

Evaluation of GEF Programs in Pacific Small Island Developing States

Approach Paper

March 2024

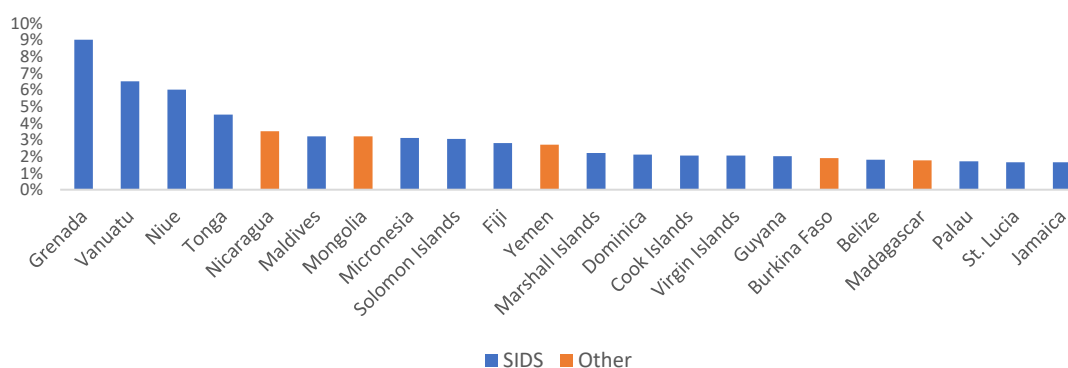
Background

1. Small Island Developing States (SIDS), are countries that share certain criteria, including its geographical, economic, social, and environmental characteristics.¹ The SIDS classification is not solely based on meeting specific numerical thresholds but rather considers the overall context and characteristics of each country. The SIDS designation provides these countries with a platform for voicing their concerns and accessing international support and assistance to address their specific development needs and challenges.

2. SIDS face a diversity of vulnerabilities rooted in both economic and contextual factors. Economically, SIDS grapple with high costs of production and a lack of economies of scale. Their market size often leads to higher per-unit costs for goods and services, making it difficult for their industries to compete globally. Moreover, the absence of economies of scale hampers their ability to benefit from efficiencies achieved through mass production. Contextually, the geographic and demographic characteristics of most SIDS amplify their vulnerabilities. These combined economic and contextual challenges exacerbate the vulnerability of SIDS to external shocks, including those stemming from climate change, economic downturns, and natural disasters ([UNCTAD 2022](#)).

3. At the global scale, SIDS contribute only minimally to the overall greenhouse gas emissions. Nevertheless, most of the SIDS confront the peril of climate-induced consequences, including rising sea levels, heightened vulnerability to natural disasters and invasive species, challenges stemming from unsustainable land and water utilization impacting vital sectors, as well as dilemmas related to the management of natural resources ([IPCC 2019](#)). Impacts related to these vulnerabilities represent high economic losses when extreme events strike, with average annual losses between 1 and 10 percent of gross domestic product (figure 1).

Figure 1. Average annual loss from natural disasters relative to GDP



Source: World Bank 2018.

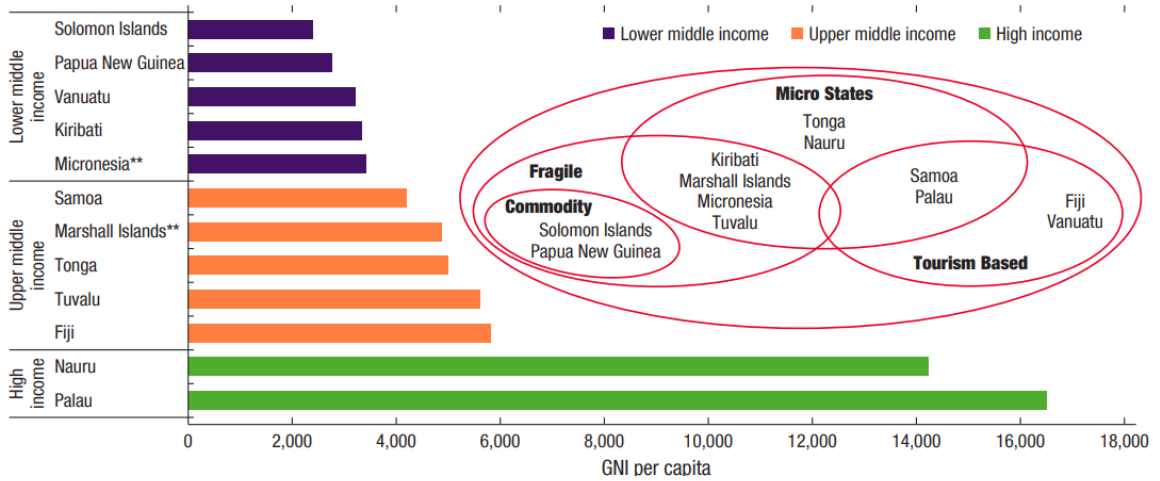
¹ The United Nations uses a set of criteria to classify countries as SIDS. These criteria were first outlined in the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) adopted in 1994 and were further elaborated in the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the BPOA (MSI) in 2005. For more information: <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/small-island-developing-states>

4. Like other SIDS, Pacific SIDSs (the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu) are challenged by their remoteness, high vulnerability to climate change-induced disasters and dependence on mostly imported products. The Pacific SIDS are some of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the effects of climate change and related disasters. The World Risk Index 2022 ranks several Pacific Island countries among the most at-risk countries, with Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Tonga ranking first, second, and third, respectively, and Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and Kiribati ranking among the top 20 ([Aleksandrova et al. 2021](#)). Although each country is affected differently by climate change, common risks include rising sea levels, stronger and more frequent tropical storms, accelerated soil and beach erosion, reduced food and water security, and damage to infrastructure.

5. The vulnerability of SIDS was glaringly exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts of COVID-19 are disproportionately significant for the Pacific Islands, largely because of their economic lifelines (food imports, tourism, and dependence of remittances), agricultural limitations (short value chains) and limited and remote health care infrastructure to respond to health emergencies. Governments' preventive measures, such as international and domestic border closures as well as restrictions on government and business hours, unintentionally triggered near total economic paralysis. The tourism sector collapsed with far reaching ramifications for livelihoods, agriculture, and food security. In addition, COVID-19 recovery efforts by Pacific SIDS are being undermined by other external shocks such as inflation and supply shortages. For example, in Samoa, petroleum prices from January to August 2022 increased by 44 percent and 60 percent for unleaded and diesel respectively, also imported food prices have risen 22 percent and 13 percent for locally produced foods from January to September that year. At the same time, fertilizer costs in Tonga and Samoa increased by 40 percent from 2021 to 2023. These impacts are reversing critical successes and progress made in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the SAMOA Pathway in the Pacific SIDS ([FAO 2022](#)).

6. Pacific SIDS broadly share many characteristics—small, remote, and geographically dispersed—but there is also much heterogeneity (figure 2). They traverse the income spectrum from about \$2,300 to \$16,500 in GNI per capita. Two-thirds of the group are considered “micro-states” with populations below 200,000, and half of these are also fragile states. Papua New Guinea is the only non-small state, with a population of close to 8 million. Overall, the region is home to about 10 million people, covering millions of square miles of ocean ([Fouad et al. 2021](#)).

Figure 2. Characteristics of Pacific SIDS

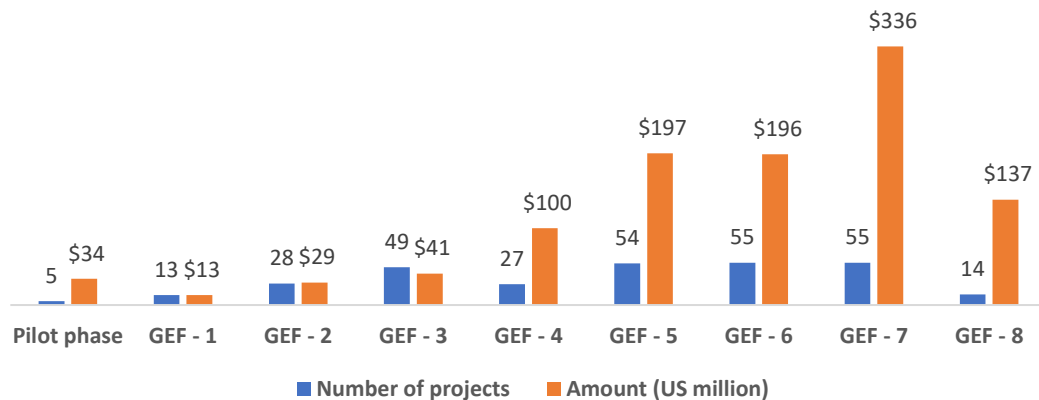


Source: Fouad et al. 2021.

Introduction

7. As figure 3 shows, the GEF has a long history of supporting Pacific SIDS.² Considering completed and ongoing projects, from GEF-1 to GEF-8, the GEF has funded 300 projects, representing \$1.1 billion. These projects include investments in biodiversity protection on land and in the ocean, resilience to climate change and related disaster risk management, increased energy access through renewable energy and energy efficiency, halting and reversing land degradation, cooperation on international waters, and improved chemicals management.

Figure 3. Projects and funding in Pacific SIDS by GEF phase



Source: GEF portal. The data includes programs and regional projects. Retrieved in March 2024.

² Pacific SIDS: Cook Islands, Federated State of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

8. Over the years, the utilization of GEF funding has adapted to country-specific requirements embedded in project and program designs, transitioning from multi-focal approaches to integrated strategies.³ Additionally, for much of GEF history, program definitions evolved as a function of their operational and financial features. In May 2008, the GEF Council formally approved the program support modality. This reform marked the official start of programs at the GEF. Since then, programs and child project identification forms (PIFs) began constituting a substantial volume of Council work programs. Early post-2008 programs tended to be designed and implemented through several child projects brought together under an objectives' framework that aimed at securing a larger-scale and sustained impact on the global environment. From GEF-5 (2010–14), program design started to become increasingly complex. Compared with earlier programs, GEF-5 shows a greater range of nonhomogeneous, multifocal, multi-Agency, and/ or regional/global programs ([GEF IEO 2018](#)).

9. Multifocal area (MFA) programming involves leveraging GEF financing from multiple GEF focal areas to address a blend of GEF objectives and outcomes within each involved focal area. The prevalence of MFA projects has notably increased, constituting 13 percent of GEF funding during GEF-4 and escalating to 28 percent in GEF-5. The Integrated Approach Pilot (IAP) programs and other larger-scale systemic investments introduced during GEF-6 were the first to focus explicitly on tackling significant drivers of environmental degradation. In GEF-7, the impact programs were launched to promote large, integrated, and impactful programs across more sectors and address multiple drivers of environmental change. Findings from the Seventh Overall Performance Study (OPS7) conducted by the GEF IEO support integrated approaches as being more conducive to the incorporation of innovation in multiple sectors as part of GEF's business model. According to the GEF-8 Programming Directions, integrated programming will be further harnessed to scale up investments for global environmental benefits during GEF-8 and beyond. In GEF-8, integrated programs are included to promote blue and green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The GEF-8 programming architecture specifically addresses the critical need to ensure that GEF investments are targeted toward tackling the breakdown in food, energy, urban, health, and natural systems that underpin human development. This evolution predominantly mirrors the growing necessity for GEF resources to facilitate enhanced integration and capitalize on opportunities for producing multiple global environmental benefits (GEBs).

Previous evaluations of SIDS

10. Many GEF IEO evaluations have incorporated coverage of SIDS through analysis of regional variation in development impacts. GEF Annual Performance Reports and Comprehensive Evaluations of the GEF routinely report performance outcomes and factors related to implementation and inclusion in GEF programming in SIDS as a priority group. OPS7 noted that GEF-7 impact programs included low participation from SIDS, and there was room

³ Integration implies the use of systems thinking. It involves specifying system boundaries, addressing multiple drivers of environmental degradation simultaneously, addressing relationships among the system elements across scales, addressing key risks and vulnerabilities, considering system resilience, and establishing a feedback loop that facilitates timely course correction (GEF STAP 2018).

for the programs to be more inclusive of priority country groups. OPS7 also discussed the Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in SIDS (ISLANDS) program, noting that it represented the largest chemicals and waste investment in GEF-7 and substantially increased funding towards LDC/SIDS investments from GEF-6. While the ridge to reef (R2R) program itself is not discussed, OPS7 describes the “ridge to reef” approach taken in GEF programming in SIDS, addressing the interconnectedness between environmental challenges on land and in the ocean ([GEF IEO 2022a](#)). An R2R project would often have an integrated watershed management approach project with the project area from the top of an island to the coral reef.

11. More in-depth coverage of SIDS has been provided by the Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation (SCCE) of SIDS ([GEF IEO 2019](#)). The evaluation found that overall programmatic approaches have not gotten much traction yet in SIDS. One exception is that the GEF is encouraging integrated approaches by promoting R2R, an integrated watershed management approach to sustainably manage soil, water, and biodiversity, while considering renewable energy resources and productive sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and tourism. The GEF assists SIDS in identifying sustainable public and private national investments within the blue economy space, through funding of collective management of coastal and marine systems and implementation of integrated ocean policies and legal and institutional reforms. GEF support to SIDS in land degradation seeks to ultimately restore degraded ecosystems, and sustainably manage resources. ISLANDS is another recently approved program that provides SIDS access to funding beyond their STAR allocation. The evaluation also notes that one of the drivers for support to SIDS from the GEF has been the need for climate change adaptation, and that the GEF’s two adaptation funds (LDCF and SCCF) have an active portfolio in SIDS in all regions. A recommendation from the evaluation is to increase the number of integrated interventions. GEF Agencies should respond to the SIDS demand by designing more integrated projects, in line with the ridge to reef, whole island, and blue economy approaches. When justified, multiphase projects should be a prioritized model for GEF projects to improve outcome sustainability. A table of findings and recommendations from the SCCE SIDS is included in annex A.

12. The formative evaluation GEF Integrated Approach to Address Drivers of Environmental Degradation assessed the approach applied through the GEF-6 integrated approach pilots (IAPs) and GEF-7 impact programs to address the drivers of environmental degradation ([GEF IEO 2022b](#)). The evaluation found that some categories of countries, such as SIDS, have not yet benefited from the IAPs and impact programs. Only one SIDS country is participating which is a missed opportunity given SIDS’ experience with regional, R2R and whole-island approaches. One of the evaluation’s recommendations calls for the GEF to ensure a greater diversity of countries included in integrated programs and be more inclusive of smaller countries such as SIDS.

13. Previously, the GEF IEO conducted the Vanuatu and Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) portfolio evaluation ([GEF IEO 2015](#)). Among its primary findings, the evaluation highlighted the important role of GEF support in elevating

environmental consciousness across all focal areas. Furthermore, it underscored the effectiveness of GEF foundational assistance in shaping national environmental priorities, policies, and legislative frameworks, yielding commendable outcomes. However, the evaluation also identified persisting challenges regarding capacity issues, both at the individual and institutional levels.

Purpose, objective, and audience

14. Given the prominence of GEF support to Pacific SIDS through programs⁴ and the need to assess their performance and trends in specific contexts, the GEF IEO is undertaking an in-depth evaluation of the topic. The evaluation will assess three programs approved in GEF-5 or later and their corresponding child projects. The purpose of this evaluation is to provide GEF stakeholders with evaluative evidence of the relevance, coherence, and effectiveness of programs in Pacific SIDS. The evaluation has three main objectives: a) to understand the evolution of GEF programs and integrated interventions in Pacific SIDS countries and to evaluate the extent to which interventions respond to lessons learned from past projects; b) to evaluate the outcomes and factors influencing the performance of GEF programs and integrated interventions in Pacific SIDS countries; and c) to provide recommendations for future GEF projects in Pacific SIDS, with potential transferability to other SIDS.

15. The main audience of this evaluation is the GEF and LDCF/SCCF Councils, GEF Secretariat and the GEF partner agencies. However, the findings of the evaluation will be relevant to donors, industry experts, government officials, and practitioners in developing countries, particularly Pacific SIDS.

Evaluation framework, questions, and scope

16. A program's theory of change (ToC) provides a basis for evaluation of the theory and results. A ToC is structured as a continuous cycle to consider feedback loops, allowing interventions to capitalize on past achievements, make gradual enhancements, expand their impact, or achieve results in different geographic regions. Considering that the GEF did not provide an explicit ToC for the Climate Proofing Development in the Pacific (CPDP), the IEO developed the ToC to gain a deeper understanding of how the program could attain the objectives of the different interventions (figure 4). The ToC is based on the goals, principles, dimensions of success and lines of action contained in the program justification and consistency framework. This ToC was also validated by reviewing the logic of the child projects.

17. The IEO will leverage the ToCs outlined in the documentation of the other two programs covered by the evaluation—the Pacific Islands Ridge-to-Reef National Priorities (R2R) and

⁴ Definitions used in this evaluation:

Program. Programmatic approach approved under the post-2008 programmatic approach modality, composed of a parent program and a variable number of child projects, designed to contribute to the overall program objective. Programs conform to the requirement of having a PFD.

Child project. Project belonging to and approved under a post-May 2008 program.

Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in Small Island Developing States (ISLANDS) (figures 5 and 6). These frameworks will serve to establish a transparent chain of accountability, linking inputs, activities, and outcomes. Consequently, it will enable a comprehensive assessment of the project's contribution to broader systemic changes. This assessment will provide valuable insights into the project's role in catalyzing social, economic, and environmental transformations, while also highlighting any challenges and potential issues that could affect the sustainability of the projects' outcomes.

18. The evaluation questions are structured around three key themes related to: the relevance of each of the GEF programs in Pacific SIDS countries, the coherence, and the effectiveness of the GEF programs in delivering results. The topics of gender equality and women's empowerment, youth participation, indigenous peoples' rights, private sector engagement and innovation will receive special attention as cross-cutting issues. These themes will be considered both from the demand and supply sides, in terms of the Pacific SIDS' needs and what the GEF is currently financing or could do better to meet those needs. The evaluation will assess each of the three GEF programs according to their own rationale, stage of development, intended outcomes, and specific issues.

Relevance and design

To what extent do the GEF programs in Pacific SIDS countries respond to policies and priorities?

- Considering the contribution of the rest of the portfolio of national projects, are the programs' objectives aligned with the GEF's programming directions and relevant to the countries' priorities and strategies?
- Were the strategies in each of the three programs the most appropriate and innovative given the state of technology and risks in these countries at the time of design?
- How well has the design of the child projects in each of these programs responded to and built on outcomes and lessons of completed projects?
- Does the project design facilitate efficient monitoring and evaluation?

Coherence

How compatible are the objectives of each of the GEF programs with similar government and/or donor-funded interventions in Pacific SIDS countries?

- Are the objectives and activities of the child projects in each program coherent with the goals and objectives of each program's theory of change, the other child projects and other development projects dealing with the same issues?
- To what extent have the programs achieved or are likely to achieve policy coherence across sectors (horizontal), across levels of governance (vertical), and across time frames (temporal)?

- Are policy inconsistencies addressed differently in the participating countries by each of the programs?

Effectiveness

To what extent have each of the GEF programs in Pacific SIDS countries achieved or are likely to achieve their planned outcomes?

- How effective have the child projects been in terms of implementation and attaining outcomes in accordance with the theories of change outlined within each program and project?
- To what extent have cross-cutting issues of gender, youth, indigenous peoples, private sector engagement, and socio-economic benefits been considered in the design of each of the programs, and to what extent have they been achieved?
- How effectively has knowledge been shared within programs through the knowledge platforms or in other ways?
- To what extent has program level reporting been systematized and enables establishing a link between program and project results?
- To what extent did the GEF interventions demonstrate their additionality of having programs with child projects compared with standalone projects?
- To what extent has the GEF Agency selection and the coordination across Agencies influenced the performance of each of the programs?

19. An evaluation matrix composed of key questions, relevant indicators, sources of information, and methods is available in annex B.

20. In terms of the scope, this evaluation focuses on the three parent programs implemented in Pacific SIDS and the corresponding child projects (table 1 and annex C). From the GEF-5 period onward, the largest program in terms of number of child projects approved in Pacific SIDS countries is the Pacific Islands (R2R) National Priorities program (GEF ID 5395). This program also had an approach focused on integration in the context of island ecosystems. The other two programs implemented in Pacific SIDS are: Climate Proofing Development in the Pacific (CPDP) (GEF ID 5037) and Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in SIDS (ISLANDS) (GEF ID 10185). The focus on programs from the GEF-5 period onward eliminated from consideration the largest program focused on SIDS—the LDC and SIDS Targeted Portfolio Approach for Capacity Development and Mainstreaming of Sustainable Land Management, approved in GEF-3, and the second largest, the PAS GEF Pacific Alliance for Sustainability (GEF ID 3420) approved in GEF-4.

Figure 4. Theory of Change of CPDP (GEF ID 5037)

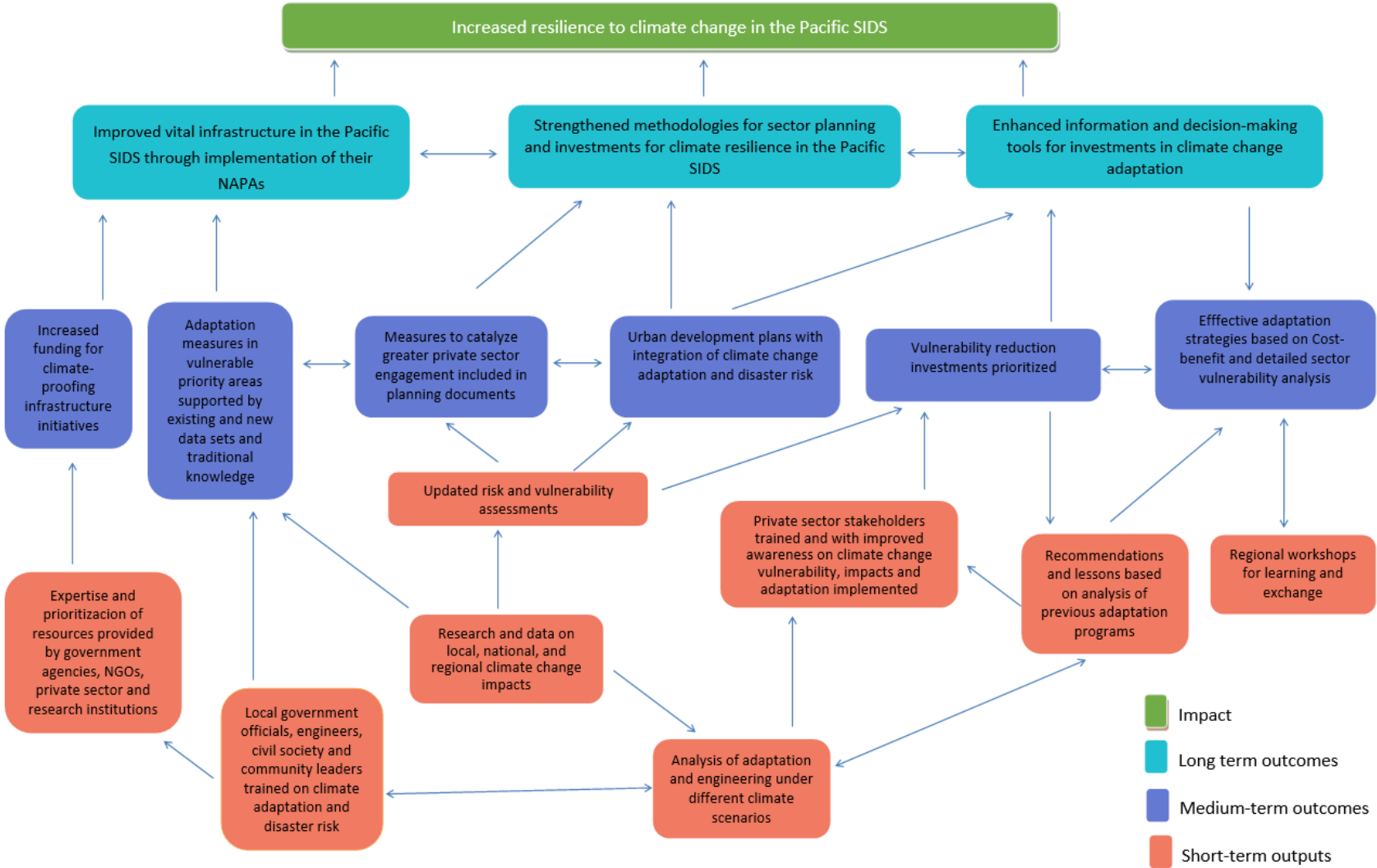


Figure 5. Theory of Change of R2R (GEF ID 5395)

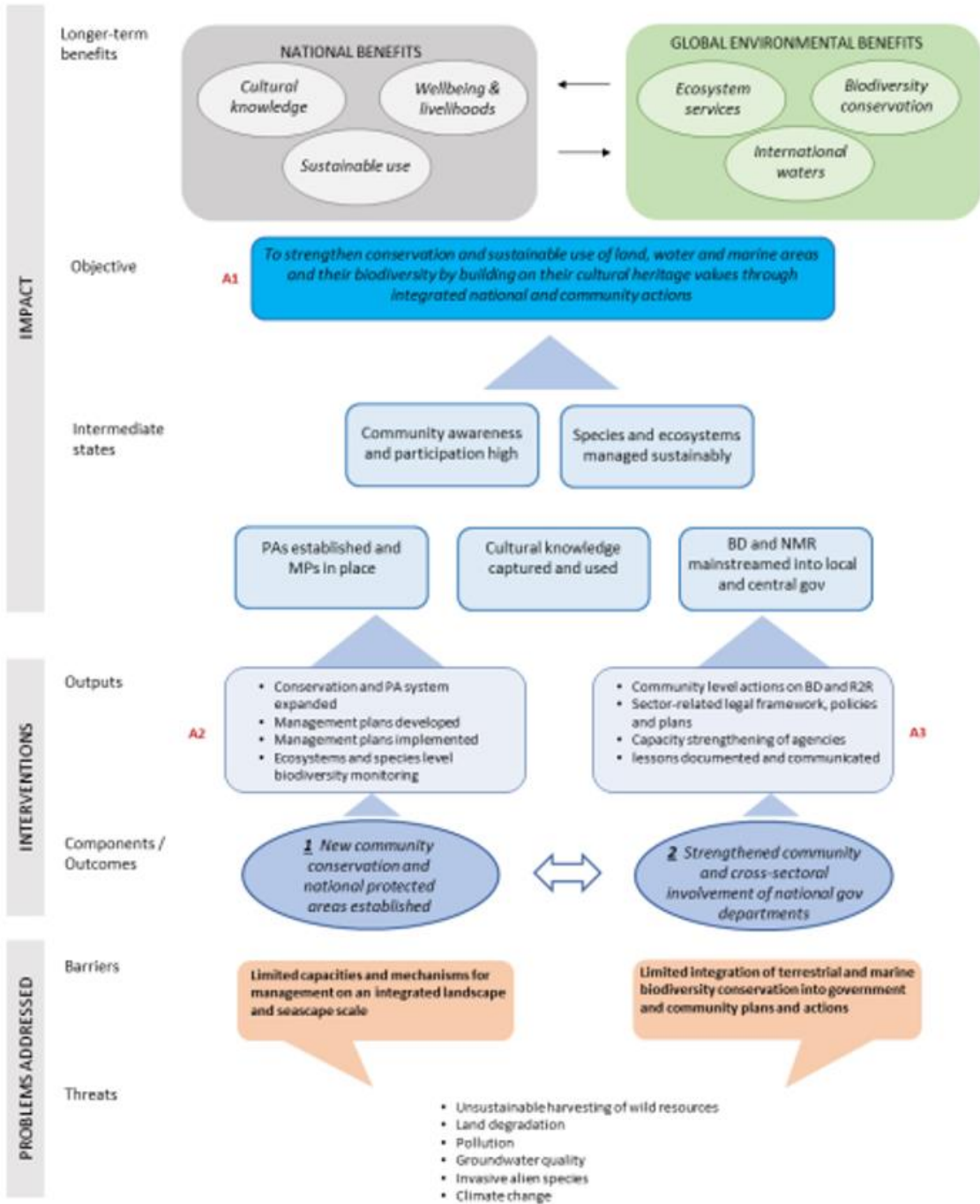


Figure 6. Theory of Change of ISLANDS (GEF ID 10185)

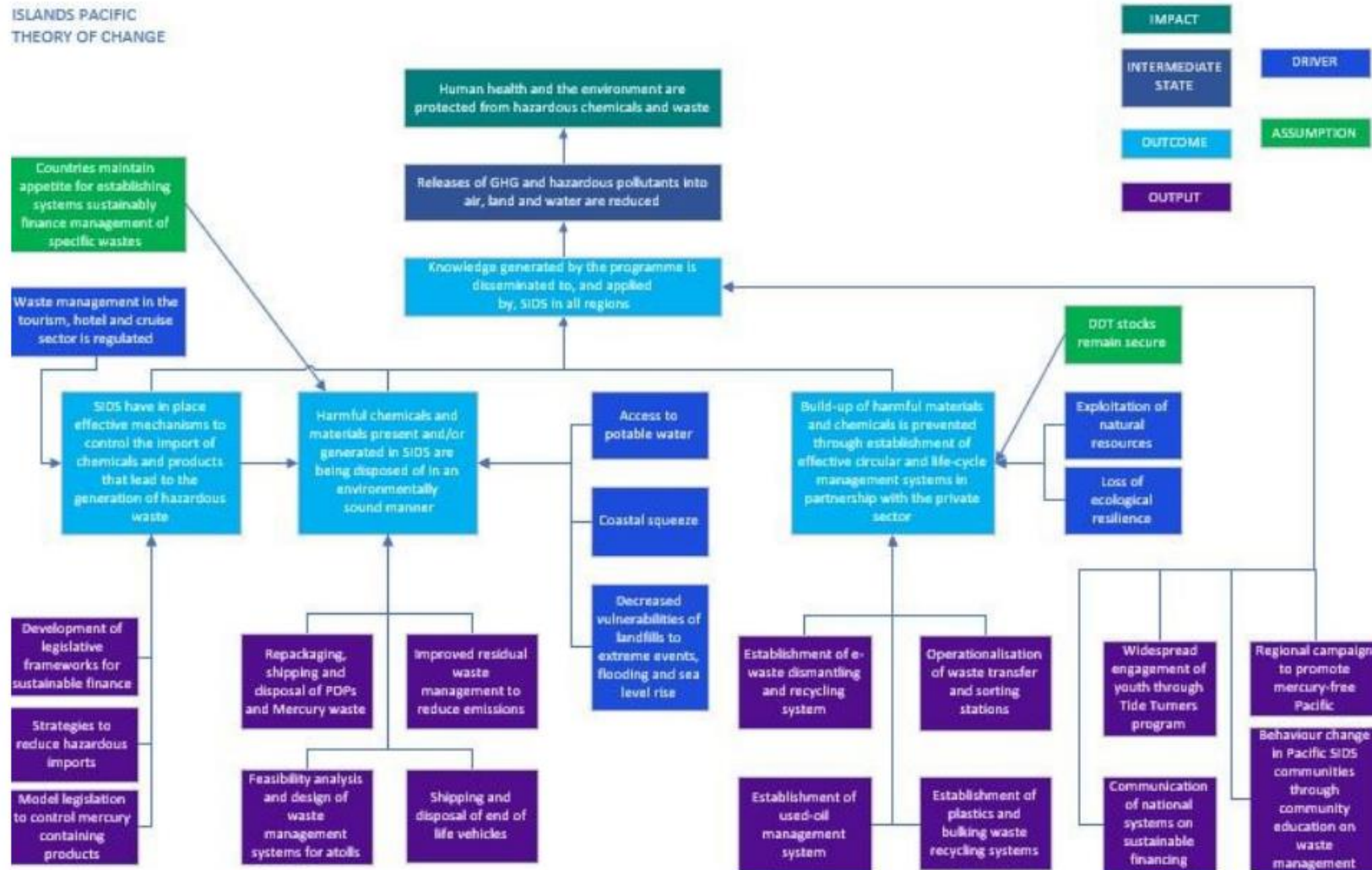


Table 1. Programs for review

Parent GEF ID	Title	GEF Phase	Lead Agency	Focal area	Funding	Objective	No. of Child projects in Pacific SIDS ^a
5037	Climate Proofing Development in the Pacific (CPDP)	GEF-5	ADB	CC	LDCF	Reduce the vulnerability of vital infrastructure in the Pacific LDCs through the implementation of NAPA priorities. The ultimate impact will be to reduce absolute investments losses from the negative impacts of climate change.	2
5395	Pacific Islands Ridge-to-Reef National Priorities (R2R)	GEF-5	UNDP	MTF (BD, CC, IW, LD)	MTF GEF/L DCF	Maintain and enhance Pacific Island countries' ecosystem goods and services (provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural) through integrated approaches to land, water, forest, biodiversity, and coastal resource management that contribute to poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, and climate resilience.	15
10185	Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in SIDS (ISLANDS)	GEF-7	UNEP	Chem	GEF	Support SIDS to enter a safe chemical development pathway through strengthening their ability to control the flow of chemicals, products, materials into their territories and unlock resources for long term management of chemicals and wastes.	2

Source: GEF Portal.

Note: ^a CEO endorsed.

21. While the ISLANDS and CPDP programs are more distributed across regions, all child projects for the R2R program are located in Pacific SIDS, but there are R2R projects in other SIDS that are not considered under the same program. In the three programs, four GEF Agencies are represented as implementers for child projects, including: the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Climate proofing development in the pacific (CPDP) (GEF ID 5037)

22. This GEF-5 program financed by LDCF and implemented by ADB had an overall goal to reduce the vulnerability of vital infrastructure in Pacific LDCs that are also SIDS through the implementation of National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) priorities, with an intended impact to reduce absolute investments losses from the negative impacts of climate change. Four national level child-projects have been approved under the program, one each in Tuvalu and Vanuatu and two in Timor Leste. There is no coordination project (project focused on knowledge management or coordination between child projects) for this program.

23. The program aimed for countries to work together to strengthen methodologies relevant to the context of small islands and exchange lessons, learning and recommendations in a number of sectors and at different levels of decision making, such as project, policy, and budgeting decisions. This was intended to multiply the benefits compared to what a country-by-country project approach would achieve.

24. The program results framework lists different interventions across three core program components with one corresponding outcome per component. The first program component is focused on technical assistance for improved decision making and knowledge development with outputs related to improve the processes for budgetary allocations for adaptation, completion of impact and vulnerability information in the countries specific to infrastructure needs in the areas of water supply and sanitation, transport, urban planning and small-scale hydropower, revised policies and investment plans to include climate change adaptation in Tuvalu, and the development of knowledge products and country/regional information exchange on approaches for strengthening infrastructure resilience and ecosystem-based adaptation.

25. Under a component focused on investment in infrastructure, specific projects in Vanuatu and Timor Leste are outlined. Investments include the development of an urban drainage and transport plan including climate change adaptation and disaster risk management in Port Vila, Vanuatu. Also, a component is focused on the institutional assessment of barriers to ecosystem-based adaptation, piloting of ecosystem-based adaptation to protect infrastructure and developing green infrastructure guidance materials.

Pacific Islands Ridge-to-Reef National Priorities (R2R) (GEF ID 5395)

26. The R2R program is a GEF-5 UNDP implemented multi-trust fund program which has an objective to maintain and enhance Pacific Island countries ecosystem goods and services (provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural) through integrated approaches to land, water, forest, biodiversity, and coastal resource management that contribute to poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, and climate resilience.

27. In this program, the Pacific Islands countries emphasize the need to focus on their own priority national activities as they utilize STAR resources. Experience has shown that an integrated approach from R2R is necessary for poverty reduction, sustainability, and capacity

enhancement for small countries with few human resources to undertake projects. Hence, each country planned to adopt specific aspects of R2R.

28. The program results framework is expansive with 28 outputs and 11 outcomes listed. The first component focuses on R2R demonstrations in all Pacific Island countries, and includes interventions in areas such as integrated coastal management and integrated water resources management (ICM/IWRM), sustainable land management, the establishment of terrestrial protected areas, coastal blue forest conservation, reforestation and restoration of forests in watersheds resulting in CO₂ sequestration, climate change risk and vulnerability assessments and integration of community-based approaches. The second component focuses on improved governance for these interventions, including the development of integrated policy frameworks, trainings and training assessments, as national coastal diagnostic analyses. The third component focuses on monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge management, including developing national and local indicators and M&E systems and national and regional platforms for sharing best practices and lessons learned. The program's fourth component is focused on regional program coordination.

Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in SIDS (ISLANDS) (GEF ID 10185)

29. The ISLANDS program, a GEF-7 UNEP implemented GEF trust fund program, is intending to support SIDS to enter a safe chemical development pathway through strengthening their ability to control the flow of chemicals, products, and materials into their territories and to unlock resources for long-term management of chemicals and wastes including integrated chemicals and waste management in SIDS. Seven child projects have been approved. All are implemented regionally or globally in SIDS countries. One of the child projects is a communications, coordination, and knowledge management project (GEF ID 10266), while the other six are regional projects focusing on an ocean area (Caribbean, Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans).

30. The ISLANDS program, through a combination of interventions and initiatives, aims to address specific needs at the country level but at the same time reinforce regional and global cooperation, addressing the challenges that SIDS face. Implementation will involve several sectors such as tourism, recycling, and shipping in integrated chemicals and waste management.

31. The ISLANDS program has a results framework with four planned outcomes. The outcomes are focused on developing mechanisms to control the import of chemicals and products that lead to the generation of hazardous waste, the safe management and disposal of existing chemical products and materials, the establishment of effective circular and life-cycle management systems in partnership with the private sector, and knowledge management and communication.

Methodology and approach

32. This evaluation will adopt a mixed-methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The approach is expected to include the following main elements.

- **Literature and document review.** The evaluation includes a literature review of good practices and lessons from other organizations with experience in R2R, non-chemical development, and climate proofing development. The literature and document review will include both journal articles and evaluations by the GEF IEO and evaluation offices of GEF Agencies, as well as online sources.
- **Portfolio review analysis.** The evaluation team will review project design and performance documents for all three programs and all their child projects. All child projects will be reviewed for quality of design, including integration of lessons learned from past projects. Projects with performance information available in the form of a project implementation report, mid-term or terminal evaluation will additionally be reviewed for progress towards achievement of project and program level outcomes. An additional scoping exercise will be conducted to identify past projects in Pacific SIDS countries taking similar approaches. This scoping will be done both through a search of the GEF database of all projects for the use of key terms in the projects results framework and through compiling a list of past projects mentioned in the three program's PFDs and child project design documents. The identified past projects will also be reviewed to develop a database of lessons learned.

The portfolio review will include the following elements:

- **Review of the three program framework documents.** The program framework documents for the three programs will be reviewed for information on the interventions supported and strategies for program support and knowledge management.
- **Quality-at-entry of child project documents.** Quality-at-entry of child projects will be assessed for all 19 child projects under the 3 programs using a standardized project review protocol. The purpose of this review will be to assess relevance of interventions, coherence with the overall program, as well as incorporation of lessons learned from relevant projects.
- **Review of completed projects.** The effectiveness of completed projects will be assessed based on information and ratings in terminal evaluations. This information will be aggregated using a standardized project review protocol.
- **Review of past projects for lessons relevant to the programs and child projects.** Identification of past projects will be done through an iterative search of completed projects' components using key terms. Relevant lessons learned will be aggregated in a database to serve as a reference point for stakeholder interviews and in review of program framework documents and child projects.

- **Interviews.** Interviews will be conducted with a range of stakeholders including present and former GEF Secretariat members involved in the three programs, GEF Agencies active in Pacific SIDS, STAP members, GEF focal points, child project managers, relevant government and non-governmental actors, project stakeholders and beneficiaries in select Pacific SIDS.
- **Case studies.** Field visits will be conducted to gather the perspective of country stakeholders. The evaluation will visit three child projects from the R2R program and one child project each from the climate proofing and ISLANDS programs. Child projects selected for field visits could be both national and regional projects. Field visits will focus on collecting country-level evidence to validate the findings of the portfolio review on relevance, coherence, and effectiveness of interventions, as well as evidence of the integration of lessons learned from past GEF projects into the design of the programs.
- **Contribution analysis⁵:** The evaluation team will use contribution analysis to help identify the extent to which the GEF interventions actually contributed to the development outcomes articulated in each of the programs’ theory of change.
- **Focus group discussions with beneficiaries/targeted communities.** In select case study areas, a sample of beneficiaries will be selected to participate in focus groups with the objective of gathering qualitative data, insights, and understanding different perspectives regarding the project and its interventions.
- **Triangulation.** The evaluation team will conduct an analysis of, and triangulate data collected to determine trends, formulate findings, lessons, and conclusions. Various stakeholders will be consulted during the process to test preliminary findings.

Limitations and quality assurance

33. Eleven out of the 19 child projects are completed and nine of them have a terminal evaluation available. This will limit evaluative evidence in terms of effectiveness and impact especially for the ISLANDS program, which was formally launched in June 2022, and for which no child projects are complete.

⁵ A central challenge in evaluating the GEF’s program effectiveness is that it is never the only cause of observed outcomes and impacts. Instead, activities contribute to observed outcomes that are also influenced by local and global policies, events, and activities, both positive and negative. Contribution analysis provides an explicit framework to consider the plausible association of interventions or programs to outcomes while accounting for other factors that may have influenced observed outcomes. Contribution analysis starts from a theory of change with a clear results chain linking GEF interventions to outcomes to impacts, which acknowledges any underlying assumptions, risks to the outcomes, and other influencing factors outside of the direct control of the GEF. After gathering all existing evidence available to test the theory of change, the evaluation team will assemble and assess the contribution narrative, relating observed actions of the intervention or program to the observed outcomes. The contribution analysis will provide the evaluation team with an evaluable framework for judging how the GEF interventions “moved the needle.” See Mayne (2008).

34. In many countries, the GEF operates within a landscape that involves multiple donor and government initiatives. The simultaneous or sequential actions carried out by governments, diverse donors, and non-governmental organizations, as well as the effect of national context, make it challenging to clearly attribute the outcomes. To the extent possible, the evaluation team will apply a contribution analytic framework to the case studies in judging how GEF interventions “moved the needle.”

35. The evaluation will go through a comprehensive quality assurance process. The draft approach paper and draft evaluation report will be circulated and validated before finalization through a feedback process with key stakeholders. In addition to GEF IEO management and an external reviewer, the evaluation’s design and methods will be carefully documented, adhering to the principles of independence, impartiality, credibility, and utility.

Knowledge management and dissemination plan

36. The main findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this evaluation will be presented at the June 2024 GEF Council meeting and will be shared with all stakeholders involved in the evaluation process. The final evaluation report will be published on the GEF IEO website, and a link will be shared with stakeholders. The IEO will develop additional dissemination products, such as presentations, blogs, and videos, as appropriate to enhance the dissemination of the key findings. To reach a wider audience, the IEO will also explore internal and external forums, such as relevant meetings and evaluation conferences for further dissemination.

Resources

37. The evaluation will be led by Anna Viggh, IEO Senior Evaluation Officer, with oversight by the Chief Evaluation Officer and Director of the IEO. The team will include an IEO Evaluation Analyst and short-term consultants to help with desk and portfolio reviews, and subject matter experts in topics covered by the programs (R2R, non-chemical development, and climate proofing development).

38. The evaluation will be conducted between September 2023 and December 2024. An initial evaluation timetable is shown in table 2 and will be further revised and detailed as part of the further preparations.

Table 2. Evaluation timetable

	2023				2024											
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Evaluation design																
Draft approach paper	X	X	X													
Feedback process			X	X												
Final approach paper					X											
TORs & protocols development			X	X												
Data collection and analysis																
Desk and portfolio review					X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Interviews								X	X	X	X	X				
Contribution analysis								X	X	X						
Case studies										X	X					
Data analysis								X	X	X	X					
Triangulation brainstorming										X	X					
Gap filling											X					
Report writing																
Draft report												X	X			
Address feedback & comments													X	X		
Final report															X	
Presentation to Council																X
Dissemination and outreach																X

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Annex A. Conclusions and recommendations of the Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation (SCCE): Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

Conclusions

In its evaluation, the GEF Independent Evaluation Office reached the following nine main conclusions:

- (1) GEF-financed projects in SIDS are strongly aligned with the government's priorities and reflect the heterogeneous needs of the various countries.
- (2) GEF interventions are relevant to national environment challenges and are aligned with the GEF focal areas.
- (3) The GEF is encouraging integrated approaches by promoting ridge to reef, an integrated watershed management approach to sustainably manage soil, water, and biodiversity, while considering renewable energy resources and productive sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and tourism.
- (4) The performance of SIDS projects was lower than for the overall GEF portfolio on the dimensions of outcome performance, and project implementation and execution. The SIDS ratings on sustainability are similar to the overall GEF portfolio. Regional projects perform significantly better on outcomes and sustainability.
- (5) Context related factors which support sustainability include legal and regulatory reforms, national ownership, establishment of national environment funds, institutional and public private partnerships. Weak institutional capacity, low levels of environmental awareness, pressure from agriculture and tourism sectors impede sustainability.
- (6) Project related factors which have a positive influence on sustainability include training and building capacity, adaptive project management, strong project teams with a good steering committee, and scaling up and replication based on lessons learned. Limited attention to the quality of project design, inadequate investment in building local and national capacity and lack of a clear exit strategy and future financing, are project related factors which negatively impact sustainability.
- (7) The GEF has supported the long-term sustainability of outcomes in the SIDS through a variety of interventions and verified post-completion sustainability ratings of several projects have improved since project completion.
- (8) The GEF has been given increasing attention to cross-cutting issues including gender mainstreaming, resilience and fragility, and private sector engagement and financing in project design; the ability to accessing private sector financing was noted as a challenge.
- (9) The GEF's main areas of additionality are strengthening institutions and assistance with legal and regulatory frameworks.

Recommendations

In its evaluation, the GEF Independent Evaluation Office reached the following five recommendations.

(1) Derive greater benefits from the expanded GEF partnership. GEF Agencies should focus their efforts in SIDS based on their thematic and geographic competence and establish a permanent presence to strengthen dialogue with the respective government and key stakeholders.

(2) Increase the number of integrated interventions. GEF Agencies should respond to the SIDS demand by designing more integrated projects, in line with the ridge to reef, whole island, and blue economy approaches. When justified, multiphase projects should be a prioritized model for GEF projects to improve outcome sustainability.

(3) Promote innovation and knowledge exchange. The GEF project portfolio in SIDS should include a combination of innovative (e.g., income-generating products from invasive alien species) and scaling-up approaches that have shown to be effective. Innovation should be supported even if it has a higher risk. Regional programs should encourage a transfer of knowledge to the poorest SIDS through a South-South capacity-building approach.

(4) Strengthening institutional capacity. GEF Agencies and projects should continue to build institutional capacity in the SIDS and assist in improving project design with due consideration to sustainability (exit strategy, stakeholder engagement, national and local capacity building to ensure continuation, M&E) and in the use of financial resources.

(5) Within the context of the climate change mitigation projects, build on the GEF's comparative advantage. When considering interventions in the climate change mitigation area, the GEF should strategically explore the opportunity to address two of the main challenges facing SIDS—deficient waste management and the lack of sustainable energy. GEF financing should continue to explore the various alternatives for renewable energy in SIDS possibly including wind, tidal and ocean wave power, and geothermal energy resources.

Annex B. Evaluation matrix

Relevance and design - To what extent do the GEF programs in Pacific SIDS countries respond to policies and priorities?			
Key question	Indicators/measures	Source of information	Methodology
Considering the contribution of the rest of the portfolio of national projects, are the programs' objectives aligned with the GEF's programming directions and relevant to the countries' priorities and strategies?	Magnitude of the alignment of program's design with GEF'S programming directions (low, medium, high).	Project Proposals, performance documents, country engagement strategies and national development plans.	Project portfolio review.
Were the strategies in each of the three programs the most appropriate and innovative given the state of technology and risks in these countries at the time of design?	Evidence of design, replication or scaling up of innovative and appropriate components into the programs' strategies.	Project Proposals, performance documents, stakeholders.	Project portfolio review, interviews, case studies.
How well has the design of the child projects in each of these programs responded to and built on outcomes and lessons of completed projects?	Evidence of integration of conclusions and lessons from other completed projects in the program's design.	Project Proposals, performance documents, stakeholders.	Project portfolio review.
Does the project design facilitate efficient monitoring and evaluation?	Quality of the results framework and its targets/indicators, Quality of the project's risk matrix, Quality of assessment of the project's potential environmental and social impact, and monitoring/mitigation, Quality of Gender assessment/targets	Results Framework, Risk Matrix, Environmental & Social Impact Assessment, Gender assessment	Desk study
Coherence - How compatible are the objectives of each of the GEF programs with similar government and/or donor-funded interventions in Pacific SIDS countries?			

Are the objectives and activities of the child projects in each program coherent with the goals and objectives of each program's theory of change, the other child projects and other development projects dealing with the same issues?	Magnitude of the alignment of child projects design with parent program and other child projects.	Project Proposals, performance documents, country engagement strategies and national development plans, terminal evaluations, midterms reviews, PIRs, stakeholders.	Project portfolio review, case studies, interviews
To what extent have the programs achieved or are likely to achieve policy coherence across sectors (horizontal), across levels of governance (vertical), and across time frames (temporal)?	Development outcome and progress implementation ratings for interventions.	Project terminal evaluations, midterms reviews, PIRs	Project portfolio review, case studies, interviews, contribution analysis
Are policy inconsistencies addressed differently in the participating countries by each of the programs?	Evidence of programs' interventions to identify and address policy inconsistencies.	Project Proposals, performance documents, country engagement strategies and national development plans, terminal evaluations, midterms reviews, PIRs, stakeholders.	Project portfolio review, case studies, interviews
Effectiveness - To what extent have each of the GEF programs in Pacific SIDS countries achieved or are likely to achieve their planned outcomes?			
How effective have the child projects been in terms of implementation and attaining outcomes in accordance with the theories of change outlined within each program and project?	Assessment of projects' ratings and other performance indicators	Stakeholders, Project proposals and performance documents	Project portfolio review, case studies, interviews, contribution analysis
To what extent have cross-cutting issues of gender, youth, indigenous peoples, private sector engagement, and socio-economic benefits been considered in the design of each of the programs, and to what extent have they been achieved?	A detailed review of the incorporation of cross-cutting issues in the design and implementation of each of the programs	Stakeholders, Project proposals and performance documents	Project portfolio review, case studies, interviews

How effectively has knowledge been shared within programs through the knowledge platforms or in other ways?	Assessment of the design, quality and use of knowledge products and platforms of each of the programs	Stakeholders, knowledge products and performance documents	Project portfolio review, case studies, interviews
To what extent has program level reporting been systematized and enables establishing a link between program and project results?	Assessment of the monitoring and evaluation tools established by each of the programs	Stakeholders, project documents and performance documents	Project portfolio review, case studies, interviews
To what extent did the GEF interventions demonstrate their additionality of having programs with child projects compared with standalone projects?	Assessment of the additional contribution (financial and non-financial) by each of the programs	Stakeholders, project documents and performance documents	Project portfolio review, case studies, interviews
To what extent has the GEF Agency selection and the coordination across Agencies influenced the performance of each of the programs?	Assessment of the unique value and expertise of agencies as well as their coordination throughout the implementation of the programs	Stakeholders, project documents and performance documents	Project portfolio review, case studies, interviews

Annex C. Approved child projects in Pacific SIDS countries

GEF ID	Project Title	GEF phase	Agency	Country	Focal areas	Fund source	Status
Parent GEF ID 5037 - Climate Proofing Development in the Pacific (CPDP)							
9197	Protecting Urban Areas Against the Impacts of Climate Change in Vanuatu	GEF-5	ADB	Vanuatu	CC	LDCF	Completed
9512	Climate Resilience in the Outer Islands of Tuvalu	GEF-5	ADB	Tuvalu	CC	LDCF	Under Implementation
Parent GEF ID 5395 - Pacific Islands Ridge-to-Reef National Priorities (R2R)							
5208	R2R: Advancing Sustainable Resources Management to Improve Livelihoods and Protect Biodiversity in Palau	GEF-5	UNEP	Palau	BD, CC, IW, LD	GEF	Project Implemented
5348	Conserving Biodiversity and Enhancing Ecosystem Functions through a "Ridge to Reef" Approach in the Cook Island	GEF-5	UNDP	Cook Islands	BD, CC, IW, LD	GEF	Project Implemented/TE available
5381	R2R: Implementing a "Ridge to Reef" Approach to Protecting Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functions in Nauru (R2R Nauru)	GEF-5	UNDP	Nauru	BD, CC, IW, LD	GEF	Project Implemented/TE available
5397	R2R: Integrated Sustainable Land and Coastal Management	GEF-5	FAO	Vanuatu	BD, CC, IW, LD	GEF	Under Implementation
5398	Implementing a "Ridge to Reef" Approach to Preserve Ecosystem Services, Sequester Carbon, Improve Climate Resilience and Sustain Livelihoods in Fiji (Fiji R2R)	GEF-5	UNDP	Fiji	BD, CC, IW, LD	GEF	Project Implemented/TE available
5404	R2R: Testing the Integration of Water, Land, Forest & Coastal Management to Preserve Ecosystem Services, Store Carbon, Improve Climate Resilience and Sustain Livelihoods in Pacific Island Countries	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu,	IW	GEF	Project Implemented/TE available

5417	Economy-wide Integration of Climate Change Adaptation and DRM/DRR to Reduce Climate Vulnerability of Communities in Samoa	GEF-5	UNDP	Samoa	CC	LDCF	Project Implemented/TE available
5510	R2R Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the National System of Protected Areas	GEF - 5	UNDP	Papua New Guinea	BD, LD	GEF	Project Implemented/TE available
5517	R2R Implementing an Integrated Ridge to Reef Approach to Enhance Ecosystem Services, to Conserve Globally Important Biodiversity and to Sustain Local Livelihoods in the FSM	GEF-5	UNDP	Micronesia	BD, CC, IW, LD	GEF	Under Implementation
5544	R2R Reimaanlok Looking to the Future: Strengthening Natural Resource Management in Atoll Communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands Employing Integrated Approaches (RMI R2R)	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional, Marshall Islands	BD, CC, IW, LD	GEF	Under Implementation
5550	R2R Implementing a Ridge to Reef Approach to Protect Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functions	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional, Tuvalu	BD, CC, IW, LD	GEF	Project Implemented/TE available
5551	Resilient Islands, Resilient Communities	GEF-5	FAO	Regional, Kiribati	BD, IW, LD	GEF	Under Implementation
5552	Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation, and for the Enhancement of Ecosystem Service and Cultural Heritage in Niue	GEF-5	UNDP	Niue	BD, CC, IW, LD	GEF	Project Implemented/TE available
5578	R2R Integrated Land and Agro-ecosystem Management Systems	GEF-5	FAO	Tonga	BD, LD	GEF	Project Implemented
5663	R2R Integrated Environmental Management of the Fanga'uta Lagoon Catchment	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional, Tonga	BD, CC, IW, LD	GEF	Project Implemented/TE available
Parent GEF ID 10185 - Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in SIDS (ISLANDS)							
10266	Communications, Coordination and Knowledge Management Project	GEF-7	UNEP	Global	Chem	GEF	Under Implementation

10267	ISLANDS - Pacific Child Project	GEF-7	UNEP	Regional, Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	Chem	GEF	Under Implementation
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