancing governance and livelihood benefits. A total of eight indicators were set, two for the overall project objective and two each for the three outcomes. Each of these indicators is SMART, making them easy to measure and their progress easy to track.

4.1.6 Assumptions and risks

48. The project document highlights seven risks categorize as operational, regulatory, and environmental. These risks, which include the high cost of living, labor shortages, transportation and communication challenges are still relevant and, in many cases, continue to impact communities. These risks underwent a comprehensive assessment which considered both internal and external factors that influence the overall performance of the project. Internal factors included stakeholders' familiarity with the national policy context and their established practices on the ground. Positive synergy was observed among the project, GoRMI, and relevant stakeholders, making for a conducive environment for collaboration. The project incorporated assumptions and risks including 'externalities that influenced the findings' in the project identification form (PIF) and project document (see **Annex**-15).

4.1.7 Lessons from other relevant projects incorporated into the project's design

49. This project is built upon knowledge acquired from other regional R2R and biodiversity conservation projects as well as international water-themed projects. Specifically, the Pacific Regional R2R program, along with national R2R projects and the regional program support project, were crucial collaborators in this project. Coordination with the regional project was established through program reporting and participation in regional training activities. The Pacific Regional R2R program is a multifaceted initiative that secured more than USD 82 million of GEF financing for a five-year period, commencing in 2013. It encompassed the national projects of 14 Pacific island countries, including RMI, facilitated the integration of natural resource management through demonstration projects, capacity-building, and the implementation of national and local policies, reforms, and budget commitments. One activity under Output 3.4 of this project involved a training workshop on integrated water resources management, a component previously implemented in the regional R2R project. This activity is aligned with the goals of the Pacific Regional R2R program and the RMI National Conservation Plan, which include developing a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for the Reimaanlok process, an activity this project embraced. This M&E system aimed to establish a foundational framework for assessing the project's progress towards achieving the strategic Reimaanlok objectives.

4.1.8 Planned stakeholder participation

50. The project effectively tackled the establishment of valuable partnerships, agreements, and new challenges. It formulated and implemented the designated 'stakeholder engagement plan' as outlined in the project documentation, refining partnership structures and facilitating discussions about roles and obligations. As planned, the project successfully established partnerships with important stakeholders, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, through various contractual agreements. It also received the technical support it had anticipated. The project aimed to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of its initiatives by engaging seven categories of stakeholders[11]. Through careful planning and allocation of resources, the project successfully engaged these stakeholders at the right places and mobilized them at appropriate times. Stakeholders acknowledged that the majority of partnership arrangements had been appropriately established and that roles and responsibilities were well-defined (see **Annex**-16).

4.1.9 Linkages between the project and other interventions within the sector

51. The project played a vital role in establishing intentional connections between itself and other interventions within the sector by building linkages with national and regional programs. It also made significant contributions to the strategies, plans, and documents formulated by the GoRMI to promote sustainable development. Furthermore, the project facilitated the addressing of various issues outlined in multiple plans, frameworks, and strategies (see **Annex**-17).

4.2.0 Adaptive management arrangements

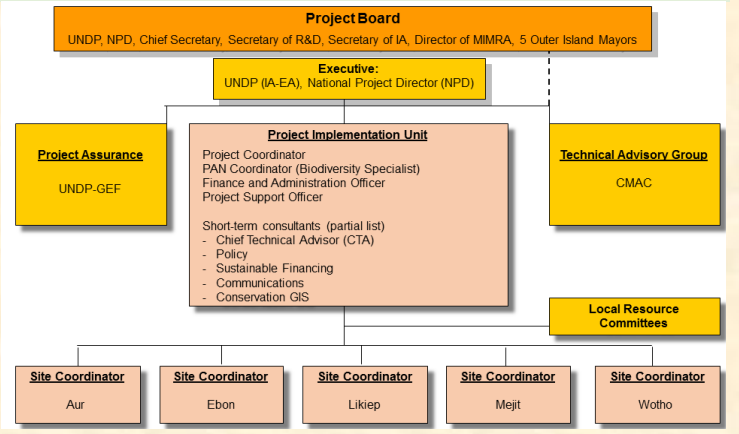
52. In terms of modality, the UNDP is currently carrying out this project using a direct implementation modality (DIM) under its supervision. Under the DIM, the UNDP is responsible and accountable for managing the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of project interventions, ensuring successful project outcomes, and making effective use of UNDP resources. According to the project document, the PSC/PB is comprised of 13 members, including representatives from UNDP and CCD, the Chief Secretary, the Secretary of R&D, the Secretary of Internal Affairs, the Director of MIMRA, and the Mayors of five outer islands. The presence of the PIU within the CCD premises in Majuro is a clear indication of the CCD's commitment to this project. It is commendable that the PIU took proactive measures to expedite the implementation process and make

[11] (i) direct beneficiaries, (ii) community-based stakeholders, (iii) stakeholders involved in project implementation, (iv) non-governmental organizations/civil society organizations (CSOs), (v) state-owned enterprises, (vi) private sector entities, and (vii) regional stakeholders

up for time lost in the initial years. For the effectiveness of the project, the project's organizational structure underwent some modifications.

53. The initial modality was to be the national implementation modality (NIM), but that was later changed to the DIM on February 24, 2017 based on the letter received from CCD. In terms of human resource management, out of the five project staff, three were based in the RMI, while two were stationed at the UNDP MCO in Fiji. This staffing arrangement posed challenges for communication due to the relatively small size of the team. Similarly, to achieve the project's outputs, UNDP closely collaborated with OEPPC and provided direct project services (DPS[12]) in line with UNDP policies for GEF-funded projects. Regarding the flow of funds, UNDP receives the project's funds and disburses them directly to the IPs/contracted parties responsible for implementing activities. The smooth implementation of the project was affected by political and traditional influences, especially when it came to gaining community support. To address this challenge, the project adjusted its activities and funds to accommodate genuine local needs while still aligning with the project's main goals and objectives.

Figure 1: Project's organizational structure



54. The feedback and suggestions provided by MTR were taken by the PSC/PB and PIU. Due to the committed efforts of the PIU, a significant portion of the MTR recommendations have been put into practice as much as feasible, addressing the relevant requirements. The recommendations provided by the MTR have strengthened the three expected outcomes of the project'. Project stakeholders confirmed that all the changes made to the project were well-documented, involved the IPs, and focused on implementation-related issues (see **Annex**-18).

4.2 Project implementation

4.2.2 Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements

55. Throughout the project's implementation period, the project maintained strategic partnerships with key stakeholders that aligned well with the partners' predefined roles and responsibilities. The active involvement of stakeholders, collaborative processes, and partnership arrangements played a vital role in integrating nationally and internationally proven scientific tools, approaches, and best practices into local contexts with modifications when needed. This project's coordination and partnership approach brought benefits not only to UN agencies and I/NGOs but also to government stakeholders. The approach facilitated the expansion and strengthening of networks with relevant agencies, enabling the development of large programmatic landscapes and the more effective utilization of available resources. The following are some of the key exemplary methods developed during the project's implementation.

- *Create and employ the KoboToolBox platform to conduct surveys regarding water availability and related concerns on the outer islands.*
- *Utilize satellite data applications to actively monitor and quantify environmental conditions, aiming to cultivate awareness regarding crucial factors like rainfall and vegetation health. This endeavor is aimed at establishing a connection to phenomena like El Niño and other climate conditions. These insights can serve as valuable inputs for Marshallese agencies concerned with water and food security and ultimately contribute to community-based planning and sustainability. Enhancing comprehension of the distribution and resilience of both subsistence and commercial crops with data played a pivotal role in improving sustainability.*

[12] DPS costs are those incurred by UNDP for the provision of services that are execution-driven and can be traced in full to the delivery of project inputs. DPSs are over and above project cycle management services.

- *Other exemplary practices include the sustainable harvesting and production of virgin coconut oil on Ebon atoll through solar power, the compact packaging of small fish on Aur atoll, and the creation of handicrafts on Wotho and Mejit atolls that draw upon local resources and skills.*
- *Methods of terrestrial PA methodology have been revised, LEAP method edited, alternative livelihood approach piloted/upgraded that would be best practice for other to be used in the future.*

56. By involving national-level government authorities engaged in natural resource management, especially in the biodiversity and international water sectors, through the PSC/PB, the project expanded its outreach. This fruitful partnership led to the development of projects and programs in and around the project's outer atolls, as acknowledged by IPs and government stakeholders (see **Annex**-19).

4.2.3 Project finance and co-finance

a. Project finance

57. The TE consultant identified certain discrepancies between the planned and actual expenditures. However, the project employed robust financial controls so it was able to practice informed decision-making regarding the budget and ensure the timely flow of funds for satisfactory project deliverables. Given that the RMI R2R project did not satisfy the NIM threshold for annual audits in 2019, there is no need for a separate project-level audit report (see Table 23 in Annex-14 for the list of audited projects). Throughout the evaluation consultation with IPs and stakeholders, no allegations of funds had been mishandled were reported. Each IP diligently followed its respective procurement policies for acquiring and utilizing materials and services. One positive aspect of the project is that, with strong justification, changes to fund allocations are possible. On June 30, 2023, the status of disbursement and delivery, specifically the cumulative GL delivery compared to the total approved amount as outlined in the Project Document, as well as the cumulative GL delivery against the anticipated yearly deliveries, is showing a positive trend of progression (see Table 17 in **Annex**-14). This is an encouraging indicator despite the presence of various challenges.

58. The fact that the project implemented appropriate and stringent financial controls, is evident in several measures. First, combined delivery reports (CDRs) and the project's budget balance report provide a clear overview of expenditure and commitments in the current year. Once generated through ATLAS, now such work is carried out in the Quantum system. Second, manual monitoring of project expenditures against budget lines was employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of financial progress and outstanding commitments. Last, the receipt of quarterly tranches of GEF funds from UNDP was contingent upon having spent a minimum of 80% of the funds from the previous tranche. Some concerns were raised regarding the timely payment of contracts, however. For instance, there were instances in which a US$ 1,000 contract took up to six weeks to complete and receive approval. In addition, it took six to eight weeks for approval to be granted after bills and receipts were submitted requesting payment.

b. Co-financing

59. The project successfully identified potential sources of co-financing and effectively leveraged co-financing opportunities. IPs, stakeholders, and PIU staff have a clear understanding of the reported co-financing, enabling them to actually bring to fruition the committed in-kind, grant, and cash co-financing. They are also well-informed about the reasons for discrepancies between expected and actual levels of co-financing. There was some uncertainty, however, regarding the extent to which project components supported by external funders should be integrated into the overall project. Nevertheless, there is unanimous belief that co-financing will contribute toward achieving project outcomes and ensuring its long-term sustainability.

Table 1: Status of co-financing

Co-financing (type/)	UNDP financing (US$)		Government (US$)		CSO (US$)		Total (US$)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
	126,371		3,452,768		478,000		4,057,139	
Grants	-	-	-	500,000	-	-	-	-
Loans	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	500,000
In-kind support	-	126371	-	2,952,768	-	478,000	-	3557139
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total	126,371	126,371	3,452,768	3,452,768	478,000	478,000	4,057,139	4,057,139

Source: PIR, 2023

60. The total co-financing amount stands approximately 51% of the total financial resources required according to the project document. The data indicates that the project successfully mobilized the planned 100% co-

financing (see Table 1 below). These resources played a significant role in the achievement of the project's objective and outcomes. Some of the pieces of evidence supporting this figure encompass confirmation emails from co-financing sources. These emails encompass details such as the amount, nature of the activity, project name, and dates involved. It has also been actively gathering these documents from IPs and relevant stakeholders. The TE consultant observed that a considerable portion of that co-financing was monitored through collaborative efforts with several NGOs, state agencies, and communities, mainly in the form of in-kind contributions. However, these in-kind contributions were not meticulously tracked during the project's implementation. The majority of co-financing, came from the recurrent costs of staff time and their annual budgets.

4.2.4 Monitoring & evaluation: design at entry (*), implementation (*), and overall assessment of M&E (*)

61. The project effectively utilized M&E information to enhance its performance and adapt to changing needs. Regular monitoring and periodic evaluations of the project's results, as outlined in the project results framework, yielded positive outcomes. The MTR played a crucial role in reviewing indicators, but there was no any feedback for making them more effective and more appropriate. Project-level M&E activities were conducted in accordance with UNDP requirements, as specified in the UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures (POPP) and UNDP Evaluation Policy. Monitoring and periodic assessments of the project's indicators promoted the optimal utilization of project resources, ensuring both cost efficiency and cost effectiveness. Several monitoring tools were utilized to assess the overall performance of the project and make adjustments based on identified needs. The project supported the documentation of lessons learned as part of knowledge management for knowledge sharing, but this process faced challenges due to the absence of a dedicated staff member (i.e. M&E Associate). An area for further improvement lies in systematically recording M&E results using a suitable online platform, such as Google Drive or other data archive system to ensure their availability and usability in the future. The project implemented effective mechanisms to assign national/regional institutes and the GEF Operational Focal Point, represented by the CCD Director/National Project Director (NPD), for project monitoring. The PSC/PB played a significant role in assessing the desired project results by reviewing and appraising AWPs keeping in mind the lessons learned. The site coordinators, who acted as vital links between the project and the outer atolls, were responsibility for field-level monitoring and supervision, in coordination with LRCs, traditional institutions, and mayors. The UNDP North Pacific Office actively collaborated with key project stakeholders to ensure the project adhered to UNDP M&E criteria in a timely fashion and upheld high standards. As part of adaptive management, the PIU increased its weekly meetings from one in the beginning to two (on Tuesday and Friday) in recent years. Although the project document calls for holding two PSC/PB meetings per year in order to take into account the changing needs of the project. The UNDP MCO played a crucial role in providing strategic advice and guidance to the PIU through their RSD team leaders and IRMU to enhance the M&E mechanism As outlined in the project's document, the UNDP MCO Fiji and UNDP North Pacific Office was unable to conduct any oversight monitoring mission to establish project M&E standards due to the onset of COVID-19, which resulted in the closure of RMI's borders for several months to years. UNDP MCO missions and back-to-office reports (BTORs) helped the project update its risk logs based on their monitoring. It is mandatory for UNDP staff and consultant to develop and share BTORs after each monitoring visit. No country mission was conducted by the RTA at any time during the project period nevertheless, the RTA provided valuable and practical recommendations whenever required and contributed to improving the overall performance of the project. Over the past five years, the project was audited only once in compliance with the DIM audit criteria and UNDP financial regulations and rules. During the TE mission, IPs and relevant stakeholders expressed a strong sense of ownership and support for the project, referring to it as "their project." This level of local ownership was fostered in part because an effective M&E mechanism was in place. Working with outer atolls can be challenging, primarily because not all materials are readily available and may vary depending on the vendor and the circumstances (See **Annex-20**).

62. The evaluation of the project's overall M&E status involved the following aspects: (i) adherence of project M&E to the M&E standards of UNDP and GEF, (ii) collaboration with project stakeholders to ensure that UNDP M&E criteria meet the required standards, (iii) utilization of M&E information to enhance performance and adapt to changing needs, (iv) consideration of project-level M&E to support national data systems, (v) utilization of M&E mission data to update the ATLAS risk log and UNDP gender marker, (vi) frequency of financial audits in compliance with the DIM audit criteria and UNDP financial regulations, and (vii) improvement in procurement and logistic systems. The overall analysis results in a rating is as follows.

(a) M&E design at entry: **5** (Satisfactory)
(b) M&E plan implementation: **5** (Satisfactory)
(c) Overall quality of M&E: **5** (Satisfactory)

4.2.5 UNDP implementation/oversight (*) and implementing partner execution (*), overall project implementation/execution (*), coordination, and operational issues

63. A thorough analysis of secondary information and interviews with project stakeholders revealed that the UNDP provided essential technical assistance in various stages of the project, including project identification, concept preparation, appraisal, detailed proposal preparation, approval, start-up, oversight, supervision, and evaluation. The UNDP MCO Fiji assumed responsibility for programmatic and financial matters, encompassing human resource management, financial auditing, procurement of goods and services, and oversight of project expenditures in line with the approved AWPs and budgets. Travel restrictions posed challenges in managing goods and materials based on the procurement plan. In response to these financial risks and the slow procurement process, the PSC/PB meeting of 2023 authorized the PIU to expedite procurement procedures, granting it additional authority. The result was speedier procurement and better logistics management. Overall, UNDP support was found to be satisfactory in terms of both quality and timeliness and to benefit IPs, stakeholders, and the PIU. The practice of preparing detailed PIRs annually proved valuable, as it allowed for the inclusion and sharing of various issues with the PSC/PB and the GEF (the donor). The PIR encompassed risk assessments and addressed challenges faced during project implementation, along with management responses to mitigate those challenges. In addition, the PIR facilitated adequate oversight of environmental and social risks, as identified through the SESP.

64. No IP or stakeholder raised any concern regarding the quality of the project's implementation or oversight at any point during the TE field mission. Operating autonomously, each IP responsibly executed the agreed project activities within the planned budget limits. Whenever the need arose, such as when an issue or concern that could potentially impact the overall quality of the project emerged, UNDP stepped into provide technical assistance and administrative support. It should be noted, however, that, at the outset, the project's progress was relatively slow, primarily due to external adversities and that no plan to accelerate its pace or address the gap was put in place. UNDP's oversight responsibilities did, however include ensuring the timely delivery of activities, as well as their quality, achieving anticipated results, ensuring the appropriate utilization of funds, managing the procurement and contracting of goods and services, maintaining financial records, conducting risk assessments, addressing issues in annual reporting, and evaluating the SESP. It also was to apply safeguard measures to address any risks identified.

65. The SESP evaluation suggested that during implementation the project was "low risk," implying that its actions were not expected to create significant negative environmental or social impacts that could undermine overall project performance. Although the periodic assessment of SESP was mandatory, detailed evaluations were not, in fact, regularly conducted. Instead, brief assessments were carried out before the development of each PIR towards the end of each fiscal year. In conclusion, stakeholders expressed satisfaction with UNDP's implementation and oversight of the IPs' execution, overall project implementation, and coordination with relevant stakeholders to resolve operational issues.

66. After conducting a comprehensive analysis of the aforementioned findings, the following ratings were assigned: (i) UNDP implementation/oversight received a rating of **5** (Satisfactory), (ii) implementing partner execution was rated at **5** (Satisfactory), and (iii) overall project implementation/execution obtained a rating of **5** (satisfactory).

4.2.6 Risk management, including social and environmental standards

67. The project established a mechanism to track risks on a quarterly basis and subsequently update these risks in the UNDP's ATLAS risk log. This process allows for thorough reviews and the implementation of corrective measures as needed. The project document comprehensively identified and categorized several risks into seven distinct categories: environmental, financial, operational, organizational, political, regulatory, and strategic. A total of 10 risks were assessed and ranked according to their potential impact on the overall project's performance and the probability that they would have such an impact using a scale ranging from 1 (a low level of impact) to 5 (a high level of impact), see **Annex**-21.

4.3 Project Results

4.3.1 Assess the achievement of outcomes against indicators

a. Project Outcome 1

68. Under Indicator 1, *"terrestrial and marine ecosystems under enhanced management,"* the project made significant contributions. The TE targets included (i) establishing new protected areas and expanding coverage of unprotected ecosystems, (ii) creating five new terrestrial protected areas (PAs), (iii) achieving a total coverage of 502 ha by the new terrestrial PAs, (iv) establishing 5 new marine protected areas (MPAs), and (v) achieving a coverage of 30,550 ha for new nearshore marine PAs (see Table 2). The project successfully facilitated the establishment of 59,071 ha of MPA and 623.3 ha of terrestrial protected area (TPA). In addition, it successfully facilitated the approval of Wotho, Mejit, Likiep, and soon Aur resource management plan, including the delineation of MPAs and TPAs. Ebon delineation and management plan was completed under the PROP project.[13].

Table 2: Progress on Outcome 1 indicators

Indicator	Target (End of project)	Achievement	Remarks
Terrestrial and marine ecosystems under enhanced management	Number of new terrestrial PAs: 5	6 new TPAs	
	Coverage of new terrestrial PAs: 502 ha	623 ha	TPA values for Aur drafted but excluded
	Number of new marine PAs: 5	7	
	Coverage of new nearshore marine PAs: 30,550 ha	59071 ha	MPA values for Aur drafted but excluded
	Total TPA: 579.4 ha	623 .3 ha	
	Total MPA: 59,114.2 ha	59071 ha	
Number of NRMPs	5	4	5 NRMPs developed; 3 approved from local government, 1 near to complete (90% task completed), and 1 completed under the PROP projec

Source: Project record, 2023

The summary of MPA & TPA is given below

Site	New MPA	New TPA
Wotho Atoll	**4** *NE subsistence MPA (1,560 ha) * NW seasonal MPA (779 ha) * Mo Marine PA (630.1 ha) * Commercial Marine PA (10,439.1 ha)	**2** * Riwut PA (118.1 ha) * Mo Terrestrial PA (118 ha)
Evidence/supporting document: Wotho Atoll NRMP includes the area covered by the MPA and TPAs (calculated by MICS using ArcGIS/Google Earth)		
Mejit Island	**0**	**2** * Mejit Taro PA (18 ha) * Mejit NW PA (24 ha) *See section below*
Evidence/supporting document: Mejit Island NRMP includes delineated areas – CTA used Google Earth to calculate the TPA areas.		
Likiep Atoll	**2** * Subsistence MPA (5,919 ha) * Commercial MPA (40,131 ha) *See section below*	**1 Network** * Subsistence PA (387 ha) *See section below*
Evidence/supporting document: Likiep Atoll NRMP includes the area covered by the MPA and TPAs (calculated by MICS using ArcGIS/Google Earth)		
Aur Atoll	Network drafted in the NRMP	Network drafted in the NRMP
Evidence/supporting document: Aur Atoll NRMP includes the area covered by the MPA and TPAs (calculated by MICS using ArcGIS/Google Earth)		
Ebon Atoll	Not applicable	Not applicable

Note: this table 4 describes the updated documents and info - for some of the sites. The zoning/area is described in the NRMP (attached with this report).

Source: Project's record, 2023

[13] The World Bank is providing support to Kiribati, the Republic of Marshall Islands, and Tonga through the Pacific Islands Regional Oceanscape Program (PROP) with the aim of enhancing sustainable ocean-dependent livelihoods. Within the RMI PROP initiative, a total of 212 individuals have undergone training to strengthen the skills of observers and debriefers in the realm of sustainable ocean resource management. Additionally, 21 coastal communities have received assistance in the development of community fisheries management plans using the Reimaanlok Framework. This program spans a duration of six years, commencing from December 2022 and concluding in December 2028.

69. The TPA network in Ebon atoll is currently being delineated, following the completion of the outputs of a terrestrial survey, including a vegetation map and flood risk assessment model. In Wotho atoll, the total nearshore MPA covers 13,406.26 ha. In Likiep atoll, plans for MPA network delineation are in the drafting phase and nearing completion, while delineation of Likiep's TPA network will be finalized after the outputs of a terrestrial survey, primarily a vegetation map and flood risk assessment model, have been produced. The delays in TPA and MPA network delineation, which ranged from 2019 to 2022, were attributable to there being a lack of relevant preliminary information in 2021.[14]

70. In Mejit Island, TPA network delineation were completed and the island has approved the creation of two additional terrestrial protected areas, covering a total of 40.42 ha. In Aur atoll, in contrast, delineation was delayed because the task could not be assigned to an IPs in 2021, when it was planned. All IPs with the capacity to complete the task were already burdened with a full workload and could not take on additional responsibilities. Delineation of the Aur MPA network was added to IOM's and MICS's portfolios by amending the LoA and RPA, respectively. Drafts for the Aur resources management plan, protected areas spatial analysis, and delineation tasks were prepared with support from IPs and Chief Technical Advisor (CTA). The process is currently undergoing community review, natural resource management plan (NRMP) sign-off, and physical delineation. Aur's TPA delineation is also nearing completion: it is awaiting the production of the necessary outputs of a terrestrial survey. In Aur atoll, the 75% of the atoll's barrier (including land) was tentatively established for conservation (traditional no-take and subsistence only).

71. The delay in TPA and MPA delineation activities was attributed to the lack of relevant information. It is noteworthy, however, that all of the planned marine survey expeditions (designed to collect data) and reports (to document the health of the reef) have been completed. Drafts of the terrestrial baseline surveys, which include flood risk assessment models, are available. In addition, cultural surveys for Likiep and Wotho atolls are, with technical assistance from HPO, in their final drafting phase. The survey and drafting processes, however, need to be expedited. Because of the rise in costs and time associated with the RMI quarantine procedures, SPC was unable to commit to completing the hydrogeological survey. As a result, this task was handed over to RMI Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) to carry out in close collaboration with SPC technical staff. RMI-EPA plans to conduct surveys of two project sites by modifying the LoA with PIU/UNDP within the project's period.

72. Under Indicator 2, *"number of NRMPs, inclusive of integrated terrestrial and coastal resource assessments and management strategies, approved by local resource committees and under implementation"* (TE target 5 NRMPs completed and adopted), the project has made substantial progress. Specifically, the project successfully completed and obtained approval for three resource management plans, one each in Mejit, island, and Wotho Ebon atolls, a step which brings it closer to achieving the end-of-project target of five NRMPs completed and adopted. The Ebon NRMP was completed by MIMRA under the PROP project. Interviews with MICS revealed that NRMPs for Mejit and Aur atolls are currently being developed with the assistance of their respective LRCs and local governments and it is hard to meet this target considering the limited timeframe of the project. These management plans include integrated assessments of terrestrial and coastal resources, along with corresponding management strategies. The NRMPs that have already been approved are currently being implemented under the leadership of LRCs and local governments. Such good progress reflects the commitment of the project towards effectively managing and conserving the natural resources in the respective atolls.

73. The project's records indicate that Aur resource management plan is still in the development phase and that the delay was caused by the late availability of findings from the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP) and terrestrial surveys conducted by IOM and MICS, respectively. Findings from the SEM and marine surveys were incorporated, but certain aspects, such as the establishment of PAs, the introduction of rules and measures, and the development of an action plan, remain incomplete. Similarly, the Likiep resource management plan is still being developed by MICS, with funding support from GEF and other donors. The delay in this case resulted from the lack of certain information essential for delineating TPAs/MPAs through community consultation.

74. Collaborating with public school system (PSS), the project developed a curriculum that played a pivotal role in promoting awareness and inculcating the principles of natural resource management and conservation at the school level. The PSS played a significant role in incorporating conservation messages into the science

[14] Delineation effort required the final TPA data for 4 sites (all except Wotho) and the MPA data for 3 sites (Mejit, Likiep, and Aur).

curriculum. PSS orchestrated a pilot training session for atoll teachers, focusing on curriculum mapping and the development of a teacher guide. The participants also crafted an integrated science environment (iSEC) framework tailored to the elementary level and atoll context. In addition, a training event in lesson planning was created using the 'contemporary quality pedagogy framework' template. Teachers who participated in that training actively engaged in creating and using lesson plans and PowerPoint presentations. However, it is essential to observe, assess, and evaluate the implementation of the curriculum tools, learning resources, and assessment methods within project schools to ascertain their efficacy. The initiatives, such as the integration of iSEC into the RMI national curriculum, are likely to persist even beyond the conclusion of this project.

75. The project is currently undertaking the construction and handover of the Ebon Virgin Coconut Oil Facility, and the construction of additional raceway tanks for clam farming in Likiep and Aur atolls. All preliminary tasks for these activities have been completed, so it is likely they will be completed by the time of project closure. A thorough assessment of progress indicators reveals that the project's performance is positive, an achievement is attributed to the project's strong relationships with and strategic mobilization of IPs, and the support received from UNDP MCO and North Pacific Office.

76. Regarding the project's food security intervention, which was reallocated from the Blue Fee concept and is being implemented by the Ministry of Natural Resource and Commerce, progress is being made. All communities have received the planned supplies and training, including activities like tree planting, food storage, and cooking demonstrations. To operationalize the NRMPs, the project allocated resources worth US$30,000 to the local governments and communities of the 5 project atolls to implement their NRMP action plans. The PIU was actively involved in the procurement process. Notably, Ebon and Wotho have utilized most of the allocated resources, while procurement and progress in the other three atolls are still ongoing.

77. In sum, Enhanced comprehension of biophysical, socioeconomic, and cultural aspects of terrestrial and nearshore marine resources across five outer atolls was achieved through the development of NRMPs. However, the dissemination, utilization, and application of these plans at the community level remain insufficient.

b. Project Outcome 2

78. In line with Indicator 1, *"position of PAN Coordinator, overseeing operation of the PAN office, is institutionalized"* (TE target: Position of PAN Coordinator is institutionalized as a permanent position), the project has been providing financial support to the PAN Coordinator, who was recruited on 20 December, 2019, and whose position has now been institutionalized under MIMRA. The PAN office, housed under MIMRA, is operational, and the PAN program was officially launched in March 2022. One noteworthy accomplishment of the project was obtaining the Cabinet's approval for the PAN, which opened up numerous opportunities to ensure the interconnection of policies and their practical implementation. The future involves the utilization of community-based adaptive management to establish NRMPs which can facilitate the realization of initiatives for biodiversity and natural resource conservation. For example, local communities were engaged and their indigenous skills and resources leveraged. The expansion and enhancement of protected areas within both terrestrial and marine ecosystems played a pivotal role as these measures acted as drivers to rejuvenate biodiversity and enhance productivity and thereby contribute to the sustainability of local livelihoods. The project's rafting a framework of legal support to operationalize the PAN Act was a pivotal move, one aimed at empowering communities in the realms of biodiversity conservation and natural resource management. Employing a community-based approach rooted in indigenous knowledge and wisdom was central to the formulation of the NRMP. This approach placed livelihoods at the core, incorporating conservation measures while also delving into various aspects such as eco-tourism and paying for ecosystem services (see Table 3).

79. The project played a pivotal role in facilitating land-use arrangements that bolster an ecosystem-based approach to natural resource management through alternative livelihood interventions. For example, IOM-supported livelihood projects effectively garnered consent from traditional landowners to allocate land for natural-based solution livelihood interventions in Ebon, Likiep, Aur, and Mejit.

80. The student recruitment campaign for the post-graduate course at University of South Pacific (USP) was not successful as only one application was received. As an alternative, then, the PIU engaged the CMI to build the capacity of four graduates currently working in the Land Grant and Agriculture Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce. They earned a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and now work as adjunct instructors in the new Associate degree in Agricultural Education for Health and Sustainable Livelihoods, which began to be offered in CMI from fall 2022. The project also organized four Associate Degree summer camps in Majuro, Ebeye, Jaluit, and Wotje, in which 80 potential students participated. These camps aimed to train students, equip them with skills, and foster their interest in agriculture through transitional activities. To ensure the sustainability of alternative livelihood interventions at the project atolls, the project engaged IOM and conducted the needed training and workshops. For example, in Ebon, training focused on virgin coconut oil production, while in Likiep, the emphasis was on giant clam farming. Project beneficiaries in Aur, Mejit, and Wotho received training in both giant clam farming and handicraft production. Apart from the handicraft training, all training programs were reported to be complete. CMI successfully administered and certified participants in an agroforestry pilot course held on five outer islands despite the challenges of effective communication and comprehension. A noticeable disconnect emerged between the training resource personnel and the participants undergoing training. Fiji National University (FNU) undertook the training of trainers and orchestrated trips to outer islands for summer camps in Jaluit, Wotje, Majuro, and Ebeye. These efforts were carried out in collaboration with Landgrant and MoNRC. The project successfully reached a count of 2,000 local residents, including 1,000 women, who benefited from comprehensive approaches to natural resource management in the chosen five outer islands. Nevertheless, the degree to which these individuals derived benefits from the "integrated approaches" still falls short of desired levels.

Table 3: Progress on Outcome 2 indicators

Indicator	Target (End of project)	Achievement	Status
Position of PAN Coordinator, overseeing operation of the PAN office, is institutionalized	Position of PAN Coordinator is institutionalized as a permanent position	The project continues to provide financial support to the PAN Coordinator (recruited on 20/12/2019 and position institutionalized under MIMRA).	Completed
Number of RMI professionals trained in integrated approaches through Regional Pacific R2R	4, including 2 women	4, including 2 women	Completed

Source: PIMS, 2023

81. Under Indicator 2, *"number of RMI professionals trained in integrated approaches through the Regional Pacific R2R Program"* (TE target: four, including two women), the project change its approach after no qualified applications for the post-graduate course emerged. As an alternative, the project decided to collaborate with the CMI to enhance the capacity of four graduates, two men and two women.

c. Project Outcome 3

82. In alignment with Indicator 1, *"national repository for spatial biodiversity and resource management information"* (TE target: Conservation GIS database and online clearing house updated with new data, including TEK data from all 5 project atolls), the project provided significant support. It involved acquiring equipment to operate the National Spatial Analytical Facility (NSAF), which replaced the previous GIS-based management information system (Conservation GIS). Currently, the NSAF server is operational and, after being temporarily hosted by the CMI, is now hosted by MIMRA. The project also procured specialized IT equipment, including desktops, screens, and software such ArcGIS to support the operation of NSAF at MIMRA. Some tasks, such as completing the datasets, defining user and access protocols, and preparing case studies are in the process of completion as the project is still under implementation (see Table 4).

83. One exemplary approach employed by the project was the establishment and utilization of GIS for capturing information pertaining to biodiversity and natural resource management. This practice is particularly relevant for Pacific Island Countries (PICs) due to their geographical dispersion. The integration of this technology serves as a crucial tool for updating and monitoring advancements in biodiversity conservation and the protection of natural resources. Furthermore, the project played a pivotal role in increasing public awareness about biodiversity conservation and the Reimaanlok process. However, the project needs to further enhance comprehension of people's knowledge and perspectives, as different communities have different viewpoints. It is good that TEK data has been collected in the form of traditional stories/legends compiled in ebooks by Jo-Jikum, a local NGO.

84. In partnership with CMI, the project achieved the following milestones: (i) the advancement and finalization of status of the agroforestry program from a certificate program to an Associate of Science (AS) Degree program, (ii) the provision of Certificate IV training to 5 Marshallese instructors specializing in agroforestry, and (iii) the organization of the NSAF database. However, the training aspect is pending due to the relocation of the trainer to the United States. CMI played a pivotal role in the development of the NSAF, including the acquisition and setup of a server and a subsequent data to ensure its operational functionality. One challenge that arose during the certificate course was the presence of a communication barrier between instructors and participants. However, credit goes to CMI for their innovative approach: they successfully addressed this issue by enlisting a translator from the MoNRC, effectively bridging the gap.

Table 4: Progress on Outcome 3 indicators

Indicator	Target (End of project)	Achievement	Status
National repository for spatial biodiversity and resource management information enhanced and sustained	ConservationGIS database and online clearing house updated with new data including TEK data from all 5 project sites	MIMRA was confirmed as the NSAF host. Specialized IT equipment and software (ArcGIS) were procured to MIMRA to support the NSAF operation. Spatial data collected throughout the project period shall be provided to MIMRA prior to project closure.	Under progress and expected to be completed within project's tenure
Cultural expressions (stories, chants, dances, oration, material production, proverbs) linked to resource management documented and mapped in the 5 project sites management plans, and celebrated annually via inter-generational knowledge transmission events	The 5 project sites hold and document (including at least one video documentary) a public event linking cultural expressions and resource management and which is organized by, with and for an intergenerational gathering of community members	First LVG with Jo-Jikum were completed and the second LVG with Jo-Jikum is under implementation	Under progress and expected to be completed within project's tenure

Source: PIR, 2023

85. Under Indicator 2, *"cultural expressions (stories, chants, dances, oration, material production, proverbs) linked to resource management documented and mapped in the five project sites management plans, and celebrated annually via inter-generational knowledge transmission events"* (TE target: each of the 5 project atolls hold and document a public event linking cultural expressions and resource management, including at least one video documentary, organized by, with, and for an intergenerational gathering of community members), the project is making significant strides. The video production is currently in its last phases. Presently, IOM is transcribing and translating to make final adjustments. Afterward, it will undergo clearance from both UNDP and government counterparts, and all of these steps are expected to be finished by November 1st.Currently, the project is in the final stages of establishing a contractual agreement with IP to capture and prepare easily understood formats of awareness materials about local and traditional knowledge and make them readily accessible.

86. In February 2020, the activities of the first contract with Jo-Jikum, were successfully completed. This LVG led to cultural exchanges between the youths of Majuro and those of the outer atolls that resulted in the production of an e-book that describes legends and traditional knowledge. The budget initially allocated to support the RMI HPO/Ministry of Internal Affairs was later revised to accommodate the results of the cultural survey methodology. This budget was then awarded to Jo-Jikum to replicate the activities of their first LVG on another project site. The second LVG with Jo-Jikum is currently underway, and final reporting on its outcomes is in progress. These efforts demonstrate the project's commitment to preserving and celebrating cultural expressions linked to resource management and to facilitating inter-generational knowledge exchange events.

87. Further, Jo-Jikum authored two booklets that compile stories originating from Arno and Aur. Currently, both booklets are undergoing a meticulous review and one is nearing completion. The successful outcome was made possible by assembling a dedicated team of interns with a diverse array of skills. These interns were provided with essential technical training, they participated in cultural protocol meetings to ensure alignment with traditional leadership customs, and they took strategic trips. Local knowledge holders and experts were actively engaged to share with them valuable oral traditions and legends, including those from adjacent atolls. These oral narratives were then transcribed after meticulously recording audio data for precise documentation. Information was also gathered concerning the impact of climate change on TEK, as well as strategies to conserve cultural insights and wisdom. The accumulated knowledge was reviewed by PSS in collaboration with the Curriculum Department to ensure the suitability of its content in terms of educational standards. The ultimate validation of this knowledge came from the House of *Iroij*, the traditional

chief, adding a final layer of authenticity. The partnership fostered between the PSS and traditional leaders facilitated a systematic approach to working on TEK.

88. The project's current level of performance serves as strong evidence that the project's objectives have been successfully met. To complete the remaining project activities (livelihood and food security), the entire project team, including IPs, stakeholders, and the PIU, are to be strategically moved towards successful completion of all tasks. Project stakeholders confirmed that the project had achieved its overall objectives, as well as the outcomes and outputs for each component. The number of beneficiaries is 31% lower than the EOP target. It also justified because comparing the three documents, which include (i) the ProDoc report (see table on page 10), (ii) the 2011 Census report, and (iii) the 2021 Census report, it is evident that the population of the project site has declined by approximately 35.05% (calculated as 2051 - 1332 = 719, or 719 / 2051 = 35.5%). The total population of the project site was 2051 during the 2011 Census, but it decreased to 1332 during the 2021 Census, see Table 22 in Annex-14 for detail. This success was instrumental in generating impacts and contributing to global environmental benefits. It was made possible through the skillful mobilization of available human and financial resources, even in the face of numerous external challenges.

4.3.2 Progress towards objective and expected outcomes

a. Project's objective

89. The objective-related indicator in the UNDP Strategic Plan, labelled Indicator 2.5, focuses on evaluating the presence of *"legal, policy, and institutional frameworks for conserving, sustainably using, and ensuring access and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity, and ecosystems"* (TE target 1). In this vein, the project successfully facilitated the development and endorsement of the PAN Act by the Cabinet and MIMRA. In June 2021, the PAN Regulations were approved by the MIMRA Board, and the PAN Office officially launched its program in March 2022. Commendably, the project continues to provide financial support to the PAN Office.

90. The project adhered to eight alternative strategies to achieve its objectives. Those strategies included (i) utilized the pandemic period strategically, (ii) used a collaborative approach that promoted synergy, (iii) mobilized key project stakeholders and engaged in policy advocacy, (iv) modified the project's work plans, targets and budget, (v) recruited human resources, mobilized a field mission and strengthened collaboration with local governments, (vi) fostered collaboration and linkages with other R2R initiatives, (vii) developed suitable strategies to fill the gaps, and (viii) extended the project's tenure by nine months using a co-cost modality

91. After conducting a thorough review of the project document, it identified a total of seven risks classifiable into three categories: operational, regulatory, and environmental. In conclusion, unless additional resources and mechanisms are put in place to sustain best practices and lessons gained, these risks and barriers may impede the achievement of the project's objectives and the generation of global environmental benefits. Fortunately, future projects have the opportunity to address these areas and fill the gaps. Ten assumptions were formulated, three related to objectives, two each for outcomes 1 and 2, and three for Outcome 3. A thorough evaluation of the project documents and PIF revealed that the assumptions and risks were well-articulated. The identified risks and assumptions comprehensively covered various project risks, taking into account factors such as the nature and scale of project activities, technical complexities, policy and institutional challenges, stakeholder involvement, and resilience. In response to the local context and evolving needs and priorities, the project made several modifications to its work plans, targets, and budget over the years. The project's work plans were meticulously crafted through extensive consultations with the Mayors and IPs. This collaborative approach ensured that the activities aligned with the core objectives outlined in the project's log-frame. Additionally, these plans received approval from the PSC/PB before actual implementation commenced (see **Annex**-22).

4.3.3 Relevance (*)

92. Project is strongly aligned with national plans and priorities. Its logical framework was deemed appropriate for addressing national needs and priorities. The project's goals and objectives are positively correlated with the priorities of the GoRMI and the preferences of local communities. This alignment underscores the project's relevance and its ability to address crucial concerns shared by both national and local entities. The project's design and objectives were in line with the national development priorities and the strategic plans of the RMI. The project aimed to support the implementation of Reimaanlok, the National Conservation

Area Plan adopted in 2008. The project took a realistic approach to addressing gender issues both in its design phase and throughout the implementation stage. By acknowledging the differences between the priorities, needs, and knowledge of men and women, the project incorporated gender considerations into seven primary actions. This deliberate inclusion ensured the proper mainstreaming of gender throughout the project's implementation.

93. The project is pertinent as it contributes to the implementation of GoRMI's policies and the operationalization of government conservation plans and is aligned with several UNDP priorities. The project's objectives are also in line with GEF strategic priorities, supporting the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant policy provisions. Four of the five outer atolls selected are situated within two of the 15 key biodiversity areas (KBAs) identified by GoRMI. Aur and Ebon are located within the Southern Ralik KBA, while Likiep and Mejit are found within the Northern Ratak KBA. The selection of these five outer atolls took place during a participatory session at the inception workshop in April 2016 and was based on several criteria. The project responded as effectively as it could to political, legal, economic, and institutional changes in GoRMI. It placed a strong focus on promoting resilient livelihoods for local communities by enhancing five key assets or capitals—human, physical, natural, social, and financial—thereby delivering significant socio-economic benefits (see **Annex-23**)

94. The assessment of relevance was based on the following criteria: (i) programmatic linkages and alignment between this project and national and regional projects, (ii) alignment between national priorities and policies and the project's goals and objectives, (iii) relevance of project design and objectives in addressing gender issues and the last-mile population, (iv) project's alignment with GEF Focal Area Strategy and UNDP's strategic priorities, and (v) relevance to the project's areas, people, interventions, and key climatic challenges, as well as political, legal, economic, and institutional changes. The overall rating for relevance is **5** (Satisfactory).

4.3.4 Effectiveness (*)

95. Several pivotal factors contributed to the project's effectiveness and subsequent success. These encompassed a strategic emphasis on capacity-building initiatives, adept management of human resources through well-considered adjustments, fostering positive relationships and effective coordination with senior government officials, and the establishment of regular meetings for the PSC/PB to secure strategic guidance.

96. On the contrary, there were a range of factors that impeded the achievement of intended project outcomes. These included prolonged staff recruitment processes, changes in PSC/PB membership, shifts in mayoral leadership, limitations in national human resources availability, and delays in securing IPs through recruitment. External factors such as the outbreak of pandemics like Zika virus and dengue fever, delays in MTR schedule, scarcity of materials and supplies due to travel restrictions, the necessity to adhere to both UNDP and government standard operating procedures and policies (a process demanding significant time), and the utilization of advanced technologies in remote regions also contributed to challenges faced during the project (see **Annex**-24).

97. After conducting a meticulous assessment and analysis of the success factors that contribute to project success, as well as the factors that hinder the achievement of intended outcomes, the TE consultant rates the overall effectiveness of the project as **5** (Satisfactory).

4.3.5 Efficiency

a. Cost-effectiveness

98. Interviews with stakeholders and IPs revealed that the project achieved good-quality results in a cost-effective manner. Adjustments were made to the budget, inputs, and resources throughout the project period in order to respond to the project's needs. No stakeholder reported that any resource constraint negatively impacted the overall performance of the project. While there were instances of transferring funds between budget lines, the amounts involved never exceeded 10% of the budget. Hence obtaining prior approval from UNDP in this case is not necessary.

99. The project truly exemplified the principle of value for money. It employed effective strategies to make the best use of available data and information and addressed data gaps by collecting primary information. For example, the project successfully developed NRMPs for three atolls (Wotho, Mejit, Aur) and provided terrestrial datasets (unincorporated) for Ebon NRMP (which was completed by MIMRA under PROP). This 'value for money' approach was achieved through efficient resource mobilization and cost-sharing, a competitive procurement process, and rigorous supervision and monitoring. To adapt to travel restrictions,

the project conducted training and workshops online. Despite this change, the quality of training programs was reported to be good.

100. The project's inception workshop, held on 9 March 2018, was combined with the Regional R2R inception workshop, and specific changes were made to the project log frame to avoid duplication. Overall, the project's financial management procedures adhere to high standards of quality and comply with both UNDP guidelines and national policies, legislation, and procedures. As of the current moment, the cumulative spending for outcomes 1 to 3 and project management stands at 79.82%, 97.58%, 92.53%, and 57.99% respectively. This accumulates to a total expenditure of 83.74%. The remaining budget available for the project amounts to US$ 695,253.05 (see Table 5). Taking into account the ongoing process of budget liquidation and the PIU's feasible work plan for the remaining duration of the project, along with the project's specific scope of work, it is feasible for the project to effectively manage its available resources as planned, assuming no further external challenges arise. During the transportation of materials and supplies via chartered boats in Likiep atoll, the local government of Likiep covered 60% of the total expenses. Similarly, for boat charters in Ebon, organizations such as NEO, IOM, MoNRC, and the local government of Ebon contributed approximately 50% of the total transportation costs.

Table 5: Budget and expenditure (2018-2023)

Outcomes and other headings	Approved budget	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total disbursed	Progress (%)
Other		947.71	3,256.25	3,256.25	3,256.25	3,256.25	17,637.25	31,609.96	-
Outcome 1	2,698,958	146,241.97	401,409.28	556,765.04	515,007.27	431,619.18	103,378.86	2,154,421.60	79.82
Outcome 2	607,734	20,582.57	116,118.37	118,275.11	84,272.34	176,881.57	76,930.73	593,060.69	97.58
Outcome 3	434,694	43,357.38	72,064.45	12,287.09	22,977.47	223,721.17	27,829.24	402,236.80	92.53
Project management	186,595	12,004.65	8,657.00	12,611.42	56,470.19	12,635.50	5,833.96	108,212.72	57.99
Total	3,927,981	223,134.28	601,505.35	703,194.91	681,983.52	848,113.67	231,610.04	3,289,541.77	83.74

Source: Project's record, August, 2023

101. The project demonstrated cost-effectiveness in its resource allocation. It efficiently utilized financial and human resources and strategically allocated funds, human resources, time, and expertise to achieve desired outcomes. Several examples highlight the project's commitment to achieving value for money. In 2014, Ebon Atoll conducted a comprehensive archaeological field survey. To avoid duplicating efforts, the HPO requested that UNDP focus on filling in data gaps and updating the field survey report with recent data instead of starting a new survey from scratch. This approach not only saved project resources but also ensured cost efficiency and effectiveness.

102. Similarly, during baseline surveys, the project leveraged existing secondary data gathered by IPs and stakeholders and collected only the required additional data. For instance, the project utilized the initial work conducted by CMAC and its member institutions during its baseline survey, saving resources and avoiding data redundancy. This approach also prevented stakeholders from growing irritated by having to provide the same information to multiple agencies within a short period. The project also benefitted from collaborating with local governments during surveys, further optimizing resource utilization. Over the past decade, the RMI received various GEF investments, such as the PROP. While the PROP project focused on offshore fisheries, it also established synergies with this project's nearshore fisheries components and the two engaged in collaborative cost-sharing activities. Overall, the project's resource allocation demonstrated a strong commitment to cost efficiency and effectiveness, leveraging existing data, collaborating with local partners, and avoiding redundant efforts.

103. The primary collaborators in this project were the Pacific Regional R2R program and regional program support projects. Coordination with regional projects occurred through program reporting and regional training activities, as outlined in the project framework (specifically, outputs 2.4 and 3.4). These collaborations provided valuable opportunities for mutual learning, sharing experiences, and gathering best practices. However, travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the holding of many face-to-face meetings and discussions about successes and the reasons behind them. To enhance the capacity of the GoRMI, project resources were allocated to fund four professionals to pursue post-graduate programs organized through the regional project. The PROP project, which commenced implementation in 2016 and run until 2022 (with no-cost extension), primarily focuses on fisheries. It follows an integrated approach to natural resource management in alignment with the Reimaanlok process. Despite their different emphases, there were several positive and productive collaborations between this project and PROP, particularly in shared activities at the micro and macro levels. In addition, the project coordinated with other concurrent initiatives such as the RMI Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) carried out in 2018. This coordination

involved the exchange of information, knowledge, and experiences. For instance, logistical arrangements for marine and terrestrial surveys were shared between PROP and FIA projects.

104. In selecting project sites, one of the criteria considered was local commitment. Indeed, local governments had previously requested that the Reimaanlok process be implemented in their jurisdictions. This measure aimed to ensure local ownership and optimize the utilization of the project's human and financial resources. Locating the PIU office within the premises of CCD not only saved on rent expenses but also facilitated meaningful coordination and linkages with other agencies, thereby fostering synergy and ownership.

105. According to stakeholders, the allocation of GEF funds to capacity-building activities is highly justified as it ensures that institutional and individual capabilities for long-term management and conservation of RMI ecosystems are developed. The project's emphasis on mainstreaming priority actions into national development plans, programs, and budgetary frameworks is additional evidence of its cost effectiveness. Additionally, the project effectively strengthened community-based management capacities while at the same time taking into account the geographic remoteness and logistical challenges faced by the outer islands of RMI.

b. Expenditures in line with international standards and norms

106. The project uses its funds efficiently by carefully adhering to logistics and procurement plans.[15] After evaluating the budget breakdown according to the Atlas Code, most of the categories are in line with the budget ceiling, while a few have incurred expenditures beyond the allocated amount (see Table 18 in **Annex**-14). External challenges have contributed to price increases in goods and services, resulting in over expenditure in some cases.

107. Overall, fund utilization was good; there were only a few setbacks and delays attributable to internal processes. To expedite fund utilization, the project developed and strictly followed yearly procurement plans with quarterly divisions for each component. This approach helped the project maintain its expenditures in line with international standards and norms. All expenditures were meticulously recorded, ensuring compliance with the rules and protocols of UNDP and GEF. The project has maintained proper books and accounts in adherence to international standards and norms.

c. Efficient approach to project implementation for delivering the planned results

108. The project's management structure, in general, was effective in fostering the successful achievement of anticipated results. Drawing from their well-established experience in specific thematic areas, IPs brought valuable complementary expertise and skills. The selection of IPs was appropriate and relevant as all had extensive experience in one or the other of the project's thematic domains. The previous involvement of UNDP, IPs, and government stakeholders in projects within the RMI and the project's outer atolls helped them understand the communities' issues and concerns regarding natural resource management.

109. Though there was a turnover of project staff at UNDP and IPs, most recruitment and replacement were not much delayed. In addition, UNDP staff from Majuro and Fiji offices took on additional responsibilities to cover gaps caused by staff turnover until suitable replacements were in place. While IPs did not express concerns about insufficient human resources, some mentioned that there were too few UNDP staff to handle multiple coordination tasks, instantly monitor ongoing initiatives, and effectively manage and supervise IPs. Quality was not compromised by limited human resources, however, as the project maintained an indicator-based monitoring system and strong connections with IPs and national and local governments helped the project bridge monitoring gaps. As the project lacked a dedicated exit strategy and needed more time for institutionalization, a no-cost extension was deemed relevant. During the extension period, many activities were streamlined to ensure their quality and institutionalization. Nevertheless, a specific and formalized exit strategy did not materialize during this period.

110. Twenty months after the project's inception, site coordinators were recruited locally to establish strong connections with the community, allowing them, as insiders, to initiate activities without constraints. These coordinators played a crucial role in facilitating the institutionalization of the project's best practices and learning and worked in coordination with relevant agencies. While the structure, functions, and objectives of the PSC/PB were commendable, some improvement could be achieved by including representatives from

[15] The procurement plan comprised activities, sub-activities, target sites, budget descriptions, implementing agencies, funding sources, planned budgets, procurement categories, types of procurement actions, descriptions of goods, services and works required, final delivery dates, and so forth.

PSS in the future initiatives. Although the project did encounter external challenges, its stakeholders appreciated its implementation efficiency received appreciation from stakeholders. To enhance results, certain activities were modified slightly to better align with local needs.

111. The most prominent knowledge and communication outputs comprised two categories of printed and electronic storybooks originating from Arno and Aur. These resources were created under the guidance of Jo-Jikum and focused on themes of culture, land utilization, and environmental conservation. To disseminate project information widely, the project prepared and distributed them to communities and stakeholders. Although the project did not have public hearings, feedback boxes, or a dedicated toll-free number for beneficiary complaints, no stakeholders raised concerns regarding its accountability and transparency. There were no allegations about the mishandling of funds either. Each of the IPs strictly adhered to their own procurement policies for purchasing and using materials and services.

112. In the stakeholders' perspective, the project's support was commendable, especially considering the challenging socio-political situation. As discussed earlier, the project faced initial delays due to internal processes and procedures related to human resource and financial management. Interviews with IPs and project stakeholders revealed that the project effectively reached previously unreached sections of the society, addressed unmet needs, and prioritized marginalized and deprived segments. In addition, the project allocated resources towards integrating gender equality and human rights, a measure offering significant benefits. The project's management structure, as outlined in the project document, was efficient in delivering the expected results. Throughout the implementation period, the project followed UNDP's DIM approach, aligning the project with the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement (SBAA) between UNDP and the Go RMI and the Sub-Regional Program for the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (2013-2017). The decision to change from an NIM to a DIM was a genuine response to CCD/MoE's limited capacity to implement such a large budget and to comply with UNDP's finance, logistics, and procurement regulations. The efficient project management enabled the project to utilize significant financial resources without compromising on quality.

113. The project document was well-structured and effectively utilized by the PIU team to implement project activities. Considering the 60-month implementation timeframe (extended to 69 months with a 9-month no-cost extension) and GEF financing of approximately US$3.927 million, the overall achievement of the project has been satisfactory despite several adversities.

114. Although the process of submitting AWPs first to the PSC/PB and then to UNDP for approval demanded additional time, it was considered logical and necessary. The project's adaptive management measures were effective in implementing the proposed activities. That said, implementation faced various challenges, including the pandemic, which slowed down the pace of progress that the project made against its targets. Travel restrictions affected on-the-ground activities, prompting the project to make adaptive changes, such as reallocating funds from other activities to focus on food security initiatives.

115. Overall, the project's implementation structure and mechanisms were deemed adequate and forward-oriented. While the number of staff in PIU was fewer than provisioned in the project document, the project was still able to maintain a good level of engagement with relevant partners and engage in sufficient monitoring. However, the implementation of activities was constrained by limited staff numbers.

d. Timeliness of the planned project activities

116. Analysis of the project's expenses revealed that progress in implementation was initially slow due to extensive preparatory work involving social mobilization and community engagement. Then the COVID pandemic and outbreaks of zika virus and dengue fever further hindered the pace of activities. Despite these challenges, the projected cumulative expenditure as of July 2023 was 83.74%. The observed positive correlation between the planned budget and the actual expenses, demonstrated the project's commendable efficiency in generating good results within the timeframe.

117. The selection of qualified and experienced IPs played a crucial role in allowing the project to strategically carry out activities based on tried-and-tested approaches, save time and mitigate potential project failures. Certain surveys such as the marine survey took longer than anticipated initially. Nevertheless, the project managed to complete most of its planned activities, with only a few like integrated livelihood activities, yet to be finished. Stakeholders confirmed that the project achieved its expected outcomes during the no-cost extension period despite the challenges it had faced. The project invested considerable time and effort in utilizing its funds efficiently and delivering activities on schedule. While delays in implementation impacted

cost effectiveness to some extent, they did not significantly hinder the achievement of the project's goals. Since the recruitment of the project team took more time than expected, there was a seven-month delay after official approval was secured. To make timely decisions, a PSC/PB was established. It conducted 11 meetings[16] over 5 years, one less than planned, and was instrumental in ensuring successful project delivery.

118. Collaboration with implementing partners, including MICS, MIMRA, CMI, IOM, MONRC and Jo-Jikum, a youth-led NGO, contributed to the successful delivery of project outputs. The 9-month no-cost extension helped the project complete remaining activities, consolidate project initiatives, and foster learning, innovation, and best practices. The project's implementation schedule was impacted by domestic travel restrictions caused by dengue and Zika virus outbreaks in the RMI from May 2019 to April 2020. The project was resilient and adapted to the circumstances, ensuring progress despite the challenges the health crises introduced.

119. Project implementation on the outer atolls was hindered by travel restrictions. Some technical surveys were underway at the time the restrictions were imposed, and the absence of their findings delayed the design and initiation of other, associated activities. As said, the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in April 2020 and persisted until August 2022, resulted in international travel restrictions and other measures that further impacted the project. The management of goods, supplies, tools, and equipment was also delayed. In addition UNDP's internal processes and the transition of its accounting system from ATLAS to Quantum affected the timeliness of payments and liquidations, adding to the project's difficulties. The PSC/PB's generosity was evident when it approved the proposed AWP 2023 activities and entrusted the PIU with the implementation responsibility to expedite the procurement process.

120. As per the DIM modality, UNDP is responsible and accountable for managing the project, including monitoring and evaluating project interventions, achieving outcomes, and ensuring the effective utilization of GEF resources. The GEF disbursed fund to UNDP for executing project activities, with general disbursements occurring a reasonable 1-2 months after the submission of all required documents. UNDP, in turn, disbursed funds to IPs on different dates, a schedule suggesting that disbursements were based on actual needs. Upon receipt of required documents, UNDP took approximately 3-4 weeks to disburse amounts to IPs. The requirement for IPs to utilize at least 80% of their budget before requesting the next installment was a positive measure. However, there were instances where funds were delayed due to changes in UNDP's financial management system (ATLAS to Quantum). Overall, there was a good correlation between the project's activities and budget. However, IPs faced challenges in fine-tuning and institutionalizing completed activities before moving on to new ones, particularly because of the abundance of small activities. Nevertheless, the allocation of roles and resources to each IP was justified as it took into account their respective experience in the natural resource management sector.

e. Cash and in-kind contributions as co-financing for project implementation

121. The project team actively mobilized and monitored the proposed co-financing resources. Up to now, the project has secured a total mobilization of US$ 4,057,139, with grants accounting for US$ 500,000 (12%), and the remaining US$ 3,557,139 (88%) being in-kind contributions. Of the overall co-financing, an amount of US$ 362,016.10 has been realized as of June 30, 2023 (see Table 4 in **Annex**-4).

Following discussions with CCD Director, GEF Operational Focal Point, and NPD, Mr. Clarence, and Deputy Director, Mr. Warwick Harris, it was confirmed that there were no monetary contributions mobilized. Instead, all co-financing was provided in the form of in-kind support over the course of the project's five-year implementation period. A co-financing letter dated November 30th, 2016, outlined this arrangement, stating that "*The in-kind contribution includes co-financing support to the project implementation unit, in the form of OEPPC (CCD) office space in Majuro and certain office services and facilities, and also in the form of OEPPC (CCD) staff time for project oversight, participation in project steering committee meetings, and other support.*" These letters were exchanged during the project development phase between OEPPC (now CCD) and UNDP, and both parties emphasized that the overall spirit of this letter and arrangement remains valid. It is important to note that during the project's initiation, the national government faced budget reductions, which made it difficult and challenging to secure grant contributions. Additionally, the office underwent administrative changes and had to focus on establishing the new governance structure and facilities within the newly formed Ministry of Environment, where the Climate Change Directorate is currently situated. These factors influenced the overall contribution and the ability to leverage co-financing in cash. Nevertheless, apart from the contractual agreement between MICS and the Nature Conservation Society

[16] The first meeting took place in March 2018 in Majuro. Seventeen representatives of 13 different organizations took part.

for the completion of the Likiep Atoll Resource Management Plan, which amounted to US$ 9,678, no further documentation or proof of co-financing has been provided at the time of evaluation.

f. Leveraging additional resources

122. The project was successful in mobilizing additional resources from various stakeholders and agencies. As an illustration, agencies such as EPA, MoNRC, CMI, and UNDP SGP shared their respective plans and programs with the project, fostering opportunities for collaborative synergy. Furthermore, the concurrent projects undertaken by MICS, Jo-Jukum, IoM, MoNRC, EPA, CMI, and UNDP SGP played a crucial role in facilitating mutual learning from each other's programs. This allowed for the adoption of best practices and lessons in the current project. These agencies also extended their support by providing technical assistance through information sharing and participating as "technical resource persons" during sessions. There was a commendable level of collaboration and coordination among partners, as well as effective information exchange for the collaborative implementation of project activities. While there was limited formal collaboration between GEF and GCF initiatives, project managers from different projects under GEF and GCF participated in office consultations and meetings, thereby fostering cooperation. The amount of resources leveraged relative to the project's budget was significant, a ratio demonstrating the project's ability to attract additional funding and support beyond its initial financial allocation.

123. Based on the overall analysis of six parameters of efficient, namely (i) level of cost-effectiveness, (ii) expenditures in line with international standards and norms, (iii) approach to project implementation for delivering the planned results, (iv) timeliness of the planned project activities, and (v) scale of leveraging additional resources, the performance of project in terms of efficiency is rated as **5** (Satisfactory).

4.3.6 Overall Outcome (*)

124. The project facilitated the development and endorsement of the PAN Act by the Cabinet and MIMRA. In June 2021, the PAN Regulations were approved by the MIMRA Board, and the PAN Office officially launched its program in March 2022. Commendably, the project continues to provide financial support to the PAN Office. In contrast, the project's Blue Fee concept, which involved scheme and legislation development, was repealed as it lacked support from the GoRMI. It was replaced with food security interventions (see **Annex-29** for updated result framework).

125. To fulfill the outcome 1, the project facilitated the establishment of 26,691 ha of MPA and 472 ha of TPA. In Wotho atoll, the total nearshore MPA covers 13,406.26 ha. In Likiep atoll, plans for MPA network delineation are in the drafting phase while delineation of Likiep's TPA network will be finalized after the outputs of a terrestrial survey. In Mejit atoll, both MPA and TPA network delineation were completed and the atoll has approved the creation of two additional terrestrial protected areas, covering a total of 40.42 ha. The project completed and obtained approval for three resource management plans a step which brings it closer to achieving the end-of-project target of five NRMPs completed and adopted.

126. The project has been providing financial support to the PAN Coordinator and involved in the formulation of PAN regulation (2021). It also engaged the CMI to build the capacity of four graduates of Land Grant and Agriculture Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce and provided Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. These progresses suggested that outcome 2 is achieved.

127. The NSAF server is operational and is now hosted by MIMRA. Some tasks, such as completing the datasets, defining user and access protocols, and preparing case studies are under completion. It developed to capture and prepare easily understood formats of awareness materials about local and traditional knowledge and make them readily accessible. It also undertaking the construction and handover of the Ebon virgin coconut oil facility, and the construction of additional raceway tanks for clam farming in Likiep and Aur atolls. These achievements collectively met the outcome 3.

128. Upon conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the project's main objective and its three intended outcomes, the overall outcome of the project is rated as **5** (Satisfactory).

4.3.7 Country ownership

129. The country exhibits a strong sense of ownership of the project and collaborative efforts with IPs and stakeholders. The project's core ideas and concepts are rooted in the nation's development plans, specifically its plan for the Reimaanlok process. There is a clear correlation between the project's overall development objective, the three outcomes, the 12 outputs, and the key concerns addressed in the national

sectoral and development plans. The three outcomes of the project significantly contributed to the broader Reimaanlok process, which aims to enhance natural resource management and ensure environmental protection while maintaining a sustainable balance with the use of ecosystem goods and services that communities rely on.

130. The government's commitment and ownership of the project are noteworthy, as senior government officials from the CCD/MoE were actively involved in project identification, design, planning, and implementation. In addition, the GoRMI and donor agencies are keen on providing financial support to operationalize the national development plans, one of their key agendas. GoRMI has developed, amended, and enacted plans, policies, and regulatory frameworks to support the project's overall objective and achieve good outcomes. The establishment of the PSC/PB demonstrates government ownership, with representatives from government and civil society organizations serving as members and the CCD Director as the chairperson. This board holds the highest authority for making crucial decisions related to project operationalization. The project mobilized various ministries, departments, INGOs, UN agencies, academic institutions, and CSOs to maximize its results. It aligns effectively with ministerial strategic plans and sectoral policies related to biodiversity conservation, integrated water management, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk management and can therefore ensure the efficient implementation of the Reimaanlok process. During the project's design phase, the national priorities of the GoRMI were taken into account. In fact, the ProDoc was designed based on three of RMI's outcomes, with a primary focus on Outcomes 1.1, 3.1, and 5.1. The project's priorities are directly aligned with national policies and frameworks, including the National Strategic Plan and RMI' SDGs.

4.3.8 Sustainability: financial (*), socio-economic (*), institutional framework and governance (*), environmental (*), and overall likelihood (*)

Financial risks to sustainability

a. Management of financial resources available in the project's outer atolls

131. There are several mechanisms in place to manage financial resources for the project's outer atolls. GoRMI has allocated a budget to the local governments of the five outer atolls to operationalize integrated resource management plans. In addition, other UNDP parallel projects, such as ACWA/GCF, and UNDP-Small Grants Programme contribute some funds to fill in the gaps. The project played a role in establishing an operation and maintenance (O&M) fund aimed at sustaining livelihoods and other small-scale infrastructure initiatives. This was achieved by combining a 50% contribution from the CBOs/CSOs and the remaining 50% from the local government. It's important to note that the project's involvement in O&M was limited to resource allocation, with a relatively minor influence. Furthermore, the parallel projects of various I/NGOs and UN agencies in the project's atolls also help bridging financial gaps and reduce financial risks (refer **Annex-28**). The Micronesia Challenge Trust also provides financial resources for project activities, specifically Output 1.4. Over time, the investment in strengthening the capacities of local communities to implement integrated resource management plans has lowered financial risks. The formulation and institutionalization of PAN has provided additional financial resources for the outer atolls and guided key stakeholders in identifying viable and sustainable financing options for the long-term management of PAN. During consultations, stakeholders said that opportunities for financial sustainability existed. These opportunities include the interests and willingness of donors to contribute to natural resource management efforts. In addition, the government's commitment to operationalizing SDGs, SFDRR, biodiversity conventions, national communication reports, and NAP formulation and execution are expanding the possibilities for financial sustainability.

b. Establish financial and economic instruments and mechanisms

132. According to the stakeholders interviewed, financial and economic instruments and mechanisms are in place to ensure that benefits continue to flow once the GEF assistance ends. The project has also maintained a positive working relationship with GoRMI, international donors, INGOs/NGOs, government stakeholders, and IPs, resulting in the generation of US$ 4.057 million in co-financing. The project's integrated livelihood initiatives have contributed to the financial empowerment of the local people on the project's outer atolls. Women's groups, in particular, have been successfully operationalized and now serve as social platforms for sustainable livelihoods, leading to a reduction in financial risks at the familial and societal levels. This success is attributed to the project's having provided a comprehensive package, including training, inputs, and technical support, to implement the livelihood schemes. LRCs have been effective in leveraging resources from the local government to implement resource management plans. Elected Mayors have promised to provide additional funding in the future to operationalize their resource management plans. Both women and youths are confident about continuing their livelihood schemes.

133. As the project's key components are gradually integrated into the plans, policies, and programs of local governments, there is potential for channeling and leveraging government resources. Although some groups and committees are still in their early stages of institutional development, their enthusiasm and the work they have already carried out indicate that they will continue to function as social platforms for sustainable livelihoods. To ensure sustainability from a financial perspective, the project could take further steps, including supporting the establishment of a seed fund, strengthening the record-keeping systems of the groups and committees, and formulating and implementing operational guidelines for the seed fund. These measures would enhance financial sustainability and contribute to the long-term success of the project's initiatives.

134. The assessment of financial risks to sustainability was based on two factors: (i) the management of financial resources available in the project's outer islands, and (ii) the establishment of financial and economic instruments and mechanisms. After considering these aspects, the overall rating for financial risks to sustainability is **4** (Likely)

Socio-economic risks to sustainability

a. Reduce socio-political risks through community empowerment

135. Social risks, such as the erosion of culture, norms, and values, and political risks, like an unstable government and financial fraud, pose threats to the long-term success of project outcomes. Across the project's duration, however, significant efforts were made to build human capital by developing local resource persons (LRPs) through various capacity-building initiatives. Notably, all the project's site coordinators hail from the outer atolls, and they now can serve as valuable human capital for the project as long as they continue their roles as LRPs in the future. One commendable achievement of the project is the transformation of trained group facilitators, community members, and other stakeholders into "local assets." These individuals can now be called upon in times of need to effectively operationalize the project's positive initiatives, thereby providing support in managing socio-political risks.

b. Risk that undermine the sustainability of stakeholder ownership of the project's outcomes and benefits

136. The project faced challenges due to the global COVID pandemic as well as local Zika virus and dengue endemics, resulting in border closures that had an impact on the supply side of the project. In addition, the lack of international technical expertise hindered the SPC's ability to provide essential technical assistance for conducting a hydrological survey in Likiep atoll. Consequently, the survey had to be reassigned to RMI-EPA and the original plan modified according to its technical and human resource capacity. When local epidemics led to the closure of outer island airports, delaying the conduction of field surveys necessary for informing the development and updating of integrated resource management plans. The level of stakeholder ownership, including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders, is currently in a positive direction to sustain the project's outcomes and benefits. Since various key stakeholders view this project as their own, the project's benefits are likely to continue to flow to the outer atolls.

c. The awareness of stakeholders contributes to the long-term objectives of the project

137. Stakeholders are aware of the importance of operationalizing the Reimaanlok process in achieving the long-term objectives of the project. It was shared that local communities have developed a profound sense of ownership over project activities. This strong sense of ownership is driven by people's unwavering belief in the project's potential to improve their lives and ensure the sustainable use of ecosystems. The incorporation of TEK in the project has added significant value by preserving local culture and wisdom. Furthermore, the development and implementation of livelihood improvement plans instilled a newfound confidence in the people, fostering a "we can do" attitude. This strong sense of local ownership stems from the socio-economic dividends the project provides, dividends that enhance the quality of life and overall wellbeing of the population through alternative livelihood options. This comprehensive approach has empowered local communities and strengthened their commitment to the project's success.

d. Transfer project's successful aspects to appropriate parties and potential future beneficiaries for replication

138. The project devised a mechanism to engage the GEF operational focal point (CCD Director/Chair of PSC/PB) in international platforms, allowing it to share the project's best practices and lessons. This mechanism facilitated the project's inclusion in future GEF funding cycles and supported the scaling up and replication of successful strategies in new areas. As a result, the project's positive aspects have begun to be transferred to potential future beneficiaries and others who can benefit from its learnings. Unfortunately, the outbreaks of COVID-19, Zika virus, and dengue fever severely impacted the project's smooth operation. Despite these challenges, the construction of small-scale infrastructures as part of the operationalization of integrated livelihood plans was able to foster a sense of ownership among stakeholders. The strategic

combination of software and hardware activities not only encouraged local participation in the project's campaigns but also ensured the sustainability of its activities. A significant portion of the project budget was allocated to the implementation of integrated resource management plans in five selected outer atolls. This approach aligns with sustainability perspectives and contributes to advancing the Reimaanlok process by showcasing the application of innovative and traditional management measures that can be scaled up elsewhere.

e. Achievement of gender results in the short and long terms

139. The project was successful in involving women and youths in various livelihood schemes and capacity-building initiatives. Collaborating with local governments, schools, groups, committees, and cooperatives, the project was able to foster gender and social inclusivity in all groups. All its IPs have gradually become more established and assumed greater responsibilities. The positive rapport between groups and committees and local governments is also expected to yield gender-focused outcomes in the long run.

140. Socio-economic risks to sustainability have been steadily decreasing due to the heightened awareness and strengthened capacities of LRCs in implementing their respective Reimaanlok resource management plans. The project's support in operationalizing the PAN Office, a vital governance mechanism established through the passing of the PAN regulation 2021, played a crucial role in managing human and financial resources and providing legislative support. Enhancing institutional sustainability would involve several measures: (i) drafting sustainability and exit plans from the project's inception and having mechanisms in place to execute such plans, (ii) further institutionalizing groups and committees, and (iii) leveraging additional resources through a PPP model. These steps will contribute to the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the project's initiatives.

141. The Mayors of five local governments agreed to continue livelihood interventions with the use of government budget. Land ownership, land disputes, and localized issues within the community continue to affect project's outcomes regarding livelihood interventions but those issues are slowly being resolved with increased knowledge and understanding.

142. Socio-economic risks to sustainability were assessed through the following criteria: (i) reduction of socio-political risks through community empowerment, (ii) risks that may undermine the sustainability of stakeholder ownership of the project's outcomes and benefits, (iii) level of awareness among stakeholders regarding their contribution to the project's long-term objectives, (iv) transfer of successful aspects of the project to appropriate parties and potential future beneficiaries for replication, and (v) overall achievement of gender results in the short and long terms. Based on this analysis, the rating for socio-economic risks to sustainability is **4** (Likely).

Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

a. Favorable legal frameworks, governance structures and processes that will continue to foster project benefits

143. The RMI's legal frameworks, policies, governance structures, and processes do not pose any threat to the continuity of the project's benefits. The project played a crucial role in facilitating the implementation of the Reimaanlok process by providing support to the five outer islands. Collaborating with IPs and government stakeholders, the project focused on accountability and transparency and on transferring technical knowledge. Moreover, the project has been instrumental in assisting local governments in formulating rules, regulations, and protocols for sustainable natural resource management. The fact that these guidelines were developed by individuals after they had received training ensures their future effective implementation. LRCs have been established and are overseen by local governments to guide the development of resource management plans at the atoll level. The project's impact goes beyond merely modifying policies, plans, and strategies; it extends to executing and operationalizing these changes at the local and national levels through the capacity-building of key stakeholders (Component 2). To enhance sustainability from a legal perspective, it would be beneficial if the last quarter of the project's timeline were dedicated solely to the institutionalization and consolidation of the policy support provided throughout the project's duration. This measure would strengthen the foundation for the long-term success and continuity of the project's initiatives.

b. Develop appropriate institutional capacity to promote self-sufficient activities

144. The project played a key role in developing suitable institutional capacity, including by building systems, structures, staff, and expertise. This capacity-building effort enabled the project to sustain its best practices and incorporate lessons learned during implementation into the designs of new projects. The support the project provided for capacity-building initiatives was highly beneficial. Moreover, the measures taken to mitigate institutional and governance risks were low-cost and therefore highly likely to be sustained. With

this project, four CBOs/CSOs were established, and an additional six were restructured following the GESI approach. Furthermore, over four CBOs/CSOs were officially registered with the local government through the efforts of this project, while two more are currently in the registration process (see Table 19 in **Annex-14**). This level of advancement is anticipated to contribute to the sustainability of the project's initiatives. The project's emphasis on developing institutional capacity has positioned it well for long-term success and continuity.

c. Identify and involve champions that promote project outcomes

145. The project identified and engaged local youths, government representatives, and individuals from civil society to participate in capacity-building initiatives, developing them into LRPs. These individuals played a crucial role in promoting the project's best practices and innovative measures on a large scale. From the project's outset, collaboration, coordination, and linkages among stakeholders and IPs were well-established, a fact that enabled the project to secure consensus for continuing its initiatives even after it comes to an end. The project's senior management proactively identified potential future institutional and governance challenges and devised win-win mitigation measures to address these challenges. Working in collaboration with IPs and government stakeholders, the project also developed a mechanism to address gender equality and other human rights concerns in the project's communities. This inclusive approach enhanced the project's impact and ensured the wellbeing of the communities it served.

d. Documentation of lesson learned and provision of exit strategy and sustainability plan

146. The primary stakeholders of the project consist of five local government Mayors who are members of the PSC/PB. The Mayors collaborate through their network, the MIMA, where they share development interventions and project concepts to replicate best practices and lessons. To facilitate knowledge exchange, the project established a mechanism to involve IPs in joining the PSC/PB as needed to update and learn from each other. It is commendable that the PSC/PB chair, who is also the GEF operational focal point (CCD Director), includes best practices and lessons learned from the project in other GEF funding cycles, too. While the IPs have developed plans to ensure the sustainability of each activity, an overall exit strategy and sustainability plan have not yet been formally finalized. Furthermore, the project coordinates its activities with those of the PROP project and other complementary projects and initiatives. This coordination allows the project to capitalize on synergies and prevent the duplication of its and others' efforts, ensuring an efficient and effective implementation of activities.

e. The project team documents lessons on a continual basis.

147. The project enhanced the institutional capacities of groups and committees, empowering them to engage in community-level activities and advocate for socio-economic change. Because IPs have extensive experience and positive rapport with the project's communities, they will continue to provide technical support even after the project comes to an end. Local people have established strong connections with these IPs, ensuring they will be able to get ongoing assistance. Each group/committee now holds regular meetings and makes action-oriented decisions, steps enhancing their institutionalization. The project has created an enabling environment that fosters empathy through reflective listening, avoiding argumentation, acknowledging and exploring individual resistance to change, and supporting self-efficacy. This approach ensures that changes in behavior will be sustained. From a political perspective, sustainability can be further ensured if (i) capacity-building events are viewed as a means rather than an end, with practical short training and refresher training being prioritized over long events, (ii) simple self-monitoring mechanisms are utilized to periodically assess and track changes, and (iii) local government sectoral staff are involved as resource persons during training events to build rapport and facilitate access to government resources. These steps will contribute to the project's long-term success and lasting impact.

148. The evaluation of institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability considered the following factors: (i) the extent of favorable legal frameworks, policies, governance structures, and processes that will continue to foster project benefits, (ii) the development of appropriate institutional capacity to promote self-sufficient activities, (iii) the identification and involvement of champions that promote project outcomes, (iv) documentation of lessons learned and provision of an exit strategy and sustainability plan, and (v) the mechanism through which the project team continuously documents lessons. Based on this assessment, the rank for institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability is **4** (Likely).

Environmental risks to sustainability

a. Environmental factors that could undermine the future flow of the project's environmental benefits

149. Interactions with IPs and project stakeholders revealed that there are no foreseeable environmental risks that could undermine the future flow of the project's environmental benefits. The project's activities were carefully designed and implemented to ensure they would not harm the local environment and would,

instead, promote its wellbeing. Local resources were sourced from environmentally safe areas, contributing to this positive approach. The project also proactively promoted climate-smart land use through integrated methods, aligning with the GEF's objective to achieve multiple wins in sustainable food production, rural development, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and ecosystem resilience in the RMI. Collaboration with relevant stakeholders was instrumental in operationalizing the guidelines developed by MoNRC and the FAO for the best use of agricultural land and marine resources. As of July 2023, there were no visible external factors deteriorating the wellbeing, or survival of the project's communities, ensuring the protection of land, food, water, and forests. The project-fostered increase in understanding of terrestrial, coastal, and marine resources, along with its demonstration of merged modern and TEK practices, enabled the sustainable use of limited resources and ensured the continued provision of the ecosystem goods and services relied upon by the local communities. Although the risks in the project sites are currently minimal, it is understood that changes in weather patterns, such as El Nino in 2023, could dramatically alter the situation. That said, the project's communities have developed skills and knowledge to mitigate adverse impacts to the best of their ability.

b. Possible threats to the sustainability of project outcomes

150. With the support of IPs and stakeholders, the project effectively implemented community-based adaptation practices using established protocols, including PROVIA, a five-stage iterative adaptation process. Outcomes 2 and 3 involve supporting the development of a tertiary agroforestry certification program, a pilot program for environmental education in primary schools, and a youth-based public awareness campaign. These initiatives made significant contributions to the conservation of the local environment. The project has also emphasized the use of local seeds and increased awareness of invasive alien species, thereby helping protect the local environment. While the effects of climate change, such as sea level rise, saltwater inundation, ocean acidification, and erosion, are major environmental challenges, people have gained valuable insights into how to adapt to these adversities in the future. Increased awareness has also facilitated the management of problems caused by pollution, particularly the disposal of solid and liquid waste, and overfishing in certain areas. During the project's design phase, environmental risks were identified and appropriate mitigation measures were developed. These risks were also regularly assessed, and if any outstanding environmental risks were identified, they were incorporated into PIRs. To enhance sustainability from an environmental perspective, the project should (i) conduct periodic assessments of SESP throughout project implementation, and (ii) proactively identify likely environmental risks and implement measures to mitigate them by mobilizing local skills, knowledge, and technologies. By taking these steps, the project can improve its long-term impact on the environment and promote sustainable practices.

151. Environmental risks to sustainability were evaluated by considering two main factors: (i) environmental factors that could potentially undermine the future flow of the project's environmental benefits, and (ii) possible threats to the sustainability of project outcomes. Based on this assessment, the ranking for environmental risks to sustainability is **4** (Likely). After conducting a comprehensive analysis of the ranking of (i) financial risks to sustainability, (ii) socio-economic risks to sustainability, (iii) institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability, and (iv) environmental risks to sustainability, the overall likelihood of sustainability is ranked as **4** (Likely).

4.3.9 Cross-cutting issues

152. This project was a complex endeavor that involved a diverse range of stakeholders, including government entities, local governments, non-governmental organizations, businesses, regional partners, and academia. However, not all stakeholders possessed the necessary capacity or time to conduct activities, so most IPs were forced to manage their activities independently and await the completion of tasks by others before producing a final product. Despite these challenges, the project established fruitful partnerships with local governments, resulting in benefits for the communities living in the outer atolls. The Reimaanlok process, which lies at the heart of this project, is entirely community-based. It follows an eight-step approach that ensures that all voices, regardless of gender, caste, race, color, or wellbeing, are represented and heard. It aims to leave no one behind, securing the rights of all citizens to essentials like food, clean water, and resources to build shelter and foster a healthy living environment. Reimaanlok serves as a powerful tool of community engagement, one which promotes conservation and biodiversity health in RMI while safeguarding the human rights of local residents. Furthermore, it actively promotes the GESI approach, which seeks to enhance integrity and social welfare with the active involvement of youths and women. Many livelihood schemes under the project are managed by women's leadership, and local youths play an active part in documenting and disseminating TEK. The project also focuses on integrated livelihood schemes that directly contribute to poverty alleviation and provide a reliable income to local populations. Its efforts include capacity-building and skills-development activities that utilize local resources and knowledge. The project's activities are designed to be less susceptible to climate and disaster risks than ordinary development

activities. In addition, the project prioritizes knowledge management, ensuring that best practices and lessons learned can be effectively scaled up to larger areas in the future.

4.4.0 GEF Additionality

153. According to the GEF Evaluation Policy, TEs are required to assess six areas[17] of "GEF additionality," which refers to the additional outcomes, both environmental and otherwise, directly linked to a GEF-supported project. Either directly or indirectly, this project contributed to all six areas. The fact that this project adds was made evident by the majority of interviewed primary, secondary, and tertiary stakeholders. The consensus was that, without this project, there would have been no comprehensive support for implementing the Reimaanlok process using a "R2R" approach in the project's outer atolls. The project's contributions were facilitated through various means, such as conducting studies, surveys, assessments, and training sessions and providing manuals and toolkits. Legislative efforts were also made to enhance R2R connectivity, a step which improved the effectiveness of management and created programmatic synergies. The project played a significant role in promoting sustainable fishing practices and providing alternative sources of household income. By doing so, it has ensured that scarce ocean-based resources will be used wisely in the present and safeguarded for future generations.

154. Interviews with project IPs, stakeholders, and officials from GoRMI revealed that the project has effectively fostered institutional and governance additionality. It established an environment that encourages engagement, participation, and involvement and that addresses contemporary natural resource-related issues. By sharing and adopting learning, best practices, and achievements, the project was able to surpass its initially envisioned outcomes. In terms of socio-economic additionality, the project successfully transformed the mindsets of traditional leaders, a change which lead to the wiser utilization of scarce ocean-based resources and preserved TEK system. The project introduced alternative livelihood initiatives focusing on food and water security as well as the protection of ecosystem goods and services and attendant fostering of biodiversity conservation efforts. In addition, the project saw success in its efforts at resolving land-related disputes and maintaining harmonious relationships between traditional leaders and elected officials of local governments (Mayors and council members) and staff (Clerks and Policemen). The solid relationships formed through the tireless efforts of the Site Coordinator in each of the project's atolls made for a strong foundation for success. On the environmental front, the project strategically contributed to the operationalization of the National Strategic Plan (2020-2030), relevant indicators of SDGs, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR). In addition, the project actively participated in consultations during the formulation of the NAP of GoRMI, and was able to provide valuable inputs to enhancing climate adaptation efforts.

4.4.1 Catalytic role/replication effect

155. In its assessment of the extent to which the project demonstrated scaling up, replication, demonstration, and/or the production of public goods, the TE found that the project had played a catalytic role in demonstrating innovative goods and services, such as application of renewable energy in raceway tank, solar water pump, and virgin coconut oil extraction using solar system which were then tested and trialed in communities. The project shows great potential for replicating and scaling up its best practices and lessons learned in the remaining 19 atolls. With slight modifications to accommodate local needs, priorities, and culture, best practices can be effectively extended to other areas. During a mini workshop, Mayors revealed that, many best practices and lessons learned from the project had already been replicated in and around the project communities through the MIMA. Drawing inspiration from this project, a recent Mayors' workshop in Majuro (from July 10-21, 2023) also emphasized the prospects for carrying out community development work with a focus on natural resource management (see **Annex**-27).

4.4.2 Progress to impact

a. Helped to identify the forest stocks through its forestry inventory and forest analysis initiatives

156. One significant shortcoming of the Reimaanlok process was that terrestrial ecological assessments were not carried out on four out of the five outer atolls. With the project made progress on Output 2.4 by collaborating with the Forest Service under the aegis of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to build upon the RMI FIA initiative, which began in 2018 and was conducted on 10 atolls. The project successfully integrated four project atolls, namely Aur, Ebon, Mejit, and Wotho, into the FIA effort. The MoNRC played

[17] (i) Environmental, (ii) Legal/Regulatory, (iii) Institutional/Governance, (iv) Financial, (v) Socio-Economic/Innovation

an indispensable role in the collaborative development of the RMI Forest Action Plan and Agriculture Sector Plan with communities spanning the Marshall Islands.

157. In addition, the project established a mechanism for the Micronesia Challenge to adopt the FIA approach for monitoring all of its terrestrial conservation areas. To enhance data sharing and information dissemination, the project facilitated the procurement and transfer of the NSAF to MIMRA. This institution is now fully operational. The use of UAV in conjunction with geo-satellite images played a crucial role in augmenting the FIA process. This collaboration was coordinated with the Ministry of Resources Development and helped both to identify forest stock and provide valuable data for current and future agricultural purposes under the MoNRC. Through these initiatives, Reimaanlok practitioners and partners actively shared data to support the development objectives of all outer atolls under the Reimaanlok conservation plan. The culmination of these efforts led to more comprehensive and informed approaches to terrestrial ecological assessments, thereby benefiting conservation and agricultural endeavors in the region.

b. Increased awareness and preservation of TEK

158. In collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Customary Law and Language Commission, Historic Preservation Office, and the youth-led NGO Jo-Jikum, the project played a crucial role in gathering, analyzing, and documenting TEK using the Reimaanlok Guidelines for TEK collection. Under Output 3.2, which aimed to enhance the Reimaanlok approach for assessing indigenous knowledge, the project supported the conduction of cultural surveys of the five outer islands. These surveys successfully captured, documented, and mapped site-based TEK, which is now being utilized to formulate integrated resource management plans. Two publications on TEK, made possible through collaboration with the public school system and houses of chief (traditional leaders), were released in Arno and Aur atolls. Guidelines to the use of TEK were effectively tested through the knowledge collected, a fact that significantly contributed to the success of the story collection activities. An evident change brought about by this project was the increased awareness and preservation of TEK. In RMI, traditional knowledge had been gradually eroding due to disruptions in the social structures of the outer atolls, primarily caused by various socioeconomic factors, including a high rate of out-migration. However, the project's efforts were instrumental in countering this trend and helping to safeguard the invaluable traditional knowledge of the region.

c. Project's framework for integrated natural resource management has started to be replicated

159. The project's integrated natural resource management framework, along with its methods, technologies, and tools, is now being extended to more atolls, as is disaster risk planning and coastal vulnerability assessments by IOM, MIMRA and MICS. Furthermore, the Reimaanlok framework, including its techniques, technologies, tools, and strategies, is being replicated in various other RMI atolls and islands through additional initiatives. One such example is the project on Jaluit atoll and Lib Island, which is funded by ITF and administered by ADB. Indeed, CMAC has modified and enhanced the Reimaanlok eight-step procedure, as well as the associated tools and methodologies. Communities on the outer atolls have begun translating these community-driven integrated approaches into action, effectively operationalizing resource management plans. This achievement was made possible by the project's meticulous design, testing, fine-tuning, and subsequent implementation of community-driven integrated approaches and frameworks. Moreover, the project has focused on building the capacities of both national and local stakeholders, enabling them to replicate successful models in other areas.

d. Contributed to the conservation of globally significant species and fostered participatory biodiversity conservation

160. The RMI boasts some of the healthiest and most prosperous coral reefs globally. They are known for their high species diversity, including over 1,000 fish species, 360 coral species, 2,500 invertebrates, 5 species of sea turtles, and 27 marine mammal species. Additionally, four atolls are vital nesting grounds for globally significant seabird populations. The majority of the atolls are dominated by agro-forest, beach forest, and savanna though some of the northern atolls are home to rare natural semi-arid forests. The project made significant contributions to biodiversity conservation, particularly in raising awareness about and understanding of the precious coral reef ecosystems, marine life, and the responsible management of tuna fisheries. By embracing a multi-focal-area approach, the project improved the socio-economic status of its beneficiaries by enhancing food and water security, livelihoods, and ecosystem goods and services, a measure leading to more informed and participatory biodiversity conservation efforts.

161. By updating outdated biodiversity baseline survey data and conducting additional terrestrial surveys, the addressed data gaps and assessed the status of biodiversity in terrestrial and nearshore marine ecosystems.

Moreover, the project promoted climate-resilient practices in agro-forestry, protected terrestrial and marine resources, and implemented community-based interventions to enhance the resilience of production systems. One crucial aspect of the project's success lies in its contribution to the sustainability of biodiversity conservation through the establishment of sustainable financing mechanisms, both within and outside the MC Endowment Fund. These measures will ensure continued support for conservation efforts even beyond the duration of the project.

e. Increased trend of sustainable use and focus on ecosystem goods and services

162. Through the project's dedicated efforts and well-planned interventions, resilient livelihoods were assured for communities living in isolated conditions surrounded by the vast ocean. The data and evidence collected during interviews highlights the positive impact of the project's training and awareness-raising activities, which enhanced people's human capital, enabling them to manage scarce natural resources effectively. The project's focus on sustainable agro-forestry increased natural capital by reducing erosion and salinization, conserving soil quality, and strengthening shoreline and groundwater resilience. As a result, the volumes of storm-water runoff and land-based contaminants were reduced, benefiting nearshore marine habitats and supporting increases in productivity and food security. Financial capital also grew as the project introduced alternative livelihoods, thereby reducing fluctuations in household income and helping communities, especially youths, women, and the elderly, cope with socioeconomic challenges and outmigration. Modest capital inputs, such as environmental monitoring devices and physical assets for alternative livelihood pilots, improved physical capital.

163. The project also fostered people's social capital by enhancing their capacities and skills in local governance, increasing their valuation of TEK, and promoting equitable access to ecosystem goods and services. Local women, in particular, experienced an increase in self-esteem and self-confidence due to improved livelihoods, which have enabled them to use their newly acquired skills to earn additional income. Livelihood schemes generated local employment opportunities and readily available income, increasing the resilience and capacities of beneficiary communities. However, there is a need to provide institutional support and promote and diversity livelihood products to ensure sustainable outcomes. The projects' local resource based integrated livelihood initiatives, implemented at the center of its interventions, distributed socioeconomic benefits widely across its working atolls. The operationalization of NRMPs fostered community cohesion and improved subsistence-level and modern livelihood opportunities. Notably, there was an increase in the sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services in the project's atolls, facilitated by capacity-building measures for local stakeholders and beneficiaries. Overall, these initiatives resulted in positive changes in the socioeconomic status of the beneficiaries, including increased income, improved health, and enhanced overall wellbeing.

f. Strengthened climate resilience and community-based adaptation at the local level

164. The project played a vital role in harnessing global environmental benefits by promoting the sustainable development of fragile outer atolls ecosystems and fostering good governance. It achieved these ends by providing funding for the RMI PAN Office's operations, enhancing the capacities of professional and scientific communities, and raising awareness among local and national stakeholders. Recognizing the close connection between natural resource management and the wellbeing of local communities, the project's improved ecosystem management efforts also enhanced climate resilience and supported community-based adaptation. The establishment of LRCs and the development of NRMPs facilitated the integration of PA financing into local government plans, programs, and development budgets. The project systematically sensitized communities to potential disaster and climate risks, emphasizing their likely impacts on community infrastructures and livelihood schemes both now and in the future. By enhancing livelihood capital, incorporating climate and disaster risk considerations into the designs of community infrastructures (albeit on a limited scale), and conducting various trainings, orientations, and review-and-reflection sessions, local communities were better equipped to face future shocks and stresses, thus building their resilience. Moreover, the project's attention to environmental safeguards ensured the construction of resilient infrastructure. The increased physical and socio-economic resilience of settlements and communities made them safer and better prepared them to cope with future shocks. Overall, the project's comprehensive approach significantly contributed to building resilience and fostering sustainable development in the region.

g. Developed legal and regulatory frameworks to operationalize Reimaanlok

165. The project's fundamental objective was to facilitate the operationalization of the Reimaanlok National Conservation Plan. This objective was accomplished by enhancing individual and institutional capacities, raising public awareness, and demonstrating the effectiveness of community-driven integrated natural resource management. As a result of these efforts, the RMI is now better equipped to fulfill both national

and regional conservation commitments, including meeting the targets of the Micronesia Challenge. The project's support in strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks played a crucial role in achieving these positive outcomes.

h. Enlarged inclusion of women and local people

166. Stakeholders claimed that the project had played a crucial role in promoting greater inclusion of women and local communities in natural resource management and conservation processes through its alternative livelihood initiatives. In addition, the project advanced GESI policies and practices within the GoRMI by developing a gender assessment and action plan. Gender-disaggregated data, information, and indicators are now utilized to report on progress in meeting the goals outlined in the gender action plan, thanks to updates made through the project's efforts in addressing gender issues during its design phase. As a result of the project's interventions, gender issues are now integrated into the local government's plans and programs. The participation of women in various groups and committees has increased and women are more empowered to engage in decision-making platforms and gain greater access to and control over family and community resources. The project improved the quality of life for the community by fostering confidence, leadership, livelihood opportunities, and inclusion. Social empowerment and the institutionalization of social platforms were supported through training, awareness-raising, and strengthening of community structures such as groups and LRCs. The resources and benefits of the project were distributed equitably among the local population, regardless of gender, race, or wealth. Furthermore, the project enhanced the capacities and self-assurance of resource-poor individuals through a series of capacity-building initiatives, creating a "we can do" attitude among local communities. Effective knowledge management through capacity-building initiatives bolstered local people's sense of ownership of natural resource management, thereby strengthening social capital. Empowered by the project, groups and committees are now capable of enforcing rules and regulations based on collectively agreed-upon norms.

167. Some visible changes in the project's islands as a project's effort[18]

CHANGED Practice #1: Starting collaborative efforts within local communities

168. In the past, community activities were segregated based on gender, age, and roles. The people of Mejit atoll believed that if men and women worked together, community's traditional norms and values would be negatively impacted. However, the implementation of this project resulted in a positive transformation. Local residents have begun to engage more actively as a unified community and are now open to participating in joint meetings. These positive changes can be attributed to the training sessions conducted for various community members, including schools, groups, and local traditional leaders.

CHANGED Practice #2: Enhancing community awareness of climate change

169. Initially, the Mejit atoll community lacked understanding about climate change and its impacts. Many attributed the land erosion and rising sea levels they saw to normal, natural processes and not anthropogenic causes. Convincing the community to address climate change as something that can be prepared for and adapted to prove challenging. Some individuals dogmatically suggested that climate change does not exist at all. Others attributed sea-level rise to natural currents, likening it to regular tides. The implementation of this project, however, significantly broadened the community's comprehension of climate change. Through a series of interventions, they learned about the causes behind erosion, sea-level rise, and temperature fluctuations within the islands. Efforts such as planting *kiden* (*Heliotropium arboreum*) and *koṇṇat* (beach naupaka) helped address land erosion. By providing education and tangible solutions, the project, along with MICS, made positive strides in encouraging the community to acknowledge and act upon the challenges posed by climate change.

CHANGED Practice #3: Increasing cultivation within project communities

170. Prior to the project's initiation, very few crops, largely just taro, pentas, breadfruit, and coconut, were cultivated locally due to a lack of understanding about gardening techniques and compost fertilizer production. It was difficult to provide seedlings and organize training sessions due to high costs, limited transportation, and a shortage of relevant experts. Moreover, the isolation of and the rough seas surrounding Mejit resulted in occasional difficulties in shipping and offloading supplies. Within the project framework, MoNRC significantly contributed by procuring and distributing the seeds and seedlings of selected species, including *jannar* for coastal protection.

171. During the COVID period, in recognition of the importance of food security, the MoNRC and PIU teams began to conduct training sessions and to visit sites. Training was held locally, and the community responded positively, participating actively. As a result, many more people began to cultivate mini-gardens, planting vegetables such as taro, cabbage, cucumber, tomatoes, corn, and eggplants. Local people learned innovative techniques, including

[18] These "changed practices" were recorded/documented through a series of mini-workshops involving three Site Coordinators, a review of their field diaries, and consultations and validation sessions with the Mayors of Wotho and Aur local governments.

using plastic to increase soil thickness and creating ditches with the assistance of MoNRC. In addition, they used coconut husks to retain soil moisture for extended periods. The project's efforts were supported by the MoNRC, which provided farming tools, and MICS, which helped create resource management plans and, in collaboration with IOM, identified livelihood schemes. As a result of these interventions, over 80% of people in Mejit now having their own mini-gardens at home and/or in schools. Moreover, the community proactively reforested the area with native trees and added foreign crops such as a productive breadfruit variety obtained from Tonga to their daily meals due to its potential for year-round harvesting.

CHANGED Practice #4: Enhancing the *bwiro* production process for Mejit

172. In the past, the community in Mejit would, using a time-consuming and labor-intensive process, prepare *bwiro*, a delicacy made from fermented breadfruit and coconut milk, which they exported to Majuro and other sub-centers. Recognizing the potential to increase the efficiency of that process as part of their livelihood projects, the community expressed a keen interest in expanding market opportunities. To support this initiative, IOM planned to provide training and appropriate tools, but progress has been limited, so the project needs to redouble its efforts to develop and support the community's efforts to see an effective boost to livelihoods.

CHANGED Practice #5: Empowering women in clam and taro farming initiatives

173. Prior to the project in Likiep, the majority of local communities did no farming at all, neither on land nor in the ocean. In pursuit of its aim to promote livelihood opportunities and support sustainable farming practices, the project introduced both clam farming and the replanting of taro patches. IOM and MIMRA provided men and women with essential guidance on clam farming, while MoNRC conducted training sessions in the proper techniques for replanting taro patches. As a result of these efforts, more than 70% of women now cultivated taro cultivation, and the farming system has improved. This year's harvest yielded a substantial quantity of taro, enough for personal consumption as well as marketing the surplus, and the community carefully saving seeds for the next cycle. Over 75% of the women in Likiep atoll actively farm clams using six raceway tanks. The project's focus on empowering women and involving them in clam and taro farming has proven successful; in particular, it has created new opportunities for economic growth and sustainable farming.

CHANGED Practice #6: Promoting marine conservation and sustainable fishing practices

174. In Likiep atoll, the community used to rely heavily on exporting live and dried fish to Majuro and Ebeye, generating a significant source of income. However, there was limited understanding of the potential consequences of over-harvesting on their marine resources both now and in the future. To address this concern, a project was initiated by MICS to promote the merits of marine protected areas and warn of the risks of over-harvesting. A series of consultation meetings were conducted to educate the community on the importance of sustainable fishing practices. The project also facilitated the development of rules and regulations for harvesting from both protected and non-protected marine areas, emphasizing the long-term benefits for the community of such strictures. Through these discussions, the community was convinced of the need to implement and enforce rules and regulations. Their conviction grew as they observed that fish were smaller and less abundant than they had been 10 years earlier. Despite these efforts, one challenge the project faces, is a delay in finalizing the rules and regulations for the protected areas as the local government is still reviewing the provisions. Despite this setback, the project made significant progress in promoting marine conservation and fostering an understanding of the importance of sustainable fishing practices. It is crucial to continue these efforts and garner the necessary community- and government-level support to ensure the protection and preservation of the marine ecosystem for future generations.

CHANGED Practice #7: Transforming community gathering practices

175. In the past, community gatherings and meetings for societal purposes were a rare occurrence in Likiep atoll. People would typically come together only for church prayers, birthday celebrations, and funeral ceremonies. Communication within the society was also limited, with interactions mostly confined to these specific events. This project brought about a change. The community has embraced the concept of holding regular gatherings and taking active participate in discussions to advance community development activities. Men, women, and children actively participated in various training sessions and workshops organized by the project. Local residents have realized the importance of convening meetings to address crucial local issues, engage in meaningful discussions, reach a consensus, and make informed decisions before embarking on community-driven initiatives. The project played a pivotal role in fostering a sense of community involvement and cooperation and encouraging active participation from all members of the society. As a result, the people of Likiep atoll practice more collaboration and shared decision-making and therefore have adopted more effective and collectively-driven efforts that enhance their community's well-being.

CHANGED Practice #8: Implementing greenhouses and raceway tanks for supplemental income

176. Responding to the community's request in Likiep atoll, the project established four greenhouses to serve as nurseries and one additional raceway tank beyond the original six. It will contribute to promote greenery and create additional income streams from both greenhouse produce and fish sales. The required resources were

identified and incorporated into the atoll's resource management and Reimaanlok plans. Although the necessary materials were identified, the procurement process encountered delays. Procurement of the required materials is in place. Despite these challenges, the project is committed to fulfilling the community's vision of using greenhouses and raceway tanks as sources of supplementary income. Once the procurement hurdles are overcome, these initiatives are expected to play a vital role in improving livelihoods and supporting sustainable economic growth within the community.

CHANGED Practice #9: Enhancing marketing skills and diversifying crop cultivation

177. With the support of the project, local communities in Wotho atoll aimed to improve their marketing systems in Majuro and Ebeye. After considering various livelihood options, they prioritized two schemes: producing more handicrafts for sale outside the atoll and initiating clam farming. The handicraft group eagerly prepared to export their products, while the Wotho Youth for Christ enthusiastically embraced clam farming as well as replanting breadfruit, coconut trees, and pentanes, all species which are essential for making handicrafts. Currently, more than 40% of the population is engaged in handicraft production; men gather raw materials and women weave. Breadfruits and coconuts are consumed but also play a crucial role in handicraft creation. The use of pandanus leaves for weaving is also a significant aspect of the handicraft production process. Initially, the communities faced challenges related to transportation and material management and misunderstandings with *alap* (landowners) temporarily hindered progress. However, these issues were resolved, and now the communities are thriving, enjoying the benefits of their improved marketing skills and diversified crop cultivation.

CHANGED Practice #10: Establishing rules and protocols for protected areas

178. In Wotho atoll, the local community used to collect crabs, sea turtles, lobsters, and other sea foods from two small islands named Mejurwon and Kaben without any specific regulations. They would then sell these resources in Majuro and other sub-centers. Then the conduction of detailed surveys revealed that these small islands fall within PAs. As a result, protocols for harvesting resources from these islets were established. Implementing the protocols presented some challenges. For generations, local people relied on these resources to generate income and to trade in a barter system to meet their needs. Making the switch from haphazard harvesting to wise harvesting required a series of meetings and consultations. The project played a crucial role in providing solid information derived from detailed surveys conducted during site visits and in developing a resource management plan. This process helped community members realize the significance of adopting responsible harvesting practices. Frequent visits and community consultations were essential approaches to convince people and local traditional leaders about the importance of adhering to the new protocols. Initially, some skepticism arose as the community had encountered other teams in the past that made promises but failed to deliver tangible outcomes. However, with persistence and proper communication, the project was successful in gaining the trust and cooperation of the community, ultimately leading to the establishment of rules and protocols for the protection of valuable resources.

CHANGED Practice #11: Recognizing the importance of traditional leadership and elected officials in project implementation

179. Before the project arrived, island communities, including Wotho, were primarily governed by community leaders, alongside elected mayors and council members. However, there was a disconnect between the traditional leaders, namely the *irooj* (atoll chief), *alap* (landowner), and *rijerbal* (the workers), who focused on their individual traditional rights, sometimes overlooking the broader benefits for the entire community. Mayors and council members, on the other hand, prioritized development but found their hands tied without the approval of traditional leaders. With the intervention of the project, a series of joint meetings were organized, bringing together traditional leaders and elected officials to emphasize the importance of collaborative efforts. The aim was to identify activities and explore the resources required for implementing these initiatives. As a result, traditional leadership in Wotho embraced the idea of working for collective societal benefits and wellbeing. Their attitudinal change facilitated the timely approval of the resource management plan. According to the cultural norms and values of Wotho, visiting village atoll chiefs required offering them gifts and competent speakers to engage in discussions and rationalize the overall benefits of the project for present and future generations. In Marshallese culture, not everyone can approach a chief directly, so designated messengers or landowners usually undertake such visits. Initially, local people had little interest in the project's activities, considering meetings and training sessions as a waste of time. They preferred focusing on collecting copra, which is a significant source of income for outer Islands communities and sold in Majuro to meet daily needs. However, over time, the community's perspective shifted positively, and they became eager to support the project's activities in Wotho. People's willingness to contribute time and effort to install equipment and commitment to sustain the project's livelihood initiatives even after it's comes to and end are encouraging signs of local ownership and engagement.

5. Summary of main findings, conclusions, recommendations & lessons

5.1 Main findings

180. The project was specifically designed to address national priorities, primarily environment, climate change, and resilience, and align with GoRMI's country-driven approach. Its results framework consisted of three components/outcomes with 12 outputs, a structure which proved to be robust and effective. Analysis of the project's results framework, including its logic, strategy, and indicators, revealed that objectives were well-defined and that components were strongly correlated. The project took a positive and supportive approach toward assisting communities with their unmet needs. It successfully achieved the anticipated three outcomes, including the establishment of 26,691 ha of MPA and 472 ha of TPA, and secured approval for three NRMPs (two others are nearing completion). Moreover, the project provided comprehensive support for the institutionalization and strengthening of PAN, and collaborated with CMI to build the capacity of four graduates through semi-academic courses. In addition, it contributed to the operationalization of NSAF and created easily understandable awareness materials about local and traditional knowledge.

181. The project employed various alternative strategies in order to achieve its objective. These strategies included utilizing the pandemic period strategically; adopting a collaborative approach to promote synergy; mobilizing key project stakeholders for policy advocacy; modifying work plans, targets, and budget; recruiting human resources; strengthening collaboration with local governments; fostering linkages with other R2R initiatives; developing strategies to address gaps; and extending the project's tenure by nine months through a no-cost modality. The assessment for SES conducted during the design phase was highly consultative. Issues such as land-related disputes and the impact of COVID-19 were discussed in the PIRs. However, periodic SES and gender reassessment were not conducted; assessments were conducted but only as one-time exercises. The project document highlighted seven risks, including high living costs, labor shortages, transportation, and communication; these still impact communities but at different scales. These risks were incorporated in the PIRs, but some assumptions may not be fully realized.

182. This project was built on knowledge gathered from regional R2R and biodiversity conservation projects, as well as international water-themed projects. Key collaborators include the Pacific Regional R2R program, national R2R projects, and the regional program support project. Stakeholder participation was ensured through partnerships and agreements and by addressing emerging challenges. The stakeholder engagement plan outlined in the project document was executed, and partnership arrangements and responsibilities were fine-tuned through negotiations. In terms of management arrangements, UNDP was implemented using a DIM, with the CCD Director serving as the NPD and chairperson of the PSC/PB. The PIU, which is located at CCD/OEPPC in Majuro, receives continuous guidance from the NPD to ensure the efficiency of its functioning, a fact reflecting CCD's commitment to the project. Five project staff members were employed, with three based in RMI and two stationed at the UNDP MCO in Fiji, an arrangement which sometimes posed communication challenges. The project's organizational structure underwent some significant modifications, primarily its transition from an NIM to a DIM.

183. The project adopted adaptive management practices to address challenges by implementing suggestions from the MTR and adjusting anticipated results based on assessments. Stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements were expanded by fostering partnerships, utilizing resources efficiently, linking micro- and macro-level issues, and leveraging resources. Despite some discrepancies between planned and actual expenditures, the project had robust financial controls which enabled it to make informed decisions making and resulted in a timely flow of funds. Co-financing sources were identified and it reported that they successfully leveraged, resulting in US$ 4,057,139 worth of commitments to provide in-kind, grant, and cash co-financing. Nevertheless, apart from the contractual agreement between MICS and the Nature Conservation Society for the completion of the Likiep Atoll Resource Management Plan, which amounted to US$ 9,678, no further documentation or proof of co-financing has been provided. The project utilized M&E information to improve performance and meet UNDP M&E standards. It collaborated with stakeholders to ensure compliance and used project-level M&E to support national data systems. The project also organized M&E according to UNDP and GEF standards and updated the ATLAS risk log and UNDP gender markers using M&E mission data. A financial audit was conducted once during the project tenure, in compliance with DIM audit criteria and UNDP financial regulations.

184. The project's relevance is evident in its strong programmatic linkages with national and regional projects, alignment with national priorities and policies, and consideration of gender and last-mile population issues. It also aligns with the GEF Focal Area Strategy and UNDP's strategic priorities. Furthermore, the project efficiently utilizes resources, seeks to be cost-effective and implements an efficient approach to deliver

planned results. It successfully mobilizes cash and in-kind contributions as co-financing, another measure adding to the project's effectiveness.

185. The project successfully addressed financial risks to sustainability by managing resources on the outer atolls and implementing suitable financial and economic instruments. Socio-political risks were reduced by promoting community empowerment, fostering the ownership of project outcomes, and increasing stakeholder awareness of long-term objectives. Gender-equitable results were achieved, an achievement mitigating socio-economic risks. Institutional framework and governance risks were managed through favorable legal frameworks, policies, and capacity-building. Champions were identified to promote project outcomes, and lessons learned were documented. That said, the project has no exit strategy or sustainability plan. Environmental risks were addressed by mitigating factors that could undermine future environmental benefits and reducing threats to the sustainability of project outcomes.

186. This project involved a diverse range of stakeholders, some of whom inadequate capacity to conduct activities independently. Despite these challenges, fruitful partnerships were established with local governments, benefiting communities on the outer atolls. The community-based Reimaanlok process aimed to ensure inclusivity and promote the rights of all citizens, in part by espousing a GESI approach which actively involved youths and women. Integrated livelihood schemes directly contributed to the poverty alleviation of and reliable incomes for local populations. The project prioritized knowledge management in order to scale up best practices and lessons learned to larger areas in the future.

187. The project, though only just nearing completion, has already had several preliminary impacts. These include identifying forest stocks through forestry inventory and analysis, raising awareness and preserving TEK, contributing to the conservation of globally significant species through participatory biodiversity conservation, promoting the sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services, strengthening climate resilience and community-based adaptation at the local level, developing legal and regulatory frameworks for Reimaanlok, and enhancing the inclusion of women and local communities.

5.2 Conclusions

188. The project played a crucial role in promoting the sustainable development of fragile outer atolls ecosystems and fostering good governance to harness global environmental benefits. The Reimaanlok process was refined as lessons were learned from communities. Funding support to the RMI PAN Office was invested in enhancing the capacities of professional and scientific communities and raised awareness among local and national stakeholders. Indigenous practices were utilized, saving the project from potential failure once funding pulled out. Success depended on the collective commitment of stakeholders to integrate biodiversity conservation into socio-economic development priorities. The multi-focal-area approach improved beneficiaries' socio-economic status by enhancing their food and water security, livelihoods, and access to ecosystem goods and services, all measures leading to more informed and participatory biodiversity conservation efforts. In addition, livelihood improvement plans instilled newfound confidence in their beneficiaries, fostering optimism among them.

189. LRCs, women's groups, local governments, IPs, and other stakeholders are enthusiastic about replicating the successful initiatives and best practices of the project on the pilot islands as well as their surroundings. The project took a practical approach to addressing gender issues: more specifically, it considered the different priorities, needs, and knowledge of men and women during both design and implementation. As a result, gender considerations are now integrated into local governments' plans and programs. They empower women to participate in decision-making and assume more control over family and community resources. The GoRMI allocated a budget to the local governments of the five outer atolls to implement integrated resource management plans and the project supplemented that amount with resources worth US$30,000 to each atoll.

190. The project maintained financial integrity and adopted a value-for-money approach throughout implementation. Its receipt of quarterly GEF funds from UNDP was contingent upon its having spent at least 80% of the previous tranche. The decision to switch from NIM to DIM was a wise considering CCD/MoE's limited capacity and ability to comply with UNDP's regulations. The project followed GEF's and UNDP's financial management regulation. Utilizing existing resource management plans rather than developing new ones saved resources, allowing for the early operationalization of those plans, which, in primarily focusing on alternative livelihood initiatives, ensured value for money. Effective strategies were employed to maximize the utility of available data and address data gaps through the collection of primary information.

191. From the outset, the project encountered administrative challenges compounded by the pandemic, Zika virus, and dengue fever, all of which collectively limited travel and slowed progress. To adapt, funds were reallocated to prioritize food security initiatives. Unavailability of international technical expertise delayed the conduction of hydrological and other scientific surveys, and the shortages of materials and supplies hindered the smooth implementation of activities. Travel bans prevented the conduction of joint monitoring missions, thereby hindering mutual learning and best practice sharing. Planned monitoring visits, including the oversight mission of UNDP MCO Fiji and UNDP North Pacific Office, were turned into online to meet the project's M&E standards.

192. The project encountered challenges to the smoothness of its implementation due to political and traditional influences, which particularly undermined the gaining of community support. To address this hurdles, the project adjusted activities and funds to meet genuine local needs staying aligned to its main goals. IPs faced difficulties in fine-tuning and institutionalizing completed activities, especially due to the numerous small tasks they were responsible for. The fact that there were so few UNDP staff members affected their ability to handle multiple coordination tasks, monitor ongoing initiatives, and effectively supervise IPs within the indicator-based monitoring system.

193. High rates of out-migration from RMI could impact the documentation and dissemination of TEK about conservation initiatives among relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the project lacked dedicated exit strategy and sustainability plans, potentially hindering the consolidation of best practices and lessons learned after the project's end and thereby limiting the replication of successful aspects. Though the project generated valuable data through scientific studies, the project has to systematically record M&E results using a robust online platform like Google Drive or a data archive system. Without such a system will make it challenging to ensure the availability and usability of the data in the future.

194. The project faced some difficulties due to UNDP's internal processes and absence of regular audits made demonstrating due diligence in fund management difficult. Although a significant portion of co-financing was monitored collaboratively, in-kind contributions were not meticulously tracked during project implementation.

195. The project faced consistent delays in human resource management, forcing the project to modify its timeframe and work plans. To address this shortcoming, five site coordinators were recruited through consultancy contracts when the regular hiring process was deemed unfeasible. Delays in recruiting IPs, conducting the MTR, and implementing refresher training also hindered the achievement of the intended outcomes. Furthermore, reallocation of certain activities from one IP to another created operational challenges and further delayed the pace of implementation.

196. Working with outer atolls was challenging due to the limited availability and varying prices of materials from different vendors. Travel restrictions also affected procurement planning. To address these challenges, the PSC/PB meeting of 2023 granted the PIU additional authority to expedite procurement procedures and improve logistics management. The result was faster procurement and better handling of goods and materials.

197. While periodic assessments of SES were mandatory, detailed evaluations were not regularly conducted. While preparing PIRs, however, only limited gender assessments were carried out. That said, the project did actively promote gender equality and women's empowerment through various measures, including maintaining gender balance in institutions, capacity-building, and other services. An affirmative action approach was taken by operationalizing the project's gender assessment and action plans. Women were involved through different social platforms, and they participated in project planning and decision-making related to resource management.

198. Timely payment of contracts has been problematic; in fact, the time elapsed between submitting bills and securing approval often took up six weeks. The need to conducting PSC/PB meetings on the outer atolls was undermined by logistical challenges. The limited pool of experienced and qualified individuals in RMI made hiring suitable short-term consultants difficult. High rates of staff turnover at the UNDP MCO, along with internal restructuring within UNDP, reduced institutional memory and M&E support and that affect project's quality. It was no feasible to carry out physical missions to make quality checks, however, fill the gaps through online meetings to the extent possible.

199. The project faced challenges with groups and committees in their early stages of institutional development, requiring that it provide them more support than it had intended. While the existing policy environment allowed for leveraging external resources, these opportunities were not fully explored. There is still potential to develop additional supportive policy measures such as PAN National Strategic Action Plan to fully implement the PAN Law and develop the best practices and learning generated by this project to maturity.

5.3 Recommendations

200. **Recommendation 1** *(to UNDP, IPs and Government Stakeholders):* Use a strategic approach to deploy IPs effectively and streamline remaining pending tasks *(linked to finding # 35)*

- The project's good performance stands as compelling proof of the successful achievement of its objectives. To optimize project activities, strategically engage the project team, including IPs, stakeholders, and the PIU, to ensure the successful completion of all tasks with excellent outcomes. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each IP to consolidate and enhance task execution.
- Enhance collaboration between IPs and government counterparts to encourage shared learning, reduce programmatic duplication, and foster synergistic cooperation. Achieve this by arranging regular review and reflection sessions involving IPs and pertinent stakeholders.

201. **Recommendation 2** *(to UNDP, IPs and Government Stakeholders):* Conduct SES and gender assessments regularly and incorporate the GESI approach into local government plans and policies *(linked to finding # 33)*

- Because socio-economic and environmental as well as gender factors are dynamic and context-specific, it is essential to periodically assess and analyze them. Updating analyses will provide valuable insight and enable the project to address these issues effectively in subsequent project implementation phases, thereby improving project outcomes. In addition, perform periodic assessments of SES by identifying potential environmental risks and implementing measures to mitigate them. Mobilize local skills, knowledge, and technologies to achieve this goal.
- The project's commitment to promoting gender balance within its staff and community institutions is moderate. To further advance GESI, it is crucial to integrate gender issues into local government's plans and programs. By mainstreaming the GESI approach into local government plans and policies, the rights deprived populations can be better addressed, ultimately benefiting the entire community.
- To that marginalized populations benefit equitably from the project's services, conduct a barrier analysis building upon the background provided in the GESI strategy and gender action plan (GAP). Efforts should be made to encourage women's participation in livelihood schemes, such as providing fellowships to outstanding women entrepreneurs to foster their interest in promoting their businesses. To achieve better outcomes, it is essential to integrate cross-cutting issues like GESI, climate change, and the environment into training curricula. Applying affirmative action by selecting business schemes and reserving seats for women in key decision-making positions within committees and groups can help address these disparities. Enhancing monitoring mechanisms and measuring gender-specific changes resulting from project interventions requires making specific improvements.
- Regularly perform barrier analyses in conjunction with SES and gender assessments to identify key issues that hinder the integration of GESI into the plans and programs of the local government.
- Mainstream GESI in the programmatic cycle i.e. collecting baseline data, designing, implementing and monitoring the project in order to distribute the projects benefits to all people irrespective of gender and caste/ethnicity.

202. **Recommendation 3** *(to UNDP, IPs and Government Stakeholders):* Align the scope and volume of activities with the human resources *(linked to finding # 170)*

- The project faced challenges due to the limited number of UNDP staff, all of whom were tasked with multiple coordination responsibilities and engaged in ongoing initiative monitoring and providing effective supervision of IPs. This shortage of staff negatively impacted the indicator-based monitoring system and hindered the project's ability to make strong connections with IPs as well as national and local governments. Not having enough human resources also prevented the detailed documentation of best practices, lessons learned, and SES and gender assessments.
- The high volume of project activities further added to the staff's difficulty in maintaining the project's standards. To ensure future success, it is crucial to establish a clear correlation between the scope and volume of activities and the availability of human resources. It is recommended that future project designs adopt a strategic approach by focusing on fewer activities. Narrowing its scope will allow the project to

fine-tune and institutionalize completed activities before moving on to new ones, ensuring that each undertaking receives the necessary attention and resources to achieve sustainable and impactful outcomes.

- To streamline human resource management, employ headhunting techniques and individual contract arrangements. This will mitigate potential disruptions during project implementation due to shortages of staff. Facilitate timely partnership agreements, ensuring punctual implementation of the HACT and conducting spot checks to evaluate IPs' programmatic and financial capacities. Ensure a strong alignment between the nature and quantity of activities, geographical complexities, and the quantity and skill set of human resources in order to achieve optimal outcomes.

203. **Recommendation 4** *(to UNDP, IPs and Government Stakeholders):* Establish a comprehensive exit strategy and sustainability plan *(linked to finding # 224)*

- The project faced a significant gap in not having either a dedicated exit strategy or a sustainability plan, which hindered the effective institutionalization and consolidation of the policy support provided throughout its duration. Although IPs did devise individual plans to ensure activity sustainability, an overarching exit strategy and sustainability plan have not been formally realized. This gap also hampers the replication of successful aspects of the project. It is best to draft sustainability and exit plans at the project's inception and establish mechanisms for executing them during implementation. The exit strategy should include sustainability agreements and commitments with IPs, identify capacity-building needs, and provide for a clear handover of all roles and responsibilities.
- Draft the sustainability plan should involve engaging in discussions with local governments and CBOs about operation and maintenance (O&M) funds. To ensure the long-term viability of the project's initiatives, it should also consider options like providing seed funding (and its operational guideline) and negotiating co-financing for O&M funds.

204. **Recommendation 5** *(to UNDP):* Design training curricula using comprehensive training needs assessments*(linked to finding # 225)*

- Begin by conducting capacity needs assessments to identify specific gaps that need to be addressed through training. Then develop training curricula that are tailored to fill these identified gaps effectively. To ensure the effectiveness of the training sessions, create an environment that encourages participants to share their existing knowledge and ideas during each session. In addition, consider the education levels of the trainees when determining the nature and duration of the training to be able to provide more targeted and impactful learning experiences. Where applicable, incorporate practical drills to enhance the learning process, and allocate resources for refresher training to reinforce acquired knowledge and skills periodically over time. Conduct pre- and post-training evaluations to gauge the impact of each training and assess participants' progress. At the end of each training, develop action plans to implement, and closely monitor progress in implementing plans to increase community awareness.
- Rather than considering capacity-building events as a final goal, view them as a means to continually enhance skills and knowledge. Opt for practical short-term training sessions and refresher training, instead of solely relying on lengthy events. It is essential to offer short-duration training that caters to different levels, whether basic, intermediate, or advanced, along with corresponding refresher training to reinforce learning and skill development. To achieve optimal results from training efforts, implement two key strategies: (i) develop simple self-monitoring mechanisms that enable periodic assessment and tracking of changes in participants' abilities and knowledge, and (ii) engage local government sectoral staff as LRP during training events.
- Create a pool of LRPs by conducting ToT sessions and engaging participants in delivering relevant follow-up training sessions using a cascading model. Periodically organize review-and-reflection sessions with LRPs to encourage knowledge-sharing and mutual learning from their experiences. Empowering LRPs and implementing efficient monitoring practices will strengthen the project's capacity to achieve its goals and have a positive impact on the targeted communities.

205. **Recommendation 6** *(to UNDP, IPs and Government Stakeholders):* Design locally suitable livelihood schemes *(linked to finding # 245)*

- To optimally benefit communities, tailor livelihood schemes to local contexts by cultivating crop varieties that can withstand extreme weather conditions and resist common insects and diseases. Integrate climate and disaster risk considerations into the development of livelihood schemes. Customize livelihood schemes to match micro-climatic conditions, seasonality, and the proven experiences of local people. Take into account the availability of local resources and existing market infrastructures, as determined by thorough assessments. Develop short-term, quick-impact livelihood schemes and align them with the government's long-term local-level programs to ensure sustainable development.
- Support market assessments and value chain analyses to enable the preparation and sale of secondary products, thereby increasing the overall economic viability of whatever livelihood schemes are adopted. Facilitate the provision of simple processing and post-harvest technologies that add value to primary products. For example, solar dryers can be highly beneficial due to their affordability, women-friendly design, low operational costs, and numerous uses and benefits, including reducing drudgery in processing activities.
- Mainstream disaster and climate risk reduction feature in the design of livelihood schemes as well as the subsequent implementation to ensure the benefits acquired from project-initiated schemes.

206. **Recommendation 7** *(to UNDP):* Capture TEK in an appropriate data format for future utilization *(linked to finding # 94)*

- The ongoing efforts to document and share TEK with relevant stakeholders are commendable, and its outreach is satisfactory. However, a potential concern for the future is the risk posed by high rates of out-migration from RMI, which could lead to the loss of valuable conservation knowledge unless it is stored in platforms like Google Drive, online archives, and other similar data repositories.

207. **Recommendation 8** *(to UNDP):* Develop robust procurement plans and detailed activity-specific implementation guidelines *(linked to finding # 184)*

- The efficiency and success of the project rely heavily there being effective procurement plans. Weak procurement plans can lead to delays in achieving the project's objectives. To avert this possibility, it is crucial to craft well-designed procurement plans that take into account quick assessments and risk mapping. Making this change speed up procurement and make logistics management more efficient, mitigating financial risks and enhancing overall project performance.
- Furthermore, it is essential to create activity-specific implementation guidelines for each project activity (with milestones and deliverables). These detailed guidelines will serve as roadmaps for staff involved in implementation, ensuring that the anticipated results are achieved and minimizing the risk of a misstep.
- During the initial years of a project, create contingency plans to address potential challenges related to administrative, financial, procurement, and logistics matters. These plans should adhere to both UNDP's and the government's standard operating procedures and policies. Mapping the existing resources will provide valuable insights that can be used to design effective contingency strategies that can mitigate potential bottlenecks and ensure smooth project implementation.
- It is also essential to conduct more hands-on training sessions for relevant administrative and finance staff to overcome the challenges made by shifting from the previous ATLAS to Quantum system. These training sessions will equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate and utilize the Quantum platform confidently, ensuring a smoother and more successful transition to the new system.

208. **Recommendation 9** *(to UNDP):* Document best practices and lessons learned *(linked to finding # 25)*

- Creating a comprehensive case studies based on livelihood interventions is a crucial step in promoting the replication and scaling up of successful practices and lessons in other Pacific countries with similar geographical contexts. Allocate dedicated time to developing and showcasing success and failure stories, best practices, and valuable lessons learned. This compilation of experiences should be shared with relevant agencies to foster knowledge exchange and capacity-building. Thoroughly document best practices and lessons learned, recognizing that many innovative approaches have already been implemented successfully and can be replicated in new areas for the benefit of other agencies.

5.4 Lessons learned

209. **Lesson learned # 1:** Trainings are most effective if they are short and then followed up on with drills and refresher training

- Trainings are most effective when they are limited in duration and are complemented by practical drills and refresher sessions designed to inculcate skills and knowledge. Community meetings and training sessions played a crucial role in helping the members of LRCs, group, and committees comprehend project-related issues, especially their root causes, effects, and potential solutions, in a collaborative manner using the review-action-reflection-action model. Short training sessions complemented by refresher training, drills, street theatre, and video documentaries, effectively dispelled misconceptions and stimulated people's interest and learning. Through a series of capacity-building initiatives, the abilities of local government's abilities were strengthened and a sense of ownership of the project promoted. As a result, governments proficiently and amiably managed all disputes and conflicts that arose at the source, before they could spin out of control. By conducting logically organized capacity-building trainings, the project was able to access the technical and financial resources required to nurture successful initiatives. Furthermore, the project successfully mobilized local government staff to act as LRPs during implementation, further promoting a sense of ownership and commitment.

210. **Lesson learned # 2:** Capacity-building initiatives should be seen as a process

- Every capacity-building initiative should be viewed as part of an ongoing process rather than as an isolated event. The effectiveness of such initiatives improves when they are customized to meet the specific needs and interests of participants. Engaging elderly individuals, local youths, and students in TEK documentation proved to be a valuable approach for this project. The knowledge they acquire from training spreads easily to other family members, making the training even more impactful.

211. **Lesson learned # 3:** Sufficient awareness is required before introducing any new technology

- Adequate awareness is a prerequisite when introducing novel technologies like refined coconut oil extraction, raceway tanks and so forth. Before implementing such technologies, it is crucial to sensitize and empower communities through presentations, and interactive sessions. People show enthusiasm for new technology when it utilizes locally available resources, is cost-effective, and incorporates local knowledge and wisdom.

212. **Lesson learned # 4:** *Transparency and accountability are necessary to win the trust of communities*

- In order to gain the trust of communities, transparency and accountability are crucial. Disseminating knowledge products through various media channels plays a vital role in raising awareness and facilitating learning exchanges. Using IEC materials and ensuring media coverage contribute to maintaining transparency and accountability. However, it is important to note that these efforts may also lead to an increase in the demands of non-targeted communities. Strict adherence to policies like do-no-harm and political neutrality is essential in ensuring transparency and accountability and, in turn, building the trust of communities and local governments.

213. **Lesson learned # 5:** Existing social platforms helped in the selection of needs-based and demand-driven schemes

- The utilization of existing social platforms facilitated the identification of needs-based and demand-driven schemes. Collaborating with established LRCs, committees, groups, and cooperatives expedited the progress of identifying schemes and saved valuable time and resources. Opting for demand-driven schemes ensured active community participation and considerable contributions in terms of resources and materials. This approach also accelerated the project's advancement while minimizing resource duplication.

214. **Lesson learned # 6:** Participation of multiple stakeholders reduced the duplication of works

- The active participation of various stakeholders such as local governments, IPs, stakeholders, academia, women's groups, and cooperatives played a significant role in several aspects. Participation aided in selecting appropriate schemes, resolving conflicts among beneficiaries, fostering local ownership, and effectively minimizing work duplication. Furthermore, stakeholder involvement contributed to the sustainability of capacity-building initiatives and awareness activities.

215. **Lesson learned # 7:** *Socio-political influences can be managed by adjusting activities and funds*

- Socio-political influences can impact the project's implementation, particularly in terms of gaining community support. To tackle this challenge, it is crucial to adjust project activities and funds to address

genuine local needs while still aligning whatever is chosen with the project's overall goals and objectives. The project's plans and financial approaches were effective in resolving socio-political conflicts and ensuring smooth implementation.

216. **Lesson learned # 8:** Timely sharing of project's activities and plan helped the project leverage more resources from government entities and other stakeholders

- The timely sharing of the project's activities and plans proved instrumental in the project's being able to secure additional resources from government entities and other stakeholders. It is imperative to share details if a project wishes to effectively access the services and resources it needs. Collaborative efforts were made possible in interventions where cooperation was feasible. For instance, the project received supplementary assistance, albeit limited in scale, from PROP for the sustainable management of coastal fisheries after the project informed PROP about its mandates. This sharing of mandates also boosted the ownership and long-term sustainability of the project.

217. **Lesson learned # 9:** Project schemes are likely to be sustainable if they are low-cost and based on indigenous knowledge and skills

- The project's schemes are expected to be sustainable due to their affordability and derivation from indigenous knowledge and skills. Since nature-based solutions might not always fully meet people's demands, the inclusion of minor technical and financial support can enhance community participation, interest, and ownership, further increasing sustainability.

218. **Lesson learned # 10:** Gender-friendly livelihood schemes encouraged the involvement of women

- The involvement of women was encouraged by selecting of gender-friendly livelihood schemes using participatory discussions and decision-making processes. This approach fostered a sense of empowerment and an optimistic "we can do it" belief. In addition, selecting training sites and venues within communities also made it easier for women to participate.

219. **Lesson learned # 11:** Valuing the importance of traditional leaders helped to resolve local issues

- Recognizing and respecting the significance of traditional leaders and adhering to cultural protocols played a crucial role in resolving local issues. By involving traditional leaders and local government mayors in the preparation of integrated resource management plans, the project fostered trust with the local community. This trust, in turn, encouraged their active participation in other project activities.

220. **Lesson learned # 12:** Impact of staff turnover could be minimized by mapping human resources in advance

- The adverse impacts of high staff turnover can be reduced through proactive human resource mapping. In fact, the project was able to address gaps resulting from staff turnover. The fact that technical staff was both insufficient and unskilled posed challenges to the project's implementation progress. In cases where the regular hiring approach was not feasible, possible delays in human resource management were managed by utilizing consultancy contracts. The transition of UNDP's accounting system from ATLAS to Quantum, coupled with internal processes, adversely affected the timeliness of payments and liquidations. This issue could have been mitigated if administrative and finance staff had had enough training to ensure smooth financial operations.

221. **Lesson learned # 13:** Periodic review-and-reflection sessions at the local level helped to resolve difficulties

- Conducting periodic review-and-reflection sessions at the local level proved instrumental in resolving some of the difficulties faced by the project. These sessions, which involved IPs and other stakeholders, enabled the project to overcome emerging challenges and achieve its indicators within the designated timeframe. Project-capacitated IPs and stakeholders played a crucial role in addressing procurement and activity implementation issues. In addition, effective knowledge and data management played a significant role in enabling the project to tackle the complex challenges that arose during the project's implementation.

222. **Lesson learned # 14:** Coordination meetings help to mainstream project plan with local government plan

- Through coordination meetings with local governments, the project successfully aligned and integrated its plans with the local government plans. These meetings were essential in minimizing gaps and ensuring a seamless merging of objectives. Additionally, the coordination meetings played a crucial role in managing emergency situations, such as those arising from COVID-19, Zika virus, and dengue fever, including the subsequent travel bans.

Annex-1: Terms of Reference

Services/Work Description: International Lead Evaluator
Project/Programme Title: Reimaanlok – Looking to the Future: Strengthening natural resource management in atoll communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands employing integrated approaches (RMI R2R)
Consultancy Title: International Lead Evaluator – UNDP –GEF Terminal Evaluation (PIMS 5685)
Duty Station: Home-based with travel to Marshall Island
Duration: 30 working day over 12 weeks (05/May/2023 - 31/July/2023)
Expected start date: 05/May/2023

1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, all full- and medium-sized UNDP-supported GEF-financed projects are required to undergo a Terminal Evaluation (TE) at the end of the project. This Terms of Reference (ToR) sets out the expectations for the TE of the *full -sized* project titled Reimaanlok – Looking to the Future: Strengthening natural resource management in atoll communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands employing integrated approaches (RMI R2R) *(PIMS # 5685)* implemented through UNDP. The project started on the 1 February 2018 and is in its *5* year of implementation. The TE process must follow the guidance outlined in the document 'Guidance For Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects' http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guidance.shtml#handbook.

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT`

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) has a strong dependence on natural resources and biodiversity not only for food and income. The Marshallese relationship with the islands forms the basis of its culture and way of life which has developed in harmony over thousands of years. In the face of global threats, RMI still has pristine waters and coral reefs that contribute to ecosystem services and livelihoods. In recognition of the importance of its natural assets, RMI together with other SIDS responded to global conservation targets through the Micronesia Challenge and specifically for its part, it prepared Reimaanlok to serve as a clear roadmap of the way forward.
This project support operationalizing the Reimaanlok – the National Conservation Area Plan, adopted in 2008 to effectively conserve at least 30% of the nearshore marine resources and 20% of the terrestrial resources across Micronesia by 2020.

The project objective is to sustain atoll biodiversity and livelihoods by building community and ecosystem resilience to threats and degrading influences through integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources adopting the principles and processes outlined in Reimaanlok.

Project Site Interventions:
The project is piloted on five (5) outer islands of Wotho, Mejit, Likiep, Aur and Ebon with a US$3.9m support through the Global Environment Facility. The interventions are designed to strengthen local capacities, enabling local communities to implement the integrated natural resource management plans, and providing scale-able demonstrations of sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services. The lessons from this project will guide replication in other sites.

3. TE PURPOSE

The TE report will assess the achievement of project results against what was expected to be achieved and draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming. The TE report promotes accountability and transparency and assesses the extent of project accomplishments.

Further to this, the objectives of the evaluation will be to:

- assess the achievement of project results supported by evidence (i.e. progress of project's outcome targets),
- assess the contribution and alignment of the project to relevant national development plan or environmental policies;
- assess the contribution of the project results towards the relevant outcome and output of the Multi Country Programme Document & United Nation Pacific Strategy (UNPS/UNDAF)
- assess any cross cutting and gender results and impacts
- examination on the use of funds and value for money
- Asses the impact of COVID-19 on project's implementation, and to

- Draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming

The TE will be conducted according to the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF Financed Projects.

4. TE APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The TE report must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful.
The TE team will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure/SESP) the Project Document, project reports including annual PIRs, project budget revisions, lesson learned reports, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based evaluation. The TE team will review the baseline and midterm GEF focal area Core Indicators/Tracking Tools submitted to the GEF at the CEO endorsement and midterm stages and the terminal Core Indicators/Tracking Tools that must be completed before the TE field mission begins.

The TE team is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), Implementing Partners, the UNDP Country Office(s), the Regional Technical Advisor, direct beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful TE. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to I.) The International Organization for Migration ii.) Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce iii.) RMI – Environmental Protection Agency iv.) The College of the Marshall Islands v.) Marshall Islands Conservation Society and vi.) Jo-Jikum; executing agencies, senior officials and task team/component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project beneficiaries, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the TE team is expected to conduct field missions to, I.) Ebon Atoll, ii.) Likiep Atoll, and iii.) Aur Atoll sites.

If international travel restrictions persist the project will engage a local counterpart to conduct the field missions facilitating the required interview by the international team lead.

The specific design and methodology for the TE should emerge from consultations between the TE team and the above-mentioned parties regarding what is appropriate and feasible for meeting the TE purpose and objectives and answering the evaluation questions, given limitations of budget, time and data. The TE team must, however, use gender-responsive methodologies and tools and ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues and SDGs are incorporated into the TE report.
The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits and data to be used in the evaluation must be clearly outlined in the TE Inception Report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP, stakeholders and the TE team.
The final report must describe the full TE approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the evaluation.

5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE TE

The TE will assess project performance against expectations set out in the project's Logical Framework/Results Framework (see ToR Annex A). The TE will assess results according to the criteria outlined in the Guidance for TEs of UNDP-supported GEF-financed Projects http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guidance.shtml#handbook.).
The Findings section of the TE report will cover the topics listed below.
A full outline of the TE report's content is provided in ToR Annex C.
The asterisk "(*)" indicates criteria for which a rating is required.
Findings

i. Project Design/Formulation

- National priorities and country driven-ness
- Theory of Change
- Gender equality and women's empowerment
- Social and Environmental Safeguards
- Analysis of Results Framework: project logic and strategy, indicators
- Assumptions and Risks
- Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g. same focal area) incorporated into project design
- Planned stakeholder participation

- Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector
- Management arrangements

ii. Project Implementation

- Adaptive management (changes to the project design and project outputs during implementation)
- Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements
- Project Finance and Co-finance
- Monitoring & Evaluation: design at entry (*), implementation (*), and overall assessment of M&E (*)
- Implementing Agency (UNDP) (*) and Executing Agency (*), overall project oversight/implementation and execution (*)
- Risk Management, including Social and Environmental Standards

iii. Project Results

- Assess the achievement of outcomes against indicators by reporting on the level of progress for each objective and outcome indicator at the time of the TE and noting final achievements
- Relevance (*), Effectiveness (*), Efficiency (*) and overall project outcome (*)
- Sustainability: financial (*) , socio-political (*), institutional framework and governance (*), environmental (*), overall likelihood of sustainability (*)
- Country ownership
- Gender equality and women's empowerment
- Cross-cutting issues (poverty alleviation, improved governance, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster prevention and recovery, human rights, capacity development, South-South cooperation, knowledge management, volunteerism, etc., as relevant)
- GEF Additionality
- Catalytic Role / Replication Effect
- Progress to impact

Main Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned

- The TE team will include a summary of the main findings of the TE report. Findings should be presented as statements of fact that are based on analysis of the data.
- The section on conclusions will be written in light of the findings. Conclusions should be comprehensive and balanced statements that are well substantiated by evidence and logically connected to the TE findings. They should highlight the strengths, weaknesses and results of the project, respond to key evaluation questions and provide insights into the identification of and/or solutions to important problems or issues pertinent to project beneficiaries, UNDP and the GEF, including issues in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Recommendations should provide concrete, practical, feasible and targeted recommendations directed to the intended users of the evaluation about what actions to take and decisions to make. The recommendations should be specifically supported by the evidence and linked to the findings and conclusions around key questions addressed by the evaluation.
- The TE report should also include lessons that can be taken from the evaluation, including best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success that can provide knowledge gained from the particular circumstance (programmatic and evaluation methods used, partnerships, financial leveraging, etc.) that are applicable to other GEF and UNDP interventions. When possible, the TE team should include examples of good practices in project design and implementation.
- It is important for the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned of the TE report to include results related to gender equality and empowerment of women.

The TE report will include an Evaluation Ratings Table, as shown below:

ToR Table 2: Evaluation Ratings Table for RMI R2R Project

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)	Rating[19]
M&E design at entry	
M&E Plan Implementation	
Overall Quality of M&E	
Implementation & Execution	Rating
Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight	
Quality of Implementing Partner Execution	
Overall quality of Implementation/Execution	
Assessment of Outcomes	Rating
Relevance	
Effectiveness	
Efficiency	
Overall Project Outcome Rating	
Sustainability	Rating
Financial resources	
Socio-political/economic	
Institutional framework and governance	
Environmental	
Overall Likelihood of Sustainability	

6. TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the TE will be approximately 30*working days)* over a time period of *(12 weeks)* starting on *(05 May 2023)* The tentative TE timeframe is as follows:

Timeframe	Activity
28th April 2023	Selection of TE team (GPN express roster for IC while procurement process for NC will be used)
15 May, 2023	Preparation period for TE team (handover of documentation)
20 May 2023	Document review and preparation of TE Inception Report
21 May 2023	Finalization and Validation of TE Inception Report
28 May 2023	Latest start of TE mission, TE mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits, etc.
05 June 2023	Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings; earliest end of TE mission
10 Jun 2023	draft TE report completed
15 June 2023	Circulation of draft TE report for comments
25 June 2023	Incorporation of comments on draft TE report into Audit Trail & finalization of TE report _final report completed
15 July 2023	Preparation and Issuance of Management Response – management response to the TE draft completed
20 July 2023	Expected date of full TE completion

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

7. TE DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	TE Inception Report	TE team clarifies objectives, methodology and timing of the TE	No later than 2 weeks before the TE mission (21 May 2023*)*	TE team submits Inception Report to Commissioning Unit and project management
2	Presentation	Initial Findings	End of TE mission: *(5 June 2023)*	TE team presents to Commissioning Unit and project management
3	Draft TE Report	Full draft report *(using guidelines on report content in ToR Annex C)* with annexes	Within 3 weeks of end of TE mission: (10 June *2023)*	TE team submits to Commissioning Unit; reviewed by BPPS-GEF RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP
5	Final TE Report* + Audit Trail	Revised final report and TE Audit trail in which the TE details how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final TE report *(See template in ToR Annex H)*	Within 1 week of receiving comments on draft report: *(25 June 2023)*	TE team submits both documents to the Commissioning Unit

[19] Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, I&E Execution, Relevance are rated on a 6-point rating scale: 6 = Highly Satisfactory (HS), 5 = Satisfactory (S), 4 = Moderately Satisfactory (MS), 3 = Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), 2 = Unsatisfactory (U), 1 = Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability is rated on a 4-point scale: 4 = Likely (L), 3 = Moderately Likely (ML), 2 = Moderately Unlikely (MU), 1 = Unlikely (U)

*All final TE reports will be quality assessed by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO). Details of the IEO's quality assessment of decentralized evaluations can be found in Section 6 of the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines.[20]

8. TE ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing the TE resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's TE is *the UNDP Pacific Office*.
The Commissioning Unit will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the TE team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the TE team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

9. EVALUATOR ETHICS

The TE team will be held to the highest ethical standards and is required to sign a code of conduct upon acceptance of the assignment. This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. The evaluator must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The evaluator must also ensure security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the evaluation process must also be solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses without the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

Annex-2: Evaluation approach and methods

TE approach: The TE utilized a "summative approach" to evaluate the project's performance, meaning it focused on the achievement of expected outputs and results, with a special emphasis on the higher levels of programmatic outcomes. In adopting this approach, the TE reviewed the project's progress and accomplishments, all the while assessing the extent to which the intended outcomes had been realized.

In addition to the summative approach, the TE also integrated a "formative approach" which involved identifying and documenting valuable lessons learned. The lessons collected are intended to be applied to the design and implementation of similar future projects and will thereby contribute to the continuous improvement of such initiatives.

Finally, the TE employed a "constructive and participative approach": it actively collaborated with the project team and consulted various key informants and stakeholders, namely implementing partners (IPs) at all levels, project beneficiaries, and relevant partner organizations including academic institutions, community-based organizations (CBOs), the private sector, and local and national governmental authorities.

The TE Consultant carried out discussions and interviews in a semi-structured manner, one fostering collaborative reflection and facilitating the formulation of lessons learned. Whenever targets were not met or appeared unattainable within the planned timeframe, the TE carefully investigated the underlying reasons for the lapse and involved stakeholders in exploring potential causes related to project design, implementation arrangements, and other factors.

TE methods: To achieve the primary purpose and objectives of the TE, the TE consultant employed a mixed methods approach[21] with a strong emphasis on qualitative tools and techniques. This approach facilitated a thorough examination of the project's key outcomes. Utilizing mixed methods rendered the evaluation process comprehensive and well-rounded, allowing it to incorporate both qualitative insights and quantitative measurements to effectively assess the project's performance and outcomes. Through the combination of qualitative and quantitative data, the TE consultant gathered a comprehensive set of information and addressed key questions.

[20] Access at: http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/section-6.shtml
[21] The review methodology used for this project TE was based on the UNDP-GEF's monitoring and evaluation policies and includes multiple methods rooted in the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data wherever possible.

Annex-3: List of document reviewed

Sn	Item (electronic versions preferred if available)
1	Project Identification Form (PIF)
2	UNDP Initiation Plan
3	Final UNDP-GEF Project Document with all annexes
4	CEO Endorsement Request
5	UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) and associated management plans (if any)
6	Inception Workshop Report
7	Mid-Term Review report and management response to MTR recommendations
8	All Project Implementation Reports (PIRs)
9	Progress reports (quarterly, semi-annual or annual, with associated workplans and financial reports)
10	Oversight mission reports
11	Minutes of Project Board Meetings and of other meetings (i.e. Project Appraisal Committee meetings)
12	GEF Tracking Tools (from CEO Endorsement, midterm and terminal stages)
13	GEF/LDCF/SCCF Core Indicators (from PIF, CEO Endorsement, midterm and terminal stages); for GEF-6 and GEF-7 projects only
14	Financial data, including actual expenditures by project outcome, including management costs, and including documentation of any significant budget revisions
15	Co-financing data with expected and actual contributions broken down by type of co-financing, source, and whether the contribution is considered as investment mobilized or recurring expenditures
16	Audit reports
17	Electronic copies of project outputs (booklets, manuals, technical reports, articles, etc.)
18	Sample of project communications materials
19	Summary list of formal meetings, workshops, etc. held, with date, location, topic, and number of participants
20	Any relevant socio-economic monitoring data, such as average incomes / employment levels of stakeholders in the target area, change in revenue related to project activities
21	List of contracts and procurement items over ~US$5,000 (i.e. organizations or companies contracted for project outputs, etc., except in cases of confidential information)
22	List of related projects/initiatives contributing to project objectives approved/started after GEF project approval (i.e. any leveraged or "catalytic" results)
23	Data on relevant project website activity – e.g. number of unique visitors per month, number of page views, etc. over relevant time period, if available
24	UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD)
25	List/map of project sites, highlighting suggested visits
26	List and contact details for project staff, key project stakeholders, including Project Board members, RTA, Project Team members, and other partners to be consulted
27	Project deliverables that provide documentary evidence of achievement towards project outcomes
28	2019 CO Audit Report
29	Mejit Draft Management Plan_ (July 2023)
30	RMI-2011-Census-Summary-Report-on-Population-and-Housing
31	MH 2021 Census table report 210223[12097]
32	AUR Atoll Resource Management Plan_30.80.23 clean
33	LIKIEP ATOLL MP 2022-2027
34	Likiep MP Signed Page
35	GEF8_Core_Indicator_Reporting_RMIR2R_TE_9.18.23
36	Grant_MICS_LIKIEP021522
37	Likiep Management Plan
38	AUR Atoll Resource Management Plan

Annex-4: Mission itinerary

Tentative time		Activity	Venue	Means of transportation	Remarks
Departure	**Arrival**				
July 15					
10:00	6:00	Travel (Kathmandu-Kawalampur)	Kawalampur	Airplane	Whole night transit at Kawalampur airport
July 16					
8:00	16:00	Travel (Kawalampur-Manila-Guam)	Guam	Airplane	Transit at Manila and Guam
July 17					
8:00	18:00	Travel (Guam-Majuro)	Majuro	Airplane	MIR Majuro
July 18					
9:00	18:00	Interviews/meetings with stakeholders	Majuro	Vehicle	MIR Majuro

July 19					
9:00	18:00	Interviews/meetings with stakeholders	Majuro	Vehicle	MIR Majuro
July 20					
9:00	18:00	Interviews/meetings with stakeholders	Majuro	Vehicle	MIR Majuro
July 21					
9:00	18:00	Interviews/meetings with stakeholders	Majuro	Vehicle	MIR Majuro
July 22					
9:00	18:00	Interviews/meetings with stakeholders	Majuro	Vehicle	MIR Majuro
July 23					
9:00	18:00	Interviews/meetings with stakeholders	Majuro	Vehicle	MIR Majuro
July 24					
9:00	18:00	Interviews/meetings with stakeholders	Majuro	Vehicle	MIR Majuro
July 25					
9:00	18:00	Interviews/meetings with stakeholders	Majuro	Vehicle	MIR Majuro
July 26					
9:00	18:00	Interviews/meetings with stakeholders	Majuro	Vehicle	MIR Majuro
July 27					
9:00	18:00	Interviews/meetings with stakeholders	Majuro	Vehicle	MIR Majuro
July 28					
9:00	18:00	Interviews/meetings with stakeholders	Majuro	Vehicle	MIR Majuro
July 29					
8:00	22:00	Travel (Majuro- Guam-Manila)	Manila	Airplane	Whole night transit at Manila
July 30					
8:00	22:00	Travel (Manila-Kawalampur-Kathmandu)	Kathmandu	Airplane	Kathmandu

Annex-5: Data collection and analysis

Qualitative data collection: Tools and techniques

The collection and creation of qualitative data, information, and evidence involved the use of the following tools and techniques:

a. Initial briefings/introductory meetings: Following the initial briefing session with representatives from UNDP CO and the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) to clarify the main objectives and areas of focus, the TE Consultant arranged an introductory meeting with the PIU team. This meeting served as an opportunity to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the project's strategy, approach, an overview of the current implementation, partnership arrangements, key achievements, as well as the challenges and bottlenecks encountered.

b. Document review: The TE consultant conducted a thorough review of a comprehensive set of documents which included the project document, reports on progress in implementation, statements on financial status and disbursement, risk management practices, and reports and studies conducted by different consultants.

c. Key informant interviews: The TE consultant actively engaged with representatives from various project partners, government officials, consultants and researchers, academics, and the staff of CBOs through key informant interviews (KIIs). During these interviews, critical information regarding the project's priorities, challenges, barriers, bottlenecks, best practices, and lessons learned was captured. Each TE question was carefully designed to elicit information relevant to the key evaluation criteria. To ensure gender balance and responsiveness, efforts were made to include a diverse range of interviewees that took gender equality and women's empowerment into consideration. The methods and tools used in the evaluation were designed to be gender-responsive and to address gender-related issues. The TE consultant also held discussions with the Deputy Resident Representative of Northern Pacific Office and the Regional Technical Advisor and Program Analyst of UNDP MCO Fiji to capture additional insights at the macro level.

d. Most significant change technique: The TE consultant utilized the "most significant change" technique to assess the project's achievements. This approach facilitated the identification of real changes in people's lives, livelihoods, and overall wellbeing that could be attributed to the project. In addition, it allowed for the capture of any unintended outcomes or impacts that may have occurred as a consequence of the project.

e. Case studies: By documenting certain case studies recommended by the IPs, the consultant was able to generate additional material for use in assessing the project's impact on the beneficiaries. These case studies focused on benefits for the beneficiaries and the notable transformations observed in their lives.

Quantitative data collection

During the desk review process, the TE consultant collected quantitative information and organized it into tables to facilitate validation during KIIs. Quantitative tools were utilized to measure the project's progress towards targets, drawing on the M&E records and database of the project, both of which was made accessible to the TE consultant. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the TE consultant employed triangulation techniques, comparing and cross-referencing information from multiple sources. This approach helped to strengthen the credibility of the findings and the validity of the conclusions.

TE in-country mission

The TE conducted a 16-day in-country mission from July 15 to 30, 2023, with a focus on visiting Majuro, the capital city of the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), to engage with stakeholders at various levels. Throughout this mission, the TE consultant interacted with key informants, including relevant project stakeholders and government officials at both the national and the local levels. The in-country mission proved to be invaluable as it provided the TE consultant with important insights into the stakeholders' overall impressions, the challenges they had encountered, and the measures implemented to address those challenges..

Data analysis

The TE consultant adopted a mixed approach to data analysis, one which examined both quantitative and qualitative data and then cross-referenced the findings from each type. For the qualitative analysis, the TE consultant employed a thematic approach as well as a content analysis tool.[22] Using similarities, the consultant grouped and categorized response to identify the key issues and concerns identified by most respondents. He also analyzed quantitative data using simple Excel tools as needed. To assess the project's achievements, he rated the different components using the available guidelines.

Date triangulation

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the data, the TE consultant triangulated the findings by comparing and cross-checking primary information with secondary data. This approach enhanced the validity of the TE findings, making them evidence-based and therefore valuable. In those instances where the findings appeared to be unusually exceptional, elements of "outcome harvesting" were employed. This involved engaging in specific follow-up with relevant key informants and other sources to further investigate and validate the findings. The TE matrix, provides a comprehensive breakdown of the TE criteria. It includes evaluative questions, indicators, sources of information, and the methodology employed for each criterion.

Annex-5.1: Completed List for all Agencies/Representative met during the Evaluation

Sn	Name	Agency/ Organization	Role	Contact Info	Gender
1	Dolores Debrum	MICS	Director	director@atollconservation.org	F
2	Dua Rudolph	MICS	Deputy Director	dua@atollconservation.org	M
3	Babbitt Keju	IOM	Project Assistant	457-3651	M
4	Laura Freeman	IOM	Program Officer	lfreeman@iom.int	F
5	Baron Jordan	IOM	Senior Program Officer	bjordan@iom.int	M
6	Angela Saunders	IOM	Head of Sub-Office	457-7604 aksaunders@iom.int	F
7	Loredel Areieta	JOjukum	Program Manager	457-5881 delosereyes.Areieta@gmail.com	F
8	Konea Ishimura	Jojukum	Program Manager	456-2443 konea@gmail.com	M
9	Moriana Philip	EPA	Director	morianaphillip.rmiepa@gmail.com	F
10	William Raer	CMI	Contact Marissa for clarification	455-6903	M
11	Clarence Samuel	CCD	Director	clarencesam@gmail.com	M
12	Warwick Harris	CCD	Deputy Director	warwick47@gmail.com	M

[22] A technique usually used to analyse qualitative data.

13	Jikit Rufus	MONRC	Chief of Forestry	lrufus@hawaii.edu	M
14	Imeo Hicking	MONRC	Forestry Coordinator	hickingm1@gmail.com	F
15	Canson Sam	UNDP R2R	Mejit Site Coordinator	457-1212 canson.sam@undp.org	M
16	Damien Debrum	UNDP R2R	Likiep Site Coordinator	damien.debrum@undp.org	M
17	Gampy Kattil	UNDP R2R	Wotho Site Coordinator	455-7211 gampy.kattil@undp.org	M
18	Kudo Kabua	Wotho Atoll Local Government	Mayor	455-5836 kudokabua@gmail.com	M
19	Fred Bukida	Aur Local Government	Mayor	fbukida@gmail.com	M
20	Benedict Yamamura	MIMRA	Chief of Coastal Fisheries	byamamura@mimra.com	M
21	Hannah Lafita	PSS	Consultant	hlafita@pss.edu.mh	F
22	Jennifer Debrum	PIU Staff	RMI R2R Project Coordinator	455-4229 jennifer.debrum@undp.org	F
23	Amelia Raratabu	PIU Staff	RSD Programme Associate	amelia.raratabu@undp.org	F
24	Marissa Note	PIU Staff	RMI R2R Finance and Admin Assistant	marissa.note@undp.org	F
25	Kevin Petrini	UNDP	Deputy Resident Representative	kevin.petrini@undp.org	M
26	Rusiate Ratuniata	UNDP	Program Analyst	rusiate.ratuniata@undp.org	M
27	Martin Romain	UNDP	CTA	martin.romain@undp.org	M
28	Floyd Robinson	SPC	Program Specialist	floydr@spc.int	M

Annex-5.2: Evaluation questions

Evaluative Criteria Questions
1. Relevance: *How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF Focal area, and to the environment and development priorities at the local, regional and national level?*
1.1 Does the R2R project's objective align with the priorities of the government of RMI and local communities?
1.2 Does the R2R project's objective fit within the national environment and development priorities of RMI?
1.3 Did the R2R project concept originate from local or national stakeholders, and/or were relevant stakeholders sufficiently involved in project development?
1.4 Does the R2R project objective fit GEF strategic priorities? *(GEF strategic priority documents for period when project was approved would simply be GEF 5 strategic priority)*
1.5 Was the R2R project linked with and in line with UNDP priorities and strategies for the country?
1.6 Does the R2R project's objective support implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other relevant policy provisions?
2. Effectiveness: *To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?*
2.1 Are the R2R project objectives likely to be met? To what extent are they likely to be met?
2.2 What are the key factors contributing to R2R project success (achievement) or underachievement?
2.3 What are the key risks and barriers that remain to achieve the R2R project objective and generate global environmental benefits?
2.4 Are the key assumptions and impact drivers relevant to the achievement of Global Environmental benefits likely to be met?
3. Efficiency: *Was the project implemented efficiently, in line with international and national norms and standards?*
3.1 Is the R2R project cost-effective?
3.2 Are expenditures in line with international standards and norms?
3.3 Is the R2R project implementation approach efficient for delivering the planned project results?
3.4 Is the R2R project implementation delayed? If so, has that affected cost-effectiveness?
3.5 What is the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to R2R project implementation?
3.6 To what extent is the R2R project leveraging additional resources?
4. Sustainability: *To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-political, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?*
4.1 To what extent are R2R project results likely to be dependent on continued financial support? What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project results once the GEF assistance ends?
4.2 Do relevant stakeholders have or are likely to achieve an adequate level of "ownership" of results, to have the interest in ensuring that project benefits are maintained?
4.3 Do relevant stakeholders have the necessary technical capacity to ensure that project benefits are maintained?
4.4 To what extent are the R2R project results dependent on socio-political factors?
4.5 To what extent are the R2R project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance?
4.6 Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of R2R project impacts and Global Environmental benefits?
5. Gender equality and women's empowerment: *How did the project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment?*

5.1 How did the R2R project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment? 5.2 In what ways did the R2R project's gender results advance or contribute to the project's biodiversity outcomes?
6. Impact: *Are there indications that the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward reduced environmental stress and/or improved ecological status?*
6.1 Have the planned outputs been produced? Have they contributed to the R2R project outcomes and objectives?
6.2 Are the anticipated outcomes likely to be achieved? Are the outcomes likely to contribute to the achievement of the R2R project objective? 6.3 Are impact level results likely to be achieved? Are the likely to be at the scale sufficient to be considered Global Environmental benefits?
7. Cross-cutting and UNDP mainstreaming issues
7.1 How were effects on local populations considered in R2R project design and implementation?
Partnership: • How the partnerships affected in the R2R project achievement, and how might this be built upon in the future? • Have the ways of working with the partner and the support to the partner been effective and did they contribute to the R2R project's achievements? • How does partnership with local government work? Does it create synergies or difficulties? What type of partnership building mechanism is necessary for future partnership?
Gender equality and Social Inclusion • To what extent have issues of gender and marginalized groups been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the R2R project? • To what extent the R2R project approach was effective in promoting gender equality and social inclusion - particularly focusing on the marginalized and the poor through livelihood interventions? • To what extent has the R2R project promoted positive changes of women, differently abled people and marginalized group? Were there any unintended effects?
Human rights • To what extent have ethnic minorities, physically challenged, women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefitted from the work of the R2R project and with what impact? • To what extent have R2R project integrated "human rights based approach" in the design, implementation and monitoring of the R2R project? Have the resources been used in an efficient way to address human rights in the implementation (e.g. participation of targeted stakeholders, collection of disaggregated data, etc.)?

Annex-6: Ethics

As called for in the ToR, the conduction of the TE was an independent, impartial, and rigorous process which upheld standards of personal and professional integrity and adhered to the principles outlined in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations and the UNDP GEF M&E policies, specifically the "Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF financed Projects (August, 2020)." The TE consultant was committed to safeguarding the rights and confidentiality of information providers and ensuring the security of the collected information both during and after the evaluation. Protocols were implemented to guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of the sources of information. Furthermore, it was agreed that the information, knowledge, and data generated during the evaluation process would be used solely for the evaluation and not for any other purposes unless with prior consent and authorization from UNDP, GEF, and IPs.

The TE consultant upheld the highest ethical standards and formally signed the UNEG Code of Conduct form. In addition, the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees, and stakeholders were prioritized and compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing data collection and reporting was ensured. Consent was sought for the use of direct quotations from individual key informants in the report in order to comply with ethical standards and protect the rights and confidentiality of all those involved. Throughout the TE process, the TE consultant adhered to fundamental principles such as objectivity, participation, collaboration, transparency, reliability, and privacy and eschewed bias and preconceived notions.

Annex-7: Limitations to the evaluation

The TE consultant faced various constraints when gathering data and information, including (i) his inability to access the outer islands to collect data, (ii) the unavailability of focus group discussions (FGDs) and participatory observation tools for use in empirical data collection, (iii) the challenge of recruiting national consultants for support to TE consultant, (iv) the fact that a UNDP gender assessment was being conducted currently, (v) difficulty in obtaining organized data because the management information system (MIS) lacked robustness, and (vi) the limited ability of IPs and stakeholders to provide quality time for interviews.

Initially, the TE consultant faced considerable logistical and operational challenges, which prevented him from physically visiting the outer islands, where the project sites were located. These challenges included the irregular availability of common ship services, which operated only every three months, and airplane services, which operated only weekly. Furthermore, the project islands had limited plane and ship services, and in the event of that an airplane would have mechanical issues (which happened frequently), there could be prolonged delays of several weeks, making these areas highly inaccessible. To bridge the data gaps resulting from his inability to visit the outer islands, the TE consultant heavily relied on alternative methods of data collection. These included conducting KIIs, holding meetings and consultations with IPs, project stakeholders, and government agencies to extract as much empirical data as possible. The TE consultant also diligently reviewed all the reports available from the UNDP CO Fiji and the PIU in Majuro. In addition, to establish and maintain communication and collaboration, the TE consultant utilized digital communication tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams, thereby facilitating meetings with UNDP officials based in Pohnpei, Federal State of Micronesia and Suva Fiji.

Second, these same constraints prevented the TE consultant from employing FGDs as a means to evaluate the project's progress and significant changes. These FGDs would have involved project beneficiaries, including individuals or groups who had directly benefited from the project's services or initiatives. Without FGDs, the consultant missed the opportunity to collect valuable insights from men and women beneficiaries and stakeholders. Moreover, without non-participant observation, the consultant lost another opportunity to assess the tangible and visible outcomes generated by the project and to closely exam the project's effects and outcomes without directly engaging with local beneficiaries. To address these data collection limitations, the TE consultant arranged a series of mini-workshops with UNDP Site Coordinators and engaged in detailed discussions with local government officials and Mayors. Through these interactions, the TE consultant gathered data and information to the best of his ability, attempting to fill the gaps attributable to the lack of FGDs and non-participant observation.

Third, UNDP encountered difficulties in hiring a national consultant from RMI because all qualified personnel from RMI were already actively involved in project implementation. As a result, they were unable to serve as independent evaluators. To overcome this obstacle, the TE consultant took on additional responsibility: he managed the entire process of data collection, tabulation, synthesis, and analysis and conducted a series of interviews. During the data collection process, the TE consultant faced language barriers with some of the Site Coordinators. The language gap meant that he was unable to fully grasp the organic opinions of the coordinators regarding the visible and invisible changes brought about by the project in people's lives, livelihoods, and overall wellbeing. These challenges were effectively addressed by making the best use of the time and resources available. The consultant focused on collecting the most relevant and best quality data possible during the data collection phase, ensuring that the evaluation process remained comprehensive and informative despite its limitations.

Fourth, some PIU staff were mandatorily involved in the UNDP Gender Assessment, a global gender exercise, and therefore were less available to and capable of providing data and evidence. This situation particularly affected interviews with project stakeholders, PIU staff, IPs, and PSC/PB members. Despite this constraint, PIU staff made a concentrated effort to address the resultant gaps in data availability. They dedicated time and effort toward minimizing the impact on the TE consultant's data collection process, striving to provide as much information and support as possible.

Fifth, the inadequacy of the project's MIS data made it difficult for the consultant to make systematic use of secondary data. This limitation also impeded the consultant’s ability to access and verify certain data and their respective sources. To address these gaps, the TE consultant employed a multi-source approach to gather information. The data collected from various sources were then carefully cross-checked with the Project Document and other relevant reports, particularly PIRs. Despite the challenges posed by the poor MIS data, the TE consultant made every possible effort to comprehend and present an accurate and impartial assessment of the data and information available. By diligently corroborating and cross-referencing the information from different sources, the TE consultant aimed to produce a fair and genuine evaluation.

Sixth, the TE data collection phase lasted from July 15, 2023, to 30 July, 2023, a period in which the majority of IPs were occupied with meeting targets and preparing reports. The PIU also had a heavy workload, managing various programmatic, procurement, and logistics tasks simultaneously. As a result of how busy they were, some scheduled interviews had to be rescheduled multiple times. Despite these challenges, the TE consultant remained flexible and accommodated the preferred timeframes of IPs and PIU staff to conduct interviews and consultations, ensuring data collection could take place.

Overall, the TE consultant encountered quite a few challenges during the data collection process, but effective contingency plans were put in place to mitigate any adverse impact on the quality of the evaluation findings. Through careful planning and adaptability, the evaluation process was designed to yield reliable and insightful results irrespective of the multiple challenges faced.

Annex-8: Structure of the TE report

As called for in the Guidance for conducting terminal evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects (2020) and the provided outline in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the TE report is structured into five key chapters and annexes. The initial chapter presents an overview of the report in the form of an executive summary. The second chapter introduces the evaluation, while the third chapter provides a comprehensive description of the project. Next, the fourth chapter presents the findings of the evaluation in three sections: design/formulation, implementation, and results. Within this chapter, the TE consultant rates various aspects of the project using the standard rating systems provided by the guidelines, thereby offering a thorough assessment. The fifth and last chapter summarizes the main findings, conclusions, recommendations, and lessons derived from the evaluation process. The annexes accompanying the main body of the evaluation report include the ToR as well as additional information that substantiates the data, information, evidence, and examples presented in the report.

Annex-9: Development context

During the project's design phase, particular attention was given to incorporating RMI's overall development context and including environmental, socio-economic, institutional, and policy factors. Moreover, national priorities and UNDP global obligations, specifically the UNDAF Outcome were also taken into account while crafting the project's objectives and scopes.

a. Environmental context

Because there were very few comprehensive scientific studies on RMI's natural environment, it was challenging to effectively plan and prioritize biodiversity conservation efforts. The limited availability of scientific data also hindered prompt decision-making and subsequent action. Despite the fact that the Reimaanlok model of integrated resource planning, management, and development has been around since 2008, relevant sectors of the national government and stakeholders had limited understanding of how to align it with national and international SDGs, particularly for the outer islands of RMI. Consequently, the local governments of the outer islands found it difficult to develop conservation and sustainable development plans using the Reimaanlok process. Not recognizing the potential of the model for cross-sectoral collaboration, they viewed it primarily through an environmental sector lens and thus limited its application.

The project builds upon several national and regional initiatives that serve as the foundation for its implementation. To illustrate, the Micronesia Challenge (MC) introduced in 2006 represented a collective commitment among five Northern Pacific island countries, namely the Federated States of Micronesia, the RMI, the Republic of Palau, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, to conserve at least 30% of nearshore marine resources and 20% of terrestrial resources across Micronesia by 2020. This ambitious goal surpassed the goal set by international conventions and treaties. According to the State of Environment Report (2016), most of the protected areas (PAs) lacked proper management plans. The National (RMI) Outcome 1.1[23] Regional UNDAF Outcome 1[24], and Sub-Regional UNDAF Outcome 4[25] all highlight certain environmental issues. The Reimaanlok approach emphasized the adoption of area-based planning principles and the development of management plans aligned with marine spatial planning approaches. These management plans offered a practical framework to local communities, one which took into account environmental, social, cultural, and economic factors specific to the unique bio-geographic context of the outer islands.

b. Socio-economic context

The lack of an integrated approach that incorporates socio-economic considerations such as food and water security and livelihoods alongside the protection of ecosystem goods and services has undermined both formal and participatory biodiversity conservation efforts. Past initiatives introduced by various agencies were scattered

[23] National (RMI) Outcome 1.1 calls for "a functional regulatory system with a high degree of compliance at all levels to achieve sustainable development of natural resources and protection of the environment through strengthened gender inclusive CCA and DRR."
[24] Regional UNDAF Outcome 1 says "by 2017, the most vulnerable communities across the PICTs are more resilient and select government agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and communities have enhanced capacity to apply integrated approaches to environmental management, CCA/mitigation, and DRM."
[25] Sub-Regional Programme Outcome 4 (UNDAF Outcome 1.1) spells out "improved resilience of PICTs, with a particular focus on communities, through the integrated implementation of sustainable environmental management, CCA and/or mitigation and DRM."

and, as a result, failed to yield substantial results. The lack of gender-disaggregated indicators has hindered the assessment of impacts, particularly those concerning socio-economic benefits and improvements in the livelihoods of disadvantaged segments of society. Despite RMI's being a matrilineal society where the status and position of women is culturally considerable, women often face socio-economic setbacks due to prevailing stereotypes. These stereotypes include the belief that women should be confined to domestic roles while men are expected to occupy public spaces and be the primary breadwinners (RMI National Gender Policy: para 2, 2015). In recognition of the gaps in the socio-economic context, RMI Outcome 3.1 aims to enhance self-reliance and promote resourceful livelihoods for poverty reduction while increasing food and water security for inclusive socio-economic development.

c. Institutional context

To enhance the implementation of Reimaanlok and capitalize on existing institutional arrangements, there was a critical requirement to clarify and share responsibilities among different national agencies. This clarity was equally needed at the local level to foster efficiency and community ownership. Strengthening institutional and individual capacities at both the central government and the community levels was necessary to ensure greater visibility and to promote the effectiveness of managing the Reimaanlok process. RMI is well-positioned to fulfill its national and regional conservation commitments, including the targets of the Micronesia Challenge, by bolstering individual and institutional capacities, raising public awareness, and showcasing community-driven integrated natural resource management approaches. Both RMI Outcome 1[26] and UNDP Strategic Plan Output 2.5[27] underscored the significance of addressing the institutional context through the operationalization of the Reimaanlok process.

d. Policy context

The translation of the Reimaanlok vision into implementation on the ground faced challenges because robust legislative frameworks and institutional arrangements for managing the Protected Area Network (PAN) were lacking and because supportive policies, institutions, and community engagement were inadequate. To effectively manage the PAN, it was essential to strengthen enabling conditions, a task involving bolstering institutional capacities and regulatory frameworks, supporting natural resource surveys, promoting partnerships between the private sector and local communities, and expanding academic training in natural resource management. Other changes required included providing support for the operationalization of the PAN Office, conducting a legislative gap analysis, and preparing an action plan for the development of legal "supporting arms," such as legislation, regulations, rules, and ordinances related to the PAN Act. Furthermore, the project's foundation was built upon RMI's outcomes 1.1[28], 3.1[29], and 5.1 and aligned with regional UNDAF Outcome 1[30].

Annex-10: Challenges, barrier and opportunities

Challenges: RMI faces numerous challenges, including the erosion of its traditional knowledge system, the overharvesting of sea-based resources, and the impacts of climate change. Traditional conservation and management practices tied to land ownership and extended family lineages are gradually declining. Moreover, a considerable number of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) holders and practitioners have migrated to more developed atolls or even outside the country.[31] This exodus has been driven by the escalating pressure on commercial fishing and overexploitation of reef and lagoon resources, particularly reef fish, sharks, turtles, groupers, and sea cucumbers, for both local consumption and export markets. Adding to these challenges are climate change-related events such as sea-level rise, increasing ocean temperatures, and ocean acidification, all of which are eroding the resilience of Pacific Ocean atoll ecosystems.

Barriers: The project set out to tackle and overcome five barriers that were identified during the project's development phase: (i) limited information on the ecosystem health of the outer islands, (ii) insufficient human

[26] RMI Outcome 5.1 sets a goal of creating a society based on good governance whose people and institutions uphold traditional, national and international laws and conventions.
[27] UNDP Strategic Plan Output 2.5 spells out legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions that ensure the conservation, sustainable use, access to, and benefit-sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, in line with international conventions and national legislation.
[28] Outcome 1.1 discusses the creation of a functional regulatory system with a high degree of compliance at all levels to achieve the sustainable development of natural resources and protection of the environment through strengthened gender-inclusive climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR).
[29] Outcome 3.1 says to enhance self-reliance and resourceful livelihoods to reduce poverty and increase food and water security for inclusive socio-economic development.
[30] By 2017, the most vulnerable communities across the PICTs will be more resilient and select government agencies, civil society organizations and communities will have enhanced capacity to apply integrated approaches to environmental management, CCA/mitigation, and DRR
[31] U.S. Census 2010 and RMI Census 2011

resources for managing the PAN and biodiversity conservation at the community level, (iii) a weak legislative framework and feeble institutional arrangements for PA network management, (iv) inadequate human resource capacity for sustaining effective PAN management, and (v) the decline of traditional conservation and management practices coupled with limited awareness and knowledge of and access to available information. All five barriers were thoroughly identified, analyzed, and successfully addressed during the project's formulation and subsequent implementation. While the relevance of these threats and barriers still exists to some extent, they may be manifested differently at present. Despite notable progress in biodiversity conservation in RMI, including policy reforms and on-the-ground activities, some barriers still persist and continue to impede the achievement of effective and financially sustainable management of terrestrial and nearshore marine ecosystems.

Opportunities: The project design recognizes significant opportunities to capitalize on, particularly the empowerment of local resource committees (LRCs) and local governments. These local authorities possess a profound understanding of the natural resource management and communities in their jurisdictions, making them invaluable partners in ensuring the sustainability of project activities even after the project comes to an end. Two crucial strategic elements in the project design were capacity-building and establishing functional platforms at the local government level. This step enabled effective collaboration with stakeholders at the national level, thereby fostering a strong and enduring foundation for the project's success.

Annex-11: Project's 12 outputs

- **Output 1.1:** Marine and terrestrial biodiversity and socioeconomic surveys conducted or updated in 5 outer islands to assess status and threats and serve as a guide in the delineation of conservation areas and spatial planning.
- **Output 1.2:** Conservation areas delineated and declared in 5 outer islands following Reimaanlok guidelines: Type I (subsistence non-commercial use) and Type II (high level of protection) areas; coarse-scale, fine-scale and species conservation targets; land-sea interactions
- **Output 1.3:** Integrated management plans developed or updated and implemented in 5 outer islands following the Reimaanlok process and balancing livelihood considerations
- **Output 1.4:** Sustainable financing mechanisms from internal and external sources put in place to further build up the RMI sub-account in the Micronesia Challenge Trust to meet the costs of implementing the National Conservation Area Plan
- **Output 2.1:** An action plan for developing secondary legislation to the Protected Area Network (PAN) Act 2015 formulated
- **Output 2.2:** The PAN Office is operationalized through agreed organizational arrangements formally adopted through an appropriate policy instrument
- **Output 2.3:** Strengthened community-based management structures recognizing traditional ownership of resources (land, coastal, etc.) and local national arrangements to enable communities to take ownership and leadership in the formulation and subsequent implementation of integrated resource management plans
- **Output 2.4:** Capacity building on integrated approaches for conservation and livelihoods benefitting key national government agencies, community leaders and residents in all 24 outer islands in the entire country
- **Output 3.1:** GIS-based management information system (MIS) developed under the Reimaanlok project improved as an accessible repository for all spatial biodiversity and resource management information to aid in policy formulation, enforcement, monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management.
- **Output 3.2:** Local and traditional knowledge documented and compiled in the MIS for easy access and preserved for inputs in the development of integrated management plans
- **Output 3.3:** Support for expansion/continuation of education and awareness programs at the local and national levels, e.g., the 'Just Act Natural' initiative; complementary awareness programs implemented using various forms of media to mobilize support for conservation and livelihoods
- **Output 3.4:** Coordination established with the Pacific R2R program – regional program support project and other national R2R projects – in terms of monitoring and evaluation and south-south collaboration

Annex-12: List of project stakeholders

National government

1. Department of Climate Change (former OEPPC)
2. Marshall Islands Marine Resource Authority (MIMRA)
3. Historic Preservation Office (HPO)
4. Department of Lands and Survey (L&S)
5. Public School System (PSS)
6. Ministry of Natural Resource and Commerce (MNRC)

Local government
1. Mayors: five target sites

Partner organizations/NGOs
1. International Organization for Migration (IOM)
2. Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS)
3. JoJikum

Academic Institution
1. College of the Marshall Islands (CMI)
2. University of the South Pacific

CMAC members:
1. RMI Environmental Protection Agency (RMIEPA)
2. Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs (MoCIA)
3. Marshall Islands Visitors Authority (MIVA)
4. Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS)
5. University of the South Pacific (USP)
6. Office of Environmental Policy & Planning Coordination (OEPPC)
7. Women United Together in the Marshall Islands (WUTMI)
8. Ministry of Natural Resources & Commerce (MoNRC)
9. The ProDoc clearly stated the need to involve key stakeholders in project implementation.

Main Government Agencies including:
1. Ministry of Internal Affairs
2. Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority, MIMRA
3. Environmental Protection Authority, EPA
4. Ministry of Resources and Development (R&D), Division of Agriculture
5. Ministry of Resources and Development (R&D)
6. Office of the Chief Secretary (OCS)
7. Office of the President
8. Ministry of Resources and Development, Division of Trade and Investment.
9. College of the Marshall Islands, CMI
10. Historic Preservation Office, HPO
11. The Council of Iroij
12. Marshall Islands Visitors Authority, MIVA
13. Ministry of Finance
14. Ministry of Education
15. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
16. National Training Council, NTC
17. Marshall Islands Mayors Association (MIMA)
18. GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) in RMI

Annex-13: Adjustments were made to Outcome 3 and Output 3.3

Original outputs/outcomes	Modified Outputs/outcomes
Outcome 3: Accessible data and information systems and improved linkages and collaboration with regional initiatives to support adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI.	**Outcome 3:** Improved collaboration and decision through the readily accessible and functional database and information system including the Pacific R2R Program, to support adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI
Output 3.3: Support for expansion/continuation of education and awareness programs at the local and national levels, e.g., the 'Just Act Natural' initiative; complementary awareness programs implemented using various forms of media to mobilize support for conservation and livelihoods.	**Output 3.3:** Expansion/continuation of education and awareness programs at the local and national levels supported, e.g., the 'Just Act Natural' initiative; complementary awareness programs implemented using various forms of media to mobilize support for conservation and livelihoods.

Source: Derived from MTR

Annex-14: Additional data tables

Table 1: Status of total project's activities by atoll

Atoll	# of planned activities	# of completed activities	# of ongoing activities	# of activities just initiated	# of activities not started yet	Total activities

Source: Project's record, consultation with IPs

Aur	1. Handicraft initiative with IOM 2. Fish smoking initiative w/ PIU 3. Raceway tanks for clam farming with IOM 4. Field surveys w/ IOM, MICS & MoNRC 5. Aur Management Plan	2/5	3/5	3/5	0/5	5 40% completed and on track
Ebon	1. Virgin Coconut Oil facility with IOM 2. Canoe building activity with PIU 3. Field surveys 4. Ebon Management Plan	¾	¼	¼	0/4	4 75% completed and on track
Likiep	1. field surveys completed 2. NRMP completed and updated 3. Race way tanks for clam farming 4. delineation activities 5. Green house 6. Solar water pumps to be installed on 5 raceway tanks	Completed Completed Completed Completed 50% completed To be initiated	4.5/6	1.5/6	0/6	75% completed and on track
Mejit	1. Field surveys 2. Mejit NRMP 3. Agricultural Food Security Intervention 4. Greenhouse nursery and agricultural tools for farming Taro patches rehabilitation 5. Breadfruit preservation facility	1 completed 2 completed 3 completed 4 initiated 5 initiated	3/5	3/5	0/5	60 % completed
Wotho	1. Field surveys 2. Wotho NRMP 3. Clam farms raceway tanks and solar water tanks 4. Handicraft (IOM, MICS) 5. Greenhouse	Completed Completed To be initiated Initiated To be initiated	2/5	3/5	0/5	40% completed

Table 2: Earlier footprint of UNDP and other projects (in the project's five atolls)

Sn	Name of earlier program/projects*	Project tenure	Thematic area	Donors	Project's partners	Synergies
1	Micronesia Challenge and the Regional Pacific Invasive Species project		Biodiversity	GEF	SPREP CCD MoNRC	Bio-diversity and natural resource management
2	UNEP-GEF project	NBSAP development	5 years	GEF	CCD	Bio-diversity conservation
3	Pacific Regional R2R program	5 years	International Waters	GE	UNDP SPC RMI-EPA	Natural resource management
4	National R2R project	5 years	Bio-diversity & international waters	GEF	UNDP CCD	
5	Pacific Islands Regional Ocean-scape Project (PROP)	5 years	Bio-diversity	World Bank	MIMRA	Oceans and marine
6	ACWA	7 years	Water Security	GCF	UNDP RMI-EPA	Water conservation and management
7	Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change	5 years	Infrastructure resilience in the water sector	GEF	OEPPC; now CCD	Climate resilient infrastructure

Source: Project's record, consultation with IPs

Table 3: Planned vs actual dates of key human resource management

Staff position	Planned recruitment (MM/YY)	Actual recruitment (MM/YY)	Reasons for this variation	Its impacts in overall project's performance
CTA	2017	2020	Recruitment process/ longer evaluations/	Moderate, but recruited Deputy Project Manager
RTA	2017	2017	NA	NA
National Project Director	2017	2018	NA	New RTA from 2023
Project Coordinator	2017	2018	Had to advertised 4 times	Moderate
PAN Coordinator/ Biodiversity Specialist	2017	2021	MIMRA hired PAN Coordinator, through own funding. Project supported salary for PAN Administration Assistant.	Significant
Finance and Admin Officer	2017	2020	Recruitment process took longer than anticipated	Moderate
Site coordinators in 5 Atolls	2017	Ebon and Wotho: 2020Likiep/Mejit/Aur: 2021	Recruitment process took longer than anticipated	Significant

Source: Project's record, consultation with IPs

Table 4: Co-financing status by June, 2023

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Co-financing amount confirmed at CEO Endorsement / Approval	Investment mobilized	Materialized co-financing as of Jun 30, 2023
A. Recipient Government					
Recipient Government	Office of Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination (OEPPC)	In Kind	500000	Investment mobilized	0
Recipient Government	Office of Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination (OEPPC)	Grants	500000	*NA*	0
Recipient Government	Ministry of Internal Affairs	In Kind	2452768	Investment mobilized	0
Recipient Government	College of the Marshall Islands	In Kind	*NA*	Investment mobilized	100000
Recipient Government	Division of Lands and Survey	In Kind	*NA*	Recurrent expenditures	0

Recipient Government	Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce	In Kind	*NA*	Investment mobilized	70000
B. CSO					
CSO	Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS)	In Kind	100000	Investment mobilized	92016.11
CSO	Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI)	In Kind	378000	Investment mobilized	0
C. GEF Agency (UNDP)					
GEF Agency	UNDP	In Kind	126371	Recurrent expenditures	0
D. Donor Agency					
Donor Agency	Pacific Islands Climate and Adaptation Center	Grants	*NA*	Investment mobilized	0
Donor Agency	The Nature Conservancy	In Kind	*NA*	Investment mobilized	0
Donor Agency	Small Grants Program	Grants	*NA*	Investment mobilized	50000
Donor Agency	Government of New Zealand	Grants	*NA*	Investment mobilized	50000
Total			**4,057,139**		**362016.10**

Source: PIR, 2023

Table 5: Modification of project's activities

Original plan/activity	Revised/modified plan/activity	When modified (mm/yy)	Reasons for modification	Any value addition of this modification
Set up of the PAN Office	Renovation of GEF/PIU Team office	2020	PAN office secured budget, PAN staff housed under MIMRA	R2R paying for PAN Administration Assistant.
Support development of PAN legislation	Food Security	2020	PAN Legislation already exist as it was passed in 2015	Yes. Rapid Food Security Interventions in 5 atoll community in terms of traditional food crops and supplies to offset shortages in imported food in future disaster events.

Source: Project's record, consultation with IPs

Table 6: Number of events organized for assuring transparency and accountability mechanism

Means	Frequency/ Year	Process	Evidence
Steering Committee Meeting	Twice per year	Presentation by both PIU and Implementing partners – QA session open by Chair	Board meeting paper are disseminated 2-5 days prior to Meeting. Discussion with Board Chair , prior to meeting
Inception Workshop	Once	Partners are taken through Project activity and allocated budget. Discussion on how IP will be engaged in through the project	Regular meetings with IP for updates & issues
AUDIT	2019	RMI R2R – Picked during office audit in 2019	
HACT for MICS and CMI	2021	Meeting with IP, auditor, and UNDP UNDP provided Management response to the findings	Regular check in with IP , to comply with response provided in the report
SPOT Check for MICS & CMI	2023	Meeting with IP, auditor, and UNDP UNDP provided Management response to the findings	Regular check in with IP , to comply with response provided in the report

Source: Project's record, consultation with IPs

Table 7: List of PEB meetings

Year (duration)	Number of meetings	Date (YY/MM/DD)
2019 (30 June 2018 to 1 July 2019)	1	2019-03-27

2020 (30 June 2019 to 1 July 2020)	1	2019-10-30
2021 (30 June 2020 to 1 July 2021)	3	2020-08-11
		2020-09-15
		2021-06-09
2022 (30 June 2021 to 1 July 2022)	4	2021-10-22
		2021-11-19
		2022-06-14
		2022-08-17
2023 (30 June 2022 to 1 July 2023)	3	2022-06-14
		2022-10-23
		2023-05-24

Source: Project's record

Table 8: Monitoring visits from different agencies

Agencies	When (MM/YY)	Where (Majuro/atoll level)	What they monitored (activities)?	Key outcomes/major modifications as a result of such visits
UNDP MCO	2019 2021	Majuro	UNDP representative at Project Board Meeting	Mostly Approval if Annual Work Plan, including deviation of activities, and reallocation of funds
UNDP North Pacific Office	2022	Majuro	All UNDP projects in the Marshall Islands Board Meetings	Understanding of project operational challenges in country High level dialogue with key members of Cabinet, I.e., Minister of Environment for long term engagement of UNDP in the RMI, Annual Meetings to review and monitor UNDP Pacific Strategy

Source: Project's record, consultation with IPs

Table 9: Project's partners' anticipated and modified roles

Sn	Project's partner	Anticipated roles (ProDoc)	Actual role	Reasons for this modification in role and their implications
1	The Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS)	Member of the Project Board in relation to site management project activities; implementing partner on Just Act Natural project activities, share data from management plans	Member of the PB and Implementing partner to execute field surveys, development of management plans and collaborate with MIMRA on Marine surveys	MICS played both roles
2	MIMRA	Focal agency for PAN legislation, share data from marine surveys, management plans	Same	na
3	The College of Marshall Islands (CMI)	Member of the Project Board and implementing partner in relation to Agroforestry Certificate and National Spatial Analytic Facility project activities with MICS, JoJiKuM, and Land Grant Program	Implementing partner	Change in administration Capacity to build local capacity on certain technical skills, such as agro-forestry Housed the NSAF
4	International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Member of CMAC Practitioner of the REIMAANLOK	Implementing partner	Capacity to engage in R2R activities
5	MoNRC	Member of the Project Board in relation to agroforestry related project activities; share data from terrestrial surveys	Implementing partner	Capacity to engage in R2R activities as national experts on agro-forestry

6	Historical Preservation Office	Member of the Project Board in relation to culturally related project activities, working in coordination with Alele Museum	Support and expert advice to PIU	Newly establish staff Re-structuring of HPO Existing national priorities and limited capacity to fully engage with R2R
7	RMI-EPA	Member of the Project Board in relation to water and sanitation related project activities; Executing Authority for UNDP-Regional R2R program/project	Implementing partners Support and expert advice to R2R	NA
8	GEF Small Grants Program	Coordination of GEF SGP projects in support of implementing management plans	Also co-funding of some R2R activities, I.e., Ebon Virgin Coconut oil facility	na
9	JoJiKum	Implementing partner in relation to Just Act Natural project activities, working in coordination with Youth to Youth in Health		na
10	UNDP-Regional R2R Program/Project	Coordinating and implementing partner in relation to UNDP-Regional R2R program activities in country	same	na

Source: Project's record, consultation with IPs

Table 10: Project key milestones vs. actual dates (2015-2023)

Sn	Important events	Planned date	Actual dates	Reason for this variation and its impacts on overall performance
1	PIF approval		Oct 21, 2015	Reasons for delays in the start dates goes for all
2	CEO endorsement		Sep 27, 2017	Change in administration with GEF OFP which caused some delays
3	LPAC meeting- project endorsement		February 2017	Change from NIM to DIM to support the new GEF OFP in the initiation of project
4	ProDoc sign (project start date)	November 2017	Feb 1, 2018	Difficulty in recruitment of R2R PIU staff
5	Inception workshop		Mar 9, 2018	No Project Management, yet, in process of hiring. Inception was facilitated by DPM
6	First disbursement		Apr 18, 2018	
7	Mid-term review	1 August 2020	Feb 1, 2021	Project started in 2018 and not 2017
8	Terminal evaluation	Jan 19, 2023	August 25, 2023	
9	Closing	Feb 1, 2023	November 1, 2023	NCE approved to ensure activities are completed.

Source: Project's record

Table 11: Letter of agreement (LoA) with partners

Sn	Agencies	Planned date of LOA	Actual date of LOA	Variation	Reason for variation	Impacts on project's overall performance
1	International Organization for Migration,	2019	2019	none	COVID-19 outbreaks Local epidemics	Delays in implementation and delivery
2	Public School Systems	2022	2022	None	na	Curriculum workshop facilitated by the consultant Teachers guide and framework approved. Pending is the evaluation.
3	College of the Marshall Islands	2019	2019	None	Logistics Staff capacity	Delays and low delivery

						Thorough discussion needed to be made before agreement.
4	Marshall Islands Conservation Society	2019	2019	none	Same as #1	Delays
5	Jo-Jikum (Youth NGO)				Logistics and staff capacity	delays
6	Pacific Community SPC,				COVID-19 outbreaks Local epidemics	delays
7	Marshall Islands Marine Authority	2018	2020	Yes	PAN had its own funding, PAN Coordinator hired by MIMRA. R2R Supported Admin staff	Thorough discussion needed to be made before agreement.
8	USP	na	na	na	na	na
9	Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs	na	na	na	Limited HR capacity	delays
10	MoNRC	2021	2021	NA	NA	Sustainable livelihood component was implemented by MoNRC.

Source: Project's record, consultation with IPs

Table 12: Planned vs. actual partners

Planned Partner	Actual partners
1. Coastal Management Advisory Council (CMAC) RMI	1. CCD (advisory level)
2. Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA)	2. Partner
3. Office of Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination (OEPPC)	3. Partner
4. Ministry of Resources & Development (R&D)	4. Partner
5. Historic Preservation Office (HPO)	5. Partner (advisory level)
6. Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) RMI	6. Partner
7. College of the Marshall Islands (CMI)	7. MoNRC as it is more appropriate
8. Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS)	8. Partner
9. Land Grant Program	9. No engagement
10. GEF Small Grants Program	10. No engagement
11. Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI)	11. No engagement
12. JoJiKuM (Environmental Youth NGO)	12. Partner
13. Youth to Youth in Health	13. Partner
14. Private Sector	14. Partner

Source: Project's record, consultation with IPs

Table 13: M&E requirement (target vs achievements)

Sn	GEF M&E requirements	Target	Achievement
1	Inception workshop	1	1
2	Standard UNDP monitoring and reporting requirements as outlined in the UNDP POPP	60/5	NA
3	Monitoring of indicators in project results framework	5	NA
4	GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR)	5	5
5	Financial Audit as per UNDP audit policies	5	1
6	Lessons learned and knowledge generation	5	-
7	Addressing environmental and social grievances (Project Board meetings twice per year, one in Majuro and one in the outer islands)	12	All at Majuro level
8	Addressing environmental and social grievances (annually, by UNDP Pacific Office project staff)	5	1
9	Mid-term GEF Tracking Tool to be updated by the Project Coordinator	1	1
10	Terminal GEF Tracking Tool to be updated by the Project Coordinator	1	1
11	Stock-taking retreat	5	1
12	End-of-project review by PB/PSC	1	Not yet
13	Annual supervision mission by UNDP Pacific Office	5	3

Sn	GEF M&E requirements	Target	Achievement
14	UNDP Quality Assurance Assessment by UNDP Pacific Office	Online (QA)	Inception, MTR/TE
15	UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor	QA	QA

Source: Project's record

Table 14. Changes to the Project's Outcomes and Outputs

Original outputs/outcomes	Modified Outputs/outcomes
Outcome 3: Accessible data and information systems and improved linkages and collaboration with regional initiatives to support adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI.	**Outcome 3:** Improved collaboration and decision through the readily accessible and functional database and information system including the Pacific R2R Program, to support adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI
Output 3.3: Support for expansion/continuation of education and awareness programs at the local and national levels, e.g., the 'Just Act Natural' initiative; complementary awareness programs implemented using various forms of media to mobilize support for conservation and livelihoods.	**Output 3.3:** Expansion/continuation of education and awareness programs at the local and national levels supported, e.g., the 'Just Act Natural' initiative; complementary awareness programs implemented using various forms of media to mobilize support for conservation and livelihoods.

Source: MTR

Table 15: Travel suspensions with some adversities

Sn	Adversities	Most affected area/atolls	Travel suspended (from…to)	Impacts on project's overall performance
1	COVID-19	Entire RMI country	May 2019 to April 2020	Low delivery due to delay in implementation. This resulted in activities carried forward to the following year.
2	Zika virus	All 5 project sties	May 2019 to April 2020	Low delivery due to delay in implementation. This resulted in activities carried forward to the following year.
3	Dengue fever	All 5 project sites	July 2019 until January 2020	Low delivery, and activities were pushed back to the following year – delay in implementation

Source: Project's record, consultation with IPs

Table 16: Status of MTR recommendations operationalization

Sn	Recommendations	If yes, how?	If not why?
1	The planned completion date of the project is not realistic. To ensure full achievement of all planned end-of-project targets, the project implementation period must be extended **(UNDP).**	Ideally, yes, but that was not the case	It is not realistic because of unforeseen events i.e. CoVid and local epidemics. Also, national circumstances such as the geographical locations of project sites separated by an ocean makes it extra challenging to deliver on a timely manner.
2	There has been a considerable delay in developing the necessary surveys and studies (marine survey, terrestrial surveys, socio-economic studies, LEAP surveys, hydrological survey, network scenario, management plans, delineation of the proposed sites, etc.) due to travel restrictions. As it is not clear when travel restrictions will be eased, an effective adaptative management plan must be put in place with clear measures to undertake the necessary work under a pro-longed travel restriction **(Project team with the support of UNDP).**	The strategy is to undertake all other activities that did not require traveling.	

3	Due to the limited technical experts available at the national levels, it is recommended that peer experts, from other Micronesian Islands, provide technical support such as the development of a Conservation GIS database and online cleaning house for the different project sites **(UNDP Regional Office and team).**	The project engaged the services of UH and other Universities from the US to under take analysis and of GIS based data and information that was collected from the project sites	
4	As for linking cultural expressions to resource management, the MTR Consultant believes it should not be a problematic issue as the Project collaborates with different stakeholders, mainly the Mayors of the outer islands, to take the lead role to promote the sense they are involved in the project as an important partner. The involvement of youth related organizations is key for sustaining and transferring local and traditional knowledge to young and new generations **(Project team)**.	The project engaged the Youth NGO JoJikum to develop 2 ebooks by collecting stories and legends from elders living on project sites (see Aur and Arno trip report). Story telling and oral history is part of Marshallese traditions to pass on information and knowledge from one generation to the next.	
5	The MTR recommends making the project's technical deliverables, lessons learned, and knowledge management productions with a focus on cultural expressions open to the public by sharing the materials through different websites, social media and any other proper tools **(Project team)**.	This was not successful. The project did invest in a website development, but ran into barriers involving UNDP communication protocols. The project also did not have a dedicated communication officer to work directly with UNDP to disseminate information to the public.	
6	An external consultant could be recruited to further assist in enrolling Marshallese students from the University of the South Pacific to get the needed capacity building and knowledge in integrated approaches **(Project team with the Support of UNDP)**.	This was not successful, therefore the project team tried a different approach which was to engage the college of the Marshall Islands to develop an agro-forestry certificate program which has been very successful and it also inspired the certificate program transform into a 2 year associate degree program.	
7	Several awareness sessions need to be organized to ensure the technical capacities are in place after the project closure with a paramount focus on conservation, sustainable livelihoods, and community-based adaptation **(Project Team).**	Awareness activities are carried out through the engagement of project partners during field missions on conservation, sustainable livelihoods and community based adaptation.	
8	Development of the project's communication plan to be prioritized to boost the project's public awareness and stakeholders' engagement efforts. Most of the project's indicators need to be clearly and effectively communicated with outer islands. Poor communications and limited travel are defined as key obstacles to achieving the project's targets (**Project team).**	The project had a communication plan but no communication officer to focus on public awareness raising. The alternative is to utilize Project Board meetings to communicate important project indicators and project partners to communicate relevant information to stakeholders and community members. Also public awareness is effected through national platforms such as Climate Change week, Mayor's conference and other forums in which the project is invited to. The Director of CCD, National Project Director also reports on project updates and information sharing through his own government networks.	
9	The project's M&E system should be strengthened. UNDP to play a key role in transforming the M&E system from a management tool to an adaptive management approach through the continuous and effective involvement of stakeholders as part of the project's adaptive management framework. For example, the quarterly progress reports should	This is ongoing through Project Implementation Reporting to GEF and other M&E tools. Also in BTORs.	

	be expanded to include an indicative work plan of activities for the next quarter as well as updated risks and mitigation measures. Furthermore, the project reporting function should include the documentation of lessons learned so that institutional memory is preserved, and a reference guide is created to support any future replication of similar project initiatives **(Project team with UNDP support).**		
10	UNDP-GEF Project Assurance to provide better guidelines and technical backstopping. Support for Implementation Phase of the project is critical to ensure that adaptation management measures are in place **(UNDP and UNDP/GEF teams).**	There is sufficient guidelines which are accessible, technical backstopping was minimal, internal processes is improving.	
11	The role of the Project Board needs to be strengthened, with more frequent meetings, adequate advance provision of documentation, follow-up mechanisms established, and the inclusion of representation at the local community level **(Project team).**	The PB remained at original stage according to project board terms of reference. Follow ups are held via Special Board meetings on as needed basis.	
12	The implementing /executing agency and stakeholders of the project can provide valuable technical (and political) support and the Project should draw on these relationships further in its management approach to this project. The MTR would recommend that a greater spirit of cooperation and inclusion of other stakeholders by the Project in all aspects of the project delivery needs to be emphasized **(Project team with UNDP and Government Support).**	For the most part yes, this is happening across project networking with Mayors who are highly political figures.	
13	The MTR did not see any collaboration with other UNDP, GEF or relevant initiatives, except the Regional R2R. It is recommended that effective and continuous collaboration with all other relevant initiatives, partners, and stakeholders to enhance knowledge sharing and build on each other work **(Project team and UNDP).**		

Source: Project's record, consultation with PIU staff

Table 17: Disbursement and delivery status

Categories	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1. Cumulative GL delivery against total approved amount (in ProDoc):	9.46%	30.68%	47.38%	63.51%	59.67%
2. Cumulative GL delivery against expected delivery as of this year:	17.61%	42.43%	53.12%	63.51%	59.67%
3. Cumulative disbursement as of 30 June (note: amount to be updated in late August):	371,632	1,205,100	1,861,242	2,494,560	2,343,851

Source: PIR reports

Table 18: Budget breakdown by Atlas Code

Code	Description	Total (in US$)	Expenditure (in US$) as of June 2023	Within the budget ceiling/over expenditure
71200	International Consultants	241,500	181,206.32	Within the budget ceiling
71300	Local Consultants	324,000	107,678.62	Within the budget ceiling
71400	Contractual Services – Individual	931,286	897,278.37	Within the budget ceiling
71600	Travel	106,140	227,529.22	Over expenditure
72100	Contractual Services – Company	1,683,250	608,243.84	Within the budget ceiling

72200	Equipment and Furniture	162,750	111,362.76	Within the budget ceiling
72400	Communication & Audio Visual Equip	14,453	9,114.30	Within the budget ceiling
72500	Supplies	4,000	12,392.27	Over expenditure
72800	Information Technology Equip	21,000	24,658.04	Over expenditure
73100	Rental & Maintenance-Premises	24,000	42,287.21	Over expenditure
73300	Rental & Maint of IT Equip	8,000	8,276.00	Over expenditure
74100	Professional Services	12,500	15,892.42	Over expenditure
74200	Audio Visual & Print Prod Costs	26,647	9,716.53	Within the budget ceiling
74500	Miscellaneous Expenses	19,000	13,162.09	Within the budget ceiling
74596/64397	Direct Project Costs	84,145	63,195.78	Within the budget ceiling
74700	Transport, Shipping and handle	12,500	4,664.74	Within the budget ceiling
75700	Training, Workshop, Conference	252,810	153,563.98	Within the budget ceiling
71800	Contractual Services-Imp Partn	NA	709,286.95	NA
72300	Materials & Goods	NA	20,218.17	NA
72600	Grants	NA	40,000.00	NA
72900	MDTF & DBS Reporting	NA	-1,895.00	NA
73200	Premises Alternations	NA	15,142.71	NA
73400	Rental & Maint of Other Equip	NA	760.00	NA
76100	Foreign Exchange Currency Loss	NA	-65.71	NA
77600	Dep Exp Owned	NA	15,872.16	NA
	Grand total	3,927,981	3,289,541.77	

Source: Project's record

Table 19: Institutional capacities of CSOs/CBOs

Atolls	# of CBOs/CSOs formed *as part of this project*	# of CBOs/CSOs reformed *as part of this project*	# of CBOs/CSOs registered with local government *(with the initiatives of this project)*	# of CBOs/CSOs in the process of registration *(with the initiatives of this project)*	Remarks
Aur	2	2	2	0	The women handicraft and men's fishermen association of Aur were formulated to ensure sustainability of project interventions on ground in the community
Ebon	1	1	0	1	Ebon Ibben Dron was formulated to provide management to NRMP and other project funds, also from the Small Grants Projects. Bylaws yet to be incorporated
Likiep	1	1	1	1	Likiep Ej Makke Wot women's group was created to engage more women in handicraft, coastal-replanting, and to take part in clam farming as well.
Mejit	0	1	1	0	Mejit already had the AKIM women's organization established prior to R2R

Wotho	0	1	0	0	WUTMI chapter exist on Wotho, but not much engagement with R2R, however the youth chapter is engaged in the construction of Wotho greenhouse to enhance food security and alternative livelihood.
Total	4	6	4	2	

Source: Project's record, consultation with IPs

Table 20: List of women specific project's activities and budget utilization

Sn	List of women focused activities	How these activities contribute women's lives and overall well-being?	Estimated budget (USD)
1	Likiep Clam Farm	Women are now able to raise and sell their own clams in the local clam market	50,000.00
2	Aur Women's Handicraft association developed	Women will receive income from this scheme	50,000.00
3	Mejit Akim food crop replantation	Akim women's group will be able to sell spill over crop yield in markets to raise extra income.	25,000.00

Source: Project's record, consultation with IPs

Table 21: Achievement of proposed activities in gender action plan

Activity	Target indicators	Achievements (latest updates)
Increasing project awareness	1) 50:50 representation target 2) Separate consultations completed for each project activity (% completed) 3) Campaign developed (Y/N) 4) Number of campaigns conducted	1) Achieved 2) 100% completed 3) No 4) None
Promoting gender awareness	1) Training developed (Y/N) 2) Number of people / organizations trained 3) All project staff trained 4) Campaigns developed (Y/N) 5) Number of campaigns implemented using suitable modes of delivery	1) Yes, March 2018, by PIU for the Gender Action Plan 2) Approximately 25 3) All, but site coordinators 4) NA 5) NA
Skills development	1) In all cases, aiming at 50:50 target for PIU staff, consultants, and contractors 2) Annually and on completion of the project activity (review completed, Y/N)	NA
Implementing livelihood activities	1) Minimum 30% of approved project interventions are women's activities/ conducted by Women's Groups 2) % of implemented activities that include gender specific considerations and benefit women 3) % of projects/activities developed that specifically benefit women	4) Yes 5) Approximately 40% 6) Approximately 40% *Through the implementation of project partners, I.e., IOM, MoNRC Agricultural team, CMI, MICS etc.

Source: Project's record, consultation with IPs

Table 22: Comparison of population between two Census: 2011 and 2021

Project sites	2011			2021		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Aur	223	276	499	145	172	317
Ebon	326	380	706	209	260	469
Likiep	193	208	401	114	114	228
Mejit	176	172	348	111	119	230
Wotho	41	56	97	44	44	88
	Total 2011		**2051**	**Total 2021**		**1332**

Sourec: ProDoc, and Census Reports of 2011 and 2021

Table 23: List of project covered in CO 2019 audit

Title	Expenses during the audited period $ million	Total expenses from start of project $million
Western Pacific Integrated HIV /TB Programme	3.7	4.4
Fiji Ridge to Reef (R2R)	2.6	3.5
Vanuatu Electoral Environment Project	2.4	2.8
Regional Ridge to Reef - Pacific Island Countries	2.1	6.1
Effective Governance	1.8	5.7
Total	**12.6**	**22.5**

Source: UNDP's STREAM Analytics website

Sourec: Project's record, 2019

Annex-15: Assumptions and risks

Agencies were willing to practice co-financing, a measure which enhances programmatic synergy. External factors considered included the depth of stakeholders' understanding of coastal and marine resource management and conservation. Support for the conservation of protected areas and sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services among traditional leaders and outer island landowners was noteworthy. Moreover, local communities demonstrated the ability to implement management plans with minimal external resources. All they needed was capacity-building support and specific enabling equipment and tools. The GoRMI proactively encouraged the private sector and civil society to contribute innovatively and inclusively to biodiversity conservation on the outer islands, but the results have not yet materialized on the table.

a. Incorporation of assumptions and risks in the project identification form (PIF) and project document

Project documents and the PIF articulate the project's assumptions and risks well. The identified risks and assumptions were comprehensive: they covered a wide range of project risks, such as the nature and size of project activities; technical, policy, and institutional complexities; and stakeholder ownership and resilience.[32] According to reporting requirements, the PIRs were to identify critical risks annually; unfortunately, they did not do so and risk were not updated.

b. Externalities that influenced the findings

Externalities like climate change and global economic crises continue to affect RMI. The fact that these externalities are not assessed periodically could result in a threat to the project's success emerging to surprising the project at any given time. Not all of the 10 original assumptions will necessarily be met, meaning that there is still some risk that certain objectives and outcomes will not be achieved. For instance, although stakeholders do actively collaborate, the assumption that the GoRMI is committed to facilitating the necessary enabling conditions for encouraging private sector and civil society contributions to biodiversity conservation on the outer islands faces challenges. Similarly, the assumption regarding the timely completion of the legal designation process for protected areas under Outcome 1 may not be realized. Likewise, it may not be possible to realize the assumption regarding the mainstreaming of a conservation geographical information system (GIS) database and management information system, along with sustainable financing sources, user access protocols, and intellectual property rights protocols under Outcome 3.

Annex-16: Planned stakeholder participation

a. Partnerships, agreements and emerging challenges

As planned, the project successfully established partnerships with important stakeholders, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, through various contractual agreements. It also received the technical support it had anticipated. Among the involved stakeholders, MIMRA and the UNDP-Regional R2R project have roles consistent with the definitions outlined in the project document. In contrast, MICS participated as a member of the PSC/PB and also served as an IP. The roles of IPs were assigned to CMI, IOM, MoNRC, and RMI-EPA (see Table 9 in Annex-14). It is noteworthy to observe that, throughout the course of the project's execution, a few extra partners were incorporated in response to actual requirements beyond what was initially outlined in the project document. This strategic inclusion contributed to enhancing the

[32] UNDP ProDoc. Annex G: Monitoring Plan. Page 106 and section ii. Risk Management. Table 5. Page 39-41.

project's overall performance through the creation of synergies (see Table 12 in Annex-14). At the same time, however, the project faced challenges in scaling up the partnership approach and maximizing stakeholder engagement primarily due to the impacts of the pandemic and the high rates of staff turnover at the project and government levels. In addition, the IPs were burdened by a large number of ongoing projects, and there was a limited pool of experts available within the country. Consequently, communication among stakeholders was insufficient, and it was difficult to obtain marine survey data from the three atolls covered by the Pacific Islands Oceanscape Project (PROP) in a timely fashion. The delay had adverse effects on various associated activities, including the development of integrated management plans. Moreover, accessing the statistical analysis of and reporting on ecological data took considerable time.

The outbreak of the pandemic as well as of the dengue and Zika viruses significantly hindered the establishment of genuine partnerships and the subsequent implementation of supply and material management procedures. The shipping times for essential items was extended to cope with various restrictions, including closed borders and mandatory quarantine procedures. Changes within the HPO team also added to the delay and forced the project implementation unit (PIU) to reintroduce project-specific activities and seek new approvals.

b. Execution of the 'stakeholder engagement plan' as called for in the project document

The project aimed to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of its initiatives by engaging seven categories of stakeholders[33]. Through careful planning and allocation of resources, the project successfully engaged these stakeholders at the right places and mobilized them at appropriate times. As a result, there was a high level of satisfaction among stakeholders. The project's efforts, dedication, and timely engagement led to the achievement of the anticipated results. Furthermore, this approach facilitated the capture and use of best practices and lessons learned during decision-making processes to ensure synergies and enhance the overall impact of the project.

The project faced challenges in adequately mobilizing the Marshall Islands Chamber of Commerce (MICOC) and the Ministry of Resources and Development's Division of Trade and Investment to foster private sector participation in conservation efforts. However, the fact that no stakeholder criticized any other stakeholder's role during the interviews held suggests that a sense of solidarity and cooperation exists among all. The variations in stakeholders' roles across different project cycles showcased the PIU's success in analyzing the situation and redefining roles accordingly. Some stakeholders actively participated during baseline surveys and consultation workshops/meetings, while others played significant roles during the implementation and consolidation phases. The project's emphasis on involving line ministries and associated departments as well as local authorities (such as local communities, local government units, LRCs, landowners, and church organizations) was commendable as these entities played crucial roles in executing the project. For more details on stakeholder involvement, see Annex-15, which provides a comprehensive overview.

The project's successful achievement of its goal was facilitated by several key practices, including quarterly meetings, review-and-reflection sessions with IPs, and continuous dialogue with mayors and other influential community leaders. Engagement in review-and-reflection meetings, along with meetings of the project steering committee/project board (PSC/PB) and dialogues with Mayors the through Marshall Islands Mayors Association (MIMA) and the Council of *Iroij* (a traditional system of outer islands), helped mobilize all relevant stakeholders to work collectively towards the project's objectives.

This partnership and collective effort were instrumental in developing integrated management plans for each of the five selected islands, designing and delivering capacity-building activities, and contributing to cultural surveys. Initially, review-and-reflection meetings were quite regular during the project's early years, but they became more ad-hoc after the pandemic since travel restriction increased work pressure and stakeholders were occupied with fulfilling their programmatic targets. However, the project management adapted to the circumstances, organizing meetings based on pertinent needs in consultation with IPs and other stakeholders. In total, 12 PSC/PB meetings (target was 12) were convened, yielding various decisions that facilitated both the acceleration of project implementation and the enhancement of programmatic quality. One meeting each was held in 2019 and 2020, while three meetings took place in both 2021 and 2023. In 2022, a total of four meetings were organized (see Table 7 in Annex-14). This pattern underscores the strategic alignment of meetings with pertinent needs, reflecting a logical approach. These meetings further served as platforms for sharing knowledge and learning from each other's programs and for helping to identify and address bottlenecks through strategic decision-making and, as a result, accelerated the pace of implementation. At a PSC/PB meeting on July 14, 2022,

[33] (i) direct beneficiaries, (ii) community-based stakeholders, (iii) stakeholders involved in project implementation, (iv) non-governmental organizations/civil society organizations (CSOs), (v) state-owned enterprises, (vi) private sector entities, and (vii) regional stakeholders

for instance, a crucial decision was made to approve a nine-month no-cost extension of the project. In addition, in 2023, the PSC meeting granted the PIU increased responsibility for implementation and authorized an expedited procurement process for half of the proposed annual work plan (AWP) 2023 activities.

The project gained trust and "insider status" in the community by holding dialogues with Mayors and key community leaders. Several noteworthy instances exemplify the impact of these dialogues. In Wotho atoll, for example, productive meetings with senior landowners, traditional leaders, and political figures played a crucial role in resolving land tenure issues and paved the way for the formulation and approval of a resource management plan. In Ebon atoll, a meeting with the local government council was instrumental in resolving confusion among the community, landowners, and the Ebon local government regarding the utilization of project resources for alternative livelihood and food security initiatives.

c. Fine-tuning of partnership arrangements and negotiation of roles and responsibilities

Stakeholders acknowledged that the majority of partnership arrangements had been appropriately established and that roles and responsibilities were well-defined. The selection of organizations such as the IOM, Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS), Jodikdik in Jipañ Ãne Eo Ekūtok Maroro (Jo-Jikum) and the like based on their technical expertise helped the project achieve its desired outcomes. IOM played a vital role in implementing key activities under Outcome 1, particularly outputs 1.1 and 1.3. Their involvement was particularly significant in LEAP work, which included conducting surveys, including cultural ones; establishing ground control points; and engaging with youths, all in coordination with relevant IPs.

Moreover, the project collaborated with relevant local and regional stakeholders, such as the South Pacific Community (SPC), which served as the program coordinator for the Pacific Regional R2R program, whose membership extended to 26 countries and territories. The Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT) was engaged to explore sustainable financing options. The RMI CMAC[34] played a critical role in providing strategic guidance through interagency coordination. Stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the collaborative efforts of UNDP and the IPs, who worked together with CMAC (the technical working group) and OEPPC (the responsible party) to provide technical and strategic assistance during project implementation.

The CCD played an instrumental role in providing strategic direction to the project. UNDP's Multi Country Office (MCO) based in Suva, Fiji, and its North Pacific Office based in Phonpeh, Federal State of Micronesia, actively contributed to disseminating best practices and lessons learned from various projects, including this project, in international forums. It is worth noting that coordination gaps were observed during the initial phase of the project because there was no UNDP North Pacific Office and because the UN Joint Presence Office at Majuro had limited interactions with other UNDP projects due to a change in management. The UNDP MCO in Fiji, however, provided continuous strategic support to the PIU, helping it address all gaps that arose. In addition, the project collaborated with the Pacific Regional R2R program implemented through the SPC, strengthening regional cooperation and developing synergies in achieving common goals. Once the UNDP North Pacific Office became operational, it played a significant role in sharing the valuable lessons learned and best practices adopted in other projects and programs in the region, including the R2R regional program. This knowledge exchange fostered the cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences among various initiatives.

At the micro level, the project effectively collaborated with three existing structures: LRCs, local government units, and church organizations, each contributing based on their specific roles. The LRCs were established as part of the Reimaanlok process and have been instrumental in facilitating the development and implementation of natural resource management plans for the five outer atolls. Local government units and church organizations also played essential roles by providing guidance and leadership on the atolls, prioritizing the involvement of local indigenous communities, and empowering local institutions in the process. The partnership approach proved to be essential in conducting various studies, including socio-economic assessments and feasibility studies. It also facilitated the implementation of field interventions such as agroforestry, sustainable agriculture, mariculture, animal husbandry, small-scale fisheries, ecotourism, and handicrafts, all of which aimed to improve livelihoods in the region. Not all IPs were identified during the formulation stage of the project. For example, the project document did not mention the involvement of IOM and their participation was incorporated at a later stage to contribute alternative livelihood initiatives with resources amounting to US$ 311,200.

[34] It is an advisory group consisting of government agencies, civil society, and academic and research institutions dedicated to advancing the Reimaanlok framework by bringing together environmental practitioners to support learning, share information and adopt best practices. It consists of 12 members, all of them part of the technical advisory committee for the Protected Areas Network (PAN) established in the PAN Act of 2015. It was proposed that this group also be the technical working group for the project.

Stakeholder communication was irregular throughout the project's implementation, and, arguably, there were limited opportunities to facilitate mutual learning, particularly during periods when the regular meetings of CMAC were suspended. PSC/PB meetings helped Mayors to coordinate boat charters and attend joint training sessions for other atolls. Collaborative efforts between IOM and MICS were realized in both feasibility studies and livelihood interventions.

The partnership with IOM was defined through a UN-UN agreement. At the outset of the project, IOM supported HPO in generating an anthropological/archaeological report via a 'cultural survey.' This endeavor was a success although it encountered challenges due to some ambiguity regarding the roles of each agency.

Annex-17: Linkages between the project and other interventions within the sector

The project played a vital role in establishing intentional connections between itself and other interventions within the sector by building linkages with national and regional programs. Key collaborators included the Pacific Regional R2R program and the national R2R projects within that program and the regional program support project, all of which were instrumental in supporting this project. Coordination with the regional project was achieved through program reporting and participation in regional training activities, both of which were integrated into the project framework, specifically under outputs 2.4 and 3.4. In addition, the project had plans to foster the exchange of experiences and lessons learned with other national R2R projects during joint meetings organized twice per year by the R2R regional project coordination team. The pandemic and other challenges, however, rendered face-to-face interactions impossible and thereby hindered the initial sharing of knowledge. As the project progressed, however, online platforms were utilized to facilitate learning from others' experiences, best practices, and insights. The project also allocated resources to support four RMI professionals to participate in a post-graduate program organized through the regional project.

The project made significant contributions to the strategies, plans, and documents formulated by the GoRMI to promote sustainable development. These efforts were aligned with RMI's Vision 2018 Strategic Development Plan Framework, particularly its Goal 10, Environmental Sustainability (2003-2018). It also complemented other initiatives like Reimaanlok: Looking to the Future – National Conservation Area Plan for the Marshall Islands, which shares the same objectives as the Marshall Islands Program of work on protected areas.

Furthermore, the project facilitated the addressing of various issues outlined in multiple plans, frameworks, and strategies. Some of these included the MC Business Plan (draft), National Coastal Management Framework (2008), Atoll Coastal Management Plans, National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management (2008-2018), Joint National Action Plan (for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation), National Water and Sanitation Policy (2014), Likiep Fisheries Management Plan (2007), Wotho Resources Management Plan (draft, 2016), National Solid Waste Management Strategy (draft, 2012), and their implementation reports whenever available, including RMI reports and statements to United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD).

Annex-18: Adaptive management arrangements

a. Modality

The UNDP is currently carrying out this project using a direct implementation modality (DIM) under its supervision. Under the DIM, the UNDP is responsible and accountable for managing the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of project interventions, ensuring successful project outcomes, and making effective use of UNDP resources. To provide additional quality assurance, the UNDP Regional Technical Advisor is also involved. Given that the existing capacities of the RMI to handle the budget of the project are limited, as is the availability of locally trained human resources, and that working on outer islands poses unique challenges, using the DIM was both valid and practical.

b. Provisions and roles of PSC/PB

According to the project document, the PSC/PB is comprised of 13 members, including representatives from UNDP and CCD, the Chief Secretary, the Secretary of R&D, the Secretary of Internal Affairs, the Director of MIMRA, and the Mayors of five outer islands. The CCD Director serves as the National Project Director and the chairperson of the PSC/PB. To enhance coordination, leverage additional co-financing, and ensure sustainability after the project comes to an end, it is suggested that the project include a member of Public School System (PSS) in the PSC/PB. The PSC/PB is responsible for making management decisions and approving project plans and revisions through consensus. The day-to-day execution of the project is managed by the Project Manager, under the overall guidance of the PSC/PB on behalf of the other IPs. The Technical Advisory

Group, which is composed of CMAC members, provides technical guidance to the PIU and PSC/PB through thematic meetings held as needed. The strategic guidelines provided by the PSC/PB have been commendable and well-received by project stakeholders. To enhance its effectiveness, stakeholders opined that the PSC/PB should circulate meeting agendas at least two weeks in advance and share the minutes with all relevant agencies to improve resource-leveraging from external sources based on decisions made during meetings.

c. Project's management arrangement at the national and local levels

The presence of the PIU within the CCD premises in Majuro is a clear indication of the CCD's commitment to this project. It is commendable that the PIU took proactive measures to expedite the implementation process and make up for time lost in the initial years. It did so by expediting the signing of agreements with IPs, conducting missions to demonstration sites, and conducted regular reviews of work plans and budgets in consultation with UNDP and the Regional Technical Advisor. Throughout the implementation stage, the PIU encountered various challenges which disrupted the smooth implementation of the project. At the local level, LRCs were entrusted with operating project activities on each of the five selected outer atolls in coordination with local governments and the PIU. They also go support in formulating and executing integrated resource management plans. These mechanisms are valid and are expected to contribute to the project's overall achievements.

d. Modification of the project's organizational structure

The project's organizational structure underwent some modifications. The initial modality was to be the national implementation modality (NIM), but that was later changed to the DIM. Regarding human resources, specific adjustments were made. Originally, it was agreed to manage the PAN Coordinator (Biodiversity Specialist) from PIU but MIMRA bore the salary of PAN Coordinator. Instead, the salary of the Admin and Finance Associate, who worked from the PAN office, was funded by this project, in alignment with its sustainability goals. Instead of the initially proposed Admin and Finance Officer at the PIU, UNDP hired an Admin and Finance Associate, and the Project Support Officer planned for the PIU was replaced with a Deputy Project Manager and an Admin and Finance Associate managed at UNDP MCO in Suva, Fiji, within the agreed cost arrangement (refer figure 1). During interviews, stakeholders said that the project would have performed better if the staff provisioned at Suva, Fiji, had been based at the PIU in Majuro. The project also appointed five site coordinators, one for each of the outer atolls, and utilized short-term consultants as changing requirements and the local context deemed they were needed.

e. Project's commencement

Consistent delays regarding human resource management hampered the smooth operation of the project even when there were no externalities like Covid-19, dengue or zika. The PIU was established only seven months after the start of the project, the recruitment of site coordinators took around 24 months, and the organization of the first PSC/PB meeting occurred a full 28 months after the project document was signed (they were recruited between June-August, 2020 but Ebon Site coordinator left the job in 2021. Indeed, she formerly held the position of Mayor, and there were certain conflicts between her and the current Mayor and PIU has provided some support to fill such gap), and around 12 months after the inception workshop. The project could have overcome these delays with a more strategic approach, but now they represent missed opportunities and learning for future projects. Although the project document was signed on 1 February 2018 as a formal sign that implementation had begun, but the first AWP, which marled the actual start of the implementation, was the inception workshop which took place 39 days later on 9 March 2018. Before the project was even finalized, the government had highlighted the need to develop a multi-year work plan. The delay in the project's start-up required the project team to change the project's timeframe and work plans.

According to the 2020 PIR, the pandemic had a significant impact on project activities. The GoRMI imposed a travel ban as a result of pandemic, which restricted in-country travel for international experts who were to support IPs in implementing project activities. For example, the project faced challenges in conducting scientific surveys, as a marine biologist hired by MICS was unable to travel due to the ban. Movement within the country was also restricted due to the pandemic, further hindering project operations. Furthermore, the 2020 PIR highlighted the outbreak of dengue fever in Ebeye[35] and Majuro atolls, leading the government to declare an epidemic from July 2019 to January 2020 (a total of 7 months). This outbreak was followed by a travel ban, which strictly prohibited travel outside of the affected atolls. Progress in project implementation was adversely affected as IPs were unable to travel to the outer atolls during this period.

f. Human resource management

[35] Though it was not the project's atoll.

Out of the five project staff, three were based in the RMI, while two were stationed at the UNDP MCO in Fiji. This staffing arrangement posed challenges for communication due to the relatively small size of the team. Government officials expressed their preference for a completely local project team based in Majuro/RMI. This was not feasible because of the lack of qualified and trained human resources available within RMI itself. The limited pool of experienced and qualified individuals in RMI was a major obstacle to hiring suitable people as short-term consultants. As a result, human resource management took longer than expected. To address staffing needs, the project team and UNDP, guided by the PSC/PB, resorted to manual recruitment methods instead of the UNDP's online process. In some cases, a "headhunting" approach was used to ensure that the right people were recruited for the positions. The recruitment of international consultants to support technical aspects of the project also faced delays of over a month due to UNDP's lengthy bureaucratic procedures. This delay hindered the timely selection of the right candidates for specific project tasks and adversely impacted overall project progress. The delays in certain tasks had a cascading effect on associated tasks, leading to confusion during the project's implementation phase.

g. Procurement, logistics and finance

To achieve the project's outputs, UNDP closely collaborated with OEPPC and provided direct project services (DPS[36]) in line with UNDP policies for GEF-funded projects. Regarding the flow of funds, UNDP receives the project's funds and disburses them directly to the IPs/contracted parties responsible for implementing activities. On March 17, 2023, UNDP updated its policy to transition to a new cloud-based management platform, Quantum, which replaced the previous ATLAS system it had used since January 2023. Initially, this transition posed challenges as staff had to adapt, but they gradually gained momentum and now are conversant in Quantum. The PSC/PB helped manage the large-scale procurement of goods and services. Since the PIU is located at CCD/OEPPC, the National Project Director continuously provides it with the guidance it needs to ensure efficient and timely functioning.

The 2019 PIR highlighted transportation as a major obstacle when visiting outer atolls and providing technical assistance. The outer atolls are quite distant from Majuro: Aur atoll is the closest, at 84 miles, and Wotho atoll is the farthest, at 417 miles. The primary means of transportation is airplanes, with each of the project sites having an airstrip (see **Annex**-27). Travel time by ship to reach the outer atolls varies from one day (Aur atoll) to 2-3 weeks (Wotho atoll), while airplane services are available every week for most atolls and every two weeks for Wotho atoll. The cost of transportation varies from US$ 9.10 to US$120 for airfare and US$47 to US$309 for ship fare, depending on the destination. These distances, times and costs reveal just how challenging the geographical conditions of the outer atolls are. Risks arise when flights are unavailable and can impact the mobilization of teams between Majuro and the atolls. Although inter-atoll ships are an option, their services can be inconsistent and are often poor quality. The extensive logistical hindrances, including delays in flights to the outer islands meant that some project activities were delayed.

h. Management of political and traditional influences and land rights-related issues

The smooth implementation of the project was affected by political and traditional influences, especially when it came to gaining community support. To address this challenge, the project adjusted its activities and funds to accommodate genuine local needs while still aligning with the project's main goals and objectives. Balancing the project's objectives and the new demands of the community posed a challenge for the PIU. However, these issues were amicably managed through periodic monitoring, annual assessments, and a MTR. It was found that the project team is committed to responding appropriately to the traditional and political influences surrounding implementation and to addressing all stakeholders' concerns. The 2019 PIR also pointed out that there were land disputes among various land-owning units and that these hindered progress in delineating terrestrial and marine conservation areas. Thanks to the leadership of the PIU and the guidance of the PSC/PB, these issues were effectively managed with the active involvement of LRCs and the leadership of local mayors.

i. Implement the MTR's suggestions

The feedback and suggestions provided by MTR were taken by the PSC/PB and PIU. Due to the committed efforts of the PIU, a significant portion of the MTR recommendations have been put into practice as much as feasible, addressing the relevant requirements (see Table 16 in Annex-14). Indeed, its recommendation have already been put into action following the adoption of a management response plan drafted with the collaboration of the team and the guidance of UNDP leaders. The team learned from past experience and now avoids setting overly ambitious and unrealistic goals that it cannot achieve. This learning process was valuable for all stakeholders, including GEF. PIU staff confirmed that after carefully reviewing the management response

[36] DPS costs are those incurred by UNDP for the provision of services that are execution-driven and can be traced in full to the delivery of project inputs. DPSs are over and above project cycle management services.

and developing step-wise action plans, it had now fully implemented all the recommendations of the MTR, incorporated them into project practices as required by the GEF protocol. This prompt and enthusiastic response created a positive atmosphere among the IPs and project stakeholders.

j. Modify anticipated project results based on the MTR and other assessments

The recommendations provided by the MTR have strengthened the three expected outcomes of the project'. Project stakeholders confirmed that all the changes made to the project were well-documented, involved the IPs, and focused on implementation-related issues. These changes were recorded in meeting minutes and shared with the PSC/PB for approval. The PIU team responded strategically to the MTR findings by setting realistic goals and avoiding significant deviations from the intended project results. This approach was adopted to prevent unnecessary work, uncertainties, and inconsistencies in the project's pursuit of achieving the vision of Reimaanlok. The Reimaanlok process has been tested and refined in other communities over time, allowing the project to draw valuable lessons from those experiences, too. This knowledge will help future projects to chart a course that minimizes the need for extensive modifications.

Annex-19 Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements

a. Fostered partnerships among the relevant stakeholders

Throughout the project's implementation period, the project maintained strategic partnerships with key stakeholders that aligned well with the partners' predefined roles and responsibilities. Stakeholder interviews and consultations with IPs and PIU staff revealed a high level of stakeholder engagement in project-related matters, a fact which resulted in effective partnership arrangements. During the projects' initial years, regular review-and-reflection meetings held with IPs and relevant stakeholders enhanced stakeholder participation and fostered genuine collaboration. Stakeholders' mobilization and partnership efforts were diverse, encompassing inter-governmental bodies, public and private research institutions, academia, civil society, and the private sector, a fact which created a rich environment for cross-learning. Stakeholders spoke highly of the project's contributions, especially in areas such as technical surveys, studies, and the enhancement of GIS-based information management systems. In addition, the project played a crucial role in preserving repositories of TEK, among its other achievements.

b. Utilize the project's resources to save time and protect it from likely failure

The active involvement of stakeholders, collaborative processes, and partnership arrangements played a vital role in integrating nationally and internationally proven scientific tools, approaches, and best practices into local contexts with modifications when needed. This collective effort fostered innovation and synergy, thereby resulting in significant savings of time and resource and mitigating potential failures. Moreover, agencies serving as project IPs leveraged their pre-existing and tried-and-tested approaches, methods, tools, and interventions developed over years of collaboration with other projects and donors in the aid of the project.

c. Built linkages between micro- and macro-level issues to develop a large program

This project's coordination and partnership approach brought benefits not only to UN agencies and I/NGOs but also to government stakeholders. The approach facilitated the expansion and strengthening of networks with relevant agencies, enabling the development of large programmatic landscapes and the more effective utilization of available resources. For instance, the project's collaboration with CMI proved instrumental in creating training and academic curricula that directly address local issues and concerns identified through training programs conducted at the community and local government levels. In summary, the project ushered in a paradigm shift in fostering effective partnership arrangements to achieve synergistic impacts. Right from the project's formulation to it implementation and consolidation phases, collaboration and partnership were emphasized, a focus leading to the identification of major lessons and best practices. These partnerships were instrumental in the development of comprehensive programs and initiatives.

d. Support in leveraging resources

By involving national-level government authorities engaged in natural resource management, especially in the biodiversity and international water sectors, through the PSC/PB, the project expanded its outreach. This fruitful partnership led to the development of projects and programs in and around the project's outer atolls, as acknowledged by IPs and government stakeholders. Moreover, the national government effectively utilized these partnerships to leverage resources in these sectors. They have shared the project's best practices and lessons learned in international forums and platforms, a step which garnered the project support from GEF for funding in the upcoming cycle in RMI. Despite these achievements, however, the policy environment enabling resource leveraging from international donors and development partners in these sectors is not yet robust. There is still room for improvement to better facilitate contributions and support from external sources.

Annex-20: Monitoring & evaluation

a. Used M&E information to improve performance and adapt to changing needs

The project effectively utilized M&E information to enhance its performance and adapt to changing needs. Regular monitoring and periodic evaluations of the project's results, as outlined in the project results framework, yielded positive outcomes. An annual monitoring process was in place to assess overall performance. The M&E design was well-structured, as was evident from the comprehensive M&E plan included in the project document. This plan outlined the resources needed and clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of the PIU staff, IPs, and other relevant stakeholders. The project's 12 indicators were SMART and effectively measured progress.

The MTR played a crucial role in reviewing indicators, but there was no any feedback for making them more effective and more appropriate. The project document included objectively verifiable indicators and identified means of verification, such as the inception workshop report, PIRs, AWPs, MTR, TE, financial audits, and regular monitoring of and reporting on the project's working atolls. A budget of USD 170,280 (1% of the GEF grant) was allocated for M&E activities, indicating a substantial allocation of resources for internal monitoring. M&E was recognized as a knowledge management initiative, one which aligned with the objectives outlined in Outcome 3.

Project-level M&E activities were conducted in accordance with UNDP requirements, as specified in the UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures (POPP) and UNDP Evaluation Policy. During the M&E process, AWPs and other means were utilized to assess performance based on predefined indicators adjusted to accommodate changing needs. This approach helped improve project performance. The M&E system fostered greater levels of engagement with IPs, thereby enabling the effective resolution of implementation-related issues and providing meaningful support, such as facilitating the procurement of alternative livelihood components. Periodic reviews at the level of IPs and other relevant stakeholders were instrumental in achieving project indicators within the specified timeframe, thereby enhancing momentum towards the expected outcomes.

Monitoring and periodic assessments of the project's indicators promoted the optimal utilization of project resources, ensuring both cost efficiency and cost effectiveness. For example, one of the project's indicators is to develop integrated resource management plans for five atolls by the project's end. Regular monitoring helped three atolls put such plans in place. As a result, the project is now focused on formulating integrated management plans for Wotho and Aur atolls and improving the existing plans using new data and information of other three atolls. Since there was no need to start from scratch for three plans, this approach saved resources, which were then utilized to operationalize the management plans, primarily targeting alternative livelihood initiatives. In this way, the project upheld the principle of value for money.

As mentioned above, several monitoring tools were utilized to assess the overall performance of the project and make adjustments based on identified needs. These tools included the inception workshop report, annual GEF PIRs, lessons learned reports, GEF Focal Area tracking tools for biodiversity conservation and international waters, and the baseline/CEO endorsement GEF focal area tracking tools. The MTR was also employed for evaluation, and the annual GEF PIRs played a significant role in measuring progress against indicators on a yearly basis. However, there is room for improving the PIRs in terms of their logic and their content, specifically the inclusion of more evidence and examples. The PIRs did address SES-related risks and management, but that assessment needs to be periodic since risks can change drastically over time. To enhance continuity, the previous year's PIR rating should be used to inform the preparation of subsequent PIRs.

The project supported the documentation of lessons learned as part of knowledge management for knowledge sharing, but this process faced challenges due to the absence of a dedicated staff member (i.e. M&E Associate). The available program and admin/finance staff at the PIU were primarily focused on meeting their annual targets, leaving limited time for documenting best practices and lessons learned. The GEF focal area tracking tools were effective in monitoring the results of global environmental benefits, particularly in the areas of international waters and biodiversity conservation. The periodic update of baseline/CEO endorsement GEF focal area tracking tools is commendable.

An area for further improvement lies in systematically recording M&E results using a suitable online platform, such as Google Drive or other data archive system to ensure their availability and usability in the future. The MTR played a crucial role in enhancing the project's performance by providing valuable recommendations. Despite having been delayed by 7-8 months due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, the MTR was conducted

in a virtual format. This periodic M&E initiative proved instrumental in helping the project to adapt and effectively manage changing needs.

The project implemented effective mechanisms to assign national/regional institutes and the GEF Operational Focal Point, represented by the CCD Director/National Project Director (NPD), for project monitoring. This approach ensured consistency in meeting the GEF-specific M&E requirements. However, challenges posed by the remote geographic locations of the outer atolls and the series of travel bans restricted the possibility of conducting joint monitoring missions involving both the PSC/PB and UNDP. The NPD was entrusted with the responsibility of providing government oversight of and guidance for project implementation. The UNDP Project Manager ensured that monitoring of project results and risks, including SES risks, occurred regularly and upheld the transparency and accountability of M&E and reporting on project outcomes. The project established an effective mechanism to communicate project results to the PSC/PB, the UNDP MCO, its North Pacific Office, and the UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor (RTA) based in Bangkok. This communication channel facilitates the identification and prompt assessment of any outstanding issues, allowing for immediate corrective actions.

The PSC/PB played a significant role in assessing the desired project results by reviewing and appraising AWPs keeping in mind the lessons learned. Monitoring risks also assists in planning, developing strategies, and implementing both plans and strategies during project execution.

The site coordinators, who acted as vital links between the project and the outer atolls, were responsibility for field-level monitoring and supervision, in coordination with LRCs, traditional institutions, and mayors. In addition to oversight by PB/PSC members, combined monitoring involving PB/PSC and UNDP, local government engagement, media visits to project atolls, and visits to IPs, a total of three monitoring visits significantly contributed to enhancing the overall performance of the project. These visits comprised two conducted by UNDP MCO in 2019 and 2021, and one carried out by UNDP North Pacific Office in 2022 (see Table 8 in Annex-14). These visits played a crucial role in (i) approving AWP, (ii) addressing operational challenges of the project through effective solutions, (iii) reviewing and monitoring the UNDP Pacific Strategy through high-level discussions with key members of the Ministry of Environment, and (iv) establishing a foundation for UNDP's long-term engagement in the RMI. The M&E plans formulated during the project's design underwent alterations and were not fully implemented due to various internal hurdles and external challenges (see Table 13 in Annex-14). Nonetheless, despite these challenges and adversities, the quality of the project's activities remained relatively consistent.

b. Collaborated with project stakeholders to ensure UNDP M&E criteria meet standards

The UNDP North Pacific Office actively collaborated with key project stakeholders to ensure the project adhered to UNDP M&E criteria in a timely fashion and upheld high standards. The M&E process is seamlessly integrated into the project's governance structure and is aligned with UNDP's internal systems to effectively manage and maintain quality. The establishment of the PIU was strategically aligned and linked with the UNDP quality assurance team. Although the project design called for organizing formal stocktaking retreats to review progress, share field findings, identify risks, and develop mitigation strategies, no retreats took place due to a series of travel bans and pressure to meet targets. In their place, the PIU team adopted informal stocktaking initiatives, dedicating time to developing action plans that would address emerging risks in a win-win approach.

As part of adaptive management, the PIU increased its weekly meetings from one in the beginning to two (on Tuesday and Friday) in recent years. This increased frequency proved beneficial as it allowed for thorough review and reflection on the ground situation and facilitated the resolution of issues and challenges and helped overcome project barriers, and implement corrective measures in accordance with UNDP's internal policies and practices.

Although the project document calls for holding two PSC/PB meetings per year in order to take into account the changing needs of the project. Ideally, the first meeting serves as a learning and progress review session, the second focuses on discussing challenges and making strategic decisions, such as major changes, and the third is dedicated to sanctioning the AWP for the upcoming year and addressing associated issues. None of the meetings were held on an outer atolls, however, as the project document calls for. The purpose of holding the meetings on the outer atolls was to monitor project progress directly on-site and gain a better understanding of any potential implementation or development challenges. Unfortunately, logistical challenges which would require significant resources and time to overcome prevented the realization of these meetings. Nevertheless, the PSC/PB used the issues and concerns raised organically by local government Mayors to bridge this gap and gain insights into the situation on the outer atolls.

c. Used project-level M&E to support national data systems

The UNDP MCO played a crucial role in providing strategic advice and guidance to the PIU through their RSD team leaders and IRMU to enhance the M&E mechanism. To further strengthen project-level M&E, the project designated a Deputy Project Manager and Admins and Finance Associate based at the UNDP MCO in Suva, Fiji. In addition, the UNDP North Pacific Office, which was established in October 2021 in Phonepeh, the Federated States of Micronesia, to actively engage in regional and national meetings with stakeholders, contributed to macro-level M&E issues. Despite facing various challenges, the UNDP North Pacific Office played a significant role in helping the project achieve certain key results with the mobilization of IPs and project's key stakeholders.

d. Organized project M&E to comply with the M&E standards of UNDP and GEF

As outlined in the project's document, the UNDP MCO Fiji and UNDP North Pacific Office was unable to conduct any oversight monitoring mission to establish project M&E standards due to the onset of COVID-19, which resulted in the closure of RMI's borders for several months to years. However, the pandemic presented new opportunities as online virtual platforms became viable alternatives, enabling the organization of several meetings and facilitating engagement with the UNDP MCO in M&E activities.

e. Used M&E mission data to update the ATLAS risk log and UNDP gender marker

UNDP MCO missions and back-to-office reports (BTORs) helped the project update its risk logs based on their monitoring. It is mandatory for UNDP staff and consultant to develop and share BTORs after each monitoring visit. The production of quarterly and annual reports and PIRs, all of acceptable quality, was instrumental in sharing the ground situation and key results. Risks were assessed and logged during the missions based on need and emerging circumstances. Apart from COVID-19 and outbreaks of zika and dengue fever, which closed internal borders to international visitors, all other risks were consistent throughout project implementation. Through mission visits and secondary sources, UNDP staff updated the UNDP gender marker annually to ensure that gender issues would be effectively mainstreamed into the project. The evidence of these efforts was documented in the GEF PIR and the UNDP results-oriented annual report (ROAR) (albeit not in very detail or with examples). In addition, annual output-level targets were closely monitored, assessed, and reported using UNDP corporate systems. The UNDP Risk Log was diligently maintained, with the latest entries dated 24 July 2023, and addressed various issues and concerns.

No country mission was conducted by the RTA at any time during the project period nevertheless, the RTA provided valuable and practical recommendations whenever required and contributed to improving the overall performance of the project. In addition, it was said that, the previous RTA, Joe Padila, was involved in the project's design and inception phases though. The turnover of staff at both the regional office and the MCO, as well as internal restructuring within UNDP, eroded institutional memory. Before the pandemic, most communication regarding inputs and feedback from the RTA was through email. During and after the pandemic, however, online platforms were utilized to provide relevant feedback, suggestions, and recommendations. Unfortunately, physical missions to check quality were not possible.

f. Financial audits in compliance with the DIM audit criteria and UNDP financial regulations

Over the past five years, the project was audited only once in compliance with the DIM audit criteria and UNDP financial regulations and rules. That was in October 2019.[37] In addition, at the partner level, two Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) spot checks were organized, of MICS and CMI respectively, to provide feedback and suggestions aimed at improving programmatic and financial operations. After undergoing detailed assessment, MICS and CMI promptly addressed the feedback received. PIU and IPs staff said that both the audit and the HACT spot checks played a vital role in exploring new areas that are often overlooked and in identifying areas for improvement and possible feasible solutions. To ensure a transparent and accountable mechanism, the project employed various strategies, including: convening PSC/PB meetings, holding an inception workshop, conducting audits, implementing the HACT, and conducting SPOT checks. Apart from the PSC/PB meetings and the inception workshop, the remaining actions were carried out only once (although they should be conducted periodically) to guarantee accountability and transparency (see Table 6 in Annex-14). These efforts helped maintain the financial integrity, transparency, and accountability of the project. However, by not conducting audits periodically, the project missed the opportunities to carry out corrective actions at the source and demonstrate that the project's books and accounts are meticulously maintained, ensuring the project's value for money. Regular auditing also helps minimize financial errors and strengthens project governance.

[37] There was an Office audit and RMI R2R was one of the project covered from RSD.

During the TE mission, IPs and relevant stakeholders expressed a strong sense of ownership and support for the project, referring to it as "their project." This level of local ownership was fostered in part because an effective M&E mechanism was in place. However, IPs and stakeholders also emphasized the importance of fostering more accountability and transparency through (i) public hearings, (ii) social auditing at least twice during the project period, once at its initiation and once close to its completion, and (iii) quarterly learning-cum-review meetings to facilitate knowledge sharing. Although the project have many positive aspects, some areas require improvements. Strengthening the baselines of each indicator is essential. The project should also develop alternative strategies (contingency plans) for continuing M&E during external adversities to ensure its continuity. Improving the documentation of monitoring reports with evidence and data following staff training is necessary, especially given the absence of an M&E Associate from the project. Furthermore, the quality of reports in terms of substance, content, and supporting evidence and data could be enhanced. Regular review of the SESP and the Gender Action Plan is crucial to ensure the M&E system remains robust and functional, and vice versa.

g. Improved procurement and logistic system

Working with outer atolls can be challenging, primarily because not all materials are readily available and may vary depending on the vendor and the circumstances. In addition, because there are so few vendors on these atolls, sometimes goods and services must be purchased at higher prices than are found in Majuro. While making purchases in Majuro can adhere to UNDP procurement processes, the same may not always be feasible on neighboring islands. These are the real challenges.

Annex-21: Risk management, including social and environmental standards

a. Mechanism to tracks risks on a quarterly basis and update them in the UNDP ATLAS risk log

The project established a mechanism to track risks on a quarterly basis and subsequently update these risks in the UNDP's ATLAS risk log. This process allows for thorough reviews and the implementation of corrective measures as needed. Through the examination of project-related secondary data and interviews with PIU staff, it was evident that the Project Manager is responsible for monitoring risks associated with the project on a quarterly basis and providing reports on their status to uphold standard UNDP requirements. Based on the information provided in these reports, UNDP MCO maintains the identified risks in its ATLAS risk log to facilitate necessary actions. This practice of maintaining risk logs offers a comprehensive overview of risk trends, particularly their severity, frequency, and magnitude. The risk log enables the project team to take corrective actions when required and, importantly, to learn valuable lessons for future projects with similar risk considerations.

b. Risk assessments, their frequency and management actions in response

The project document comprehensively identified and categorized several risks into seven distinct categories: environmental, financial, operational, organizational, political, regulatory, and strategic. A total of 10 risks were assessed and ranked according to their potential impact on the overall project's performance and the probability that they would have such an impact using a scale ranging from 1 (a low level of impact) to 5 (a high level of impact). Furthermore, the document provided mitigation measures for each identified risk, specifying parties responsible for taking action, including the PIU, IPs, and other relevant stakeholders. The mitigation measures were further classified as "over," "reducing," "increasing," or "no change." The team involved during project formulation conducted a thorough assessment, diligently identifying potential adverse factors that could affect the achievement of the project's three outcomes. However, no dedicated risk assessments were carried out by the PIU or any independent entity at any point during the project period. Instead, as part of PIR development, the PIU staff attempted to identify potential risks, assess their severity, and propose mitigation measures. This information was updated annually in the PIR although this exercise was somewhat limited in depth. Based on the severity of identified risks, the project team formulated management response actions, which were then reported to the GEF. These exercises and reporting occurred on an annual basis and were shared with the PSC/PB before being incorporated into the PIR each year.

Annex-22: Progress towards objective and expected outcomes

a. Alternative strategies to achieve its objectives.

The project employed the following alternative strategies to achieve its objectives.

i. Utilized the pandemic period strategically

The project employed an online platform to conduct virtual meetings, effectively addressing the challenges posed by COVID-19 and other epidemics. These virtual meetings played a crucial role in conducting on-the-ground

technical assessments through local consultants, academic institutions, and CSOs, allowing engagement with community-level stakeholders and beneficiaries. Moreover, these meetings facilitated the establishment of positive relations with IPs and mobilized national consultants to support technical assessments by consolidating survey data, drafting management plans, leading community consultations, and ultimately demarcating MPAs.

ii. Used a collaborative approach that promoted synergy

The project actively maintained partnerships with various initiatives financed by GEF, Green Climate Fund (GCF), and other groups to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices and to collaborate on project activities. In addition, it carried out joint in-country data collection with other UN agencies and relevant projects, such as IOM, to reduce interview fatigue and the burden on stakeholders and beneficiaries while also conserving financial resources. Furthermore, the project achieved significant success in leveraging co-financing: it raised USD 4.057 million through collaborative partnerships with relevant stakeholders. Co-financing was utilized effectively for its intended purposes, which included (i) enhancing institutional capabilities and regulatory frameworks, (ii) strengthening conditions required for the effective management of the PAN, (iii) supporting natural resource surveys, (iv) facilitating collaboration between the private sector and local communities, and (v) expanding and enriching academic training in natural resource management.

iii. Mobilized key project stakeholders and engaged in policy advocacy

Following agreed-upon roles and responsibilities, the project effectively engaged key IPs and stakeholders. MIMRA, for instance, was tasked with supporting the formulation of the PAN Law in consultation with relevant local and national stakeholders. Through policy advocacy and a series of review-and-reflection sessions, the project facilitated the endorsement of the PAN by the parliament, propelling it forward. In addition, the project strategically selected IPs with substantial experience in the project's thematic areas/components and skillfully mobilized them to achieve the anticipated progress. For instance, IOM was identified as a crucial implementing partner due to its extensive experience working with communities in the outer atolls of the RMI and its active involvement with the CMAC.

iv. Modified the project's work plans, targets and budget

In response to the local context and evolving needs and priorities, the project made several modifications to its work plans, targets, and budget over the years. Those modified and updated plans subsequent to receiving approval from the PSC/PB. These adjustments were crucial in channeling the project's efforts to achieve the anticipated results successfully. In close collaboration with IPs and other relevant stakeholders, the project developed a realistic work plan that effectively met the targets set under its three outcomes.

v. Recruited human resources, mobilized a field mission and strengthened collaboration with local governments

The project expedited the recruitment of five site coordinators through consultancy contracts when the regular approach to hiring human resources turned out to be unfeasible. After receiving induction training, these site coordinators were mobilized to conduct baseline surveys and other planned assessments. Their role proved to be pivotal in organizing community consultations and strengthening collaboration with Mayors and community leaders. They also played a crucial role in resolving conflicts that arose during the delineation of terrestrial and marine conservation areas and employed a win-win approach to handling other conflicts too. While some of the risks associated with complex land tenure systems remained, risk mitigation measures were implemented through town hall meetings and consultations with community members, local traditional leaders, and political figures. Besides, the five site coordinators, local government Mayors played a leading role in addressing risks. The project utilized the Reimaanlok eight-step process produced by CMAC and its member institutions as a benchmark for implementation. Although stakeholders mentioned that the project received supplementary assistance from PROP for the sustainable management of coastal fisheries, they perceived the level of assistance as somewhat limited.

vi. Fostered collaboration and linkages with other R2R initiatives

The project maintained good communications with various entities, including the Regional Program Coordination Unit (RPCU) and the Regional R2R Project, by sharing its quarterly progress reports. Prior to holding each PSC/PB meeting, the project drafted meeting agendas, thereby adhering to the programmatic approach outlined in the R2R program framework document. In addition, the project conducted monthly review-and-reflection sessions with (a) PIU and UNDP focal points and (b) PIU and IPs, along with other stakeholders. This collaborative effort not only facilitated mutual learning from each other's programs but also helped identify project-related issues and concerns that had arisen in the field and among stakeholders. Such issues were addressed and resolved in a timely fashion. The project proactively identified risks and implemented mitigation measures and possible solutions, communicating them through PIR to GEF. Regular updates about emerging issues during project implementation were provided by the PIU team and UNDP.

The effectiveness of the project was enhanced through its coordination and collaboration with the UNDP Address Climate Vulnerability in the Water Sector (ACWA) Project. The two projects established an internal formal agreement between their project managers to share knowledge, experiences, staff time and resources. Furthermore, the project learned valuable lessons from a GEF-funded initiative involving collaboration among 14 Pacific Island nations, including RMI. Through the exchange of best practices and discussions about biodiversity protection, the project gained much insight. However, it also recognized that a one-size-fits-all approach is not applicable to the diverse contexts and issues across different Pacific countries. Interventions need to be tailored to each country's particular context if they are to contribute to SDGs and other internal protocols.

vii. Developed suitable strategies to fill the gaps

Delays in human resource management created programmatic gaps, but these were addressed by leveraging the support of the RPCU. Through emails and other online collaboration tools, RPCU provided valuable technical backstopping to fill the gaps effectively. To tackle the fuel crises on the outer islands, local governments took the initiative to mobilize resources to cover transportation costs, specifically those related to fuel. Furthermore, administrative hiccups and meeting delays were efficiently managed by transitioning to online meetings, a measure which allowed for smoother decision-making processes.

viii. Extended the project's tenure by nine months using a co-cost modality

The project was granted a no-cost extension of nine months to implement activities that had been originally planned for the previous year. These activities had been affected by COVID-19 travel restrictions, and the extension allowed for their successful rollout.

b. Key risks and barriers that remain to achieving objectives and generating global environmental benefits

After conducting a thorough review of the project document, it identified a total of seven risks classifiable into three categories: operational, regulatory, and environmental. In addition, the project aimed to address and overcome five barriers that had been identified during the project development phase. These barriers were carefully analyzed and successfully resolved during the formulation and subsequent implementation of the project. However, while some progress has been made in biodiversity conservation in RMI, including policy reforms and on-the-ground activities, some barriers still persist (see below paragraphs) and hinder the achievement of the effective and financially sustainable management of terrestrial and nearshore marine ecosystems. It is important to note that the relevance and manifestation of these threats and barriers might evolve over time.

The first barrier, "limited information on the ecosystem health of the outer islands," was addressed by the project to the best of its abilities with the available resources and within the designated timeframe. However, data is dynamic, and the current scale and depth of information might not be sufficient for developing future plans and strategies. Similarly, the second barrier, "insufficient human resources for managing the PAN and biodiversity conservation at the community level," was tackled through policy support and resource management at the national level, but the same level of intensive support was not extended to the community level as it fell outside the scope of the project's design. Regarding the third barrier, "weak legislative framework and institutional arrangements for PA network management," the project contributed to policy formation, but there is still ample room for developing additional supportive policy measures to fully operationalize the PAN Law. The fourth barrier, "inadequate human resource capacity for sustaining effective PAN management," presents challenges due to the limited scope of and overwhelming demands on the project. Collaboration between MIMRA and other relevant ministries of GoRMI can lead to the development of human resource development plans for strengthening and institutionalizing the PAN. The fifth barrier, "the decline of traditional conservation and management practices, coupled with limited awareness, knowledge, and access to available information," was addressed through the documentation and dissemination of TEK among relevant stakeholders. However, a future risk might be the impact of high rates of outmigration from RMI, mainly to the USA, on these conservation initiatives.

In conclusion, unless additional resources and mechanisms are put in place to sustain best practices and lessons gained, these risks and barriers may impede the achievement of the project's objectives and the generation of global environmental benefits. Fortunately, future projects have the opportunity to address these areas and fill the gaps.

c. Key assumptions and impact drivers relevant to the achievement of global environmental benefits

Ten assumptions were formulated, three related to objectives, two each for outcomes 1 and 2, and three for Outcome 3. A thorough evaluation of the project documents and PIF revealed that the assumptions and risks were well-articulated. The identified risks and assumptions comprehensively covered various project risks, taking into account factors such as the nature and scale of project activities, technical complexities, policy and institutional challenges, stakeholder involvement, and resilience. Although it was expected that the PIRs would identify critical risks annually, they unfortunately did not provide detailed updates of the risks, despite the reporting requirement specifically requiring such information. On the whole, the project's design displayed a commendable structure, with strong alignment observed between identified obstacles, assumptions, and project activities. Notably, there existed a commendable degree of flexibility in certain activities which allowed the project to utilize specific technical expertise without compromising the overarching objectives and outcomes of the project. In conclusion, the key assumptions and impact drivers corresponding to each barrier and outcome remain relevant to the achievement of global environmental benefits.

Annex-23: Relevance

a. Programmatic linkages and alignment between this project and national and regional projects

223. This project was designed a few years after the regional R2R project, resulting in limited coordination and linkages between the two initiatives. In addition, there were notable differences in their goals, objectives, and programmatic approaches. This project focused on five outer islands, while the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) R2R project centered solely on the Laura community of Majuro atoll. Despite these distinctions, the projects had valuable interactions and learned from each other's approaches and methods during the twice-yearly joint meetings hosted by the regional project coordination team. These exchanges facilitated the cross-fertilization of knowledge and contributed to the operationalization of the Reimaanlok process.

224. The Pacific Regional R2R program and the national R2R projects, including the regional program support project, collaborated closely with this project. Coordination with regional projects occurred through program reporting and regional training activities. Both projects aligned with outputs 2.4 and 3.4 in the project framework. In addition, project resources were allocated to fund four RMI government professionals to complete a post-graduate program organized through the regional project. Because of the pandemic and subsequent travel restrictions, the project was unable to adapt its approach by providing online R2R training modules to representatives from all 24 inhabited RMI atolls/islands. The project's human resource setups at the PIU in Majuro and UNDP MCO in Suva, Fiji, played crucial roles in ensuring the project's performance through monitoring, technical support, and supervision. Online platforms like Zoom and Teams were widely utilized for monitoring, providing technical backstopping, sharing best practices, and learning from similar initiatives. These platforms also facilitated the real-time sharing of documents.

b. Alignment between national priorities and policies and the project's goals and objectives

225. Upon reviewing the project's log-frame and ToC, the TE consultant affirmed that the project is strongly aligned with national plans and priorities. Its logical framework was deemed appropriate for addressing national needs and priorities. Stakeholders view this project as a significant national initiative, one which makes substantial contributions to the preservation of atoll biodiversity and enhancement of ecosystem resilience in the outer working atolls. Furthermore, the project's goals and objectives are positively correlated with the priorities of the GoRMI and the preferences of local communities. This alignment underscores the project's relevance and its ability to address crucial concerns shared by both national and local entities.

c. Project design and objectives were relevant to addressing the issues of gender and the last-mile population

226. The project's design and objectives were in line with the national development priorities and the strategic plans of the RMI. The project aimed to support the implementation of Reimaanlok, the National Conservation Area Plan adopted in 2008. This plan sought to conserve at least 30% of nearshore marine resources and 20% of terrestrial resources across Micronesia by 2020, with the ultimate goal of sustaining atoll biodiversity and livelihoods. The focus was on building community and ecosystem resilience to combat threats and degrading influences through the integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources. Notably, in 2019, the target was revised, making the new goal to conserve 50% of marine and 50% of terrestrial resources. In the eyes of the government and various stakeholders, this project played a significant role in contributing to RMI's sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services on the outer islands. It achieved this by mitigating pressures on natural resources and addressing community development priorities. Given these facts, the project was deemed entirely relevant for the GoRMI in effectively operationalizing the Reimaanlok process. Its focus on building community and ecosystem resilience against

threats and influences was aimed at achieving three anticipated outcomes, each with direct benefits for the nation.

227. The project took a realistic approach to addressing gender issues both in its design phase and throughout the implementation stage. By acknowledging the differences between the priorities, needs, and knowledge of men and women, the project incorporated gender considerations into seven primary actions. This deliberate inclusion ensured the proper mainstreaming of gender throughout the project's implementation. Moreover, the project document conducted a thorough analysis of gender issues and identified specific activities aimed at benefiting women. Gender-related concerns were integrated into the majority of the project's activities and aligned with government policies, plans, and programs. Gender diversity was tried to maintain during human resource management, capacity-building training, public awareness campaigns, and the equitable distribution of the project's benefits. These measures fostered a highly inclusive and gender-sensitive approach, one which promoted gender equality and empowered women throughout the project's lifecycle.

d. Project's alignment with GEF Focal Area Strategy and UNDP's strategic priorities

228. The project is pertinent as it contributes to the implementation of GoRMI's policies and the operationalization of government conservation plans and is aligned with several UNDP priorities. The project's objectives are also in line with GEF strategic priorities, supporting the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant policy provisions. During interviews, stakeholders emphasized its relevance, noting its alignment with the GEF focal area strategy, strategic documents, and specific biodiversity and international focal area objectives. Furthermore, the project is closely aligned with Regional UNDAF Outcome 1, Sub-Regional Programme Outcome 4 (UNDAF Outcome 1.1), and GoRMI Outcome 1.1. It also effectively addresses all five of the Aichi Biodiversity Strategic Goals and multiple of its targets. In addition, the project contributes to UNDP Strategic Plan Output 2.5.

229. Despite the fact that the GoRMI PAN was approved in August 2015 and commenced in October 2015 and that complementary PAN Regulations were promulgated in June 2021, progress in the evolution of the RMI PAN has been slow. The project played a pivotal role in fostering policy initiatives based on UNDP's core values of policy and governance. The requirement to address policy gaps and establish institutionalization still remains.It contributed significantly to GoRMI's SDGs, particularly SDGs 14 and 15, and has a positive impact on SDGs 5, 11, and 13.

e. Relevance to project's areas, people, and interventions and key climatic challenges

230. Four of the five outer atolls selected are situated within two of the 15 key biodiversity areas (KBAs) identified by GoRMI. Aur and Ebon are located within the Southern Ralik KBA, while Likiep and Mejit are found within the Northern Ratak KBA. The selection of these five outer atolls took place during a participatory session at the inception workshop in April 2016 and was based on several criteria. These criteria included expressed interest in the Reimaanlok process, preparedness (with extra consideration given to atolls with active women's groups), consideration of ecosystem threats, and the socioeconomic vulnerabilities of the island's inhabitants. The interventions designed for these islands were not isolated actions; instead, they were based on specific criteria. These criteria included potential benefits for protecting designated protected areas, priorities of local beneficiaries as represented by LRCs, feasibility of sustaining activities after GEF funding concludes, and opportunities for involving women and other disadvantaged groups. The relevance of selecting these particular atolls is further justified by their significant impacts from climate change, including extended periods of drought, extreme weather events, and sea-level rise.

f. Relevance to political, legal, economic, and institutional changes

231. The project responded as effectively as it could to political, legal, economic, and institutional changes in GoRMI. It placed a strong focus on promoting resilient livelihoods for local communities by enhancing five key assets or capitals—human, physical, natural, social, and financial—thereby delivering significant socio-economic benefits. The project also prioritized conservation and management practices, including the sustainable management of various essential food sources like breadfruit, pandanus, and a salt-resistant strain of taro. MoNRC educated communities about the significance and advantages of specific traditional crops and tree varieties such as breadfruit, coconut, cassava, banana, and other traditional and medicinal herbs. This collective effort aimed to enhance food security and safeguard natural resources, especially considering the challenges posed by climate change. These crops are crucial in supporting dense populations in remote areas. It also sought to protect and preserve "mo," traditional no-take areas governed by *Iroij* (Chiefs), along with implementing other site-specific restrictions on species and seasonal harvesting. These

restrictions were historically linked to land ownership and extended family lineages, but they are gradually being eroded due to the migration of TEK holders and practitioners to more developed atolls and the USA. This migration has been driven by increasing deprivation and marginalization over the years. Currently, about one-quarter of the Marshallese population has left its home. Moreover, the project has actively contributed to the wise harvesting of scarce resources such as reef fish, sharks, turtles, groupers, and sea cucumbers as their populations continue to decline. By addressing these conservation and livelihood challenges, the project is having a valuable and positive impact on the wellbeing of local communities and the sustainable management of natural resources.

Annex-24: Effectiveness

a. Success factors contributing to project success (effectiveness)

232. Focus on capacity-building initiatives: The project emphasized the progress of its activities by enhancing the capacities of IP staff, stakeholders, and the PIU as well of members of LRCs and local government staff. Both workshops on planning and on gender and socio-economic training as well as community consultations were instrumental in providing a comprehensive understanding of the project and relevant issues. These capacity-building initiatives contributed to the successful implementation of the project's objectives.
233. Manage human resource through strategic modifications: As the project plan called for, the recruitment process successfully brought on board a Project Manager, and Admin and Finance Associate. Additionally, a PAN Coordinator/Biodiversity Expert was recruited and assigned to support the PAN office. Five site coordinators were also recruited. However, instead of recruiting a Project Support Officer, the project hired a Deputy Project Manager and an Admin/Finance Associate, both of whom are based in UNDP MCO, Fiji Office. These arrangements ensured that the project would have the support and coordination it needed for smooth functioning.
234. *Build good rapport and coordinate with senior government officials:* The PIU is located within the Office of CCD/MoE in Majuro. Throughout the project's duration, the PIU team maintained a collaborative working relationship with CCD (the GEF operational focal point), CMAC, IPs, and other relevant stakeholders at both the national and local levels. This collaboration facilitated the consistent monitoring of progress and thorough analysis of implementation-related issues, enabling their timely rectification. The interviewed stakeholders, including representatives from national-level ministries and organizations, as well as the Mayors of the outer islands, reported that this project was more effective than other projects they were involved with. This positive outcome was attributed to the excellent linkage and coordination among all stakeholders involved in the project.
235. *Regularize the meeting of PSC/PB to receive strategic support:* A total of 12 targeted meetings were conducted, which significantly contributed to streamlining coordination and expediting the decision-making process. An excellent example of value for money and synergy is the establishment of a joint project board for this project and the ACWA project. This collaborative approach was highly effective in terms of utilizing resources and achieving common objectives. PSC/PB members were consistently engaged in decision-making, providing strategic guidance, and actively participating in discussions related to project issues. Their valuable input greatly influenced the project team's efforts in project delivery. Furthermore, both projects jointly presented their progress at the annual PSC/PB meeting of the Regional R2R project, fostering coordination and shared learning. In addition, the MTR Report of the Regional R2R Project was shared with both projects, enabling feedback and review from all stakeholders involved.

b. Factors that hinder the achievement of intended outcomes

236. Staff recruitment took more time than anticipated: The project's initial three years of implementation were not very effective. According to the 2020 PIR, activity achievement over the first three years was only 30.68% of the total approved amount outlined in the project document. In 2019, the pace of implementation accelerated after a slow start, but then the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, made it challenging to meet the project's targets. The process of hiring site coordinators was time-consuming primarily due to difficulties getting candidates in the outer islands to submit applications. Limited internet and phone accessibility in the remote atolls also delayed recruitment. Eventually, by August 2020, 29 months after the project began, all five coordinators had been recruited. The project document was signed by the GoRMI in February 2018, but the PIU was staffed only seven months later. These delays in staffing and other challenges contributed to the project's slow progress during the initial stages of implementation. With the RTA being the only exception, the hiring process for various positions (including CTA, National Project Director, Project Coordinator, PAN Coordinator/Biodiversity Specialist, Finance and Admin Associate, and Site Coordinators in 5 Atolls) experienced substantial delays. These delays in managing human resources had a notable impact on the execution of project activities, ranging from moderate to significant levels (see Table

3 in Annex-14). Over the course of the project, two Project Analysts were employed: Floyd Robinson (2017-2021) and Rusiate Ratuniata (2021-2023).

237. Turnover of PSC/PB members, the Mayors: Subsequent to the local election of 2019, there was a complete turnover of five Mayors, the members of the PSC/PB. Consequently, the project had to conduct a series of orientation sessions again for the newly appointed Mayors, focusing on familiarizing them with the project's objectives, goals, and the overarching vision of Reimaanlok.

238. Limited national human resources: Because its population is small, the RMI has a limited pool of qualified personnel. Consequently, the project relied on hiring external experts to provide assistance, particularly for technical matters. The recruitment process for these external experts was time-consuming, however, as noted in the 2021 PIR. The recruitment of a national consultant to lead community consultation on the demarcation of PAs and the formulation of management plans, as well as the recruitment of a technical expert to analyze benthic data[38] were also faced delays attributable to the challenges of finding suitable candidates among the limited number of qualified RMI citizens.

239. Delays in recruiting IPs: The project had signed formal contracts with only six IPs to execute project's activities in the beginning. The lack of key IPs during the implementation process created challenges in providing direction, guidance, leadership, and effective management and resulted in confusion in some local sites. Furthermore, the limited number of IPs with a specific focus on environment and biodiversity conservation and resource management also hindered the smooth delivery of project activities, particularly under Outcome 1. The process of obtaining LoAs took longer than anticipated, resulting in the project's needing to adjust the timelines of and milestones for some activities. For instance, the Marine Survey by MIMRA could not be undertaken until 2020 due to resource constraints and limited personnel within the organization. Weather conditions and poor transportation facilities in the outer atolls presented additional challenges in executing project activities. These factors collectively contributed to the complexities faced during project implementation. The project's significant milestones, including PIF approval, CEO endorsement, LPAC meeting for project endorsement, signing of the project document (marking the project's start date), inception workshop, first disbursement, as well as MTR/TE and closing dates, did not unfold according to the original plan. This divergence was attributed to various internal challenges and external obstacles, resulting in a slowdown of the project's actual implementation rate (see Table 10 in Annex-14). In addition to establishing a letter of agreement (LoA) with the MIMRA, the formation of partnerships did not encounter substantial delays. However, even minor deviations in partnerships had an impact on the project's implementation speed (see Table 11 in Annex-14).

240. Extending the contractual period for IPs could yield more favorable outcomes. To illustrate, the agreement with IOM designed to contribute to alternative livelihood interventions was somewhat delayed. The allocation of US$ 175,000 per site/atoll was deemed insufficient to encompass all the required tasks, including feasibility assessments, interventions, follow-up procedures, skill development, leadership enhancement, and the expansion of governance capacity. Availing sufficient operational funds, staff, office expenses, and overhead costs was also especially when doing so needed to take in to account the geographical challenges of operating on the outer atolls while at the same time adhering to local and traditional leadership protocols, procedures, and ceremonies. A strong correlation between the sizes of funds, the duration of the project, and the nature of activities is necessary if the project is to be able to align with the objectives of the natural resource management plans.

241. Pandemic, Zika virus and dengue fever: Cases of COVID-19, dengue fever, and Zika virus presented various risks, including the potential for delayed internal and external travel due to travel bans (PIR, 2020). For instance, due to the emergence of COVID-19 and Zika Virus, a travel ban was enforced for a duration of 12 months (from May 2019 to April 2020). Moreover, the occurrence of dengue fever (July 2019 until January 2020) further impacted the pace of implementation (see Table 15 in Annex-14).These risks significantly impacted the project's ability to achieve its targets; the COVID-19 pandemic and outbreak of dengue, in particular, disrupted project activities, forcing some activities to be put on hold until the situation returned to normalcy. Travel restrictions were enforced, preventing consultants from traveling to project sites to conduct assessments and community consultations. These restrictions posed significant challenges to the project's progress and hindered its capacity to meet its intended objectives.

242. Delays in MTR: The scheduled MTR, which was initially planned for the first quarter of 2020, had to be postponed to August 2020 due to the impact of the pandemic. As a result of this delay, the critical findings

[38] It covers comprehensive and capture all detectable resources within a study area, while others focus on a specific feature or habitat type such as seagrasses or oyster reefs.

and recommendations of the MTR, which were expected to support the projects' improved delivery, were not fully available on time. Furthermore, the delay in the MTR also affected decision-making about the no-cost extension of the project, leading to additional delays in activities. The primary reason for these delays was the hiatus between the no-cost extension in 2019-2020 and the confirmation of the costed extension, which was only realized towards the end of 2020, as reported in the IOM Annual Report of 2021.

243. Shortage of materials and supplies: The project encountered setbacks due to a shortage of the materials and supplies necessary to support alternative livelihood activities and food security interventions in the outer atolls. This scarcity was primarily caused by border closures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the outer island communities also faced challenges related to a shortage of fuel, which further impeded the smooth operation of the project's activities. In addition, the inflation of fuel prices added to the difficulties faced by the project in these communities. These factors together contributed to the obstacles experienced during project implementation on the outer islands.

244. Compliance with both the UNDP's and the government's standard operating procedures and policies: At the project level, progress was impacted by the need to adhere to both the UNDP's and the government's standard operating procedures and policies regarding finance, procurement, contractual agreements, staff recruitment, and other aspects. The compliance requirements sometimes led to challenges and delays in certain activities. In addition, the transition from the ATLAS system to the Quantum system[39], the new online system of UNDP, created some initial confusion among staff. This change further added to the complexity of the project management and required adjustments to ensure a smooth and effective transition.

245. Use of high-tech technologies in the remote areas: RMI lacked formal unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) regulations and procedures, a fact which necessitated time-consuming coordination with relevant government agencies. Operating UAVs in remote and isolated locations, such as the outer atolls, proved to be complex, and thus required innovative problem-solving mechanisms. To carry out UAV mapping, the project had to rely on third-party software for the semi-autonomous collection of photos. However, most software required an internet connection and cloud-processing, which posed challenges in areas with limited internet access. Moreover, the lack of a suitable electricity or other power supply hindered the ability of the MICS team to charge drone batteries. The lack of additional drone batteries, power banks, and portable solar panels further compounded the obstacles faced during technical surveys. These cumulative factors significantly affected the pace of progress in survey activities.

Annexo-25: Catalytic role/replication effect

In its assessment of the extent to which the project demonstrated scaling up, replication, demonstration, and/or the production of public goods, the TE found that the project had played a catalytic role in demonstrating innovative goods and services, such as application of renewable energy in raceway tank, solar water pump, and virgin coconut oil extraction using solar system which were then tested and trialed in communities. These innovations can now be easily replicated even with limited resources and drawing upon the extant skills and knowledge of the people. The principles and processes outlined in Reimaanlok are gradually being embraced and implemented on atolls other than the original five. The progress is slow, but it is steady. The project's dissemination of visibility materials and knowledge products through various online platforms played a crucial role in promoting the key messages of this project among a wide community, especially those living in the outer five atolls. The development of knowledge management products targeted at the Marshallese population is commendable. The continuous sharing of project-related testimonials, case studies, best practices, and key achievements facilitated better understanding and helped see these concepts integrated into the local context. This continual sharing approach allowed for the reevaluation, modification, and confident replication of successful initiatives. The compilation of a case studies portfolio for livelihood interventions is essential for promoting the replication and upscaling of the project's best practices and lessons across other Pacific countries with similar geographical contexts. Stakeholders, during the consultations, have communicated that the Kiwa Initiative[40] is replicating certain learnings from this project and applying them in few atolls within the RMI.

[39] Quantum, a new management system. Quantum has replaced Finance/HR/Procurement/Programme system known as ATLAS to improve programme and operations processes.

[40] It is a multi-donor program that aims to build resilience to climate change through Nature-based Solutions (NbS). It is based on simplified access to climate change adaptation and NbS financing for local and national authorities, civil society and regional organizations in the Pacific Countries and Territories, including the three French Overseas. The Kiwa Initiative Steering Committee meeting chaired by New Zealand, took place in Suva, Fiji on May 16th, 2023 decided to increase donor contributions from France and Canada, the Kiwa Initiative's budget has now reached more than EUR 75 million. The MICOAST (MICronesian Community-based Fisheries Management and NbS for COASTal resilience) project, led by OneReef, will be implemented in the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru and Republic of Palau.

The project shows great potential for replicating and scaling up its best practices and lessons learned in the remaining 19 atolls. With slight modifications to accommodate local needs, priorities, and culture, best practices can be effectively extended to other areas. Certain implementing partners, such as IOM, MICS, CMI, and Jo-Jikum, have already started replicating the project's best practices and learning on other islands. They currently receive financial assistance from other donors and development partners in collaboration with GoRMI (see Annex-17). Although some improvements could have been made in the timely and comprehensive documentation of knowledge management during project implementation, the limited number of human resources posed challenges to doing so. The replication of some successful aspects of the project was hindered because neither a sustainability plan nor an exit strategy was formulated on time, leaving questions unanswered regarding what to do and how to proceed. The delay can be attributed partly to challenges posed by COVID-19 and other external adversities. In addition, staff members were under pressure to minimize implementation gaps and accelerate the utilization of the project's financial resources.

During a mini workshop, Mayors revealed that, many best practices and lessons learned from the project had already been replicated in and around the project communities through the MIMA. Drawing inspiration from this project, a recent Mayors' workshop in Majuro (from July 10-21, 2023) also emphasized the prospects for carrying out community development work with a focus on natural resource management. The project ensured that a sense of ownership developed among government counterparts and stakeholders and fostered leadership from on the outer atolls, including among local governments and bodies such as the MIMA. Despite these challenges and a slow pace, the catalytic and replication effects of the project have been gradually moving in the right direction. There is evident enthusiasm among LRCs, women's groups, local governments, IPs, and relevant stakeholders to replicate the successful initiatives of the project in and around the pilot atolls. However, the operationalization of these efforts is still largely dependent on funding from donors and development partners, a fact which somewhat undermines the true spirit of replication conducted with financial support from GoRMI.

Annex-26: Stakeholder involvement

Green: The most important stakeholders
Blue: for moderately important (having a moderate role)
Red: for less important roles during the actual implementation of the project.

A. Direct beneficiaries and community based stakeholders:

1. Local Government Units
2. Local Resource Committees
3. Women's groups and other Community based organizations
4. Custodians of traditional knowledge
5. Landowners
6. Local Church groups

B. Project implementation stakeholders:

7. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Pacific Office
8. Climate Change Directorate (CCD)

C. National level stakeholders:

9. Coastal Management Advisory Council, CMAC
10. Ministry of Internal Affairs
11. Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority, MIMRA
12. Environmental Protection Authority, EPA
13. Ministry of Resources and Development (R&D), Division of Agriculture
14. Ministry of Resources and Development (R&D)
15. Office of the Chief Secretary (OCS)
16. Office of the President
17. Ministry of Resources and Development, Division of Trade and Investment
18. College of the Marshall Islands, CMI
19. Historic Preservation Office, HPO
20. The Council of Iroij
21. Marshall Islands Visitors Authority, MIVA
22. Ministry of Finance
23. Ministry of Education
24. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
25. National Training Council, NTC
26. Marshall Islands Mayors Association (MIMA)
27. GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) in RMI

D. Non-governmental organizations (domestic):

28. Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS)
29. Women United Together Marshall Islands, WUTMI
30. Waan Aelõñ in Maiel, WAM
31. Jo-Jikum youth NGO

E. State-owned Enterprises:

32. Marshall Islands Chamber of Commerce, MICOC
33. Atoll Marine Aquaculture Ltd.
34. MMMA (Clam Farm)

F. Regional stakeholders:

35. The Pacific Community, SPC (Pacific Regional R2R Coordination Unit)
36. Micronesia Challenge
37. Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT)
38. Pacific Island Marine Protected Area Community, PIMPAC
39. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, SPREP
40. International Union for Conservation of Nature, IUCN
41. The Nature Conservancy, TNC
42. Conservation International, CI

Annex-27: Means of transportation of each of the project sites

Atoll	Distance in mile	Travel time to reach via ship (common)	Travel time to reach via ship (charter)	Fare via charter ship	Fare via common ship	Aeroplane fare	Days in week to have common ship services	Days in week to have airplane services
Aur	84 mi	1 day	1 day	fare based on charter	$9.10	$120.00 one way	every 3 months	every week
Ebon	243 mi	2 weeks	1/2 week	fare based on charter	$28.60	$247.00 one way	every 3 months	every week
Likiep	246 mi	2 weeks	2 days	fare based on charter	$26.65	$253.00 one way	every 3 months	every week
Mejit	224 mi	1.5 week	4 days	fare based on charter	$26.00	$245.00 one way	every 3 months	every week
Wotho	417 mi	2-3 weeks	1 week	fare based on charter	$47.45	$309.00 one way	every 3 months	every 2 weeks

Annex-28: Parallel projects under operation

MICS

Table 1: List of already completed projects (in the last 5 years and so) run by MICS in the R2R working atolls

Atolls	Earlier projects	Tenure	Areas of interventions	Donors/development partners
Mejit	Community projects	2019-2020	Piggery development (assist the community in building pens for free roaming domesticated pigs)	GEF – Small Grant Program
Likiep	Likiep Atoll Management Plan	2020-2022	Completion of the Likiep Atoll Management Plan in correlation with R2R	TNC-Integrated Resource Management Fund. Plan is completed but awaiting sign-off by Likiep Community *(scheduled for July 28, 2023)*
Likiep, Wotho	Einwot Juon Campaign	2021-2022	Introduction of alternative/reusable diapers for babies on Likiep along with materials and sewing machines to produce diapers	SPC-Pacific Peoples Advancing Change.
Wotho	Coastal Mapping	2020-2023	Production of coastal inundation mapping for Wotho, Wotho Atoll, for community preparedness; tool for dissemination of information to the R2R sites (in part with the US Geological Society guide) and also for other atolls when necessary.	Unitarian Universal Service Committee (UUSC)

Jo-Jukum

Table 1: List of already completed projects (in the last 5 years and so) run by Jo-Jukum in the R2R working atolls

Name of atolls	Name of earlier projects	Tenure	Remarks
Arno atoll	R2R: 'Bwebwenato in Arno'	2020-2020	Bwebwenato in Arno book is currently still in the editing phase
Aur atoll	R2R: 'Bwebwenato in Aur'	2022-2023	Bwebwenato in Aur book is currently in the final stages of editing
Key areas of interventions	• Raise awareness on the 'Reimaanlok process' and the importance of conservation and traditional ecological knowledge to Marshallese livelihoods. • Preservation of local legends and conservation of indigenous knowledge and traditional- sustainable ways of life		

Table 2: List of most relevant government projects operating in the R2R working atolls (Jo-jukum)

Name of atolls	Name of projects	Tenure	Key areas of interventions	Remarks
Majuro *(implementing partners* *Cultural and Historical Preservation Office (HPO)/Jojikum/ Office of Commerce, Investment, & Tourism (OCIT)*	Legendary Kiosks	2021-Ongoing	Preservation of cultural sites linked to Marshallese Legends	Last stages of completion

Table 2: List of ongoing projects run by MICS in the R2R working atolls

Atolls	Ongoing projects	Tenure	Areas of interventions	Donors/development partners
Mejit, Likiep, Aur, Ebon and Wotho	Our Fish Our Future	2023 - 2026	Activities to address IUU	University of Rhode Island and Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA) based in Fiji/funded by USAID

Table 4: List of most relevant government projects operating in the R2R working atolls

Atolls	Name of projects	Tenure	Key areas of interventions	Remarks
Aur, Ebon	Integrated programs	2023-2026	States of coral reefs/health in 10 atolls using data loggers; collect data on coastal waters; Thematic areas: climate information and disaster preparedness	GCF through UNEP- *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)* -RMI

Atoll	Collaboration with other agencies	For which activities
Aur	ACWA	Water security
Ebon	ACWA	water security
Likiep	ACWA,Local government	water security, building of Dock and sea wall
Mejit	Government (WAM)	Canoe building
Wotho	ACWA, JICA, Local Government	Water security, Piggery, Airport and Ramp

IoM

Table 1: List of already completed projects (in the last 5 years and so) run by your agency in the R2R working atolls

Name of atolls	Name of earlier projects	Tenure	Key areas of interventions	Remarks
Aur	2013 Drought Response	2013-2014	Food and WASH	
Aur	2016 El Nino Drought	2016 – 2018	Food and WASH	

Ebon	Peace building Fund Climate Security	2021-2023	Climate Security, Social Cohesion	
Ebon	Spotlight Initiative	2019-2022	Gender equality, Sexual and Reproductive Health	
Likiep	2013 Drought Response	2013-2014	Food and WASH	
Likiep	2016 El Nino Drought	2016 – 2018	Food and WASH	
Likeip	Peacebuilding Fund Climate Security	2021-2023	Climate Security, Social Cohesion	
Mejit	2013 Drought Response	2013-2014	Food and WASH	
Mejit	2016 El Nino Drought	2016 – 2018	Food and WASH	
Mejit	Inspiring Women's Advancement through Collective Action	2020-2023	NGO grant on traditional knowledge transfer for women on mat weaving	
Wotho	2013 Drought Response	2013-2014	Food and WASH	
Wotho	2016 El Nino Drought	2016 – 2018	Food and WASH	
Wotho	Rainwater Harvesting Improvement Project	2017	Water Security	
Wotho	National Adaptation Plan Community Consultations	2022-2023	Data collection on climate change impacts and Climate change adaptation	

Table 2: List of ongoing projects run by your agency in the R2R working atolls

Name of atolls	Name of ongoing projects	Tenure	Key areas of interventions	Remarks
Aur	Community Based Disaster Risk Management Emergency Communications	2021-2023	Disaster Risk Reduction, Emergency Communications Training, GIS mapping	
Aur	Installation of Emergency Communications Network	2023-2024	Installation of Emergency communications (HF and VHF radio stations)	
Aur	COVID-19 RESPONSE: Improving WASH Access in Public Facilities in the RMI	2023-2024	Installation of hand washing stations, Risk Communications and Community Engagement	
Ebon	Community Based Disaster Risk Management Emergency Communications	2021-2023	Disaster Risk Reduction, Emergency Communications Training, GIS mapping	
Ebon	Installation of Emergency Communications Network	2023-2024	Installation of Emergency communications (HF and VHF radio stations)	
Likiep	Community Based Disaster Risk Management Emergency Communications	2021-2023	Disaster Risk Reduction, Emergency Communications Training, GIS mapping	
Likiep	Installation of Emergency Communications Network	2023-2024	Installation of Emergency communications (HF and VHF radio stations)	
Likiep	COVID-19 RESPONSE: Improving WASH Access in Public Facilities in the RMI	2023-2024	Installation of hand washing stations, Risk Communications and Community Engagement	

Likiep	IMPACT	2020-2023	Food Security and Disaster Risk Management Training	
Mejit	Community Based Disaster Risk Management Emergency Communications	2021-2023	Disaster Risk Reduction, Emergency Communications Training, GIS mapping	
Mejit	Installation of Emergency Communications Network	2023-2024	Installation of Emergency communications (HF and VHF radio stations)	
Wotho	Community Based Disaster Risk Management Emergency Communications	2021-2023	Disaster Risk Reduction, Emergency Communications Training, GIS mapping	
Wotho	Installation of Emergency Communications Network	2023-2024	Installation of Emergency communications (HF and VHF radio stations)	

MoNRC

Table 1: List of already completed projects (in the last 5 years and so) run by MoNRC in the R2R working atolls

Name of atolls	Name of earlier projects	Tenure	Key areas of interventions	Donor/development partners
Likiep, Aur, Mejit	Outer Island Extension Agent Program	2018-2022	Increase/promote agriculture activities in the outer island; Agriculture Development	MoNRC
Aur, Mejit, Likiep	Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA)	2018-2018	Status and Trends of RMI Forests	US Forest Service
RMI	Agroforestry & Climate Change Website	2014-2017	Agroforestry & Climate Change	USGS Grant, USFS, and CMI (technical assistance provided through UH)
RMI	Developing methods to maps and measures agroforestry species with imagery taken from drones	2017-2020	Agroforestry & monitoring	USFS Grant, UHH, MICS
RMI	MICCO19+ NPFSGSGP	2021-2022	Food & nutrition security impacts due to COVID19	EU, USAID, SPC

Table 2: List of ongoing projects run by MoNRC in the R2R working atolls

Name of atolls	Name of ongoing projects	Tenure	Key areas of interventions	Donor/development partners
Mejit, Aur, Wotho, Likiep	Sawmill Program	2018 - ongoing	Utilizing senile trees; Coconut replanting	Local Government
Likiep, Mejit, Aur, Wotho	Forest Stewardship Program	2021- recently	Coconut Rehabilitation, replanting, and sawmill program	USFS

Table 3: List of upcoming projects (in pipelines) developed by MoNRC in the R2R working atolls

Name of atolls	Name of upcoming projects	Anticipated tenure	Key areas of interventions	Donor/development partners
RMI	RAS5098 "Improving the Resilience of Crops to Climate Change through Mutation Breeding- Phase 11 (SAPI)	2021- TBC	Food Security & Conservation	IAEA

Table 4: List of most relevant government projects operating in the R2R working atolls (GEF/SGP)

Name of atolls	Name of projects	Tenure	Key areas of interventions	Donor/development partners
Mejit	Conservation Program	2018- 2020	Reimaanlok	UNDP (SGP)
Mejit Island, Wotho Atoll	Conservation Program	2016-	Alternative Livelihood	UNDP (SGP)
Mejit	RMI National Invasive Species Project	2019- 2024	Marine Invasive	GEF

Table 5: List of most relevant government projects operating in the R2R working atolls

Institution Name	Funding Source	Program / Project	Purpose	Conservation benefits	Site(s)	Start Date	End Date	Total Budget
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	MNRC	Sawmill Training	Capacity Building & Forest Resource Management	To facilitate agricultural production by creating new lands for farming, promote replanting and utilize senile trees provide additional income from coconut and other timber products.	Likep, Maloelap Mejit, Aur, Wotje Namu, Jaluit, Lae, Majuro, Wotho, Ailinglaplap, Arno, Kwajalein	2018	Ongoing	$15,996.85

Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	MNRC	Sawmill Program	To utilize senile trees	Coconut replanting	Likep, Maloelap Mejit, Aur, Wotje Namu, Jaluit, Lae, Majuro, Wotho, Ailinglaplap, Arno, Kwajalein	2018	Ongoing	$135,000.00
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	MNRC Funds	Outer Island Extension Agent Program	Agricultural Development	To increase/promote agricultural actvities in the outer islands. Each extension agent undergo a two week training on livestock production, agroforestry, pest management, horticulture etc.,	Wotje, Likiep, Namu, Jaluit, Aur(Tobal), Mejit, Ailinglaplap, Maloelap	2018`	2022	$25,664.29
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	MNRC Funds	Nursery Renovation	Enhance Food Security by distributing varieties of fruits and vegetable seedlings for free to the public	To promote food security and plant conservation by producing and distributing seedlings (vegetables, fruits and trees) in RMI with the inclusion of servicing communities with equipment and nursery management trainings	Majuro	2019	2020	$169,000
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	MNRC Funds	Bolan Weto "NRC Laura Station" Renovation	Enhance Food Security	To grow priority crops such as taro, sweet potato and cassava. Hold workshops/trainings/retreats	Majuro	?	?	$350,000
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	MNRC Funds	Narik Weto Agriculture Development	Enhance Food Security	Research site-Tissue Culture Facility & Tree nursery	Majuro	2022	2024	$700K

Marshall Islands Conservation Society	SPC (PPAC)	Awareness	Awareness	Campaign aiming at reducing single-plastic use, seek alternative products with private sector; and include single-plactics in the current RMI Plastic ban legislaation	Majuro	2019	2020	$ 8,600.00
Marshall Islands Conservation Society	TNC	Conservation Program	Coastal Fisheries	Lead LMMA training and application on Likiep and Majuro Atolls. Enhance the integration of data for Management Plan design.	Laura - Majuro	2020	2021	$ 21,000.00
Marshall Islands Conservation Society	TNC	Conservation Program	Coastal Fisheries	Pilot the establishment of a replicable Fishers Association structure on Majuro Atoll; the aim is to organize fishers groups to be prepared for fisheries regulations discussions	Laura - Majuro	2019	2020	$ 30,000.00
Marshall Islands Conservation Society	RMI R2R (GEF)	Conservation Program	Reimaanlok	Pilot the Reimaanlok Terrestrial Baseline Survey methdology on 4 R2R sites (all except Wotho), including a flood risk assessment; feasibility study on Mejit Island; finalize Management Plan of Wotho; Complete alternative livelihood measures on Wotho Atoll; Marine baseline survey on Likiep Atoll;	Mejit, Aur, Likiep, Ebon, Wotho	2019	2020	$ 275,000.00
Marshall Islands Conservation Society	NOAA CRNR (via MCT)	Env. Monitoring	Env. Monitoring	Increased understanding of underwater temperature variation within Majuro Atoll. Bleaching prediction and identification of sites with overall higher temperature.	Majuro	2018	2019	$ 21,800.00

Marshall Islands Conservation Society	NOAA CRNR (via MIMRA)	Env. Monitoring	Env. Monitoring	Monitoring of Majuro Atoll coral reef (annual time series)	Majuro	2017	2018	$ 26,000.00
Marshall Islands Conservation Society	NSF	Awareness	Capacity raising	8-week internship program for 8 Marshallese students, focused on researching the impacts of pollution on near-shore marine ecosystems (specifically; algae and nutrients)	Majuro and Arno Atolls	2018	2021	$ 100,000.00
Marshall Islands Conservation Society	UoG	Coastal Fisheries	Fisheries Monitoring	Year-long fisheries dependent survey of 7 main Majuro Fish Markets; understanding of fisheries trends, reef and pelagic fish landings, details on reef fish catch composition (size, species). Critical info for fisheries regulation	Majuro	2018	2019	$ 8,500.00
	MCT							$ 13,445.00
	MIMRA							$ 22,860.00
Marshall Islands Conservation Society	UNDP (SGP)	Conservation Program	Reimaanlok	Complete the final steps of the Reimaanlok and provide additional resources for alternative livelihood measures tested under BUMB (dry-litter piggeries)	Mejit Island	2018	2020	$ 50,000.00
Marshall Islands Conservation Society	UNDP (SGP)	Awareness	Awareness	Awareness of climate change impacts; "art-based" exhibitions focused on the environment; removal of trash (beach clean-ups);	Majuro	2018	2020	$ 46,875.00
Marshall Islands Conservation Society	UNDP (SGP)	Conservation Program	Alternative Livelihood	Implementation of tailored cosystem-based adaptation measures; dry-litter pig pens, behaviour change campaign, terrestrial protected area draft on Mejit. MPA drafting, fisheries status report, sustainable fish market feasibility report on Wotho.	Mejit Island & Wotho Atoll	2016		$ 41,000.00

Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC) & Taiwan Technical Mission	ROC Taiwan/ICDF	Horticulture & Livestock Project	Enhance Food Security & Capacity Building	Agroecology and sustainable food systems are important principles which TTM practices through their zero– waste farming and "circular economy" methods.	Outer Islands, except Majuro Kwajelein Atolls	2015	Ongoing	Unknown, ICDF funded. RMI--ROC grant is used when necessary
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	EU	RENI	Enhance Resilience to the shocks and insecurities resulting from extreme El Niño events	Food security measures include increasing the availability of local food crops, especially more drought resilient crops, improving soil management practices, and establishing nurseries. Women especially will be involved in home gardening and trained in food preservation methods.	Ailuk & Kwajelein (Santo)	2017	2020	$ 48,582.36
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	US Forest Service	Forest Invnetory and Analysis (FIA)	RE-measurement the (FIA) plots established in the (RMI) in 2008.	Status and Trends of RMI Forests	Jaluit, Aur, Majuro, Kwajalein, Ailuk, Maloelap, Mili, Ailinglaplap, Arno, Likiep, Mejit, Rogelap, and Wotje	2018	2018	$ 234,745.00
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC) & CMI Land Grant	US Forest Service	Forest Stewardship	Agroforestry & Capacity Building	Promotion of traditional crops (pandanus & breadfruit) and management for food security and coastal protection. Diversed agroforestry stabilizes the environment	Ebeye, Majuro & Jaluit	2015	2018	$50,000

Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC) & CMI Land Grant	US Forest Service	Forest Stewardship	Agroforestry & Capacity Building	Promotion of non-invasive fruit trees and traditional crops (pandanus & breadfruit). Diversed agroforestry stabilizes the environment	Ebeye, Majuro & Jaluit	2019	2020	$40,000
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC) (technical assistance provided through grant to MCT)	US Forest Service	Update Forest Action Plan (FAP)	Forest Resource Management	Draft an analysis of forest conditions and trends, and provides long-term strategies. FAP identifies the Marshalls' highest priorities for forest resource management and needs for assistance from the (USDA) Forest Service.	RMI	2020	2020	$ 20,000.00
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC) and CMI (technical assistance provided through grant to UH)	USGS grant, USFS staff time	Agroforestry & Climate Change website	Agroforestry & Climate Change	Provide current information about seasonal and ENSO changes, and long-term information about climate change, linked to agroforestry recommendations.	RMI	2014	2017	$300,000
MNRC (technical assistance provided through grant to UHH)	USFS grant, UHH staff time	Developing methods to map and measure agroforestry species with imagery taken from drones	Agroforestry & monitoring	Technology development and training to collect drone imagery, use artificial intelligence to recognize species (coconut, pandanus and breadfruit), and produce maps and size metrics of canopy trees.	RMI	2017	2020	$ 40,000.00
MNRC (internship)	USFS grant to UHH	Internships	Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle	Two Marshallese UHH students engaged in student internship with Hawaii Dept. Agriculture on CRB detection, monitoring and public education.	RMI	2016?	2016?	$ 10,000.00
MNRC & partners (technical assistance)	USFS grant to MCT	Bridge FIA with MC	Forest monitoring	Add permanent plots to the plot network funded by the USFS Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA, above) and	RMI	2017	2020	$ 160,000.00

				add data gathering of interest to the Marshalls				
MNRC (travel assistance for meetings & training)	USFS grants to MCT and Western Forestry Leadership Coalition	Training & Pacific Islands Forestry Committee meeting attendance	Capacity building	Training in arboriculture, monitoring, forest nursery management, and additional topics. Inclusion in the Pacific Islands Forestry Committee of the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition,	RMI	2015	2020	$ 30,000.00
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	MCT	Scholarship Program	Conservation Education & Capacity Building	Increased understanding of traditional Agricultural practices in RMI in the face of climate change	Majuro	2018	2020	$60,000
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	USDA	Breadfruit Agroforestry Training Program	Practices for environmental and local economic revitalization	To promote breadfruit grown together with other important crops as a resilient source of nutrition and food security; Agroforestry management	Majuro	2018	2018	
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	None	Laura Farmers Association	Organization Reactivation to reduce food imports thus enhance food security	Farmers in RMI uses friendly farming methods that maintains natural habitats. Farmers avoid use inorganic fertilizers to improve crop fertility however uses natural ingredients that promotes crop & soil health.	Majuro	2020	Ongoing	$0

Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	GMRI	Agriculture Sector Plan ASP (2021-2031)	To enhance agricultural development in the RMI	Hiring of consultant and development of plan.	RMI	2019	2020	$40,000
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	UNESCAP	Development of Agriculture Sector Plan Costing	To enhance agricultural development in RMI	Hiring of consultant and development of costing Activities needed to achieve the outputs and goals are not costed, which limits capacity to inform budget funding requirements. More so, a costed ASP could inform external funding processes of development partners. Given this context, the RMI government has requested for technical assistance from ESCAP to cost the actions needed to implement the ASP.	RMI	2021	2021	$15,000
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	EU, USAID, SPC	MICCO19 + NPFSGP	To address food & nutrition security impacts due to COVID19 through strengthened sustainable and resilient food systems and good governance	Access to seeds, clonal seedlings, farming tools, materials and input to upgrade household and formal production. Integrated backyard gardening training packages shared and promoted Household Livestock production systems setup, promoted and improved Increase awareness	RMI	2021	2022	$397,713

Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC), Island Sustainability Unit (ISU, Sophia University Japan)	UNDP (RCO)	Food Systems Summit Dialogue	To address the current issues in RMI Food Systems and develop game-changing solutions	Game-changing solutions used to develop pathways which are correlated to pre-existing RMI plans/policies	RMI	2021	2021	$25,000
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	MASHAV International Agricultural Training Center (MATC)	Israel-Pacific Food Security Alliance	Establish long-term agricultural training and capacity building program.	1st Virtual Training (Agricultural Extension for Intensive Vegetable Production: Methods & Tools): Training on how to establish an extension program for local farmers. 2nd Virtual Training (Irrigation & Fertigation): Training on modern irrigation technology suitable for arid conditions and for water conservation	Majuro	2021	2021	
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC), Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS), US Forest Service and the University of Hawaii at Hilo	US Forest Service (USFS)	Forest Stewardship Program	Coconut Rehabilitation, replanting and sawmill program	Developing techniques to use satellite imagery to detect coconut health and pest conditions at the landscape-level.	Likep, Maloelap Mejit, Aur, Wotje Namu, Jaluit, Lae, Majuro, Wotho, Ailinglaplap, Arno, Kwajalein	2021	Recently	TBC
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	USFS	Urban & Community Forestry Program (Ajeltake Nursery)	To address climate change issue in the Marshall Islands/ Enhance indigenous trees/ food security	Coastal planting with salt tolerant trees along the coastal lines; Agroforestry management.	Majuro	2022	Ongoing	$104,000

Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	USFS	Forest Health Program	To control invasive plants, pest and diseases that are impacting a lot of forest and crop trees	Increase understanding of invasive plants, pest and diseases.	Majuro	2022	Ongoing	$50,000
SPREP North Sub-regional Office	GEF	RMI National Invasive Species Project	Invasive	Eradication of invasive rodents, plants, aves etc. This project is beneficial to the general health of biodiversity in RMI	Majuro, Mili, Lip and Mejit	2019	2024	$ 800,000.00
SPREP North Sub-regional Office	GEF	Inform Project	Setting Environmental Data Portal	The Inform project will help Pacific islands have reliable access to their own national datasets for environmental information, as well as a process and guide for information use standards. Capacity will be built to develop content that is then inputted into the reporting process. Additionally, the capacity of officers will be enhanced with regards to the best ways to share the information they have so it is well used by their decision makers and different communities. The information provided within the databases will also help policy development, monitoring and evaluation, and national planning.	Regional Project	2017	2021	$4.3 Million

Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	GEF	Sustainable Food Systems and Integrated Land/Seascape Management in the Marshall Islands	Enhance Food Security & Agricultural Development	Develop sustainable food systems focusing on the core elements of mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors and supporting ground implementation of sustainable land management to achieve land degradation neutrality.	TBC	TBC	TBC	$2,100,913
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	UNESCAP	Development of Agriculture Sector Plan Costing	To enhance agricultural development in RMI	Hiring of consultant and development of costing Activities needed to achieve the outputs and goals are not costed, which limits capacity to inform budget funding requirements. More so, a costed ASP could inform external funding processes of development partners. Given this context, the RMI government has requested for technical assistance from ESCAP to cost the actions needed to implement the ASP.	RMI	2021	2021	$15,000
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	MNRC Funds	Bolan Weto "NRC Laura Station" Renovation	Enhance Food Security	To grow priority crops such as taro, sweet potato and cassava. Hold workshops/trainings/retreats	Majuro	2022	2024	$350,000
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	MNRC Funds	Narik Weto Agriculture Development	Enhance Food Security	Research site-Tissue Culture Facility & Tree nursery	Majuro	2022	2024	$700K

Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	IAEA	RAS5098 "Improving the Resilience of Crops to Climate Change through Mutation Breeding — Phase II (SAPI)"	Food Security & Conservation	Capacity Building & Training on mutation breeding to improve crop resiliency	RMI	TBC	TBC	TBC
SPREP North Sub-regional Office	GCF	RMI Readiness 2	Strengthening of NDA and Direct Access Entitles	• Implement the monitoring, oversight and streamlining of climate finance framework – will articulate the need for better data and information keeping so as for monitoring progress on climate finance activities in the RMI • Continue stakeholder consultations in terms of execution of national project activities and review of the country programme, and test /streamline national procedures (RMI Handbook developed in Readiness 1) as required.	Nationally	2020		
SPREP North Sub-regional Office	EU: EDF-11	PacWaste Plus	Strengthening Waste Management	PacWaste Plus seeks to generate improved economic, social, health and environmental benefits for Pacific Island Countries arising from stronger regional economic integration and the sustainable management of natural resources and the environment.	Regional	2020	2024	€16.5 million

Annex-29: Updated result framework

Green: Completed, indicator shows successful achievements	Yellow: Indicator shows expected completion by the EOP	Red: Indicator shows poor achievement – unlikely to be completed by Project closure

Objective
To sustain atoll biodiversity and livelihoods by building community and ecosystem resilience to threats and degrading influences through integrated management of terrestrial and coastal resources

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Midterm target level	End of project target level	Cumulative progress since project start
Legal, policy and institutional frameworks in place for conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems (Indicator 2.5 from UNDP Strategic Plan)	Legal framework is in place, but institutional and regulatory frameworks are generally lacking	Similar status as baseline	1	On track to achieve project target by the end of project. Protected Area Network (PAN) Act Approved by Cabinet and enacted by the Marshall Island Marine Resource Authority (MIMRA). PAN Regulations approved by the MIMRA Board in June 2021. The PAN Office officially launched its program in March 2022. The project continues to provide financial support to the PAN Office (See Outcome 2 for details). The Blue Fee (scheme and legislation development) was repealed because it was not supported by the RMI Government. This was replaced with the Food Security Interventions (See Outcome 1 for details).
Number of direct project beneficiaries	Negligible as Reimaanlok implementation is in early stages	500 total, including 250 women	2000 total, including 1000 women	**Aur** Male.....172 Female.....145 Total.....317 **Ebon** Male.....260 Female.....209 Total.....469 **Likiep** Male.....114

				Femal.....114 Total.....228 **Mejit** Male.....119 Female.....111 Total.....230 **Wotho** Male.....44 Female.....44 Total.....88 **Total Beneficiaries** **Male : 709** **Femal: 667** **Total : 1,376** **Note:** The population of the 5 sites significantly decreased between 2011 and 2021 (migration to urban atolls and internationally)

The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:	On track
Evidence uploaded:	YES

Component 1: Expanding and Sustaining RMI Protected Areas Network

Outcome 1: Conservation areas delineated, declared and efforts sustained in up to 5 priority atolls to meet Reimaanlok targets and contributing to the Micronesia Challenge and Aichi targets

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Midterm target level	End of project target level	Cumulative progress since project start
Terrestrial and marine ecosystems under enhanced management	New protected areas (number) and coverage (hectares) of unprotected ecosystems: 0	New protected areas and coverage of unprotected ecosystems: Number of new terrestrial PAs: 2	New protected areas and coverage of unprotected ecosystems: Number of new terrestrial PAs: 5	New TPA: XXha NEW MPA: XXha Total TPA:26,691ha Total MPA: 472.42ha No of TPA:

		Coverage of new terrestrial PAs: 100 ha Number of new marine PAs: 2 Coverage of new nearshore marine PAs: 10,000 ha	Coverage of new terrestrial PAs: 502 ha Number of new marine PAs: 5 Coverage of new nearshore marine PAs: 30,550 ha	Mejit Atoll: 2 Wotho Atoll: Whole Island (including 2 TPA with specific rules) Likiep & Aur- still under work MPA: 1) Ebon Atoll Ebon Atoll delineated a network of (2) MPAs with a total nearshore coverage 13,285 ha 2) Wotho Atoll Total nearshore marine area under protection: 13,406.26 hectares (pg 24: Wotho Management Plan) Terrestrial protected areas: 432 ha under management including 236.05 hectares under specific local PA rules. 3) Likiep Atoll Likiep MPA network delineation was drafted in Q2 2022 (Likiep Management Plan draft as evidence). The final version of the network is scheduled for completion before the end of 2022. Likiep TPA delineation shall be completed following the production of the terrestrial survey outputs (vegetation map and flood risk assessment model). The data was acquired in Q2 2022. The TPA and MPA delineation activities must be completed jointly, during a community consultation. 4) Mejit Mejit MPA and TPA network delineation was completed Mejit Island approved the creation of two terrestrial protected areas for a total of 40.42 ha. 5) Aur The Aur Management Plan, protected areas spatial analysis, and delineation work have been drafted as of May 2023 by RPs and CTA. Community review, NRMP sign off, and PA physical delineation is expected in Q3 2023. Below is some of the progress/status related to this component. * All marine survey expeditions (data collection) and reports (health of the reef reports) were completed (reports available). * Terrestrial baseline surveys included a revisit of 4 project sites to cover the main inhabited islets. The main project outputs (e.g., flood risk assessment model) have been drafted and dissemination is ongoing.

				* Updated cultural surveys for Likiep and Wotho are at a standstill. HPO rep (Susan Underbrink) has not been responsive since mid Q3 2022. No significant progress since last PIR. 3) The UNDP-RMIEPA LOA is in place.
Number of Resource Management Plans (NRMPs), inclusive of integrated terrestrial and coastal resource assessments and management strategies, approved by local resource committees and under implementation	1 (Aur)NRMP completed	2 NRMPs completed	5 NRMPs completed and adopted	The Likiep Resource Management Plan final draft is ready for signing in Q2 2023. Number of Management Plan Completed: 4 (Likiep, Mejit, Wotho, Ebon) Number approved: 3 Below is detailed the progress in the formulation of the management plans. 1) The Ebon Resource Management Plan was completed and approved by the local government and community. 2) The Wotho Resource Management Plan was completed and approved by the local government, traditional leadership, and community 3) The Mejit Resource Management Plan was completed and approved by the local government and community. 4) The Aur Management Plan is still under development. The SEM and marine survey findings were incorporated but protected areas, rules/measures, and the Action Plan remains incomplete. The findings of the LEAP survey were still not made available by the project partner responsible (IOM) resulting in drafting delays. It is due for completion before the end of Q3 2023. 5) The Likiep Management Plan is near to completion (80%) The Food Security Intervention (reallocation from Blue Fee) implemented by Ministry of Natural Resource and Commerce is on track. All communities received the supplies and training planned (e.g., tree planting, food storage, cooking demos). Wotho or Mejit? and Aur were completed in 2022-2023. For evidence, refer to the Wotho and Aur MoNRC Trip reports. In support of the sites' Natural Resource Management Plan, the project provided resources ($30k) to the local government and communities of the 5 project sites to implement their NRMP Action Plan. The PIU has been responsible for (leading) the procurement process. Two sites (Ebon and Wotho) utilized most of the resources provided while the procurement of the other three sites is ongoing.

The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:	On track with shortcomings. The Aur NRMP has been significantly delayed by RP (IOM) failure to provide the necessary survey findings needed to draft the document. Measures were taken to set this activity on track for completion before project closure. The support provided to the 5 sites NRMP Action Plan has not been as effective as planned (procurement process challenges).

Evidence uploaded:	YES

Component 2: Improved Governance for Integrated Atoll Management

Outcome 2: Supportive policies, institutions and communities in place to ensure successful implementation of the Reimaanlok vision

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Midterm target level	End of project target level	Cumulative progress since project start
Position of PAN Coordinator, overseeing operation of the PAN office, is institutionalized	PAN Office is not operational, and there is no PAN Coordinator in place	PIU functioning as interim PAN Office and PAN Coordinator financed with project funds	Position of PAN Coordinator is institutionalized as a permanent position	Target Achieved The project continues to provide financial support to the PAN Coordinator (recruited on 20/12/2019 and position institutionalized under MIMRA). PAN office (housed under Marshall Islands Marine Resource Authority (MIMRA) is in operation with the PAN program launched in March 2022.
Number of RMI professionals trained in integrated approaches through Regional Pacific R2R Program	0, by the project	2	4, including 2 women	The College of Marshall Island successfully completed its activity in May 2023 including: 1) Build the capacity of four graduates, currently working in Land Grant and the Agriculture Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce, in the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Once trained it is expected that they will be adjunct instructors in the new AS in Agricultural Education for Health and Sustainable Livelihoods which will be offered at CMI from Fall 2022 2) Train 80 potential students in the AS degree in four summer camps held in Majuro, Ebeye, Jaluit and Wotje. The purpose of the camps was to provide skills and encourage interest in Agriculture through transitional activities. In AWP 2023, the project engaged RP (IOM) to conduct necessary training workshops to support the sustainability of the alternative livelihood interventions at the project sites (Ebon: virgin coconut oil; Likiep: giant clam; Aur: giant clam and handicraft; Mejit and Wotho). As of May 2023, most training programs were completed (handicraft training scheduled for Q3 2023).

The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:	On track for the two key indicators. The project continues supporting this outcome with training workshops specific to alternative livelihood interventions.
Evidence uploaded:	YES

Component 3: Knowledge Management and Monitoring & Evaluation
Outcome 3: Accessible data and information systems and improved linkages and collaboration with regional initiatives to support adaptive management of the biodiversity in RMI

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Midterm target level	End of project target level	Cumulative progress since project start
National repository for spatial biodiversity and resource management information enhanced and sustained	ConservationGIS database and online clearing house established with user access protocols established and operational	ConservationGIS database and online clearing house updated with new data from 5 project sites	ConservationGIS database and online clearing house updated with new data including TEK data from all 5 project sites	MIMRA was confirmed as the NSAF host. Specialized IT equipment (desktop, screens) and software (ArcGIS) were procured to MIMRA to support the NSAF operation. Spatial data collected throughout the project period shall be provided to MIMRA prior to project closure.
Cultural expressions (stories, chants, dances, oration, material production, proverbs) linked to resource management documented and mapped in the 5 project sites management plans, and celebrated annually via inter-generational knowledge transmission events	Cultural expressions (stories, chants, dances, oration, material production, proverbs) linked to resource management documented and mapped in the 5 project sites management plans, and celebrated annually via inter-generational knowledge transmission events	TEK surveys completed in the 5 project sites, and their management plans incorporate materials and activities linking cultural expressions and resource management	The 5 project sites hold and document (including at least one video documentary) a public event linking cultural expressions and resource management and which is organized by, with and for an intergenerational gathering of community members	The second LVG with Jo-Jikum was in place in Q3 2022. All field activities were completed by May 2023. The final report is expected in early June.

The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:	On track although lessons-sharing and capacity building opportunities are not materializing within the timeframe expected.
Evidence uploaded:	N/A
Explanation why the evidence was not provided:	The second LVG with JoJikum is currently under review by PIU/UNDP. The LOA draft is available upon request.

Annex-30: Updated GEF tracking tool

GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework Worksheet

Please complete relevant indicators and provide justifications in the textbox at the bottom.

GEF ID:	5544
Agency ID:	5685
Reported by:	
Date:	15/05/2023

Table of Content

Conserving and Sustainably Using Biodiversity
Sustainably Managing and Restoring Land
Reducing GHG Emissions
Strengthening Transboundary Water Management
Reducing Chemicals and Waste
Direct Beneficiaries

CONSERVING & SUSTAINABLY USING BIODIVERSITY

Core Indicator 1 — **Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management**

	TOTAL HECTARES (1.1 + 1.2)			
	Expected		Achieved	
	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	502.0	502.0	-	623.3

Indicator 1.1 — **Terrestrial protected areas newly created**

Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category *(please select from the dropdown list)*	Expected *(hectares)*		Achieved *(hectares)*	
			PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Wotho Terrestrial PA		<pls select>	82.0	82.0	-	
Wotho Riwut PA		*VI PA with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources*			-	118.1
Wotho Mo Terrestrial PA		*Other*			-	118.0
Mejit Terrestrial PA		<pls select>	67.0	67.0		
Mejit Taro Rehab PA		*VI PA with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources*				
Mejit NW shoreline PA		*Other*				
Aur Terrestrial PA		<pls select>	67.0	67.0	-	TBC
Ebon Terrestrial PA		<pls select>	101.0	101.0	-	-
Likiep Terrestrial PA		<pls select>	185.0	185.0	-	387.3
		<pls select>				
		<pls select>				
		<pls select>				
		Sum >>>	502.0	502.0	-	623.3

Indicator 1.2 — **Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness**

Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category *(please select from the dropdown list)*	Hectares				MET	
			Baseline		Achieved		Baseline	
			PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	PIF Stage	Endorsement
		<pls select>						
		<pls select>						
		<pls select>						
		Sum >>>	-	-	-	-	-	-

Core Indicator 2 — **Marine protected areas created or under improved management**

	Total Hectares (2.1 + 2.2)			
	Expected		Achieved	
	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	30,550.0	30,550.0	13,408.2	59,071.2

Indicator 2.1 — **Marine protected areas newly created**

Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category *(please select from the dropdown list)*	Expected *(hectares)*		Achieved *(hectares)*		
			PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
Wotho Marine PA		<pls select>	3,780.0	3,780.0	-		
Wotho NE PA		*VI PA with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources*			1,560.0	1,560.0	
Wotho NW PA		*Other*			779.0	779.0	
Wotho Mo Marine PA		*Ia Strict Nature Reserve*			630.1	630.1	
Wotho Commercial PA		*VI PA with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources*			10,439.1	10,439.1	
Mejit Marine PA		<pls select>	160.0	160.0	-		
Aur Marine PA		<pls select>	8,230.0	8,230.0	-	TBC	
Ebon Marine PA		<pls select>	3,920.0	3,920.0			
Ebon East Marine PA		*VI PA with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources*			N/A	N/A	5,657.0 Completed by MIN
Ebon West Marine PA		*VI PA with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources*			N/A	N/A	5,339.0 Completed by MIN
Likiep Marine PA		<pls select>	14,460.0	14,460.0	-	45,663.0	
		<pls select>					
		<pls select>					
		Sum >>>	30,550.0	30,550.0	13,408.2	59,071.2	

Indicator 2.2 — **Marine protected areas under improved management effectiveness**

Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category *(please select from the dropdown list)*	Hectares				MET	
			Baseline		Achieved		Baseline	
			PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	PIF Stage	Endorsement
		<pls select>						
		<pls select>						
		<pls select>						
		Sum >>>	-	-	-	-	-	-

Core Indicator 4 — **Area of landscapes under improved practices**

Note: The sub-indicator 'Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems' is available under the group of indicators titled 'Sustainably managing and restoring land'

	TOTAL HECTARES (4.1 + 4.2 + 4.3 + 4.4)			
	Expected		Achieved	
	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	-	-	-	-

Indicator 4.1 — **Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity**

	Expected *(hectares)*		Achieved *(hectares)*	
	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Sum >>>	-	-	-	-

Indicator 4.2 — **Area of landscapes under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations**

Third party certification(s):	Expected *(hectares)*		Achieved *(hectares)*	
	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Sum >>>	-	-	-	-

Indicator 4.4 — **Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) or other forest loss avoided (please select the drop-down menu)**

Indicate the names and areas of forests targeted. A counterfactual is needed to estimate the loss avoided, such as against the baseline or to the "business as usual" scenario. In the case of HCVF, Agencies should justify how forests met one or more of the High Conservation Value criteria if the forest has yet to be recognized by the related network.	Expected *(hectares)*		Achieved *(hectares)*	
	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
<pls select>				
Sum >>>	-	-	-	-

Indicator 4.5 — **Terrestrial OECMs supported**

Name of OECM	WDPA ID	Expected *(hectares)*		Achieved *(hectares)*	
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Sum >>>		-	-	-	-

Core Indicator 5 — **Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity**

Indicator 5.1 — **Fisheries under third-party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations**

Third party certification(s):	Expected *(number)*		Achieved *(number)*	
	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

Indicator 5.4 — **Marine OECMs supported**

Name of OECM	WDPA ID	Expected *(hectares)*		Achieved *(hectares)*	
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Sum >>>		-	-	-	-

USTAINABLY MANAGING AND RESTORING LAND

Core Indicator 3 — **Area of land and ecosystems under restoration**

		TOTAL HECTARES (3.1 + 3.2 + 3.3 + 3.4)			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		-	-	-	-

Indicator 3.1	Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration (choose from drop-down menu)	Expected (hectares)		Achieved (hectares)		
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
	<pls select>					
	<pls select>					
	Sum >>>	-	-	-	-	
Indicator 3.2	Area of forest and forest land under restoration	Expected (hectares)		Achieved (hectares)		
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
	Sum >>>	-	-	-	-	
Indicator 3.3	Area of natural grass and woodlands under restoration (choose from drop-down menu)	Expected (hectares)		Achieved (hectares)		
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
	<pls select>					
	<pls select>					
	Sum >>>	-	-	-	-	
Indicator 3.4	Area of wetlands (including estuaries and mangroves) under restoration	Expected PIF Stage	(hectares) Endorsement	Achieved MTR	(hectares) TE	
	Sum >>>					
		-	-	-	-	
Indicator 4.3	Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems	Expected (hectares)		Achieved (hectares)		
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
	Sum >>>					-

REDUCING GHG EMISSIONS

Core Indicator 6 Greenhouse gas emission mitigated

		Expected metric tons of CO2e (6.1 + 6.2)			
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	6.1 Greenhouse gas emission mitigated (direct+indirect) (6.1+6.2)	-	-	-	-
	6.1 Greenhouse gas emission mitigated in the AFOLU sector (direct+indirect) (6.5+6.6)	-	-	-	-
	6.2 Greenhouse gas emission mitigated outside AFOLU sector (direct+indirect) (6.7+6.8)	-	-	-	-
Indicator 6.5	Carbon sequestered or emissions avoided in the sector of Agriculture, Forestry, and Other L and Use (direct)				
	Anticipated start year of accounting Duration of accounting	Expected (metri c tons of CO2e) PIF Stage	Endorsement	Achieved (metric tons of CO2e) MTR	TE
	Carbon sequestered or emissions avoided in the sector of Agriculture, Forestry, and Other L and Use (indirect)				
Indicator 6.6	Anticipated start year of accounting	Expected (metric tons of CO2e)		Achieved (metric tons of CO2e)	
	Duration of accounting	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	Emissions avoided ou tside AFOLU sector (direct)				
Indicator 6.7	Anticipated start year of accounting	Expected (metric tons of CO2e)		Achieved (metric tons of CO2e)	
	Duration of accounting	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 6.8	Emissions avoided ou Anticipated start year tside AFOLU sector (i ndirect) of accounting	Expected (metric tons of CO2e)		Achieved (metric tons of CO2e)	
	Duration of accounting	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	Energy saved (in megajoule)				
Indicator 6.3		Expected (megajoule)		Achieved (megajoule)	
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 6.4	Increase in installed renewable energy capacity per technology (in MW) Technology (please select from the dropdown list)	Expected (Capacity - MW)		Achieved (Capacity - MW)	
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	<pls select>				
	<pls select>				

STRENGTHENING TRANSBOUNDARY WATER MANAGEMENT

Core Indicator 7 Shared water ecosystems under new or improved cooperative management

		Number			
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 7.1	Level of Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Program (TDA/SAP) formu lation and impleme ntation				
		Rating (S cale 1-4)			

		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>
		<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>

Indicator 7.2	Level of Regional Legal Agreements and Regional Management Institutions to support its i	mplementation Rating (S cale 1-4)			
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>
		<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>

Indicator 7.3	Level of National/Local reforms and active participation of Inter-Ministerial Committees	Rating (S cale 1-4)			
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>
		<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>

Indicator 7.4	Level of engagement in IW: LEARN through participation and delivery of key products	Rating (S cale 1-4)			
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>
		<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>	<pls select>

Core Indicator 8 **Globally over-exploited marine fisheries moved to more sustainable levels**

Fishery Details: Include here the name of the fishery targeted, the source for the estimate of tonnage, and the initial justification for considering the fishery to be overexploited.	Metri c Tons			
	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

Indicator 5.2	Large marine ecosystems with reduced pollution and hypoxia				
Indicate here the names of the LMEs, as well as the type and extent (qualitative or quantitative) of pollution reduction achieved through policy and infrastructure investments to address point and non-point sources.	Expe cted PIF Stage	Endorsement	Achi eved TE MTR		

REDUCING CHEMICALS AND WASTE

Core Indicator 9 **Chemicals of global concern and their waste reduced**

	Metric Tons (9.1 + 9.2 + 9.3+9.7)			
	Expected *(metric tons)*		Achieved *(metric tons)*	
	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	-	-	-	-

Indicator 9.1	Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) removed or disposed (POPs type) *(in metric tons)*				
POPs Type to choose from:	Expected *(metric tons)*		Achieved *(metric tons)*	
	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
<pls select>				
<pls select>				
<pls select> Sum >>>	-	-	-	-

Indicator 9.2	Quantity of mercury reduced				
	Expected (metric tons)		Achieved (metric tons)	
	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

Indicator 9.3	Hydrochlorofluorocarbons reduced/phased out				
Provide information by HCFC, such as HCFC22, HCFC-141b, HCFC-142b, HCFC-123, HCFC-124, HCFC-225ca and 225cb, and HCFC-21.	Expe cted		Achi eved	
	PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

Indicator 9.4	Countries with legislation and policy implemented to control chemicals and waste	Number o f Countries			
		Expe cted		Achi eved	
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

Indicator 9.5	Low-chemical/non-chemical systems implemented particularly in food production, manufa Technology used to be listed here: cturing and cities *(number)*				
		Expected		Achieved *(number)*	
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	POPs/Mercury containing materials and products directly avoided (in metric tons)				

Indicator 9.6		Expected (metric tons)		Achieved (metric tons)	
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

Indicator 9.7	Highly Hazardous Pesticides eliminated	Expected (metric tons)		Achieved (metric tons)	
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

Indicator 9.8	Avoided residual plastic waste	Expected (metric tons)		Achieved (metric tons)	
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

Core Indicator 10 **Persistent organic pollutants to air reduced**

Indicator 10.1	Countries with legislation and policy implemented to control emissions of POPs to air	Expected *(grams o* PIF Stage	*f toxic equivalent)* Endorsement	Achieved (grams o MTR	f toxic equivalent) TE

		Number o cted		f Countries Achie ved	
		Expe			
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 10.2	Emission control technologies/practices implemented				
		Nu m cted		ber Achi eved	
		Expe			
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIC AREAS					
Core Indicator 11	**People benefiting from GEF-financed investments**				
		Number			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF Stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	Female	1 ,000	1 ,000	803	
	Male	1 ,000	1 ,000	924	
		Total	**2,000**	**2,000**	**1 ,727**

<type here>

COMMENTS (explain the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core and Sub-Indicators):

Annex-31: Result matrix

Evaluative Criteria Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
1. Relevance: *How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF Focal area, and to the environment and development priorities at the local, regional and national level?*			
1.1 Does the R2R project's objective align with the priorities of the government of RMI and local communities?	• Level of coherence between project objective and stated priorities of local stakeholders	• Local stakeholders • Document review of local development • Strategies, environmental policies	• Interviews • Desk review
1.2 Does the R2R project's objective fit within the national environment and development priorities of RMI?	• Level of coherence between project objective and national policy priorities and strategies, as stated in project document	• National policy documents, such as National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, • National Capacity Self-Assessment, etc.	• Desk review • Interviews with government's stakeholders
1.3 Did the R2R project concept originate from local or national stakeholders, and/or were relevant stakeholders sufficiently involved in project development?	• Level of involvement of local and national stakeholders in project development (number of meetings held, project development processes incorporating stakeholder input, etc.)	• Project staff • Local and national stakeholders • Project documents	• Field visit interviews • Desk review
1.4 Does the R2R project objective fit GEF strategic priorities? *(GEF strategic priority documents for period when project was approved would simply be GEF 5 strategic priority)*	• Level of coherence between project objective and GEF strategic priorities (including alignment of relevant focal area indicators)	• GEF strategic priority documents (when project was approved) • Current GEF strategic priority documents	• Desk review
1.5 Was the R2R project linked with and in line with UNDP priorities and strategies for the country?	• Level of coherence between project objective and design with UNDAF, CPD	• UNDP strategic priority documents	• Desk review
1.6 Does the R2R project's objective support implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other relevant policy provisions?	• Linkages between project objective and elements of the CBD, such as key articles and programs of work	• CBD website • National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan	• Desk review
2. Effectiveness: *To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?*			
2.1 Are the R2R project objectives likely to be met? To what extent are they likely to be met?	• Level of progress toward project indicator targets relative to expected level at current point of implementation	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Field visit interviews • Desk review
2.2 What are the key factors contributing to R2R project success (achievement) or underachievement?	• Level of documentation of and preparation for project risks, assumptions and impact drivers	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Field visit interviews • Desk review

2.3 What are the key risks and barriers that remain to achieve the R2R project objective and generate global environmental benefits?	• Presence, assessment of, and preparation for expected risks, assumptions and impact drivers	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Field visit interviews • Desk review
2.4 Are the key assumptions and impact drivers relevant to the achievement of Global Environmental benefits likely to be met?	• Actions undertaken to address key assumptions and target impact drivers	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Field visit interviews • Desk review
3. Efficiency: *Was the project implemented efficiently, in line with international and national norms and standards?*			
3.1 Is the R2R project cost-effective?	• Quality and adequacy of financial management procedures (in line with UNDP and national policies, legislation, and procedures) • Financial delivery rate vs. expected rate • Management costs as a percentage of total costs	• Project documents • Project staff	• Desk review • Interviews with project staff
3.2 Are expenditures in line with international standards and norms?	• Cost of project inputs and outputs relative to norms and standards for GEF projects in the country or region	• Project documents • Project staff	• Desk review • Interviews with project staff
3.3 Is the R2R project implementation approach efficient for delivering the planned project results?	• Adequacy of implementation structure and mechanisms for coordination and communication • Planned and actual level of human resources available • Extent and quality of engagement with relevant partners/partnerships • Quality and adequacy of project monitoring mechanisms (oversight bodies' input, quality and timeliness of reporting, etc.)	• Project documents • National and local stakeholders • Project staff	• Desk review • Interviews with project staff • Interviews with national and local stakeholders
3.4 Is the R2R project implementation delayed? If so, has that affected cost-effectiveness?	• Project milestones in time • Planned results affected by delays • Required project adaptive management measures related to delays	• Project documents • Project staff	• Desk review • Interviews with project staff
3.5 What is the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to R2R project implementation?	• Level of cash and in-kind co-financing relative to expected level	• Project documents • Project staff	• Desk review • Interviews with project staff
3.6 To what extent is the R2R project leveraging additional resources?	• Amount of resources leveraged relative to project budget	• Project documents • Project staff	• Desk review • Interviews with project staff

4. Sustainability: *To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-political, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?*			
4.1 To what extent are R2R project results likely to be dependent on continued financial support? What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project results once the GEF assistance ends?	• Financial requirements for maintenance of project benefits • Level of expected financial resources available to support maintenance of project benefits • Potential for additional financial resources to support maintenance of project benefits	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Field visit interviews • Desk review
4.2 Do relevant stakeholders have or are likely to achieve an adequate level of "ownership" of results, to have the interest in ensuring that project benefits are maintained?	• Level of initiative and engagement of relevant stakeholders in project activities and results	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Field visit interviews • Desk review
4.3 Do relevant stakeholders have the necessary technical capacity to ensure that project benefits are maintained?	• Level of technical capacity of relevant stakeholders relative to level required to sustain project benefits	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Field visit interviews • Desk review
4.4 To what extent are the R2R project results dependent on socio-political factors?	• Existence of socio-political risks to project benefits	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Field visit interviews • Desk review
4.5 To what extent are the R2R project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance?	• Existence of institutional and governance risks to project benefits	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Field visit interviews • Desk review
4.6 Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of R2R project impacts and Global Environmental benefits?	• Existence of environmental risks to project benefits	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Field visit interviews • Desk review
5. Gender equality and women's empowerment: *How did the project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment?*			
5.1 How did the R2R project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment?	• Level of progress of gender action plan and gender indicators in results framework	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Desk review • Interviews • Field visits
5.2 In what ways did the R2R project's gender results advance or contribute to the project's biodiversity outcomes?	• Existence of logical linkages between gender results and project outcomes and impacts	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Desk review • Interviews • Field visits
6. Impact: *Are there indications that the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward reduced environmental stress and/or improved ecological status?*			
6.1 Have the planned outputs been produced? Have they contributed to the R2R project outcomes and objectives?	• Level of project implementation progress relative to expected level at current stage of implementation	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Field visit interviews • Desk review

	• Existence of logical linkages between project outputs and outcomes/impacts		
6.2 Are the anticipated outcomes likely to be achieved? Are the outcomes likely to contribute to the achievement of the R2R project objective? 6.3 Are impact level results likely to be achieved? Are the likely to be at the scale sufficient to be considered Global Environmental benefits?	• Existence of logical linkages between project outcomes and impacts	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Field visit interviews • Desk review
	• Environmental indicators • Level of progress through the project's Theory of Change	• Project documents • Project staff • Project stakeholders	• Field visit interviews • Desk review
7. Cross-cutting and UNDP mainstreaming issues			
7.1 How were effects on local populations considered in R2R project design and implementation?	• Positive or negative effects of the project on local populations	• Project document • Progress reports • Monitoring reports	• Desk review • Interviews • Field visits
Partnership: • How the partnerships affected in the R2R project achievement, and how might this be built upon in the future? • Have the ways of working with the partner and the support to the partner been effective and did they contribute to the R2R project's achievements? • How does partnership with local government work? Does it create synergies or difficulties? What type of partnership building mechanism is necessary for future partnership?	• Level of achievement (as laid out in the log-frame, target vs. achievements) • Achievement of outputs (qualitative, quantitative) and description of activities • Achievements on partnership, GESI and human rights	• Project document • Review of fund flow and management cost at project level • MIS and GESI data • Review of project's generated case studies	• Interviews • Pros and cons analysis-partnership with government • Document and report analysis (including partnership guideline)
Gender equality and Social Inclusion • To what extent have issues of gender and marginalized groups been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the R2R project? • To what extent the R2R project approach was effective in promoting gender equality and social inclusion - particularly focusing on the	• Level of achievement (as laid out in the log-frame, target vs. achievements) • Achievement of outputs (qualitative, quantitative) and description of activities • Achievements on partnership, GESI and human rights	• Project document • Review of fund flow and management cost at project level • MIS and GESI data • Review of project's generated case studies	• Interviews • Pros and cons analysis-partnership with government • Document and report analysis (including partnership guideline)

marginalized and the poor through livelihood interventions? • To what extent has the R2R project promoted positive changes of women, differently abled people and marginalized group? Were there any unintended effects?			
Human rights • To what extent have ethnic minorities, physically challenged, women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefitted from the work of the R2R project and with what impact? • To what extent have R2R project integrated "human rights based approach" in the design, implementation and monitoring of the R2R project? Have the resources been used in an efficient way to address human rights in the implementation (e.g. participation of targeted stakeholders, collection of disaggregated data, etc.)?	• Level of achievement (as laid out in the log-frame, target vs. achievements) • Achievement of outputs (qualitative, quantitative) and description of activities • Achievements on partnership, GESI and human rights	• Project document • Review of fund flow and management cost at project level • MIS and GESI data • Review of project's generated case studies	• Interviews • Pros and cons analysis-partnership with government • Document and report analysis (including partnership guideline)

Annex-32: Evaluative questions and sub-questions

This is a comprehensive list serving the TE team to gather the required information for all criteria to be evaluated. The questions will be selected and adjusted to the context of the interview/discussion.

Introductory questions

- What is your involvement, role and responsibility with the R2R project?
- How long have you been involved? Were you involved in the design process?
- From your perspective, what are key achievements, and key challenges for implementation and sustainability?

1. Project strategy

1.1. Project design

- How relevant were the overall design and approaches of the R2R project?
- Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the R2R project design?
- Have the ways of working with the partner and the support to the partner been effective and did they contribute to the R2R project's achievements?
- To what extent was the R2R project able to address the needs and priorities of the target groups, watersheds, and communities?
- How does the R2R project addresses country priorities? Was the R2R project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country?
- To what extend is R2R project ownership realized at government of RMI level?
- Are the assumptions underlying the R2R project design valid and unchanged? If not, what was/is the effect on achieving R2R project results?
- Has the context changed?
- To what extent were gender issues addressed in R2R project design?
- To what extent were relevant gender issues (e.g. the impact of the project on gender equality in the country, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the Project Document?
- To what extent were perspectives of those who would be affected by R2R project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during R2R project design processes?
- To what extent is the R2R project the best route towards expected results?

1.2. Project results framework/log-frame

- To what extent are how the end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) "SMART"?
- Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?
- Are broader development and gender aspects of the R2R project being monitored effectively?
- Do M&E procedures include sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits?
- Has progress so far led to - or could in the future - catalyze beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the R2R project results framework and monitored on an annual basis?

2. Progress towards results

- To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the R2R project been achieved thus far? against end of project targets?
- To what extent did the intervention bring benefits to climate vulnerable people, ultra poor, women, and people from marginalized community?
- How/does the R2R project contribute its three outcome?
- To what extent have issues of gender and marginalised groups been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the R2R project?
- How effective has the R2R project been in responding to the needs of the beneficiaries, and what results were achieved?
- Are Core Indicators (GEF Tracking Tool) measured/recorded? What is the progress/change?

- Are there significant barriers in achieving the project objectives? How/can they be overcome?
- What aspects of the R2R project have already been successful? How/can they be further expanded?

3. Assessment of M&E and learning system

- Was the information provided by the M&E system was used to improve performance and to adapt to changing needs; Are there any annual work plans?
- To what extent the M&E and learning system captures GESI related information?
- Was M&E was sufficiently budgeted for at the R2R project planning stage and whether M&E was adequately funded and in a timely manner during implementation?
- Was the information provided by the M&E system (annual work plans, other) was used to improve performance and to adapt to changing needs?

4. Project implementation and adaptive management

4.1. Management arrangements

- Has R2R project management as outlined in the Project Document been effective? Have changes been made and are they effective?
- Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner?
- How efficiently were the resources including human, material and financial resources used to achieve results/in a timely manner?
- To what extent was the existing R2R project management structure appropriate and efficient in generating the expected results?
- What is the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (i.e. UNDP)?
- Do the implementing partner and/or UNDP and other partners have the capacity to deliver benefits to or involve women? If yes, how?
- Is execution by the executing agency/implementing partner(s) effective? What have been challenges? Have changes been made?
- What is the gender balance of R2R project staff? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in R2R project staff?
- What is the gender balance of the R2R Project Board? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in the Project Board?
- To what extent has the R2R project implementation been able to adapt to any changing conditions thus far?

4.2. Work planning

- Were there delays in R2R project start-up and implementation? What were the causes, have they been resolved?
- Are work-planning processes results-based?
- To what extent/how is the PRF/logframe used as a management tool?
- Have changes been made to it since R2R project start?

4.3. Finance and co-finance

- Were there changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions? Were the revisions appropriate and relevant?
- Are there appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
- If there was a difference in the level of expected co-financing and the co-financing actually realized, what were the reasons for the variance? Did the extent of materialization of co-financing affect R2R project outcomes and/or sustainability, and, if so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?
- Is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the R2R project?
- Is the R2R project team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

4.4 Financial planning and procurement

- Did the R2R project have appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allowed management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allowed for timely flow of funds?

4.5. Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems

- Do the monitoring tools currently used provide the necessary information?
- Do they involve key partners?
- Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems?
- Do they use existing information?
- Are they efficient?
- Are they cost-effective?
- Are additional tools required?
- Could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
- Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?
- To what extent are R2R project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, reporting, and project communications supporting the project's implementation?

4.6. Stakeholder engagement

- Has the R2R project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the R2R project?
- To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of R2R project objectives?
- How does the R2R project engage women? Is the project likely to have the same positive and/or negative effects on women and men? Identify, if possible, legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women's participation in the R2R project. What can the project do to enhance its gender benefits?

4.7. Social and environmental safeguards

- To what extent has progress been made in the implementation of social and environmental management measures?
- Have there been changes to the overall R2R project risk rating and/or the identified types of risks as outlined at the CEO Endorsement stage?
- Are the risks identified in the R2R project's most current SESP valid/capture all risks?
- Are risks ratings valid? Are any revisions needed?
- To what extent have the R2R project's social and environmental management measures as outlined in the SESP been implemented, (if any, if applicable)? Were there revisions to those measures? (*what was the version of UNDP's safeguards policy at time of project approval*)

4.8. Reporting system

- To what extent/how have adaptive management changes been reported by the R2R project management and shared with the R2R Project Board?
- How well do the R2R Project team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly-rated PIRs, if applicable?)
- To what extent/how have lessons derived from the adaptive management process been documented and shared with key partners, and internalized by partners?

4.9. Communications and knowledge management

- Is communication (internal project communication) with stakeholders regular and effective?
- Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of R2R project results?
- Are proper means of communication (external project communication) established or being established to express the R2R project progress and intended impact to the public?
- Is website and other online presence?
- Did the R2R project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?
- What knowledge management activities have been undertaken?
- What knowledge products have been developed/published?
- In line with knowledge management approach in R2R project design/ProDoc?

5. Sustainability

- To what extent are the benefits of the R2R project likely to be sustained after the completion of this R2R project?
- How were capacities strengthened at the individual and organizational level (including contributing factors and constraints)?
- To what extent are the social and environmental safeguard measures adopted in R2R project implementation, and how effective are they?
- To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term R2R project results?
- Are risks identified in the R2R Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Register the most important risks, and are the current risk ratings appropriate and up to date?
- What changes should be made, if any?
- What are key R2R project contributions to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits?
- What are the key factors that may require attention to enhance sustainability of R2R project outcomes and the potential for replication of the approach?

5.1. Financial sustainability

- What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources being/not being available once the GEF assistance ends to sustain R2R project outcomes?
- What are potential funding sources, including from public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding?

5.2. Socio-economic sustainability

- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of R2R project outcomes?
- Is stakeholder ownership (government and other) sufficient to sustain R2R project outcomes/benefits?
- To what extent consider key stakeholders it in their interest that R2R project benefits will continue to flow?
- Is there sufficient public and stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the R2R project?
- Are lessons learned being documented by the R2R Project team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties/stakeholders who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

5.3. Institutional and governance sustainability:

- Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes support (or jeopardize) sustenance of R2R project benefits?
- Are the required systems, mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer in place?

5.4. Environmental sustainability

- Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of R2R project outcomes?

Annex-33: Audit trail

Refer to separate sheet

Annex-34: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct for TE consultant

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

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

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

Name of Evaluator: Dr. Dhruba Gautam
Name of Consultancy/organisation: N/A

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United national Code of Conduct for Evaluators:

Signed at: Kathmandu on Sep 26, 2023

Signature: 

Annex-35: Signed report clearance form

Terminal Evaluation Report for Reimaanlok–Looking to the Future: Strengthening Natural Resource Management in Atoll Communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands Employing Integrated Approaches (RMI R2R)
Reviewed and Cleared By:
Commissioning Unit (M&E Focal Point)
Name:
Signature: Date:
Regional Technical Advisor (Nature, Climate and Energy)
Name:
Signature: Date: