

Management Response: Implementation Plan for Evaluation Recommendations

General Information

Eval ID	756
Evaluation Manager	Fabio Fisicaro
Project Evaluation Title	Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project "Advancing Sustainable Resource Management to Improve Livelihoods and Protect Biodiversity in Palau
PIMS #	
GEF ID	5208
UNEP Sub-programme	SP3 – Healthy and Productive Ecosystems
GEF Focal Area	Biodiversity
Project Manager/ Task Manager	Sang Jin Lee
Office/Division	Ecosystems Division
Branch & Unit	Biodiversity and Land Branch
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Total # of Recommendations as per Report	5
Implementation Plan Sent to PM/TM (Date)	27/05/2024
Implementation Plan Returned by PM/TM (Date)	14/06/2024
Implementation Plan finalized (if different from the date above)	18/06/2024

Implementation Plan

No	Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation	Recommendation	Priority level	Type of Recommendation	Responsibility	Proposed Implementation time-frame	Acceptance	Reason if not Accepted or Partially Accepted	Management Action(s) to be taken
1	Given there was no final reporting from partners, that not all deliverables are in one place, and there is limited conformity on the state of various outputs and overall outcomes, and that many partners are not aware of the process and next steps on the outputs, a final closing workshop to discuss (a) the finalisation of project outputs, and (b) the sustainability of key project results, is important in improving coordination, cooperation and partnership,	EA should hold final closing workshop with all partners and develop workshop report Recommended steps: Project Manager to convene all project partners for a 1/2 day meeting in Koror The following items should be on the agenda: - Each partner to present their final work and level of completion (and a discussion after each presentation as to what next steps on that particular work is from EA and/or relevant	Important	Partners	UNEP project team to pass this recommendation to the EA to convene all partners	As soon as possible	Partially Accepted	After having discussion with EA (Project Partner) through e-communication (refer to attached emails), it turns out that having a partner's meeting to go over the recommended items will be a challenge with new staff who	TM shared the recommendation to the EA (partners) through a series of e-communication (28 May, 3, 10, 12 and 14 June). Efforts to seek for solution were done.

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	as well as honest and transparent communications for move to impact.	partners) - For those items not completed, an honest discussion as to what the challenges were - The target of exact ha as per indicator (Output 1.1.3. Indicator 3 - Percentage of marine and terrestrial areas increased - EOP Total Pan Site coverage 138,000 ha marine and 10,500 ha terrestrial) should be discussed and fully recorded as to what the contribution was by the project (building on the PIR 2022 measurement) - The sustainability of project results - What would be feasible/practical ways to coordinate and communicate among conservation actors for PAN and SLM work in Palau - How exactly gender and marginalised communities benefitted from this project and a dialogue on how this could be improved in future projects The workshop should be recorded and a workshop report should be written up to serve as the final project report, covering the items (as headers) above						do not have experience with GEF 5; the concern that project implementation was few years back so everyone has forgotten and remaining funds are for the audit. By reflecting current circumstances, EA suggest to try via email to the partners or those who understand the project and give them some time. Please refer to the message from Dolmii, Project Manager on 14 June.	
2	There is no final expenditure reporting nor final project reporting (the PIR 2023 while acting as a final report does not align directly to project achievements)	EA to urgently close off financial reporting and submit final reporting Recommended steps: Urgently conduct final expenditure reporting and co-finance reporting Submit final project report (as per Recommendation 1)	Important	Partners	UNEP project team to pass this recommendation to the EA	Urgent/after final project closing workshop	Accepted		Final technical report was successfully submitted and approved on 20 Feb., 2024 as attached. As for financial reporting, the EA is still working on and will be completed in parallel with audit being implemented (refer to attached emails).

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3	Future project implementation requires more commitment to project management by MAFE, if MAFE wants to integrate the project into its organisational structure (which the evaluator tends to agree with and believes is the point of GEF catalytic impact) it is supposed to be for project sustainability and incremental transformation in terms of institutional capacity. The management of a GEF FSP is a big undertaking and no person can do this on their own, never mind take it on part-time. The evaluator understands the turn around sometimes between design and implementation means that the context and priorities have changed - but this is why the inception meeting is so important and should be used to adjust the project accordingly, this is a recommendation for future projects. The lack of capacity and the fact that one part-time project manager was the only person coordinating this project resulted in many challenges the project could have avoided.	EA and IA to set up stronger PMU structure for future GEF projects in Palau (and in general and where applicable) Recommended steps: For future project development, clearly outline how the PMU will be structured, the PMU should have a full-time Project Manager, and preferably also a Chief Technical Advisor (or International Technical Advisor) to support project implementation and build project management capacity. Technical expertise is not the problem in Palau (even if human resources are limited), but project management expertise is - this can be easily fixed with more thought and budget going into a structured PMU. A Steering Committee is also a vital part of project implementation and steps should be taken at design to ensure commitment from steering committee members to fulfil their roles and prioritise the project.	Important	Partners	GEF Focal Point together with UNEP Project Team and EA	12 months (for GEF-7 and GEF-8 projects).	Accepted		Well noted. With MAFE as an executing agency, there will be a new GEF project (MSP, 10907) to be implemented officially in 25 June 2024. TM will participate in both inception workshop as well as the 1st PSC meeting and will have a chance to meet all PMU staff and discuss on project implementation in details. During the meeting, TM will provide technical and administrative guidance on project implementation. It will enhance capability of MAFE and PMU to carry out project effectively as planned.
4	More than 80% of the project budget was spent on sub-contracts and there is no financial expenditure reporting on this, there is no clarity on where and on what funds were spent (especially where outputs and activities were not fully achieved and/or financed by other funders), audits are missing	Conduct a full independent audit of the project Note: on the 28th of March 2024, the UNEP Evaluation Office was informed by the project team that the Executing Agency (MAFE) contracted the firm Ernst & Young to conduct the audits for the missing years. The audits should be ready by June 2024.	Important	Project	(The UNEP Project Team within the) Ecosystems Division	As soon as possible	Accepted		As mentioned during the meeting on Mar. 2024, the audit (by E&Y) is still in operation as shown in the email attached (30 May 2024). Once done, the report will be shared.

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	for the majority of the project timeline.	Upon receipt of the audits, the UNEP Evaluation Office will assess whether the issue raised by this recommendation (i.e., lack of financial expenditure reporting from the implementing partners) was adequately addressed.							
5	Too many task managers, each with their own way of doing things and in some cases contradicting each other, lack of oversight in general, and not enough guidance to a country implementing an FSP for the first time and not having enough capacity to do so	Improve oversight and guidance to projects both in design and implementation Recommended steps: Conduct capacity assessments of EA and project partners at design to improve ways to structure project when it comes to design and think seriously about including a CTA/ITA when it is necessary Provide standardized guidance, improve handover processes between task managers Provide more oversight (regular meetings with EA which include an overall ethos/enabling environment for the EA to ask questions/direct support line) Provide better guidance in terms of social safeguarding, inclusion re marginalised communities and gender mainstreaming (through the UNEP Gender and Safeguards Unit)	Important	Project	UNEP Project Team	12 months	Accepted		To improve project implementation capability, CTA was hired to have close connection with TM and provide technical guidance on site (e.g., GEF 10161) and this practice will be in operation together with capacity assessment of EA during design phase especially when working with MAFE starting from GEF-9 cycle. For GEF-7 project recently started (e.g., GEF 10907 Palau), TM will participate in the inception workshop as well as the 1st PSC meeting to provide guidance on technical as well as administrative perspectives. Also, closer monitoring and guidance including gender and safeguard issues will be made as well.