UN environment programme | Evaluation Office

Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF Project

"Strengthening national and regional capacities to reduce the impact of Invasive Alien Species on globally significant biodiversity in the Pacific" GEF ID 9410"

(2019-2025)

UN environment programme | gef | SPREP Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme



Evaluation Office of the United Nations Environment Programme

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Project Title: Strengthening national and regional capacities to reduce the impact of Invasive Alien Species on globally significant biodiversity in the Pacific

Project number: GEF 9410

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The evaluation consultant(s) hopes that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to the successful finalisation of the current project, formulation of any next phases and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in other countries and regions.

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About the Evaluation

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ABSTRACT: This report is a Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project: Strengthening national and regional capacities to reduce the impact of Invasive Alien Species on globally significant biodiversity in the Pacific, implemented between 2019 and 2025.The project's overall goal was to reduce the threats from Invasive Alien Species (IAS) to terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity in the Pacific. The evaluation sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency) and determine the sustainability of its results. The evaluation has two primary purposes: accountability and learning. Data collection methods included: field observations, in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions and document reviews. Data analysis was based on applying triangulated data to assess performance against a reconstructed Theory of Change and its causal pathways. With an overall performance rating of Satisfactory, the 5th point on a six-point scale, the strongest performing aspects were its highly aligned strategic relevance, strong country ownership, active stakeholder participation, and the establishment of a regionally scalable, demand-driven support architecture through PRISMSS. The main achievements included the formal cabinet endorsement of all four NISSAPs, successful rodent eradications in Tuvalu, Tonga, and the Marshall Islands, operational early detection systems, the institutionalization of coordinator roles in three countries, and SPREP's expansion of regional support to fifteen jurisdictions. In contrast, comparative weaknesses were apparent in outcome-level monitoring, national financial sustainability, and incomplete social safeguard documentation, notably the complete absence of formal Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes for customary lands. The main recommendations to UNEP are: i) strengthen rights-based and inclusive practice as a standard feature of future Pacific biodiversity investments and ii) improve UNEP's financial and knowledge-management systems for future regional projects. Implementing parties are advised to i) institutionalise PRISMSS as the Pacific's long-term regional IAS support service, ii) institutionalise a Pacific IAS knowledge platform within PRISMSS to compile, update and share evidence, lessons and good practices across Pacific countries, iii) protect the ecological gains from eradication and restoration through sustained surveillance and inter-island biosecurity and iv) translate endorsed NISSAPs into funded government programmes and measurable national commitments.

Source(s) of Funding by Country: *(Tonga, Niue, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu)*

Source(s) of Funding by Institution Type: *(indicate all that apply)*

Foundation/NGO	Yes/No
Private Sector	No
UN Body	No
Multilateral Fund	Yes
Environment Fund	No

Key words *(max. five words)***:** Invasive Alien Species, SIDS, Biodiversity.

Primary data collection period: June – August 2026

Field mission dates: 26th June to 10th July 2026

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

BRB	The Battler Resource Base
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific
EA	Executing Agency
EDRR	Early Detection and Rapid Response
ESERN	Environmental, Social and Economic Review Note
ESS	Environmental and Social Safeguards
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FMO	Fund Management Officer
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IA	Implementing Agency
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
KII	Key Informant Interview
KM	Knowledge management
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MFAT	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)
MTR	Mid Term Review
MTS	Medium Term Strategy
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans
NC	National Coordinator
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NISC	National Invasive Species Coordinator
NISSAP	National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plan
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NZ	New Zealand
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
PICT	Pacific Island Countries and Territories
PILN	Pacific Invasives Learning Network
PIP	Pacific Invasives Partnership
PIR	Project Implementation Reports

PISI	Pacific Invasive Species Indicators
PMU	Project Management Unit
POW	Programme of Work
PRISMSS	The Pacific Regional Invasive Species Management Support Service
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RMI	Republic of Marshall Islands
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SOP	standard operating procedures
SPC	Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
ToC	The Theory of Change
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USD	United States Dollars
VEPA	Vava'u Environmental Protection Association

Project identification table

Table 1: Project Identification Table

<table>
<tr><td>GEF Project ID/SMA ID[1]:</td><td colspan="3">GEF ID 9410, SMA ID 40228</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Type of GEF Project:</td><td>Child: N</td><td>Global Coordinating Project:</td><td>N</td></tr>
<tr><td>If yes, provide GEF Programme[2] ID:</td><td>Medium-Size Project or Full-Size Project:</td><td>Full-Size Project</td></tr>
<tr><td>UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):</td><td>GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit, Biodiversity and Land Branch, Ecosystems Division</td><td>Executing Agency: (indicate if internally executed):</td><td>Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sources of Funding (Co-finance):</td><td>Country[3](ies):
Marshall Islands, Niue, Tonga, Tuvalu</td><td colspan="2">Institution[4] Name/Type:
United nations Environment Programme, Island Conservation, Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, (Secretariat for the) Pacific Community, Landcare Research NZ Ltd, Pacific Biosecurity.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Relevant SDG(s):</td><td colspan="3">Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

SDG Target 15.8 By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species</td></tr>
<tr><td>MTS (at approval):</td><td colspan="3">MTS 2018 - 2021</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference[5] (applicable for projects approved from 2022):

OR

POW Output(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved pre-2022)</td><td>POW Direct Outcome: Countries and institutions integrate ecosystem health and productivity into decision-making and management frameworks to sustain nature's contributions to people</td><td rowspan="2">MTS 2025 Outcome(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved from 2022):

OR

POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved pre-2022):</td><td>MTS 2025 Outcome:</td></tr>
<tr><td>POW Output: (PoW 2018-2019) 3. a. (i) (i) Increase in the number of countries and transboundary collaboration frameworks that have made progress to monitor and maintain the health and</td><td>POW (2018-2019) Expected Accomplishment: EA 3 (b) Policymakers in the public and private sectors test the inclusion of the health and productivity of eco-</td></tr>
</table>

[1] SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023. Previously, it was referred to as a PIMS ID number.
[2] GEF Programme refers to 'Parent' project.
[3] Where applicable, list countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.
[4] Indicate where funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund.
[5] For these items do not include full text; only enter the number or reference.

	productivity of marine and terrestrial ecosystems *3. b. (i) Increase the in number of public sector institutions that test the incorporation of the health and productivity of marine and terrestrial ecosystems in economic decision-making*		*systems in economic decision-making* *Indicator: (i.) Increase in the number of public sector institutions that test the incorporation of the health and productivity of marine and terrestrial ecosystems in economic decision-making*
Sub-programme:	Nature Action	Programme Coordination Project (if relevant):	N/A
UNEP approval date:	25 March 2019	GEF approval date:	27 March 2019
GEF Operational Programme/Cycle # (e.g. GEF-7):	GEF-6	GEF Strategic Priority (e.g. BD4):	BD-2 Program 4
Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity		
Expected start date:[6]	January 2019	Actual start date:[7]	23 May 2019
Planned completion date:[6]	January 2024	Actual operational completion date:	31 December 2025
Planned project budget at approval:	GEF grant allocation: US$ 6,252,489		
	Expected co-financing: US$ 22,177,157 *Cash: US* 9,570,216 *In-kind: US $ 12,606,941*		
	Total planned budget: US $ 28,429,646		
Actual expenditures reported[8] (cash only):	GEF grant expenditures reported as of ***31 December 2025***: US$ 6,147,090		
	Actual co-financing as of ***31 December 2025***: US$ 31,639,896		
	Total actual expenditures reported as of ***31 December 2025***: US$ 20,506,990		
No. of formal project revisions:	0	Date of last approved project revision:	N/A
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	11	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	11 Dec. 2025
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation[9] *(required or not required):*	UNEP requirement: Y GEF requirement: Y	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation actual date:	October 2022
Terminal Evaluation *(planned date):*	December 2025	Terminal Evaluation actual date:	November 2025
Coverage - Country(ies):	Marshall Islands, Niue, Tonga, Tuvalu.	Coverage - Region(s):	Asia and the Pacific
Dates of previous project phases:		Status of future project phases:	

[6] Expected/planned dates are listed in the Project Document (ProDoc).
[7] Actual start date is the date of the last signature on the PCA or ICA.
[8] This will be reported during the evaluation phase.
[9] UNEP projects of four or more years duration require an MTR unless there is an exceptional circumstance. See the Evaluation in the Project Cycle section in the *Evaluation Office's operational manual*. Donor requirements may vary and should be considered in conjunction with UNEP's requirements.

Executive Summary

Project Background

1. The project "Strengthening national and regional capacities to reduce the impact of Invasive Alien Species on globally significant biodiversity in the Pacific" (GEF ID 9410) was implemented by the UNEP Ecosystems Division across four Pacific SIDS: Tonga, Niue, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and Tuvalu. This full-size project was approved by the GEF on 27 March 2019, with a total planned budget of USD 28,429,646, comprising USD 6,252,489 in GEF grant funding and USD 22,177,157 in planned co-financing. Operations formally commenced on 23 May 2019, and closed on 31 December 2025, following two no-cost extensions.

2. The project rationale emerged from the acute vulnerability of Pacific Island ecosystems to Invasive Alien Species (IAS), which represent the single greatest threat to native biodiversity in the region. Driven by maritime border, geographic isolation, increasing trade, weak biosecurity legislation, and critically limited domestic capacities, IAS have historically caused disproportionate negative impacts on local ecosystems, endemic biodiversity and people's livelihoods.

3. To address these drivers, the project objective was to reduce the threats from IAS to terrestrial, freshwater, and marine biodiversity by developing and implementing comprehensive national and regional IAS management frameworks. Day-to-day execution was led by the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) as the regional Executing Agency, in close partnership with national environment ministries and technical partners. Together, they worked across four sequential components to strengthen institutional frameworks, build prioritization databases, execute on-the-ground eradication and restoration, and establish a sustainable regional support backbone.

This Evaluation

4. This terminal evaluation was conducted by an independent external consultant in accordance with UNEP's Evaluation Policy. It sought to assess the project's performance across nine key criteria, ranging from strategic relevance to factors affecting performance, assigning ratings on a standard six-point scale. Serving the dual purposes of accountability and learning, the evaluation assessed results generated by the project while also gathering key findings to improve future project designs and global sustainability practices.

5. The evaluation adopted a highly participatory, mixed-methods approach. Primary data collection was conducted during a field mission to Tuvalu and Tonga from June 26 to July 10, 2026, where the evaluator carried out site visits and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in the Funafuti Conservation Area. In total, the evaluator conducted in-depth Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with 31 stakeholders (16 male and 15 female) across regional bodies, national authorities, partners, and local NGOs. Extensive secondary data was examined, including annual Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), Mid-Term Review findings, technical outputs, and financial statements.

6. All gathered information was systematically triangulated and analyzed against a reconstructed Theory of Change (ToC) to evaluate the causal pathways connecting project outputs to long-term impact. Key limitations included limited site visits in two countries, and the lack of explicit quantitative baseline data at outcome level in the project logframe. These were successfully mitigated by cross-verifying qualitative testimonies with comprehensive progress reports and co-financing records.

Key Findings and Performance Ratings

7. The project demonstrated **Highly Satisfactory strategic relevance** across all criteria. It aligned fully with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategies (MTS) and successive Programmes of Work (POW) regarding healthy ecosystems and nature action. It matched GEF-6 strategic priority BD-2, CBD obligations (Aichi Target 9), and SAMOA Pathway commitments. Coherence was exceptionally strong, as the design explicitly succeeded the GEF-4 Pacific IAS initiative, establishing PRISMSS as a direct correction to previous regional fragmentation. The project also directly contributed to SDG target 15.8 and SDG target 14.2.

8. The **quality of project design was Satisfactory** (weighted score 4.6). Notable design strengths included strong country ownership, clear governance, and the innovative decision to anchor the regional PRISMSS support service within SPREP. However, design weaknesses were evident: the logical framework lacked an explicit Theory of Change, conflated outputs and outcomes, lacked SMART indicators and quantitative baseline data, and underestimated national staff/coordinator turnover risks. Additionally, activity and technical partnership budgets were not based on bottom-up cost estimates, forcing field teams to heavily rely on external co-financing.

9. The **nature of the external context was Moderately Favourable**. The dominant external disruptor was the COVID-19 pandemic, which from 2020 through 2022 restricted travel and delayed in-country field training, baseline surveys, and eradication operations, requiring two no-cost extensions. Periodic cyclones and droughts also caused localized operational disruptions.

10. The project's **overall effectiveness was Satisfactory**. All 15 outputs were substantially delivered. National cross-sectoral TAGs were established across all four countries, and NISSAPs were completed and received formal Cabinet endorsement. In-country leadership was strengthened by institutionalizing National Invasive Species Coordinator (NISC) roles in Tonga, Niue, and RMI, while Tuvalu remains dependent on external support. Baseline studies and prioritizing tools were developed and applied, facilitating a transition toward risk-based surveillance.

11. Component 3 achieved major on-the-ground outcomes through Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) protocols, biocontrol programs, and landmark rodent eradications. Notable conservation successes include confirming rat-free status for two islands (Falefatu and Tepuka) in Tuvalu, three islands (Late, Mu'omu'a, and Fua'amotu islands) in Tonga and seven islets in the Marshall Islands, restoring Mount Talau and Toloa Rainforest in Tonga, and supporting the recovery of the endemic Tongan Whistler. However, the 2025 re-detection of rats on Late Island highlighted the fragility of these ecological gains and the need for improved post-treatment monitoring. Outcome 4.1 was the project's most successful institutional achievement, operationalizing PRISMSS as a functional regional support mechanism that has scaled its services from four SIDS to 15 Pacific jurisdictions.

12. **Financial management was Satisfactory**. Total GEF expenditure reached US$ 6.15 million (98.3% budget utilization). Co-financing was robust, significantly overachieving targets at 148.3% (US$ 32.90 million realized), driven heavily by SPREP and Island Conservation. Financial management followed the UNEP standard and no issues noted during the project implementation. However, systemic UNEP fund-flow delays frequently hindered implementation timeliness.

13. **Efficiency was Moderately Satisfactory**. While the PRISMSS model and synergies minimized duplication, efficiency was offset by staff turnover, occasional fund disbursement

delays from UNEP and pandemic-related delays that extended the project until Dec 2025, increasing cumulative operational and transaction costs.

14. **Monitoring and reporting was Satisfactory**. M&E supported implementation oversight, regular PIR reporting, and adaptive decisions. However, tracking focused on activities and output delivery rather than outcome-level changes, and Outcome 3.2 reporting was omitted from PIRs due to results framework submission gaps.

15. **Overall sustainability was Moderately Likely**. Socio-political sustainability is **Likely**, anchored by cabinet-approved NISSAPs and high community ownership. However, **financial sustainability is Moderately Likely** as national-level sustainable financing yet to be materialized, leaving local programs grant-dependent. **Institutional sustainability is Moderately Likely**; SPREP anchors PRISMSS but staffing and core regional funding remain dependent on external donors.

16. **Factors affecting performance were Satisfactory**. SPREP provided strong technical leadership, while UNEP provided flexible oversight, though its remote model lacked field-based observation. Stakeholder participation was active, and gender mainstreaming was Satisfactory, exceeding female staff engagement targets. The remaining criteria, i.e., Environmental and Social Safeguards, Country Ownership and Driven-ness, and Communication and Public Awareness, are also rated Satisfactory, indicating consistent and adequate performance across all three dimensions. These ratings reflect solid, though not exemplary, results.

Table 2: Summary of project ratings

Criterion	Rating
Strategic Relevance	Highly Satisfactory (HS)
Quality of Project Design	Satisfactory (S)
Nature of External Context	Moderately Favourable (MF)
Effectiveness	Satisfactory (S)
Financial Management	Satisfactory (S)
Efficiency	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)
Monitoring and Reporting	Satisfactory (S)
Sustainability	Moderately Likely (ML)
Factors Affecting Performance	Satisfactory (S)
Overall Project Performance Rating	Satisfactory (S)

Conclusions Summary

17. Overall, the project performed at the Satisfactory level. The strongest performing aspects were its highly aligned strategic relevance, strong country ownership, active stakeholder participation, and the establishment of a regionally scalable, demand-driven support architecture through PRISMSS. The main achievements included the formal cabinet endorsement of all four NISSAPs, successful rodent eradications in Tuvalu, Tonga, and the Marshall Islands, operational early detection systems, the institutionalization of coordinator roles in three countries, and SPREP's expansion of regional support to fifteen jurisdictions. In contrast, comparative weaknesses were apparent in outcome-level monitoring, national financial sustainability, and incomplete social safeguard documentation, notably the absence of formal Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes for customary lands.

Responses to the Key Strategic Questions

18. The project addressed MTR recommendations substantially but unevenly. While SPREP successfully implemented programmatic, gender, and regional partnership recommendations, UNEP-side systemic issues**,** specifically, component-level financial tracking and fund flow disbursement delays**,** went unaddressed. Knowledge sharing was a notable strength. The project modernized the Battler Resource Base to host over 1,200 resources, launched the PRISMSS Navigator, and held regional PILN meetings. Standardized NISSAP, EDRR, and marine biosecurity templates were successfully adopted by non-participating countries, including Samoa, and Palau. Conversely, private sector involvement was limited. Despite ambitious design plans to engage airlines, hotels, and importers, private sector participation was confined to localized consultations with community fishermen, with no formal partnership frameworks or recorded private sector co-financing.

Lessons Learned

Key lessons from the project include:

19. **Lesson 1: Regional technical support works when it is institutionalised and demand driven**. Embedding PRISMSS in SPREP overcame SIDS capacity limits and leveraged regional co-financing.

20. **Lesson 2: National coordination roles need to be institutionalised early to ensure institutional memory and continuity of specialised IAS management**. Securing core-budgeted coordinator positions prevents operational momentum loss.

21. **Lesson 3: Technical feasibility is not enough; social licence must be built before implementation**. Interventions on customary lands require culturally appropriate consultations and formal FPIC.

22. **Lesson 4: IAS management works best as a continuum from prevention to recovery**. Eradications fail long-term without integrated biosecurity, EDRR, and habitat restoration.

23. **Lesson 5: Gender mainstreaming should focus not only on participation, but also on influence, decision-making and equitable benefits**. M&E must track women's leadership, not just participation numbers.

Recommendations for Future Projects

24. The evaluation proposes six key recommendations to sustain results and guide future interventions:

25. **Recommendation 1: Institutionalise PRISMSS as the Pacific's long-term regional IAS support service.** UNEP, GEF, SPREP, and governments should formally recognize PRISMSS as a regional public good, establishing a multi-year financing and governance framework to sustain its core technical services.

26. **Recommendation 2: Further institutionalise a Pacific IAS knowledge platform within PRISMSS to compile, update and share evidence, lessons and good practices across Pacific countries.** Based on the learning so far, SPREP/PRISMSS and national partners should institutionalize the Pacific IAS knowledge platform and track uptake in policy, finance, legislation and field management to sustain regional governance.

27. **Recommendation 3: Protect the ecological gains from eradication and restoration through sustained surveillance and inter-island biosecurity.** National governments must

develop a post-project protection framework enforcing inter-island quarantine controls and minimum monitoring standards to protect rat-free islands from reinvasion.

28. **Recommendation 4: Translate endorsed NISSAPs into funded government programmes and measurable national commitments.** Governments should translate endorsed plans into costed, core-budgeted annual work programmes, transitioning coordinator positions into permanent civil service budgets.

29. **Recommendation 5: Strengthen rights-based and inclusive practice as a standard feature of future Pacific biodiversity investments.** Project partners should establish formal FPIC, grievance mechanisms, and inclusive participation protocols during preparation, monitoring women's qualitative influence on decision-making.

30. **Recommendation 6: Improve UNEP's financial and knowledge-management systems for future regional projects.** UNEP should streamline its disbursement processes to prevent fund-flow bottlenecks and implement component-level financial tracking to improve efficiency.

1 THE PROJECT

1.1 Context

1.1.1 Intervention context

31. The Pacific Ocean region, encompassing approximately 30,000 islands across 22 countries and territories, harbours one of the world's most significant biodiversity hotspots, particularly within the Polynesia-Micronesia sub-region. Islands globally support 15% of bird, reptile, and plant species on just 3% of the world's land area yet have suffered disproportionate extinction rates, with 80–93% of recorded bird extinctions and 50–81% of mammal extinctions attributed to Invasive Alien Species (IAS). In the Pacific, IAS represents the single greatest threat to native biodiversity, ahead of habitat destruction in most Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

32. This project was implemented across four Pacific nations, Tonga, Niue, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and Tuvalu (Figure 1), each facing acute IAS vulnerabilities driven by maritime border, geographic isolation, increasing trade and tourism volumes, and critically limited technical and financial capacity.

33. Root causes of increased IAS risks include weak and fragmented biosecurity legislation, insufficient scientific data on IAS distribution, absence of coordinated national and regional management frameworks, low public and political awareness, and chronic underfunding. These conditions allow IAS to continue establishing and spreading with minimal effective response.

34. The consequences are severe: accelerating extinction of endemic species, degraded ecosystem services including water provision and fisheries productivity, reduced agricultural output, and increased vulnerability to climate change impacts. Communities dependent on natural resources for food security and livelihoods face compounding risks.

35. External challenges during implementation included COVID-19-related travel restrictions from 2020 onwards, which severely disrupted planned in-country field operations, training workshops, and cross-country coordination — a significant constraint given the project's inherently field-intensive and regionally dispersed design.

1.1.2 Institutional context

36. This project was implemented under the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) within the Nature Action sub-programme[10], aligned with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy 2018–2021 and its Programme of Work objective to maintain and restore ecosystems and biodiversity. The project contributes specifically to Expected Accomplishment 3 (b) Policymakers in the public and private sectors test the inclusion of the health and productivity of eco-systems in economic decision-making." It directly supports GEF-6 Biodiversity focal area strategic objective BD-2 (Reduce threats to globally significant biodiversity) and Strategic Programme 4 on prevention, control, and management of IAS.

37. UNEP's GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit of the Ecosystems Division served as the Implementing Agency, with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) as the Executing Agency. SPREP a well-established regional intergovernmental organisation headquartered in Apia, Samoa, with a core IAS advisory function operating since 1998. National executing agencies included the relevant environment

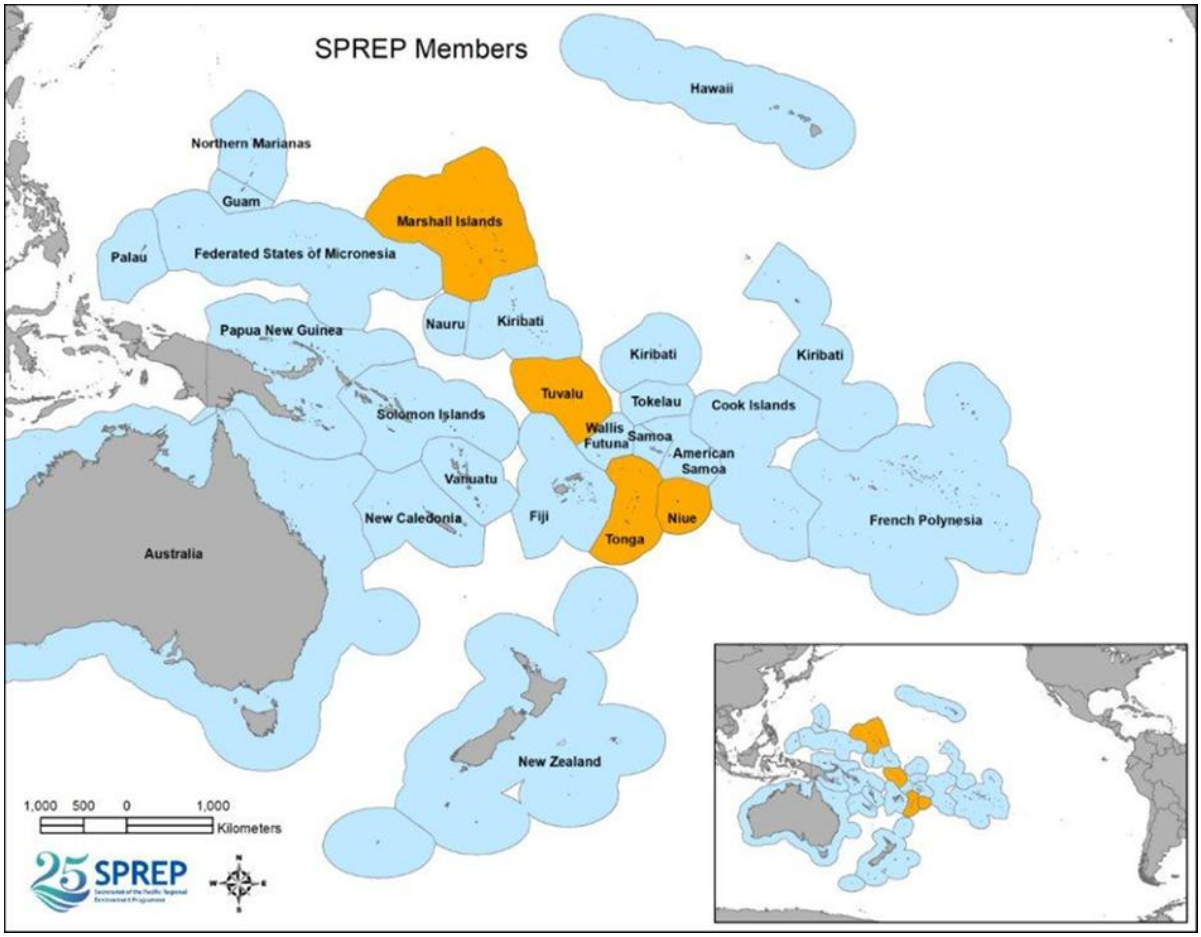
[10] Healthy and Productive Ecosystems sub programme at project design

ministries in each of the four participating countries: Tonga, Niue, RMI, and Tuvalu. Key partners included the Pacific Community (SPC), Island Conservation and Landcare Research New Zealand and Pacific Bio-security.

38. The project was approved by GEF on 27th March 2019 and the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between UNEP and the EA was signed on 23rd May 2019 (The project was intended to commence from January 2019 and end in January 2024, a 60-month duration. The total planned budget was approximately USD 28.4 million, comprising USD 6.25 million in GEF grant funding and USD 22.2 million in committed co-financing.

39. A Mid-Term Review of the current project was completed in October 2022.

Figure 1: Project Participating Countries (highlighted)



1.2 Results Framework

40. The project's results framework provided a coherent and logically structured hierarchy that links its overall objective 'Reduce the threats from IAS to terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity in the Pacific by developing and implementing comprehensive national and regional IAS management frameworks' with a set of four interlinked components. Each the components addressed specific drivers of acute IAS vulnerabilities driven by maritime border, geographic isolation, increasing trade and tourism volumes, and critically limited technical and financial capacity.

41. The project's results hierarchy was structured around a single overarching objective, four outcome-level results corresponding to four components, and a set of outputs nested within each component. The framework was built upon previous GEF funded projects in the Pacific, focusing on institutional strengthening, establishing national systems, implementing

activities through community engagement, and establishing a regional support framework for IAS management. The project components are outlined below.

- Component 1: Strengthening institutional frameworks and capacities for IAS management.
- Component 2: Establishing national systems for prioritizing IAS management
- Component 3: Implementing programmes for IAS risk reduction, Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR), eradication, control and restoration
- Component 4: Establishing a Pacific Islands regional support framework for IAS management

42. The four components deliver sequentially and interdependently. Component 1 establishes the enabling institutional environment, national technical advisory groups, updated National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plan (NISSAPs), and trained field teams, without which operational components cannot function effectively. Component 2 generates the evidence base through baseline surveys and risk assessments that inform prioritisation. Component 3 translates this knowledge into direct conservation action through biosecurity improvements, EDRR protocols, IAS control, eradications, and site restoration. Component 4, the Pacific Regional Invasive Species Management Support Service (PRISMSS), acts as the regional backbone, providing continuous technical support, training, knowledge management, and sustainability mechanisms for all three national components simultaneously.

43. This architecture reflects a deliberate logic: building national ownership and capacity while anchoring technical excellence and continuity at the regional level, thereby addressing the chronic fragmentation that has historically undermined IAS management across Pacific SIDS.

44. The following Table 3 provides the overall result framework of the project.

Table 3: Summary of project's latest approved results framework[11]

PROJECT OBJECTIVE: Reduce the threats from Invasive Alien Species (IAS) to terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity in the Pacific by developing and implementing comprehensive national and regional IAS management frameworks.		
Component	**Expected Outcomes**	**Outputs**
Component 1: Strengthening institutional frameworks and capacities for IAS management	1.1 All participating countries have a comprehensive and effective administrative framework established and countries are enabled to manage invasive alien species	1.1.1 National cross-sectoral and gender-balanced IAS technical advisory groups established and operational in all four participating countries
		1.1.2 Expert input towards strengthened IAS legislation, regulations and policies in place in four countries
		1.1.3 One NISSAP written for Tuvalu; three NISSAPs reviewed and up-dated for the other countries
		1.1.4 Administrative systems and processes to implement NISSAPs are in place allowing their efficient implementation in all participating countries
		1.1.5 Field based operational implementation teams are trained in best practice and standard operational procedures and mobilised in four countries

[11] As per the Request for CEO endorsement dated 25 April 2018/ ToRs for the evaluation.

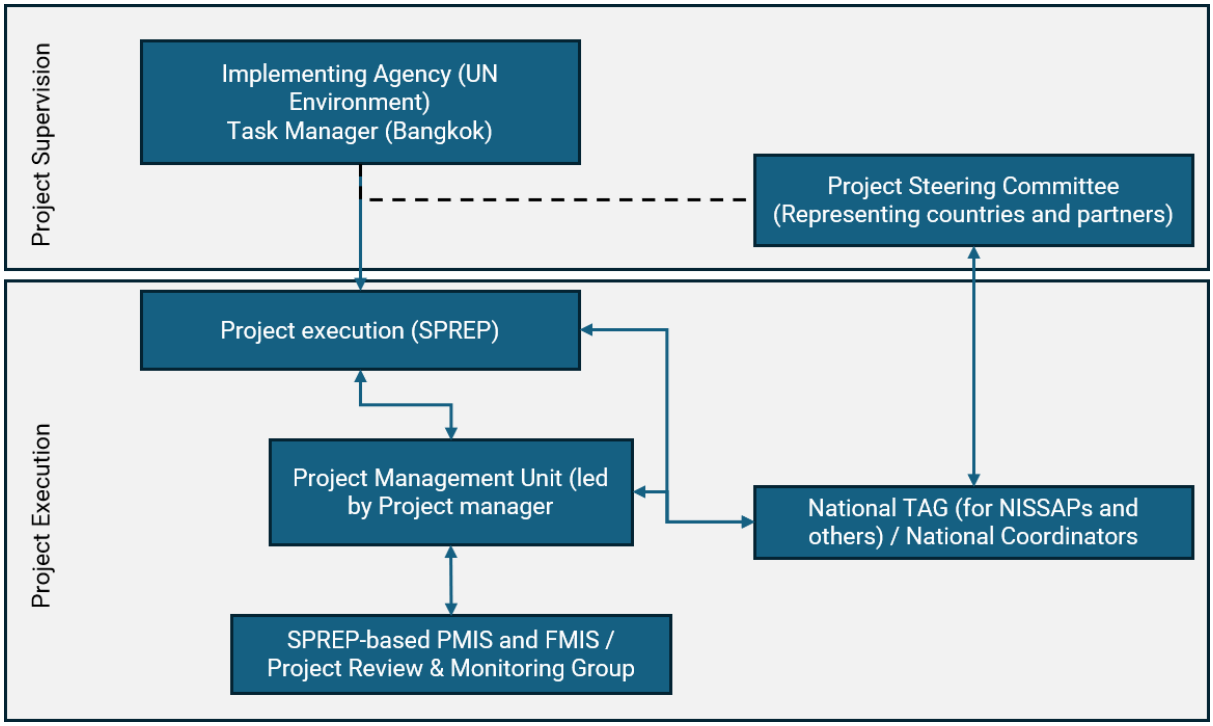
PROJECT OBJECTIVE: Reduce the threats from Invasive Alien Species (IAS) to terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity in the Pacific by developing and implementing comprehensive national and regional IAS management frameworks.		
Component	**Expected Outcomes**	**Outputs**
Component 2: Establishing national systems for prioritizing IAS management	2.1. Enhanced IAS surveillance and control strategies reduce introduction rates and contain populations below thresholds that endanger threatened and endemic species and their habitats in 4 countries:	2.1.1 Baseline studies of the distribution and status of invasive species, and programme for detecting change, completed in four countries
		2.1.2 Effective protocols for assessing risk and prioritising IAS for management developed and implemented in four countries
		2.1.3 Species and site-specific management plans, aligned with the Pacific Biocontrol Strategy as appropriate, developed for priority IAS and priority areas for all four countries
Component 3: Implementing programmes for IAS risk reduction, Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR), eradication, control and restoration	3.1. Biosecurity risks are reduced for the highest risk pathways and IAS	3.1.1 Priority risk mitigation measures are identified and necessary actions taken to reduce or eliminate risks in the four countries
		3.1.2 EDRR protocols operational in four participating countries
	3.2. Impacts of priority IAS species (identified in component 2) reduced	3.2.1 At least two sustainable IAS control programmes are established in each of at least three participating countries
		3.2.2 Successful eradications of priority species are completed on islands or island groups in at least two countries
		3.2.3 At least two sites demonstrate measurable restoration outputs as described in restoration plans
Component 4: Establishing a Pacific islands regional support framework for IAS management	4.1. Sustainable support service comprised of Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies and partners established and enabling four countries to respond to existing and potential IAS threats, and is up-scalable to at least the Pacific region	4.1.1 Support Service supporting the three other components for the four countries and the region, including providing advice on NISSAP development and implementation as required, is operationalized
		4.1.2 Sustainable financing mechanisms in place to support the establishment of a long-term Regional Support Service and national IAS management programs
		4.1.3 Capacity developed in to systematically measure the success of IAS management objectives as described in national, regional and international instruments
		4.1.4 Regionally capable information system in place delivering case studies, guidelines, standard operating procedures and tools generated by components one to three
		4.1.5 Based on project outputs, new version of the "Guidelines" for Invasive Species Management in the Pacific (Guidelines) is produced and formally approved

1.3 Project Implementation Structure and Partners

45. The project followed the standard UNEP/GEF execution modality, with UNEP serving as the Implementing Agency (IA) responsible for overall project supervision, financial oversight, and reporting to the GEF (Figure 1). Implementation was managed under the Ecosystems Division, GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit by a Task Manager based in Bangkok, Thailand. UNEP was responsible for the overall project oversight and supervision to ensure GEF policies and procedures are adhered to and that the project meets its objectives and achieves expected outcomes.

46. UNEP, as Implementing Agency, held overall fiduciary and supervisory responsibility, including approval of work plans and budgets, quality assurance of technical outputs, supervision of the Mid-Term Review, and ensuring compliance with GEF and UNEP policies. UNEP reviewed and approved the substantive and technical reports and transmitted the financial and progress reports to GEF.

Figure 2: Project implementation structure



47. SPREP, as Executing Agency, managed day-to-day project operations through a dedicated Project Management Unit (PMU) based at SPREP headquarters in Apia, Samoa (Figure 2).

48. The PMU comprised the SPREP IAS Advisor (oversight), a Project Manager (technical leadership), a Project Coordinator (coordination and reporting), a PRISMSS Associate (regional support service administration), and a shared Financial Officer. National Project Coordinators (NPCs) were appointed in each of the four participating countries, serving as the primary in-country implementation leads and representatives on the Project Steering Committee (PSC).

49. The PSC, the project's principal governance body, convened biannually, combining virtual and face-to-face meetings, and included representatives from UNEP, SPREP, all four NPCs, and PRISMSS partners. It provided strategic oversight, approved annual work plans, and monitored risk.

50. The PRISMSS constituted the regional technical backbone of the project, operationalised through seven core partners[12]: SPREP (coordination), SPC, Manaaki Whenwa Landcare Research, Birdlife International, Pacific Community, Wellington Univentures, Island Conservation and Department of conservation Te Papa Atawhai. Each partner contributed both co-financing and specialised technical expertise.

[12] PRISMSS: https://www.sprep.org/invasive-species-management-in-the-pacific/prismss

51. Overall, this multi-tiered structure combined UNEP's strategic oversight with strong scientific and local execution capacity, enabling effective technical delivery.

1.4 Stakeholders

52. The Project Document (ProDoc) includes a stakeholder analysis that provides a comprehensive overview of local groups and institutions affected by the project's activities, as well as how they participate in and benefit from the project. The project confirmed that the main beneficiaries are local communities in the project areas, whose livelihoods depend on biodiversity and natural resources. However, the document does not clearly articulate the engagement strategy with targeted communities, including women's groups, during both the design and implementation phases.

53. The project engaged stakeholders across regional, national, and community levels. The table below organises stakeholders by power-interest dynamics, consistent with UNEP evaluation protocol. Stakeholders are categorized[13] into four (4) distinct categories to specify their level of power and interest as illustrated below (Table 4):

Table 4: Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder	Interest/Influence	Role/Contribution	Benefits
Type A: High Power / High Interest			
UNEP (implementing agency)	Fiduciary oversight, policy compliance, funding accountability	Implementing Agency; approves budgets, supervises evaluations, ensures GEF compliance	Demonstrated global environmental benefits; contribution to Aichi Target 9
SPREP (Executing Agency)	Regional mandate for environment; core IAS programme implementation since 1998	Day-to-day management, PRISMSS coordination, technical leadership	Institutional strengthening; sustained regional IAS leadership role
Environment Ministries (Tonga, Niue, RMI, Tuvalu)	Sovereign responsibility for biodiversity and biosecurity	National execution; host NPCs; chair NISSAP TAGs; co-finance through staff time	Strengthened national IAS frameworks, legislation, and operational capacity
Type B: High Power / Low Interest			
Other government ministries (Ministries of Finance /Trade/ Agriculture)	Regulatory authority over imports, border controls, and national budgets	Policy enablers for biosecurity mainstreaming and sustainable financing mechanisms	Economic benefits from reduced IAS-related agricultural and trade losses
Type C: Low Power / High Interest			
PRISMSS Partners (Island Conservation, Landcare Research NZ, SPC, Pacific Biosecurity)	Strong technical interest; limited decision-making authority	Deliver specialised eradication, biocontrol, quarantine training, and field support	Expanded Pacific presence; co-financing leveraged; intellectual contribution recognised
Local Authorities / Village Communities & Local Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) (e.g., Vava'u	Direct dependence on ecosystem services; limited formal influence	Participate in IAS eradication and management, monitoring, awareness campaigns; community biosecurity	Improved livelihoods, food security, cultural heritage protection, healthier ecosystems

[13] Source: section 5 of the project documents and PIRs

Stakeholder	Interest/Influence	Role/Contribution	Benefits
Environmental Protection Association - VEPA-Tonga)			
Women and Youth Groups	Less access on formal decision-making; high interest as resource users	Key actors in horticulture, marine resource gathering, EDRR detection, restoration	Targeted capacity building, training inclusion, leadership opportunities in IAS management
Type D: Low Power / Low Interest			
Private Sector (airlines, hotels, importers)	Indirect exposure to IAS risks through trade and tourism pathways	Awareness raising, biosecurity advocacy, potential sponsors for outreach	Reputational benefit; reduced biosecurity risks to tourism-dependent business models

54. **Key change agents** identified include National Project Coordinators, NISSAP Technical Advisory Groups, and local authorities, the latter playing a critical yet underutilised role in early detection of IAS through daily agricultural and marine resource activities. The project design incorporated gender-disaggregated indicators and committed to inclusive training, though data on meaningful engagement of persons with disabilities remains limited in project documentation.

55. This stakeholder mapping highlights the layered engagement strategy required: keeping high-power actors (Type A & B) actively involved, while empowering and including high-interest but lower-power groups (Type C), especially community groups, so that the project is equitable and sustainable. The project documentation emphasises community-engagement and capacity development at the national level.

1.5 Changes in Design during Implementation

56. The project commenced in January 2019 with a planned technical completion of January 2024. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic from early 2020 significantly disrupted implementation across all four participating countries, restricting international travel, delaying planned field operations, in-country training workshops, and cross-country coordination activities, all critical to the project's delivery model.

57. In response, a no-cost extension was granted on 23 November 2023, extending the project's technical completion date to 30 April 2025. The project also got another no-cost extension (on 12 February 2025) until 31 December 2025.

58. These extensions were necessitated primarily by COVID-19-related disruptions, as well as delays in implementing key activities. Notably, the rodent eradication operation in Tonga, the most technically complex component of the project required additional time for planning and execution. In addition, the review of NISSAPs and biosecurity legislation review and biosecurity training programmes in the RMI and Tuvalu also experienced significant delays. These delays further contributed for extension of the implementation timelines. However, no formal revisions to the project's results framework or core indicators have been identified in the reviewed documentation.

1.6 Project Financing

59. The overall budget of the project was US$ 28,429,646. As per the CEO endorsement document, GEF provided a grant of US$ 6,252,489 whereas co-financing committed by 10 organizations to the value of US$ 22,177,157 (US$ 12,606,941- in-kind and USD 9,570,216 in Cash). The UNEP agency fee was US$ 593,986.

60. The planned and actual expenditure of the project fund is provided in Table 5. Overall project financial execution stands at 98.3% (US$ 6,147,090 of 6,252,489 disbursed), signalling strong financial delivery at the aggregate level.

61. However, line-item performance is uneven and tells a more nuanced story. Four of seven budget lines are fully executed: Contractual Services (100.0%, $3.22M) and Supplies/Commodities (100.1%) both closed out at or above budget, the latter's marginal overrun ($145 over) is immaterial. Staff and Personnel Costs (99.6%) and Travel (98.8%) also tracked closely to plan, consistent with predictable, recurring cost categories.

62. Equipment, Vehicles and Furniture (98.7%) landed similarly on target. General Operating and Other Direct Costs underspent more visibly at 84.1% ($2,780 unspent), worth a brief note in reporting but not a concern given the line's small absolute size (0.28% of total budget). It is also noted that project management and M&E together account for USD 377,500 (6%) from GEF fund, which is within acceptable GEF norms.

Table 5: Project financial plan and expenditure[14] by the end of the project

Budget line	Budget (USD)	Expenditure (USD)	% utilized
Staff and other personnel costs	1,683,326	1,676,383	99.6%
Travel	1,041,739	1,028,729	98.8%
Contractual services	3,220,877	3,220,443	100.0%
Supplies, commodities, materials	147,047	147,192	100.1%
Equipment, vehicles, furniture	12,000	11,849	98.7%
General operating & direct costs	17,500	14,720	84.1%
External evaluations	130,000	47,774	36.7%
Total	**6,252,489**	**6,147,090**	**98.3%**

(Source: UNEP /FMO, as of August 2026)/ Source: UNEP/FMO, sent on 3rd Aug 2026.

63. The project's co-financing target of US$ 22,177,157 was overachieved mainly due to the fact that PRISMSS initiative attracted other donors and agencies.

64. Co-financing realization far exceeded targets overall, reaching 143% of the planned US$ 22.18M (actual: US$ 31.6M). This is a strongly positive outcome for resource mobilization. This was driven almost entirely by "Other" (mainly partners) sources, which delivered 157.8% of plan (US$ 27M vs. US$ 17.14M), more than offsetting shortfalls elsewhere.

65. Government co-financing came in close to target at 94.1% (US$ 4.60M against planned US$ 4.89M), a reasonable variance. Government co-financing is dominated by Niue (57.6%, US$ 2.65M) and Tonga (24.7%, US$ 1.14M), with Tuvalu (15.4%) and Marshall Islands (2.3%) contributing smaller shares (Table 6). Notably, 97.8% of government financing is in-kind, Tonga is the only government providing cash (US$ 102,000).

66. Co-financing from other stakeholder was also concentrated among a few partners: SPREP contributed US$ 14.19, split across substantial cash (US$ 10.71M) and in-kind support. Island Conservation contributes (USD 5.86) and Landcare Research NZ Ltd (US$ 6.80M). SPREP and Island Conservation together provided 100% of all cash co-financing (US$ 14.26M), indicating continued reliance on a small number of partners for cash resources. UNEP's own financing is the clear outlier: with no-cofinancing delivered against a US$ 150,000 planned commitment.

[14] As of the draft evaluation report, the final financial reports submitted by the partners are under review. Once the financial reports have been verified, the final figures will be released.

67. By modality, cash co-financing reached 150.0% and in-kind support 137.1%, both robust.

Table 6: Project co-finances as at 3 August 2026

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Cofinancing	Investment Mobilized	Amount ($) at CEO	Amount ($) at TE
GEF Agency	United Nations Environment Programme	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	150,000	0
Recipient Country Government	Government of Kingdom of Tonga	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	980,940	1,035,000
		Grant	Recurrent expenditures		102,000
	Government of Niue	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,490,000	2,650,796
	Government of Republic of Marshall Islands	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,818,300	105,930
	Government of Tuvalu	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	598,593	708,618
Civil Society Organization	Island Conservation	Grant	Recurrent expenditures	600,000	3,549,772
		In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,100,000	2,309,408
Other	Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,725,784	3,485,528
		Grant	Recurrent expenditures	8,970,216	10,708,128
	(Secretariat for the) Pacific Community	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,000,000	0
	Landcare Research NZ Ltd	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	3,440,924	6,802,213
	Pacific Biosecurity	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	302,400	0
	Wellington University	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures		182,503
Total Co-financing				**22,177,157**	**31,639,896**

Source: UNEP/FMO, sent on 3rd Aug 2026

2 EVALUATION METHODS

2.1 Evaluation Approach

68. In line with UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual, the evaluation was undertaken at operational completion of the project to assess performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency) and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned.

69. The main target audiences for the evaluation findings are UNEP, GEF, SPREP (Executing Agency), National Environment Ministries (Tonga, Niue, RMI, Tuvalu) including PRISMSS Partners (Island Conservation, Landcare Research NZ, SPC, Pacific Biosecurity), Local Council, Communities and Local NGOs (e.g., VEPA-Tonga) and Women and Youth Groups, among others.

70. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy, the UNEP Programme Manual and the Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluations, the evaluation has been carried out using a set of 9 commonly applied evaluation criteria which include: (1) Strategic Relevance , (2) Quality of Project Design, (3) Nature of External Context, (4) Effectiveness (incl. availability of outputs; achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact), (5) Financial Management, (6) Efficiency, (7) Monitoring and Reporting, (8) Sustainability and (9) Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues (see Annex II Evaluation Framework for more details on each evaluation criterion).

71. Most evaluation criteria are rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU). The ratings against each criterion are 'weighted' to derive the Overall Project Performance Rating. The greatest weight is placed on the achievement of outcomes, followed by dimensions of sustainability.

72. The UNEP Evaluation Office has developed detailed descriptions of the main elements required to be demonstrated at each level (i.e. Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory) for each evaluation criterion. The evaluator has considered all the evidence gathered during the evaluation in relation to this matrix to generate evaluation criteria performance ratings.

73. In addition to the nine (9) evaluation criteria outlined above, the evaluation addresses a number of strategic questions that were formulated in the Terms of Reference. These questions were posed by the UNEP Evaluation Office in conjunction with members of the Project Team. For projects funded by the GEF, findings from the evaluation are to be uploaded in the GEF Portal. To support this process, evaluation findings related to the five (5) topics of interest to the GEF are summarised in Annex VIII. The intended action/results on the 5 topics were described in the GEF CEO Endorsement and Approval documents. The five (5) topics are: i) performance against GEF's Core Indicator Targets; ii) engagement of stakeholders; iii) gender-responsive measures and gender result areas; iv) implementation of management measures taken against the Safeguards Plan and v) challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach.

74. This evaluation adopted primarily a participatory approach, consulting with project team members, partners and beneficiaries at several stages throughout the process. The

evaluation also analysed (and reconstruction) of the project's Theory of Change. The Theory of Change (ToC) developed during the inception phase was also a part of the discussion with respondents during the data collection phase, and feedback on the project causal paths were solicited where possible.

2.2 Data Collection

75. The selection of evaluation methods and respondents for robust data collection was guided by the evaluation questions, stakeholder relevance, and the geographic scope of project interventions. This approach ensured the inclusion of relevant institutional roles, technical expertise, and individuals with direct involvement in project design, implementation, or oversight.

76. Purposive sampling was employed to deliberately engage information-rich participants, facilitating in-depth insights, contextual understanding, and the efficient use of resources, particularly where the objectives were learning, explanation, and data triangulation.

77. The main criteria for selecting respondents included: roles and responsibilities related to project design and management; relevance of the project interventions (sites where interventions are active or where results can be observed); diversity considerations, including gender, age, vulnerability, and community representation; and geographic coverage, taking accessibility into account.

78. Participatory tools, including Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted both online and in-person, were utilized to enhance coverage, flexibility, and inclusiveness. This balanced efficiency with the need for depth, rapport, and contextual understanding. The concurrent use of qualitative and quantitative analysis enabled triangulation, strengthened validity, and captured both measurable outcomes and their contextual explanations. This mixed-methods approach allowed the evaluation to assess not only what changed but also how, why, and for whom.

2.2.1 Primary data sources

79. The evaluation employed multiple data collection methods, including stakeholder interviews including both remote and in-person interviews, focus group discussions, and site visits. The detailed questionnaires and checklist were developed and used for KIIs. Altogether, 31 people were consulted (16 male and 15 female) (see Table 7 and Annex III).

80. Due to time and resource constraints, the evaluator could not travel to all project countries. The field mission was carried out in Tuvalu and Tonga from 27th June to 11th July 2026.These countries were selected using purposive sampling to capture the project's ecological and operational diversity. Tonga represents larger, multi-island terrestrial and biocontrol interventions with active NGO partnerships, while Tuvalu exemplifies vulnerable atoll ecosystems undergoing rodent eradications and community-led biosecurity. This selection enabled robust field-level triangulation of intervention impact and stakeholder dynamics within logistical and time constraints. The country mission itinerary is presented in Annex V.

81. KIIs were conducted with stakeholders possessing extensive project knowledge. An in-person KII was also conducted during the country field mission. Virtual interviews were also administered where it was not possible to visit the country or for those who were not available during the evaluation field mission. Respondents were selected from UNEP, government agencies, EAs, project team, project partners, local stakeholders and beneficiaries in consultation with project management.

82. The number of KIIs conducted exceeded the initial plan. This adjustment was necessary because the information available during the inception phase regarding the project's scope and stakeholder landscape was insufficient. Each interview lasted approximately 50 to 60 minutes.

83. To gain deeper community-level insights, one Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted with the country team in Funafuti Conservation Area (FAC), Tuvalu with government officials and a consultant.

Table 7: Evaluation respondents and field visits

Stakeholders - Individuals			**A. Total number involved (M/F)**	**B. Number contacted (M/F)**	**Sample size (% B/A)[15]**	**C. Total number responded Total (M/F)**	**Response rate (% C/B)[16]**
Project Team	**Project Team** (*with management responsibilities e.g. Project Management Unit)*	Implementing agency	5 (2M/1F)	5 (2M/3F)	60%	5 (2M/3F)	100%
		Executing agency(ies)	5 (3M/2F?)	4 (3M/1F)	80%	5 (4M/1F)	> 100[17]%
Beneficiaries	**Direct Beneficiaries:** (e.g. duty bearers, gatekeepers, training participants, etc.) **Indirect Beneficiaries:** (e.g. household members, civil society representatives, group members, etc.)			Not known at this stage	3 FGDs (max 10 persons, if feasible one female and two male group or mix).	1 FGD	33%[18]
Stakeholders - Entities			**A. Total number involved**	**B. Number contacted**	**Sample size (% B/A)[19]**	**C. Total number responded**	**Response rate (% C/B)[20]**
Partners	**Project implementing/ executing partners** (receiving project funds)		5	3	60%	7	> 100%[21]
	Project collaborating/ contributing partners[22] (not receiving project fund)		3	1	33%		
Field Visits	**Region / country / locality[23]**		**A. Total number sites**	**B. Number sites visited**	**Sample Size (%B/A)[24]**		
	Asia and the Pacific		4[25]	2[26]	50%		

[15] Percentage of people involved in the project who were contacted.
[16] Percentage of people contacted who responded.
[17] The number of respondents increased during the evaluation phase. While the initial plan proposed a limited number of respondents, additional issues and themes emerged as the evaluation progressed, requiring broader consultation.
[18] no availability of direct beneficiaries at the time of evaluation
[19] Percentage of entities involved in the project who were contacted.
[20] Percentage of people contacted who responded.
[21] The number of respondents increased during the evaluation phase. While the initial plan proposed a limited number of respondents, additional issues and themes emerged as the evaluation progressed, requiring broader consultation.
[22] Contributing partners may be providing resources such as either cash or in-kind input (e.g. staff time, office space etc.).
[23] In case of a global project, the unit of analysis is 'region'. In case of a regional or multi-country project, the unit of analysis is 'country'. In case of a single country project, the unit of analysis is 'locality', which could refer to a city, town, village, etc.
[24] Percentage of total number project sites in each region, country or locality that were visited.
[25] Tonga, Tuvalu, Niue and Marshall Islands
[26] Tonga (agriculture / entomology research division and Toloa Rainforest) and Tuvalu Funafuti Conservation Area (FAC)

2.2.2 Strategies for inclusivity

84. The evaluator ensured the consultation of various stakeholders to collect their feedback and different perspectives. Particular attention was given to creating safe, respectful, and comfortable spaces that encouraged active engagement and open discussion, ensuring their genuine feedback was adequately obtained.

85. The evaluator captured diverse perspectives through the purposive selection of Key Informant Interviewees, including representatives of local council, NGOs, and relevant sectoral government offices. Women's perspectives were integrated while undertaking interviews with the evaluation participants. Respondents were selected based on their roles, experience, and direct involvement in project activities to ensure the relevance and depth of insights.

2.2.3 Secondary data sources

86. The evaluation consultants conducted a comprehensive desk review of project documents, including the proposal, results-oriented monitoring review reports, progress reports to the donor, final deliverables, and other relevant materials required and available for the evaluation (Annex IV).

2.3 Data Analysis

87. At the end of the data collection process, data cleaning and analysis were undertaken. All information collected during desk reviews and interviews was triangulated to ensure accuracy. For qualitative data, the evaluator prepared an evidence matrix, applied thematic coding, and conducted content analysis based on the research questions.

88. Where necessary, varied responses from stakeholders were discussed with the project team to clarify inconsistencies. This process helped identify key factors that influenced or contributed to the project's outputs and outcomes, in line with the project logic.

89. Findings were validated through further triangulation, and project progress and performance were assessed by comparing planned targets against actual achievements. Trends across the project's extended timeframe were reviewed to understand the effects of delays, extensions, and external disruptions on the delivery of results. In addition, contribution analysis was applied to assess the plausible role of the project in observed outcomes and intermediate states.

90. All data were synthesized into evidence-based findings, structured around UNEP's evaluation criteria. Each criterion was rated using the UNEP Evaluation Office's six-point scale, ensuring consistency and comparability with other UNEP Terminal Evaluations.

91. After completing the field mission, the evaluation team presented preliminary findings to the project team and relevant key stakeholders to validate emerging results and address any factual corrections at the stage of drafting the main report.

92. The draft report was submitted to the evaluation manager following the presentation of preliminary findings to the project team. Feedback from the project team and other stakeholders was incorporated into the final version and stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the evaluator, captured in Annex I.

2.4 Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

93. The evaluation encountered a notable limitation in achieving fully balanced stakeholder representation, particularly in the direct engagement of local communities and women during site-level consultations. This constraint stemmed primarily from logistical factors. To mitigate this perspective gap and enhance the robustness of findings, the evaluation relied on methodological triangulation, cross-verifying insights across multiple data sources, including key informant interviews, document reviews, and group discussions.

94. In addition, baselines and targets of outcomes in the result framework are not explicitly presented in a quantitative way. Although several quantitative targets exist in the result framework, mostly at output level, the project progress reports did not provide clear quantitative data or information to substantiate the reported achievements. To address these gaps, the evaluation assessed progress by triangulating other sources of evidence, including qualitative data from key informant interviews, and a focus group discussion.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

95. Throughout the evaluation process and in the compilation of the Final Evaluation Report, efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more community groups. Data were collected with respect for ethics and human rights issues. All pictures were taken, and other information gathered after prior informed consent from people, all discussions remained anonymous, and all information was collected according to the UN 'Standards of Conduct'.

96. Open-access AI tools (ChatGPT free version and Fathom) were used for specific, limited tasks, including drafting summaries, checking grammar, analysing patterns in text data, and transcribing online interviews. All AI-generated outputs were thoroughly reviewed, fact-checked, and contextualized by the evaluator, who maintains full responsibility for the final content and its accuracy. The use of AI served to enhance efficiency while ensuring that professional human judgment remained central to all analytical conclusions.

97. In addition, participants were informed of the objective of the terminal evaluation and the voluntary nature of their participation. Prior consent was obtained before collecting any information or visuals. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and the information was used solely for the terminal evaluation. Results and findings were presented in an aggregated manner to protect individual identities.

98. Data analysis was conducted with strict adherence to protocols for protecting the confidentiality of all collected information. Data were securely stored on password-protected computers, and any shared files, such as Excel datasets, were encrypted to prevent unauthorized access. Access to raw data was restricted to the evaluator and the directly involved UNEP evaluation manager.

3 THEORY OF CHANGE AT EVALUATION

99. The project's initial design and mid-term review did not include a formal ToC in its analysis process, the ProDoc however provided a summary of causal pathways of the project interventions in appendix 18. The project also outlined a Results and Project Outcome framework along with the project's objectives, outcomes and outputs. The main issue however identified by the evaluator across the results chain was blurring between outputs, outcomes, intermediate states, and impact, which weakens causal clarity and evaluability.

100. In line with the evaluation requirements, the evaluator reconstructed a ToC at the inception of the evaluation considering the UNEP glossary of results definitions (Table 8).

101. The reconstruction was based on available project documents, and reviewed during the inception phase. This enabled to articulate the causal logic of inputs and outputs to intended outcomes and long-term impact. This reconstructed ToC was subsequently shared during the evaluation process (Figure 3).

102. This ToC narrative illustrates the logical pathway through which project activities are expected to sustain and effectively functioning of bio-security systems and processes in the Pacific countries. It clarifies how outputs lead to outcomes, how these outcomes combine to create transformative intermediate states, and how these states collectively contribute to achieving the project objective.

103. The restructured ToC also explicitly incorporates drivers and assumptions absent from the original logframe. Drivers include a) commitment of the government, UNEP and project partners to community participation and inclusiveness; b) increased awareness and policy environment for IAS management; c) strengthened institutional leadership of the national focal entity for IAS management & restoration; and d) increased funding commitments from international development partners. Some of the major assumptions include to have political stability, donor alignment, and the willingness of communities and institutions to remain engaged. These drivers and assumptions are described further in the following chapters.

Table 8: Justification for reformulation of results statements

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
IMPACT (Long-lasting change)		
Reduce the threats from IAS to terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity in the Pacific by developing and implementing comprehensive national and regional IAS management frameworks	The threats of IAS to Pacific terrestrial, freshwater, and marine biodiversity in the Pacific **are reduced** by developing and implementing comprehensive national and regional IAS management frameworks.	Minor changes (Subject-Object inversion)
INTERMEDIATE STATES (Refined as Outcome-level conditions from ToC from ProDoc)		
Countries' statutes, policies and regulations plus NISSAPs are fully functional and have become government core business	Countries' statutes, policies and regulations plus NISSAPs are fully functional, **institutionalized and routinely implemented**, and have become government core business	Adds "institutionalized and routinely implemented" to clarify that this reflects sustained system-level change beyond initial adoption, consistent with UNEP intermediate

Formulation in original project document(s)	**Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)**	**Justification for Reformulation**
		state (post-outcome consolidation).
Country capacity in BS and IAS core skills (e.g. EDRR etc) are established and maintained and benefitting from continuous PRISMSS support which has successfully established a longterm funding base	Country capacity in BS and IAS core skills (e.g. EDRR etc.) is established and maintained, **applied in practice**, and benefitting from continuous PRISMSS support which has successfully established a long-term funding base	Addition of "applied in practice" ensures distinction from output-level capacity development and reflects sustained utilization and financing, characteristic of intermediate states.
The conservation status of threatened species, biosecurity and ecological integrity of their habitat has significantly improved due to the intervention of the project and its long-term improvements	The conservation status of threatened species, biosecurity and ecological integrity of their habitat has significantly improved due to the intervention of the project and its long-term improvements, **contributing to broader ecosystem recovery trends**	Retains original attribution but adds "contributing to…" to better position this as transitional change toward impact, avoiding over-claiming full impact attribution and aligning with UNEP's results chain logic.
PROJECT OUTCOMES (Behavioral / institutional change)		
1.1 All participating countries have a comprehensive and effective administrative framework established and countries are enabled to manage invasive alien species.	All participating countries have a comprehensive and effective administrative framework established, **and this framework is applied**, enabling countries to manage invasive alien species	Minimal addition ("and this framework is applied") ensures this reflects use/operationalization, not just establishment (which would be output-level). Aligns with UNEP outcome definition (uptake of outputs).
2.1. Enhanced IAS surveillance and control strategies reduce introduction rates and contain populations below thresholds that endanger threatened and endemic species and their habitats in 4 countries:	Enhanced IAS surveillance and control strategies **are implemented and applied**, reducing introduction rates and containing populations below thresholds that endanger threatened and endemic species and their habitats in 4 countries	Addition of "implemented and applied" introduces the behavioural/institutional action required for an outcome. Original phrasing implied results without explicit uptake.
3.1. Biosecurity risks are reduced for the highest risk pathways and IAS	Biosecurity risk **management measures** are **applied**, **and risks are** reduced for the highest risk pathways and IAS	Introduces minimal clarification ("risk management measures are applied") to make explicit the mechanism of change (use of outputs). Avoids outcome being framed purely as an end-state.
3.2. Impacts of priority IAS species (identified in component 2) reduced	Management measures for priority IAS species (identified in component 2) are **implemented**, and their impacts are reduced	Adds "implemented" to ensure the statement reflects action taken by stakeholders, consistent with outcome-level behavioural change

Formulation in original project document(s)	**Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)**	**Justification for Reformulation**
		rather than a passive result.
4.1. Sustainable support service comprised of Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies and partners established and enabling four countries to respond to existing and potential IAS threats, and is up scalable to at least the Pacific region	Sustainable support service comprised of Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies and partners established, **operational and utilized**, enabling four countries to respond to existing and potential IAS threats, and is up scalable to at least the Pacific region	Addition of "operational and utilized" ensures this goes beyond establishment (output) to actual use by countries, which is essential for outcome-level classification.
OUTCOME INDICATORS	Outcome indicators are broadly relevant to IAS threat reduction and institutional strengthening. However, quality is mixed: some are quantitative (e.g., area restored) but others vague (e.g., "enhanced capacity" without defined measures). Baseline data is incomplete, affecting adequacy for attribution. Greater specificity and disaggregation (e.g., by gender) could have improved evaluability.	
1. OUTPUTS (Availability of products/services/capacity):		
1.1.1 National cross-sectoral and gender-balanced IAS technical advisory groups established and operational in all four participating countries	National cross-sectoral and gender-balanced IAS technical advisory groups established and **remain active** in all four participating countries	Minor refinement ("functional") retains intent but avoids implying sustained use (outcome-level). Output = establishment and activeness.
1.1.2 Expert input towards strengthened IAS legislation, regulations and policies in place in four countries	Expert input towards strengthened IAS legislation, regulations and policies **provided** in four countries	Replaces "in place" (outcome-level) with "provided" to reflect service delivery, consistent with output definition.
1.1.3 One NISSAP written for Tuvalu; three NISSAPs reviewed and up dated for the other countries	One NISSAP written for Tuvalu; three NISSAPs reviewed and updated for the other countries, **and made available to governments**	Adds availability to intended users, aligning with UNEP output definition.
1.1.4 Administrative systems and processes to implement NISSAPs are in place allowing their efficient implementation in all participating countries	Administrative systems and processes to implement NISSAPs **developed and established** in all participating countries	Removes "allowing implementation" (outcome-level). Focus on system availability.
1.1.5 Field based operational implementation teams are trained in best practice and standard operational procedures and mobilised in four countries	Field-based operational implementation teams **trained in best practice and standard operational procedures and deployed** in four countries	"Deployed" keeps this at output level (resource made available), avoiding implying sustained use/effectiveness.
2.1.1 Baseline studies of the distribution and status of invasive species, and programme for detecting	Baseline studies of the distribution and status of invasive species, and programme for detecting change,	Adds availability dimension required for outputs.

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
change, completed in four countries	**completed and available** in four countries	
2.1.2 Effective protocols for assessing risk and prioritising IAS for management developed and implemented in four countries	Protocols for assessing risk and prioritising IAS for management **developed and disseminated** in four countries	Replaces "implemented" (outcome-level) with "disseminated" (output-level availability).
2.1.3 Species and site specific management plans, aligned with the Pacific Biocontrol Strategy as appropriate, developed for priority IAS and priority areas for all four countries	Species- and site-specific management plans, aligned with the Pacific Biocontrol Strategy as appropriate, developed **and made available** for priority IAS and priority areas for all four countries	Adds availability; avoids implying execution.
3.1.1 Priority risk mitigation measures are identified and necessary actions taken to reduce or eliminate risks in the four countries	Priority risk mitigation measures identified, and **guidance/tools provided** to reduce or eliminate risks in the four countries	Replaces "actions taken" (outcome-level) with provision of tools/guidance (output-level).
3.1.2 EDRR protocols operational in four participating countries	EDRR protocols **developed and established** in four participating countries	"Operational" implies use; replaced with established (availability).
3.2.1 At least two sustainable IAS control programmes are established in each of at least three participating countries	At least two IAS control programme **frameworks** established in each of at least three participating countries	Removes "sustainable" (outcome-level judgment) and clarifies output as programme setup.
3.2.2 Successful eradications of priority species are completed on islands or island groups in at least two countries	Eradication interventions for priority species **implemented** on islands or island groups in at least two countries	"Successful" is evaluative (impact/outcome). "Implemented" reflects delivery of intervention (output).
3.2.3 At least two sites demonstrate measurable restoration outputs as described in restoration plans	Restoration interventions **implemented** for at least two sites as described in restoration plans	Avoids outcome claim ("demonstrate") and reframes as intervention.
4.1.1 Support Service supporting the three other components for the four countries and the region, including providing advice on NISSAP development and implementation as required, is operationalized	Support Service supporting the three other components for the four countries and the region, including providing advice on NISSAP development and implementation **established and providing services**	"Operationalized" clarified as service provision (availability) without implying uptake.
4.1.2 Sustainable financing mechanisms in place to support the establishment of a long-term Regional Support Service and national IAS management programs	Financing mechanisms **designed and established** to support the Regional Support Service and national IAS management programs	Removes "sustainable" (long-term outcome) and focuses on mechanism creation.
4.1.3 Capacity developed in to systematically measure the success of IAS management objectives as described in	Capacity **developed and tools provided** to systematically measure the success of IAS management objectives as	Ensures output reflects capacity provision, not its application.

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
national, regional and international instruments	described in national, regional and international instruments	
4.1.4 Regionally capable information system in place delivering case studies, guidelines, standard operating procedures and tools generated by components one to three	Regionally capable information system **developed and populated** with case studies, guidelines, standard operating procedures and tools generated by components one to three	"Delivering" implies use; replaced with developed and populated (availability).
4.1.5 Based on project outputs, new version of the "Guidelines" for Invasive Species Management in the Pacific (Guidelines) is produced and formally approved	New version of the "Guidelines" for Invasive Species Management in the Pacific (Guidelines) produced and formally approved	Already compliant with UNEP output definition (product delivered and endorsed). No change required.
OUTPUT INDICATORS	Output indicators are generally relevant to planned deliverables but vary in quality. Many are outcome intended and process-focused (e.g., "TAGs established") without clear targets or timelines. Baselines are often absent, limiting adequacy for tracking. While logically linked to outcomes, they lack SMART specificity (e.g., "trained teams" without numbers).	

104. The review of project document including drivers and assumptions indicates that the project's Theory of Change relies heavily on a set of system-level enabling conditions that are only partially articulated in the design. Key drivers include strong regional cooperation mechanisms, and sustained donor and technical support—factors that justify the regional and multi-country approach. However, assumptions are presented in a fragmented manner and largely embedded in operational risks rather than structured causal logic.

105. The synthesis identifies six core assumption domains: availability of political commitment, stakeholder coordination, community ownership, operational capacity, and financial sustainability. These assumptions are critical because they underpin the transition from outputs to outcomes and ultimately to impact. Several, particularly political will, long-term financing, and regional partnership functionality, represent high-dependency conditions beyond direct project control. This has important implications for evaluation, requiring careful contribution analysis and assessment of sustainability risks in interpreting project results.

106. The evaluator also assessed and reformulate the assumptions and drivers necessary to support transitions between results levels (i.e., from Outputs to Outcomes, Outcomes to Intermediate States, and Intermediate States to Impact) and rephrased and categorized them accordingly (Table 9).

Table 9: Justification for reformulation / expansion of drivers and assumptions

Formulation in original project document(s) – *Project Document*	**Formulation for reconstructed ToC at evaluation inception (RTOC)**	**Justification for reformulation and/or consultant's explanatory notes on the interpretation[27] of the driver or assumption**
DRIVERS		
Not provided clearly in the project document.	Strong regional cooperation architecture (e.g., PRISMSS and CROP coordination)	The project is fundamentally driven by regional collaboration and shared biosecurity risks, repeatedly emphasized across the document.
	Global biodiversity commitments [e.g., Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) obligations) from the countries]	The countries have made commitments on various Multi-lateral Environmental Agreement including CBD.
	Availability of regional technical expertise and knowledge platforms	Existing regional initiatives (e.g., PRISMSS) act as enablers of technical capacity and scaling.
	Continued donor and partner commitment to long-term IAS management and biosecurity	Co-financing and multi-partner engagement indicate external financing and institutional support as critical drivers.
	Commitments of the project on human rights and gender [see project document page 173 and (for gender; output 1.1.1)]	UNEP and the project expressed its firm commitment on human rights and gender issues during the project design.
ASSUMPTIONS		
• Political / policy support Ongoing political support for IAS biosecurity issues in-country; political motivation at national and regional levels to manage IAS will be maintained thus ensuring mainstreaming IAS management in government business; countries continue to participate in partnerships implementing IAS projects and political will remains to mainstream IAS/BS functions in Government business.	Sustained political commitment and policy prioritization for IAS and biosecurity at national and regional levels, including mainstreaming into government systems	Consolidates multiple statements into a core governance assumption, critical for institutionalization and sustainability.
• Stakeholder support Partner support continues; PRISMSS is perceived by other parties working in the Pacific as a successful forum / model which will add value to their operations; all relevant agencies nominated for the	Effective multi-stakeholder coordination and sustained engagement of national agencies, regional partners, and communities,	Groups coordination, participation, and ownership into a single system-level assumption on collaboration and governance performance.

[27] In some instances, the drivers or assumptions may not need to be reformulated, but implied meanings need to be made explicit or understanding clarified. In other cases, it may be necessary to add driver and assumptions that were not previously identified in the original TOC or results framework.

Formulation in original project document(s) – *Project Document*	**Formulation for reconstructed ToC at evaluation inception (RTOC)**	**Justification for reformulation and/or consultant's explanatory notes on the interpretation[27] of the driver or assumption**
NISSAP TAG assume their roles and responsibilities seriously and make every endeavour to make the TAG work; required cross-sectoral coordination materializes in a collaborative and efficient manner; NISSAP TAG or equivalent, performs well enough for the in-country project team to achieve outputs; timely management by NPC including cooperation from Government Agencies; NPC able to coordinate necessary activities in time; and PRISMSS partnerships remain viable long term and other projects from different funding streams will use the PRISMSS;	including functioning coordination platforms (e.g., NISSAP TAG, PRISMSS)	
• Stakeholder support (community aspects) Local approval of restoration projects by traditional owners; and local communities and Government will interact effectively to ensure the former's long-term buy-in thus ensuring sustainability.	Local communities and traditional authorities support and participate in IAS management, ensuring long-term ownership and sustainability	Extracts community dimension as a distinct social sustainability assumption.
• Operational and procedural factors Equitable opportunities to apply for positions, and existing gender and inclusion policies are adhered to; detectability of target IAS and beneficiary species is adequate for inferring success; training modules delivered in time to add value to the field-based operations.	Operational capacities, systems, and resources (e.g., staffing, technical expertise, training, data quality, coordination) function effectively and in a timely manner	Synthesizes operational assumptions into a delivery system performance assumption, avoiding fragmentation.
• External factors Weather events do not compromise operations; other funding agencies join as additional partners supporting the PRISMSS; climate events do not significantly interfere with succeeding with IAS and BS objectives; bilateral support for the PRISMSS and SPREP IAS/BS programme continues long term; and IAS identified as threats to national assets such as biodiversity.	External conditions (e.g., climate events, weather, external funding environment) remain sufficiently stable to not significantly disrupt implementation and outcomes	Consolidates environmental and external risks into a contextual stability assumption.
• Financial sustainability Countries are interested to explore sustainable financing mechanisms and support sustainable financing to continue the project's results.	Sustainable financing mechanisms (including PRISMSS business model and partner contributions) provide adequate and predictable resources over time	Elevates financing into a standalone assumption, reflecting its criticality for intermediate states and impact.

107. In overall, the reconstructed ToC enhances vertical logic by clearly distinguishing delivery (outputs), uptake (outcomes), and long-term change (impact). This improves evaluability, particularly for contribution analysis, by clarifying causal linkages and reducing risks of over-attribution between project-level interventions and higher-level ecological outcomes.

The reconstructed ToC at the time of Evaluation

The foundation: how outputs are expected to contribute to Outcomes

108. The project's four components produce foundational outputs designed to be used by national and regional stakeholders to change their practices.

109. ***Component 1 (Institutional Frameworks - Strengthening institutional frameworks and capacities for IAS management)***: Outputs such as the establishment of National Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs) (1.1.1), strengthened legislation (1.1.2), updated or new NISSAPs (1.1.3), and trained field teams (1.1.5) provide the essential governance structure and human capacity. These outputs directly enable Outcome 1.1, where countries establish a comprehensive administrative framework to manage IAS. The TAGs operationalize cross-sectoral coordination, and the NISSAPs provide the strategic plan, shifting countries from ad-hoc to systematic management.

110. ***Component 2 (Prioritization Systems - Establishing national systems for prioritizing IAS management):*** The completion of baseline studies (2.1.1) provides critical evidence on IAS distribution and status. This evidence is a prerequisite for evidence-based decision-making. When combined with the development of risk assessment protocols (2.1.2) and species/site management plans (2.1.3), these outputs lead directly to Outcome 2.1, where enhanced surveillance and control strategies reduce introduction rates. Without this data, prioritization would be guesswork.

111. ***Component 3 (On-the-Ground Action- Implementing programmes for IAS risk reduction, Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR), eradication, control and restoration):*** The identification of risk mitigation measures (3.1.1) and operational EDRR protocols (3.1.2) provide the practical "how-to" manuals and systems for biosecurity. The establishment of control programmes (3.2.1), successful eradications (3.2.2), and restoration outputs (3.2.3) represent the direct implementation of IAS management. These outputs collectively achieve Outcome 3.1 (reduced biosecurity risks) and Outcome 3.2 (reduced impacts of priority IAS), demonstrating tangible conservation results.

112. ***Component 4 (Regional Support Framework - Establishing a Pacific Islands regional support framework for IAS management):*** This component produces the glue that binds all others. The operationalization of the PRISMSS (4.1.1), sustainable financing mechanisms (4.1.2), capacity development for M&E (4.1.3), and the regional information system (4.1.4) are direct interventions that build regional and national skills, ensure long-term funding, and facilitate knowledge sharing. These outputs ensure the achievement of Outcome 4.1, a sustainable regional support service that enables countries to respond to IAS threats.

113. The transition from outputs to outcomes is driven by strong regional cooperation (i.e., PRISMSS), technical support availability, and national commitment to IAS management. Key assumptions include that government agencies and stakeholders actively apply delivered tools, systems, and capacities, coordination mechanisms (e.g., NISSAP TAGs) function effectively, and trained personnel remain in place. It is also assumed that communities and institutions engage with project interventions, and that operational conditions (timely expertise, data quality, and training delivery) enable effective uptake and use.

The transformation: how outcomes support the Intermediate States

114. These outcomes represent changes in behaviour and practice. When achieved synergistically, they combine to create new, more resilient system conditions, the intermediate states.

115. **Intermediate State 1 (*Countries' statutes, policies and regulations plus NISSAPs are fully* functional *and have become government core business*):** This state is the direct result of institutionalizing outcomes. When TAGs are operational (Outcome 1.1), risk-based surveillance is active (Outcome 2.1), and EDRR protocols are in place (Outcome 3.1), the result is a functional national system. The "functional" element is achieved through trained field teams and operational plans, moving from planning to action.

116. **Intermediate State 2** ***(Country capacity in BS and IAS core skills (e.g. EDRR etc) are established and maintained and benefitting from continuous PRISMSS support which has successfully established a long-term funding base):*** This state represents a higher-level effect than individual outcomes. It reflects the systemic application of capacities developed through the project. The regional information system (Outcome 4.1) and M&E capacity (Output 4.1.3) allow countries to track changes and adapt. When baseline data (Outcome 2.1) informs revised NISSAPs (Outcome 1.1) and control programmes (Outcome 3.2), a learning-by-doing cycle is established, where institutions and communities internalize adaptive management practices beyond the project's scope.

117. **Intermediate State 3 (*Conservation status of threatened species, biosecurity, and ecological integrity of habitat significantly improved*):** This state represents the direct ecological and biological culmination of the project's on-ground interventions. While IS 1 and IS 2 establish the institutional and adaptive systems, IS 3 captures the tangible environmental results: reduced predation pressure on endemic species (e.g., Ratak Imperial Pigeon, green turtles), effective biosecurity preventing new incursions, and restored native habitats. This state is achieved through the successful implementation of eradication programmes (Output 3.2.2), control of priority IAS (Output 3.2.1), restoration activities (Output 3.2.3), and operational EDRR systems (Output 3.1.2). It verifies that the project's long-term improvements are not just procedural but are translating into measurable biodiversity gains.

118. The progression from outcomes to intermediate states depends on sustained political commitment, institutional ownership, and continued regional collaboration. Drivers include ongoing donor support and alignment with biodiversity commitments. Key assumptions are that applied practices become institutionalized and routinely implemented, financing mechanisms (including PRISMSS) remain viable, and stakeholder coordination is maintained over time. It is also assumed that national systems retain capacity despite staff turnover and that cross-sectoral integration of IAS management becomes embedded in government core functions.

The ultimate change: how Intermediate States contribute to the Project Objective

119. The project objective is to 'reduce threats from IAS to terrestrial, freshwater, and marine biodiversity by developing and implementing comprehensive national and regional IAS management frameworks'. This is an ecological state dependent on a well-functioning socio-institutional system.

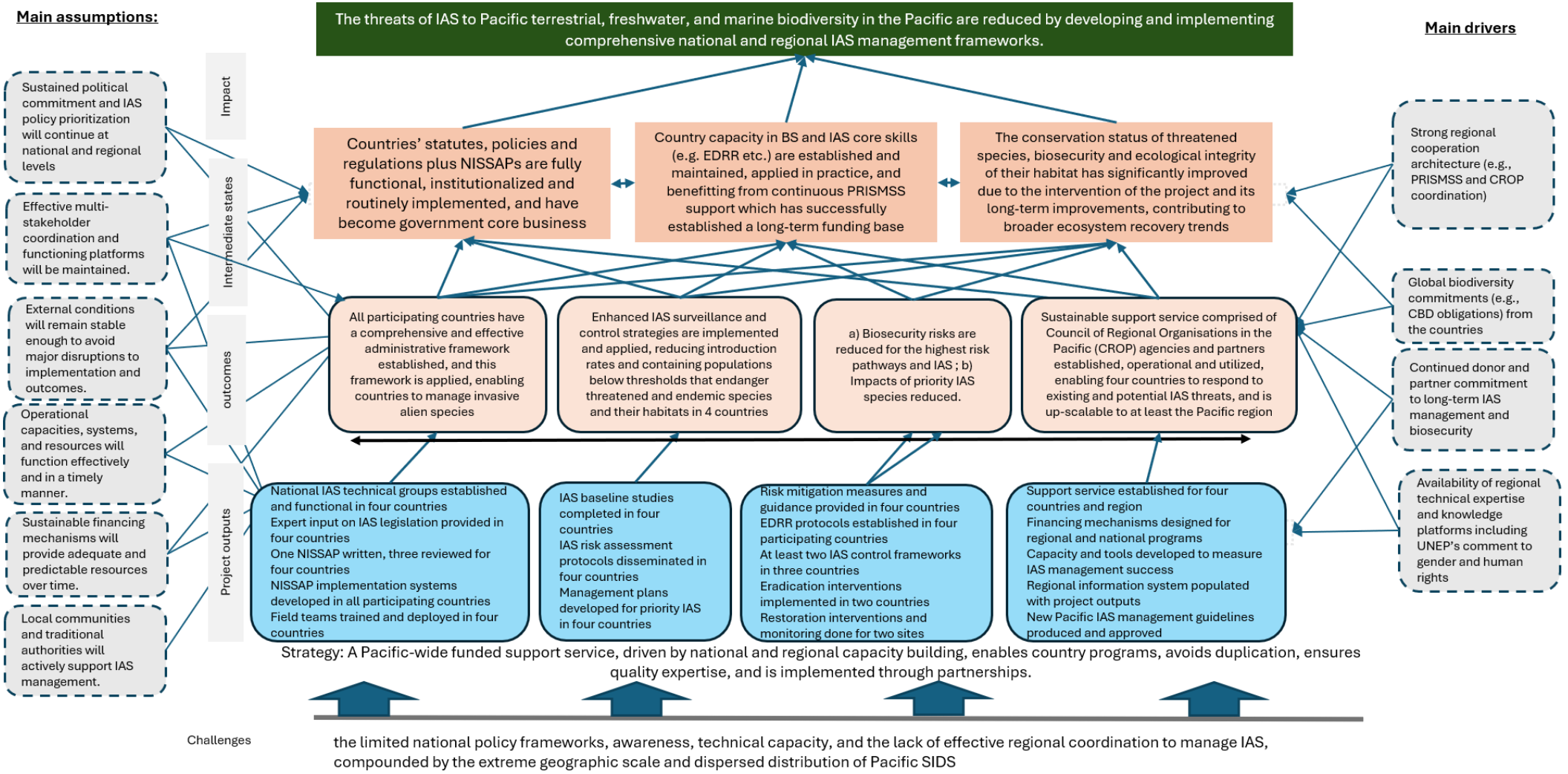
120. Functional National Systems (IS 1) ensure that threats (new attacks, established pests) are managed in a coordinated, strategic, and timely manner. Adaptive Management (IS 2) ensures that these systems learn from successes and failures, improving over time and responding to new challenges like climate change. Improved Conservation Status (IS 3)

provides the ultimate ecological evidence that these systems are working: threatened species are recovering, biosecurity is effective, and habitat integrity is being restored.

121. Together, these three states create a virtuous cycle. Good systems (IS 1) direct resources effectively; adaptive management (IS 2) continuously refines those systems; and demonstrable conservation gains (IS 3) generate political and community support, which in turn reinforces institutional commitment and financing. This resilient socio-ecological framework ensures that IAS control and prevention practices are sustained, directly reducing pressures on ecosystems. Consequently, native species recover, habitats regenerate, and the unique biodiversity of the Pacific SIDS is secured for the long term.

122. The pathway from intermediate states to impact is driven by the ecological urgency of IAS threats and sustained regional and national biosecurity systems. Key assumptions include that institutionalized systems continue to function effectively over the long term, financing remains stable, and external conditions (e.g., climate events, new IAS introductions) do not significantly undermine progress. It is also assumed that sustained IAS management leads to measurable biodiversity recovery, although recognizing time lags and the influence of external ecological and socio-economic factors beyond project control.

Figure 3: Theory of Change at evaluation



4 EVALUATION FINDINGS[28]

4.1 Strategic Relevance

4.1.1 Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities

123. The project demonstrates strong and comprehensive alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and strategic priorities (Table 10).

Table 10: Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW), and Strategic Priorities

UNEP strategic document	Alignment with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities	Level of alignment
MTS (2018-2021, 2022 -2025)[29]	The project aligns with the MTS (2018-2021) "Healthy and Productive Ecosystems" subprogramme (p. 29). Its objective to reduce IAS threats to biodiversity directly contributes to the 2030 outcome where ecosystems maintain biodiversity and function. Outputs on NISSAPs, eradications, and restoration are key contributions. In addition, the project addresses the MTS (2018 – 2022) " Healthy and Productive Ecosystems " thematic subprogramme by targeting biodiversity loss (p. 7). It contributes to the 2030 outcome of "recovery of nature" (p. 20) through IAS management and ecosystem restoration. It also supports the "Environmental governance" foundational subprogramme by strengthening IAS policies and legal frameworks (p. 30).	Full
Programme of Work **(POW)** (2018 -2019, 2020-2021, 2022-2023)[30]	The project directly contributes to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management for creating healthy and productive ecosystems (subprogramme 3. (a). (i) and 3. (b). (i): p.38-39). It also supports Environmental Governance (subprogramme 4. (b). (i). p 47) of PoW 2018-2019. By reducing IAS threats to globally significant biodiversity in four Pacific SIDS, it contributes to the subprogramme's focus on protecting terrestrial and marine ecosystems. The project addresses IAS as a primary threat to island biodiversity (PoW 2020-2021). Through eradication, control and restoration activities, it strengthens ecosystem resilience and aligns with the subprogramme's emphasis on managing ecosystems for sustainable delivery of goods and services. The project directly contributes to the subprogramme's objective of "living in harmony with nature" (PoW 2022–2023, p. 4). By implementing national IAS management frameworks and regional support mechanisms (PRISMSS), it supports the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and Aichi targets.	Full
Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building	Although the project design did not specially mention the Bali Strategic plan[31]. The project helps to operationalize the Plan by strengthening national and regional capacities for IAS management. It delivers technology support through PRISMSS	Full

[28] Refer to the TOR for descriptions of the nature and scope of each criterion.
[29] Refer to the MTS under which the project was approved.
[30] Refer to the POW under which the project was approved.
[31] The Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building is a landmark UNEP framework adopted on December 4, 2004, in Bali, Indonesia. It helps developing nations and transition economies gain environmentally sound technologies, build local institutions, and join global environmental talks.

UNEP strategic document	Alignment with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities	Level of alignment
	partners (SPREP, SPC, Island Conservation and others), develops standard operating procedures, and builds in-country skills and tools for eradication, biosecurity and restoration, ensuring sustainable environmental governance.	
South-South Cooperation	The project facilitates South-South learning through the Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN), Pacific Invasives Learning Network, Battler Resource Base and PRISMSS, enabling peer-to-peer exchange among Pacific SIDS.	Full

4.1.2 Alignment to GEF/Donor Strategic Priorities

The project demonstrates strong and comprehensive alignment to UNEP and GEF priorities (Table 11).

Table 11: Alignment to GEF/Donor Strategic Priorities

Donor or partner strategic document	Alignment with donor or partner strategic priorities	Level of alignment
GEF	The project fully contributes to GEF-6 strategic objective BD2: "Reduce Threats to Globally Significant Biodiversity" (p. 24) and Strategic Program 4 (within BD 2) on IAS prevention, control and management (pp. 26-27). It directly addresses IAS as a primary driver of biodiversity loss (p. 16) on Pacific islands. The project establishes comprehensive national and regional frameworks (NISSAPs, PRISMSS) for prevention, EDRR, eradication and restoration. By targeting threatened endemic species (e.g., Ratak Imperial Pigeon) and implementing island eradications, it reduces threats to globally significant biodiversity, aligning with GEF's focus on island ecosystems (Programme 4, p. 26).	Full

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

124. The project demonstrates strong and comprehensive alignment across global, regional, and national policy frameworks (Table 12). Its design was explicitly anchored in CBD obligations, GEF-6 strategic priorities, and the regionally endorsed Pacific IAS Guidelines — ensuring policy coherence at multiple governance levels. Alignment with trade-related instruments (Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures-SPS/ the International Plant Protection Convention - IPPC) and the Ballast Water Convention, while present, was partial and secondary to the biodiversity mandate.

Table 12: Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities

Strategic document or agreement	Alignment with global, regional, sub-regional, national environmental priorities	Level of Alignment
SDGs	SDG target 15.8 directly contribution to preventing introductions, reducing IAS impacts and controlling/ eradicating priority species. Also contributes on SDG target 14.2 (contributes to marine and coastal biodiversity protection), and SDG 17 partnership contribution through PRISMSS, PILN and multi-partner regional cooperation.	Full
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) - Article 8(h) and Aichi Targets	Project directly operationalises CBD obligations on IAS prevention, control, and eradication; explicitly contributes to Aichi Targets 1, 5, 7, 9, 11, 15, 19 and 20.	Full
GEF-6 Biodiversity Strategic Objective BD-2 and Strategic Programme 4	Project designed specifically under BD-2 (reduce threats to globally significant biodiversity) with IAS as the primary threat driver.	Full

Strategic document or agreement	**Alignment with global, regional, sub-regional, national environmental priorities**	**Level of Alignment**
SDGs	SDG target 15.8 directly contribution to preventing introductions, reducing IAS impacts and controlling/ eradicating priority species. Also contributes on SDG target 14.2 (contributes to marine and coastal biodiversity protection), and SDG 17 partnership contribution through PRISMSS, PILN and multi-partner regional cooperation.	Full
S.A.M.O.A. Pathway — UN SIDS Conference 2014, Paragraph 93	Project directly responds to calls for enhanced IAS management capacity, eradication support, and regional collaboration in SIDS.	Full
Guidelines for Invasive Species Management in the Pacific (SPREP 2009)	Project structure, components, and scorecard methodology explicitly organised around these regionally endorsed Guidelines, adopted by all 21 Pacific member states.	Full
National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plans (NISSAPs) — Tonga, Niue, RMI, Tuvalu	Project activities directly operationalise existing NISSAPs and develop Tuvalu's first NISSAP, aligning with each country's national biodiversity commitments.	Full
International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM)	Project supports national ballast water management strategies for Tonga and Tuvalu, contributing to marine IAS pathway mitigation.	Full
National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs)	Project implementation directly supports NBSAP reporting obligations across all four countries, with IAS identified as the primary biodiversity threat.	Full

4.1.4 Complementarity with Existing Interventions/ Coherence

125. The project demonstrated strong coherence with the broader GEF portfolio and Pacific conservation landscape. Most critically, it was explicitly designed as a logical continuation of the GEF-4 Pacific IAS project (GEF ID 3664), institutionalising lessons learned around the need for a dedicated regional support service, directly resulting in the PRISMSS concept. Coordination with Ridge to Reef projects was formalised during preparation, avoiding duplication while maximising complementarity around protected area and community engagement activities. Some of the relevant projects and complementarity with this project is provided in Table 13.

Table 13: Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence

Other initiatives by UNEP or other organisations	**Complementarity** *(including collaboration, coordination and overlap or duplication)*	**Level of Alignment**
GEF-4 Pacific Alliance for Sustainability IAS Project (GEF ID 3664)	Direct successor project; explicitly built on lessons learned, institutional relationships, and country capacity established under GEF-4. Terminal Evaluation (2017) informed current project design	Full
GEF-5 Ridge to Reef Projects (Tonga, Niue, RMI, Tuvalu)	Deliberate complementarity negotiated during PPG phase; collaboration around protected area management, community engagement, and biodiversity surveys (ProDoc Section 2.7, p.72)	Full
GEF-6 Fiji IAS Project (GEF ID 9095) and FSM IAS Project (GEF ID 9917)	PRISMSS was explicitly designed to extend technical support and training benefits to these allied projects on a regional basis. Shared knowledge and expertise.	Full
GEF-UNDP-IMO GloFouling Partnerships Project (GEF ID 9605)	Tonga included as pilot country in both projects; SPREP serving as Regional Coordinating Organisation enabling deliberate synergy on marine IAS and hull fouling (ProDoc Section 2.6, p.37)	Full

Other initiatives by UNEP or other organisations	**Complementarity** *(including collaboration, coordination and overlap or duplication)*	**Level of Alignment**
GBIF Regional Project — Pacific Alien and Invasive Species Data Mobilisation (BID-PA2016-0005)	Data generated from project baseline surveys designed to populate GBIF databases using Darwin Core standards; SPREP serving as EA for both	Full

Major findings Statements on Strategic Relevance and Complementarity

126. The project demonstrates strong strategic relevance across all evaluated dimensions. It aligns fully with successive UNEP Medium-Term Strategy, contributing to "Healthy and Productive Ecosystems" (2018–2021), and with consecutive PoWs on biodiversity conservation, island ecosystems, and living in harmony with nature.

127. The Bali Strategic Plan's capacity building mandate was operationalised through the PRISMSS, while South-South Cooperation was meaningfully advanced through the PILN and Pacific Invasives Learning Network and Battler Resource Base.

128. At the donor level, the project fully delivered against GEF-6 BD-2 and Strategic Programme 4. It demonstrated comprehensive coherence with national NISSAPs, CBD obligations, and the regionally endorsed Pacific IAS Guidelines — ensuring policy alignment across all governance levels. Its design as a direct successor to the GEF-4 Pacific IAS project, with deliberate complementarity with Ridge to Reef and allied GEF-6 initiatives, effectively minimised duplication while maximising additionality.

129. For participating countries, it operationalised NISSAP commitments, strengthened CBD reporting capacity, and generated direct conservation outcomes — including endangered species protection and habitat restoration — that would not have materialised within the project timeframe without GEF intervention. Regionally, the PRISMSS established a sustainable technical support architecture that extends benefits beyond the four core countries to the broader Pacific Island Countries and Territories community.

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Highly Satisfactory

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

Rating for Alignment to GEF/Donor Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory

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

Rating for Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence: Highly Satisfactory

4.2 Quality of Project Design

130. The project design demonstrates several notable strengths that collectively provide a credible and ambitious foundation for addressing IAS threats across four Pacific SIDS. These strengths, however, are accompanied by identifiable weaknesses that created implementation challenges and limited evaluability (Table 14).

131. The project design demonstrates several notable strengths that collectively provide a credible foundation for addressing IAS threats across four Pacific SIDS, alongside identifiable weaknesses — several of which are corroborated, and in some cases sharpened, by interview evidence from project partners, SPREP staff, and some other respondents who co-designed the project.

Design Strengths

132. Project preparation followed a comprehensive approach, with a thorough problem analysis (Section 2.3), country scorecards (Appendix 19), and a comprehensive stakeholder

analysis (Section 2.5) including gender considerations (Appendix 24). Strategic relevance is a clear strength, with full alignment to UNEP's MTS, GEF-6 BD-2, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15.8, and the regionally endorsed Pacific IAS Guidelines.

133. The governance architecture is well-designed. Clearly defined roles for UNEP, SPREP, the PSC, PMU, NPCs, and PRISMSS partners are presented in Section 4 and Appendix 9. The decision to institutionalise the PRISMSS within SPREP, building on the agency's two-decade IAS mandate, reflects sound institutional logic and enhances sustainability prospects.

134. The single most significant design feature, confirmed independently by multiple respondents, was the inclusion of regional set-aside funding to establish the PRISMSS.

135. Designing GEF 6 with a heavy capability-building focus and anchoring regional technical support within SPREP rather than building it from scratch in-country, was explicitly informed by this lesson from the previous projects and other actions in the region. A parallel European Union (EU)-funded project delivered by the same partners lacked an equivalent regional component, and stakeholders consistently identified this as the reason country relationships and cross-country learning matured more quickly under GEF6. The design process itself, routed through SPREP's biennial member-country meeting, where work plans are formally endorsed, also strengthened country ownership from the outset.

Design Weaknesses

136. Despite these strengths, several structural weaknesses are evident, some more consequential than the original draft indicated. The results framework (Appendix 4) conflates outputs and outcomes, and lacks consistently SMART indicators with quantified baselines, weakening evaluability and adaptive management throughout implementation.

137. More critically, budget design was not built from a bottom-up costing exercise. A PRISMSS technical partner confirmed the GEF 6 allocation for biocontrol work was "a fixed amount offered by the project, not a bottom-up cost estimate," forcing reliance on co-funding from a separate, larger project to cover core costs such as insect-rearing facilities. This is not an isolated observation. In the RMI, for instance, the project encountered considerable logistical difficulties and high expenses related to boat charters for the rodent eradication operation, which required transporting field teams, specialized equipment, and heavy supplies across remote, dispersed, and uninhabited outer island atolls. This suggests Component 3 field costs were likewise under-costed relative to the Pacific's dispersed geography, a risk the design's generic risk log did not adequately quantify.

138. The risk analysis (ProDoc Table 24) is present but generic; it underestimated National Project Coordinator turnover, a risk that materialised repeatedly and significantly in Tuvalu and RMI, as confirmed by multiple in-country respondents.

139. No explicit Theory of Change was presented at design; causal pathways and assumptions were fragmented across the narrative. The marine IAS component was comparatively underdeveloped and there were no actions on freshwater relative to its stated importance, consistent with many evaluation respondents.

140. Finally, the exit strategy and replication pathway beyond the four core countries were implicit rather than operationally detailed at design.

Table 14: Summary of quality of project design assessment ratings

	SECTION	RATING (1-6)	Summary Assessment
A	Project Preparation	6	Strength: Thorough problem analysis, comprehensive stakeholder mapping including gender and marginalized groups, costed workplan and procurement plan provided.
B	Risk identification and Safeguards	4	Strength: Risk log covers operational, political, and environmental risks with mitigation measures. Weakness: Underestimates NPC turnover risk, in-country turn-over and high logistics cost; No formal Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) mechanism and grievance redress procedure were established while working with indigenous communities on customary lands; generic safeguards.
C	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	5	Strength: Clear governance model with well-defined roles for UNEP, SPREP, PSC, PMU, and NPCs; decision-making flowchart provided. Weakness: Limited mechanisms for co-financing oversight and governance and learning during implementation.
D	Partnerships	5	Strength: Key partners identified with specified roles and co-financing commitments; appropriate to organisational mandates. Weakness: Partner capacities assumed rather than systematically assessed; no formal capacity gap analysis conducted.
E	Strategic Relevance	6	Strength: Full alignment with UNEP MTS, GEF-6 BD-2, SDG 15.8, CBD, Pacific IAS Guidelines, and NISSAPs. Complementarity with parallel interventions explicitly documented.
F	Logical Framework and Causality	4	Strength: Results logically organised around four components; gender indicators included. Weakness: No explicit ToC; outcomes statements are occasionally framed as outputs or project deliverables; indicators lack SMART specificity and clear baseline data; causal pathways are mostly implicit.
G	Financial Planning	5	Strength: Complete GEF budget and co-financing tables provided; M&E costs included. Weakness: GEF component budgets not built from bottom-up costing and co-financing budgets presented separately, limiting integrated activity-level financial tracking.
H	Efficiency	5	Strength: PRISMSS model avoids duplication; sequenced training approach; synergies with pre-existing initiatives documented. Weakness: Cost-effectiveness analysis lacks quantified benchmarks; no efficiency indicators specified.
I	Monitoring	4	Strength: Costed M&E plan with MTR and Terminal Evaluation budgeted; frequency and responsibilities outlined. Weakness: Baseline data absent in some cases; no strategy prepared to review and strengthening monitoring systems during the project implementation; limited disaggregation beyond gender.
J	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects	4	Strength: Sustainability addressed across financial, institutional, and social dimensions; PRISMSS user-pays model articulated. Weakness: Exit strategy implicit; replication beyond four countries not operationally detailed.
K	Learning, Communication and Outreach	4	Strength: Battler Resource Base[32], PILN meetings, and social media channels identified; gender and youth targeted. Weakness: No standalone Knowledge management (KM) strategy; communication effectiveness monitoring with remote communities not specified.

[32] The Battler Resource Base (BRB) is an online, searchable knowledge portal designed to support IAS management in the Pacific region. Managed by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), it acts as a central hub for environmental practitioners, coordinators, and researchers.

	SECTION	RATING (1-6)	Summary Assessment
	Total (Weighted) Score:	4.6[33]	*(Full analysis in the Inception Report, available from the Evaluation Office.)*

Summary

141. The project design is rated **Satisfactory**, reflecting strong strategic alignment, a well-evidenced and deliberately corrective regional architecture (PRISMSS), and genuine consultative buy-in. However, interview evidence confirms the design's most consequential weaknesses were not merely theoretical: budgets for both technical partnerships and field logistics were not bottom-up costed. These gaps, together with the absence of an explicit Theory of Change and underestimated staff turnover risk, reduced evaluability and periodically strained implementation without undermining the project's overall coherence.

Rating for Project Design: Satisfactory

4.3 Nature of the External Context

142. Based on interviews with stakeholders, project team members, and focus group discussions at project sites, the evaluation identified the following challenging external factors encountered during project implementation.

143. The project operated within a broadly favourable but periodically challenging external environment across its four SIDS implementation countries.

144. The most significant external disruption was the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely restricted international travel from early 2020 through 2022, directly curtailing planned field operations, in-country training workshops, cross-country technical missions, and regional coordination activities - all central to the project's delivery model. This necessitated two no-cost extensions, extending the project's technical completion from January 2024 to December 2025.

145. The Pacific region's inherent vulnerability to extreme climate events presented intermittent operational challenges. Tropical cyclones, storm surges, and drought conditions periodically affected project sites across Tonga, Tuvalu, and RMI during the implementation period, disrupting community engagement activities and field-based eradication and restoration operations. These events, while not catastrophic to project delivery, required adaptive rescheduling and contingency planning by PMU and NPCs.

146. The political context across all four participating countries remained broadly stable and supportive throughout implementation. Government commitment to IAS management was sustained, with no significant political upheaval or leadership instability materially disrupting project operations. Economic conditions in these small island states remained characteristically constrained, occasionally affecting government co-financing contributions and the retention of nationally appointed project staff — a pre-identified risk that nonetheless materialised more acutely than anticipated.

147. Overall, the external context is assessed as **Moderately Favourable**, with COVID-19 representing the dominant and most consequential external factor affecting project performance.

Rating for Nature of the External Context: Moderately Favourable

[33] Highly Unsatisfactory -< 1.83; Unsatisfactory - >= 1.83 < 2.66; Moderately Unsatisfactory - >=2.66 <3.5; Moderately Satisfactory - >=3.5 <=4.33; Satisfactory - >4.33 <= 5.16; and Highly Satisfactory - > 5.16

4.4 Effectiveness

148. The effectiveness of the project was assessed by the extent of tangible output delivery, achievement of outcomes and how those deliverables have been taken up by intended users, and what impacts (both positive and negative) were witnessed from the project interventions in the project sites. The assessment was based on various sources, such as primary data (interviews, and direct observation) and secondary sources, including the Result Framework from the ProDoc, PIRs (2017 to 2026), technical completion report, and other various reports/documents/materials related to projects.

4.4.1 Availability of Outputs

149. The achievements of the project outputs are presented below.

Output 1.1.1: National cross-sectoral and gender-balanced IAS Technical Advisory Groups (NISSAP TAGs) established and operational in all four participating countries

150. **Nature and scale of output delivery**: All four countries established national NISSAP TAGs during the project period. Tonga and Niue demonstrated stronger operational performance, building on GEF-4 institutional foundations. RMI and Tuvalu faced challenges from high staff turnover and limited government capacity. COVID-19 pandemic however disrupted regular meetings and cross-sectoral engagement in the beginning of the project. The TAG members remained engaged and provided required support during the project implementation such as preparation of NISSAPs, biosecurity legislation review, IAS baseline creation, IAS risk assessment and so on. Gender balance was promoted, with women occupying senior environment positions in three of four countries.

151. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)**: End-of-project target of fully operational TAGs partially met; functionality varied by country.

152. **Level of delivery**: Fully delivered.

153. **Ownership and intended users**: National environment ministries and cross-sectoral agencies are primary owners, with TAGs providing governance architecture for NISSAP implementation across all four countries.

Output 1.1.2: Expert input towards strengthened IAS legislation, regulations and policies in place in four countries

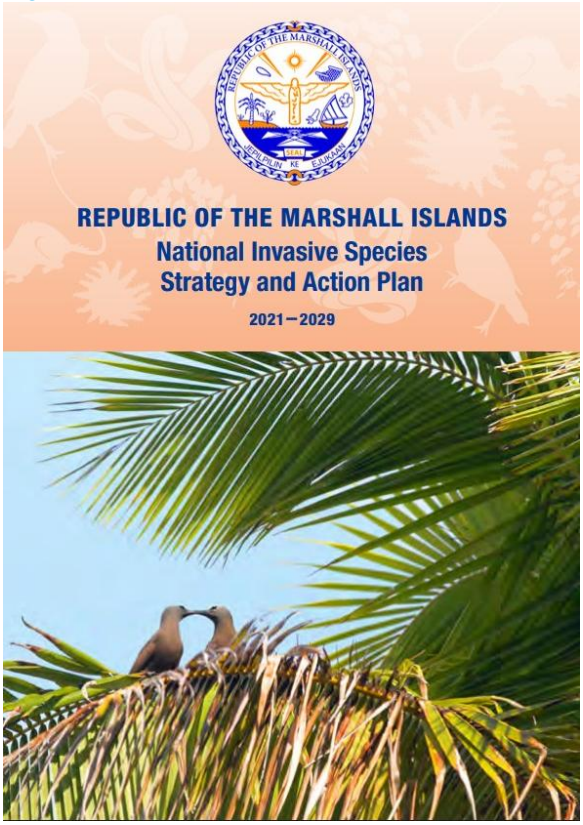
154. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** Legal experts and technical input were provided across all four countries, with PRISMSS partner Wellington UniVentures completing comprehensive legislative reviews. Cross-sectoral policy integration was facilitated through NISSAP TAGs.Tonga and RMI received support advancing draft Biosecurity Bills, though progress remains stalled at the Ministry of Agriculture levels due to a lack of funds for final drafting consultants (such as in Tonga). Marine IAS legislative provisions, including Ballast Water Convention obligations, were reviewed for Tonga and Tuvalu. Existing work on biosecurity, such as in Tonga, remain heavily focused on agricultural pathogens, whereas animals and insects are still being integrated.

155. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** End-of-project target for legislation review met.

156. **Level of delivery:** Fully delivered (regarding expert input and reviews). Progress uneven across countries.

Ownership and intended users: National legislatures and biosecurity authorities, though clear ministry ownership remains a challenge in Tonga.

Figure 4: NISSAP from the RMI



Output 1.1.3: One NISSAP written for Tuvalu; three NISSAPs reviewed and updated for Tonga, Niue, and RMI

157. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** This output was completed, with all four NISSAPs developed and, significantly, all having received formal Cabinet endorsement (Figure 4 is an example from the RMI). Niue's endorsement in 2025 marked the final milestone for this output. Tuvalu successfully established its first-ever national IAS strategic framework. To add regional value, the project developed a NISSAP toolkit and templates, standardized against the Pacific Guiding Framework, which have already been adopted by non-participating jurisdictions like Samoa and Pitcairn Islands. While COVID-19 disrupted initial in-country consultations, the project pivoted effectively to remote online tools to ensure inclusive stakeholder input for NISSAPs.

158. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** End-of-project target of four endorsed NISSAPs under implementation has been fully met.

159. **Level of delivery:** Fully delivered.

160. **Ownership and intended users:** National environment ministries and NISSAP TAGs, with the documents now serving as the primary roadmaps for national invasive species work

Output 1.1.4: Administrative systems and processes to implement NISSAPs are in place in all participating countries.

161. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** Administrative systems, including annual work planning and financial reporting, are now established across all four countries. RMI and Tuvalu required more foundational support, with systems established largely from scratch. A significant success is the institutionalization of the National Invasive Species Coordinator (NISC) roles; Tonga, Niue, and the Marshall Islands (RMI) have successfully transitioned these into permanent, government-funded positions. Tuvalu remains the exception, where a small workforce and budget constraints have prevented the absorption of the coordinator role into the national budget, requiring duties to be redistributed among existing permanent staff.

162. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** End-of-project target met for system establishment. The goal of institutionalizing NISC roles was mostly achieved (3 of 4 countries).

163. **Level of delivery:** Partially delivered.

164. **Ownership and intended users:** National environment ministries, though Tuvalu's system remains vulnerable to staff turnover and a lack of dedicated funding.

Output 1.1.5: Field-based operational implementation teams trained in best practice and standard operational procedures and mobilised in four countries.

165. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** Field teams are fully mobilized in all four countries, having received specialized training with a focus on best practice operational delivery, including the application of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and field-based protocols. Some of the specific trainings included agro-chemical risk management, weed management, EDRR, biological control and eradication methodologies. A key highlight was the 2024 regional study tour in New Zealand, which provided certified outdoor first aid and safety training. However, high staff turnover, often driven by out migration, poses a persistent threat to capacity. To mitigate this, the project adopted a "train-the-trainer" model and focused on training multiple individuals per site to preserve institutional memory.

166. COVID-19 however significantly disrupted the training schedule, delaying several workshops and necessitating virtual adaptations with reduced practical application. Gender-inclusive participation was actively promoted across all countries. Skills operationalisation was found stronger in Tonga and Niue than RMI and Tuvalu.

167. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** End-of-project target for module delivery and team mobilization has been fully met.

168. **Level of delivery:** Fully delivered.

169. **Ownership and intended users:** Government field officers and community extension workers who serve as the "first line of defence".

Output 2.1.1: Baseline studies of the distribution and status of invasive species, and programme for detecting change, completed in four countries.

170. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** As per the priority given by the respective government, baseline assessments were completed for all important terrestrial species, providing the evidence base for eradication and restoration planning. Notable achievements include weed surveys in Tonga and Yellow Crazy Ant delimitation in Niue and Tuvalu. However, geographic coverage was not universal; remote atolls in RMI and Tuvalu missed baseline surveys due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Marine baseline surveys covered key port areas and conservation sites, though coverage remained uneven. Marine baseline coverage is also significantly less complete than terrestrial coverage, representing a lingering gap in the evidence base.

171. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** End-of-project target partially met. Terrestrial baselines are complete, while marine and remote atoll surveys remain unfinished.

172. **Level of delivery:** Fully delivered for the priority species.

173. **Ownership and intended users:** National environment and biosecurity agencies utilizing the data for NISSAP prioritization.

Output 2.1.2: Effective protocols for assessing risk and prioritising IAS for management developed and implemented in four countries.

174. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** The project developed a "Priority Site Determination Tool" now used across all four countries to systematically rank islands for predator eradication and restoration. This tool incorporates multi-criteria assessments including biodiversity, social wellbeing, and cultural values. The tool has been applied in all four countries and has also been utilised in other Pacific Island countries supported by

PRISMSS. Marine IAS risk profiles were developed for port areas in Tonga and Tuvalu[34]. Despite these successes, the routine integration of these protocols into government systems is uneven; for instance, RMI's Quarantine Division still cannot access revenue for enforcement because the Biosecurity Act remains unpassed.

175. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** Target for protocol development and communication met, though operational integration remains a work in progress.

176. **Level of delivery:** Partially delivered (development complete; implementation variable).

177. **Ownership and intended users:** National biosecurity agencies and TAG members.

Output 2.1.3: Species- and site-specific management plans developed for priority IAS and priority areas in all four countries.

178. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** Site-specific management plans were finalized for priority areas across four countries integrating baseline surveys and risk assessments such as in Huvalu Forest (Niue), Toloa Rainforest (Tonga), and Funafuti Atoll (Tuvalu). These plans directly informed Component 3 activities, such as the restoration of Mount Talau, where improved habitat conditions have already supported the recovery of the endemic Tongan Whistler. A significant output was the (world's first) feasibility plan for island-wide cat and rat eradication in Niue[35], which has already attracted international investment interest[36].

179. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** End-of-project target for peer-reviewed management plans was fully met.

180. **Level of delivery:** Fully delivered.

181. **Ownership and intended users:** National environment agencies and community stewardship networks like VEPA in Tonga

Output 3.1.1: Priority risk mitigation measures identified, and necessary actions taken to reduce or eliminate risks in the four countries.

182. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** This work acts like an "insurance policy" for the project's conservation wins. Priority biosecurity risk mitigation measures were identified and implemented across all four countries through pathway analyses, quarantine system reviews, and targeted training for border control and biosecurity officers. The project also strengthened regional readiness through development of an Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) Toolkit and completion of a review of EDRR priorities. The project identified the main ways invasive species travel, like on planes or boats, and created the "Clean Boats, Clean Ports" framework[37] to stop them. Border and quarantine officers in all four countries received training on how to spot and handle these threats. Marine biosecurity risk mitigation, including port baseline surveys and ballast water strategy reviews, was addressed for Tonga and

[34] Some documents available at: https://sprep.org/news/tuvalu-progresses-survey-and-training-on-identifying-marine-non-indigenous-species-mnis / https://brb.sprep.org/content/manage-marine-biosecurity-pacific / https://brb.sprep.org/content/marine-biosecurity-toolkit-marine-non-indigenous-species-management-strategies-and-risk
[35] Available at: https://brb.sprep.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/supplement-use-framework-feasibility.pdf
[36] Project stakeholders from Niue and SPREP reported that the IAS work including the IAS feasibility study attracted the additional funding such as from adaptation fund (https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/AFB.PPRC_.36.Inf_.25.-Proposal-for-Niue-Tonga.pdf#2#1), support from New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) (https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/publications/weed-biocontrol/weed-biocontrol-articles/misccap-a-new-collaboration-for-the-pacific) and UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (https://www.sprep.org/news/restoring-island-resilience-efforts-boosted-by-new-uk-funding-collaboration)
[37] Available at https://brb.sprep.org/content/clean-boats-clean-ports-framework-protect-pacific-island-countries-and-territories-invasive.

Tuvalu. Implementation of recommended measures into routine border operations varied, with resourcing constraints and staff turnover limiting full operationalisation in RMI and Tuvalu.

183. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** End-of-project target of pathway reports produced, published, and quarantine training completed with in-country customisation substantially met; operational integration into routine biosecurity systems partially achieved (main due to lack of enough staff at the borders to keep checking every boat).

184. **Level of delivery:** Partially delivered.

185. **Ownership and intended users:** National biosecurity and quarantine agencies are the primary users.

Figure 5: Ecological restoration site in Toloa, Tonga



Output 3.1.2: EDRR protocols operational in four participating countries.

186. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** Four early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) plans were developed and established for priority IAS across all four countries, with priority species lists formally identified, response protocols developed, specialist equipment procured, and simulation exercises conducted. To operationalise these plans, species-specific EDRR protocols were also produced for ants, cane toads, and rodents. PRISMSS-delivered training workshops built national EDRR capacity, with in-country customisation visits consolidating practical application. Community-level EDRR awareness, targeting women and youth as frontline IAS detectors, was incorporated into outreach. Operational readiness was stronger in Tonga and Niue, where prior IAS programme experienced accelerated adoption. RMI and Tuvalu demonstrated progress but required sustained external support for full operational capacity.

187. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** Target met. All four countries have signed plans and have held "mock drills" (simulations) to practice their response.

188. **Level of delivery:** Fully delivered.

189. **Ownership and intended users:** Government response teams and community "first responders" who are the first to see new pests.

Output 3.2.1: At least two sustainable IAS control programmes established in each of at least three participating countries.

190. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** Five restoration sites were established in all four participating countries, exceeding the minimum three-country target. Tonga targeted at least four priority weed species alongside predator control at Toloa Rainforest and Mt Talau. Niue implemented programmes for six invasive plant species, pig management, and Yellow Crazy Ant containment within Huvalu Forest. Controlling feral pigs in Niue has become very popular. RMI established plant and animal control programmes including red-vented bulbul management. Tuvalu initiated Rat and Yellow Crazy Ant programmes on Funafuti Atoll (Figure 5). The project also focused the "War on Weeds," using biological control[38], bringing in a pest's natural enemy (like a tiny mite or beetle) to stop it from spreading. Biological control agents were introduced in partnership with Landcare Research NZ, with efficacy monitoring underway during evaluation period. Community participation including women was promoted across all countries.

191. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** The target of three countries was exceeded, with active programs now running in all four.

192. **Level of delivery:** Fully delivered (and exceeded).

193. **Ownership and intended users:** National environment agencies, local council, community groups, and NISSAP TAGs.

Output 3.2.2: Successful eradications of priority species completed on islands or island groups in at least two countries.

194. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** The project tackled some of the biggest rodent removals ever attempted in the Pacific (Tonga, RMI, and Tuvalu). In Tuvalu, two islands are now officially rat-free benefiting breeding seabirds and threatened turtle populations[39]. In Tonga, the massive Late Island (1,731 hectares) operation was a clear achievement[40]. In RMI, rodent and cat eradications on key Majuro Atoll islets secured critical habitat for the endangered Ratak Imperial Pigeon. A world-first feasibility plan for island-wide eradication from Niue was developed, attracting significant future investment interest.

195. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** Target exceeded, with successful removals confirmed or underway in the project countries.

196. **Level of delivery:** Fully delivered, though monitoring must continue to ensure islands stay pest-free.

197. **Ownership and intended users:** Environment ministries and island communities who now have safer "food hubs" for crabs, turtles, and birds.

Output 3.2.3: At least two sites demonstrate measurable restoration outputs as described in restoration plans

[38] The natural energy guide is published to aware stakeholders in the project countries (Available at https://brb.sprep.org/content/marine-biosecurity-toolkit-marine-non-indigenous-species-management-strategies-and-risk).

[39] Post Operational Report: Tepuka and Falefatu Islets, Funafuti Atoll by Jesse Friedlander, Richard Griffiths (2025).

[40] However, there was a setback in 2025 when rats were again spotted on Late Island; scientists are now testing DNA to see if these are "survivors" or new arrivals so they can learn how to prevent this in the future.

198. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** Restoration is about helping nature bounce back once the pests are gone. Ecological restoration programmes were implemented at multiple priority sites across all four countries, exceeding the minimum two-site requirement. For example, in Tonga, restoration at Toloa Rainforest (Figure 6), Mt Talau, and Eua National Park involved predator control, invasive plant[41] management, and native species planting through school and village community engagement. The most notable result is at Mount Talau in Tonga, where the rare "hengahenga" (Tongan Whistler) bird has returned in large numbers and is even being seen in nearby villages. In Niue, over 100 hectares of the Huvalu Forest are being restored through community efforts to remove invasive plants. Similarly, in Tuvalu, respondents mentioned that there has been increased of terrestrial crab and seabirds in the islets after the islets become rats free. COVID-19 however delayed some activities in RMI and Tuvalu.

Figure 6: Ecological restoration site in Toloa, Tonga



199. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** Substantially met. End-of-project target of at least two restoration sites per country with measurable outputs met and exceeded across all four countries.

200. **Level of delivery:** Fully delivered.

201. **Ownership and intended users:** Local Council, Community groups and local NGOs (like VEPA in Tonga) who take pride in watching their local wildlife recover.

Output 4.1.1: 4.1.1 Support Service supporting the three other components for the four countries and the region, including providing advice on NISSAP development and implementation as required, is operationalized.

202. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** PRISMSS was developed and operationalised as a regional technical support mechanism, initially supporting the four participating countries but subsequently expanding its activities to at least 15 other pacific countries and territories. The respondents and PIRs also confirmed PRISMSS supported NISSAP development and implementation, delivered training and technical programmes, and developed additional technical programming, including marine invasive species management.

203. Interview evidence strongly corroborates the strategic value of this model. Stakeholders described PRISMSS as a major improvement over the previously fragmented regional support system because countries could access coordinated technical expertise through one regional mechanism rather than approaching multiple independent programmes. The model was particularly valuable for small island countries with limited specialist capacity;

[41] The African tulip tree (*Spathodea campanulata*) and the cordia tree / kotia (*Cordia alliodora*)

a Niue stakeholder described PRISMSS as a readily available source of regional expertise that countries could access without using their own GEF allocations to maintain the service.

204. Importantly, the evidence suggests that PRISMSS has moved beyond being simply a project output towards becoming an **institutionalised regional service platform**. Its partnership model, technical programmes, Navigator and continued expansion demonstrate that the mechanism is being used beyond the four original countries. Interviewees also reported that GEF-6 helped establish a platform capable of attracting subsequent donor investments and scaling support regionally.

205. Performance **against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** End-of-project target of all training modules delivered, in-country customisation completed, and PRISMSS operational with regional reach substantially met — regional engagement exceeded initial projections.

206. **Level of delivery:** Fully delivered. The output was **fully achieved and exceeded in terms of regional reach**.

207. **Ownership and intended users:** SPREP and PRISMSS partners as institutional owners; all Pacific SIDS as intended users.

Output 4.1.2: Sustainable financing mechanisms in place to support the Regional Support Service and national IAS management programs

208. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** The project produced a sustainable financing report and associated Battler resources and contributed to mobilising additional external financing for PRISMSS, including support from New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the United Kingdom (UK). However, this cannot be interpreted as evidence that sustainable financing mechanisms were fully established. Interviews consistently identified long-term financing of national IAS programmes as a continuing concern.

209. While discussions on domestic financing took place[42] and studies carried out[43], respondents reported that concrete national financing arrangements had not emerged, with IAS competing with higher government priorities such as climate change and food security. Respondents also viewed that financial sustainability a major challenge because Pacific governments have limited domestic resources and remain dependent on external funding.

210. Thus, the project was successful in catalysing financing for the regional PRISMSS service, but less successful in establishing predictable, nationally owned financing mechanisms for IAS management. The output is therefore better characterised as achievement of the foundations and financing pathway, rather than full achievement of sustainable financing.

211. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** End-of-project target of financing study delivered, and mechanisms 'in place' is partially met.

212. **Level of delivery:** Partially delivered.

[42] Sustainable Finance for Invasive Species Management - Webinar Event (https://brb.sprep.org/content/sustainable-finance-invasive-species-management-webinar-event)

[43] Create sustainable financing for invasive species management (https://brb.sprep.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Battlers-Sustainable%20Digital%202022.pdf)

213. **Ownership and intended users:** SPREP, national environment ministries, and finance ministries, with sustainable financing essential for continuing IAS management and PRISMSS operations beyond the GEF project lifecycle.

Output 4.1.3: Capacity developed to systematically measure IAS management success against national, regional, and international instruments

214. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** The output was **fully achieved**, with evidence that the system was used beyond simple project monitoring. The Pacific Invasive Species Indicators (PISI) were developed and incorporated into the PRISMSS Navigator, providing an online mechanism for tracking progress against IAS management objectives. The 2025 PIR confirms that National Invasive Species Coordinators update the indicators annually.

215. Interview evidence provides stronger evidence of practical application. Stakeholders explained that the indicators provide an annual assessment of progress across the themes and objectives of the Pacific guiding framework, including biosecurity, IAS surveillance and management. A country stakeholder specifically noted that the annual indicator questionnaire provides a more realistic year-specific picture than relying solely on the NISSAP, which may represent only a snapshot of national priorities at the time it was prepared.

216. The system therefore represents a significant institutional contribution: it provides a common regional framework for measuring IAS management progress while allowing national coordinators to generate country-level information. Nevertheless, interview evidence suggests that data completeness and reporting quality remain uneven, with some countries focusing on selected indicators and having limited resources to report comprehensively. This limits the extent to which the system can yet provide a fully consistent basis for comparative regional performance assessment.

217. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** End-of-project target of reporting system use and operational was mostly met; consistent use and data population variable across countries.

218. **Level of delivery:** Fully delivered.

219. **Ownership and intended users:** SPREP, national environment agencies, and NISSAP TAGs.

Output 4.1.4: Regionally capable information system in place delivering case studies, guidelines, standard operating procedures and tools generated by components one to three; plus, sex disaggregated data on women and youth participation in IAS/ biosecurity activities / outputs

220. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** The output was fully achieved and has generated substantial added value beyond the original output specification. The Battler Resource Base provides a searchable regional repository for case studies, reports, plans, SOPs, webinars, awareness materials and other technical resources; the 2025 PIR records more than 1,200 resources in the system.

221. Interview evidence confirms that the system was not merely established but substantially improved during GEF-6 and is being used by practitioners. The Battler Resource Base was described as having been upgraded from an older, less user-friendly system into a more accessible knowledge resource used by invasive species practitioners for planning and field implementation. The Battler resources include practical guides, protocols and step-by-step procedures that help countries implement IAS activities.

222. The subsequent integration of the Battler Resource Base, PISI and PRISMSS services within the PRISMSS Navigator is particularly significant because it brings technical resources, country information and regional support functions together in one platform. This increases the likelihood that knowledge generated through the project will remain accessible and useful after project closure.

223. There are nevertheless limitations. Interviewees noted that knowledge management remains to be improved, with some technical materials still difficult to discover and many products available primarily in English. UNEP stakeholders also recommended continued production and dissemination of more accessible technical and scientific materials. These are therefore areas for continued improvement rather than evidence of failure to deliver the output.

224. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** End-of-project target of Battler Resource Base comprehensively populated with use monitoring operational substantially met; systematic impact monitoring however partially implemented.

225. **Level of delivery:** Fully delivered.

226. **Ownership and intended users:** SPREP as institutional custodian; all Pacific SIDS, regional agencies, and global IAS practitioners as intended users of this open-access knowledge platform.

Output 4.1.5: Based on project outputs, new version of the "Guidelines" for Invasive Species Management in the Pacific (Guidelines) is produced and formally approved.

227. **Nature and scale of output delivery:** The output was fully achieved and appears to have become an important regional reference framework. The 2025 PIR confirms that the 'Guiding Framework for Invasive Species Management in the Pacific' was developed and formally endorsed by SPREP member countries and territories and Pacific Community (SPC) members, making it the guiding framework for regional IAS management.

228. Interview evidence confirms that the Framework has been used to structure national IAS planning. A country stakeholder reported that the national NISSAP was developed using the Pacific Guidelines framework and that NISSAPs across the Pacific have been harmonised around this approach. Another stakeholder described the Framework as the overarching regional document, with national NISSAPs operating underneath it and providing the country-level expression of the regional approach.

229. The Framework therefore represents more than a completed knowledge product: it has provided a common regional architecture linking national planning, indicators, technical tools and IAS management practice. Its integration with the Battler Resource Base and PISI strengthens this function. However, interviews indicate that implementation and reporting against the Framework remains uneven across countries, reflecting differences in national capacity and financing.

230. **Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):** End-of-project target of revised Guidelines produced and formally approved by SPREP Meeting substantially met.

231. **Level of delivery:** Fully delivered.

232. **Ownership and intended users:** SPREP and all 21 Pacific member states as institutional owners.

Summary

233. The project delivered substantially across all 15 outputs spanning four components. Institutional outputs, including NISSAP TAG establishment, NISSAP development and review, Biosecurity legislative strengthening, and trained field teams, were delivered across all four countries, providing the foundational governance and human capacity architecture for national IAS management. Output delivery was consistently stronger in Tonga and Niue than RMI and Tuvalu, where staff turnover and COVID-19 disruptions created implementation gaps.

234. Component 2 and 3 outputs demonstrated tangible operational achievements, including terrestrial baseline surveys, risk protocols, management plans, EDRR frameworks, weed control programmes, biological control introductions, landmark rodent eradications, and community-led restoration programmes across multiple priority sites. The Late Island eradication and Niue country-wide feasibility plan represent globally significant conservation milestones directly attributable to project support.

235. Component 4 outputs, particularly PRISMSS operationalisation, Battler Resource Base expansion, capacity development systems, and revised Pacific IAS Guidelines, collectively established a durable regional knowledge and technical support infrastructure. Sustainable financing mechanisms and marine baseline coverage represent the most significant delivery gaps requiring ongoing attention.

236. Overall, Output quality was consistently high, delivering peer-reviewed management plans, Cabinet-endorsed NISSAPs, and standardized toolkits. Timeliness was moderately impaired by COVID-19 disruptions and fund disbursement delays, requiring two no-cost extensions. Demonstrated utility is substantial, evidenced by operationalized EDRR playbooks, island eradication feasibility plans, border biosecurity protocols, biocontrol releases, and field teams trained in standard operating procedures.

4.4.2 Achievement of Project Outcomes

237. Achievements of project outcomes are presented below in Table 15.

Table 15: Achievements of project outcomes

Outcome 1.1:	**All participating countries have a comprehensive and effective administrative framework established, and this framework is applied, enabling countries to manage invasive alien species**
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	**Indicator 1.1:** 4/4 TAGs operational; target partially achieved. **Indicator 1.2:** 4/4 NISSAPs under implementation; target fully achieved.
Sources of Information /Evidence:	PIR 2025; Annex 12 Final Report; NISSAPs; TAG records; GEF IAS Tracking Tool; interviews with national coordinators, government agencies, UNEP, SPREP and regional partners.
Narrative Assessment:	The project generated substantial institutional change, moving IAS management towards more coordinated and planned government action. All four countries had operational TAGs and government-endorsed NISSAPs under implementation. Importantly, interview evidence indicates that NISSAPs are being used to guide annual activities rather than remaining static planning documents. All four countries have received cabinet endorsement of NISSAPs. In all countries, NISSAPs have become the source for IAS related activities identification and implementation. The project has also developed NISSAP template, including community consultation template, that can also be used by other countries in the Pacific. These templates are available on the Battler Resource Base and

	some respondents mentioned that the template was used by some countries (i.e. Pitcairn Island as well as Samoa). The project also helped institutionalise National IAS Coordinator functions in Tonga, Niue and RMI, strengthening continuity and accountability. However, the depth of institutionalisation remains uneven. Tuvalu's coordinator position is less secure, while RMI and Tuvalu remain more exposed to staff turnover, limited resources and competing priorities. The evidence therefore demonstrates increasing institutionalization of the TAGs and NISSAPs in the project countries, but they vary across all four countries.
Level of Achievement:	Partially achieved

Outcome 2.1:	**Enhanced IAS surveillance and control strategies are implemented and applied, reducing introduction rates and containing populations below thresholds that endanger threatened and endemic species and their habitats in 4 countries**
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	**Indicator 2.1:** IAS risk protocols established in all four countries: target fully achieved. **Indicator 2.2:** Species- and site-specific IAS management plans developed — target substantially achieved.
Sources of Information /Evidence:	PIR 2025; Annex 12 Final Report; baseline and risk assessments; EDRR plans and protocols; species/site management plans; interviews with national agencies, communities, UNEP, SPREP and technical partners.
Narrative Assessment:	The project generated substantial changes in how IAS surveillance and control are planned and applied. All four countries moved towards **risk-based surveillance**, supported by baseline information, pathway analysis, EDRR protocols and priority species/site assessments. These tools are being used to guide national interventions rather than relying mainly on opportunistic responses. The strongest evidence of behavioural change is operational: EDRR protocols were customised and tested, specialist equipment was provided, and Tonga successfully detected and removed cane toads before establishment. Site-specific plans also informed eradication and restoration activities, including Niue's island-wide cat and rat eradication feasibility work. Community involvement, including women and youth as frontline detectors, further extended surveillance beyond government agencies. However, marine surveillance and routine integration of risk measures into border operations remain weaker, particularly in RMI and Tuvalu because of staffing and resource constraints. Evidence of actual reductions in introduction rates or sustained containment of IAS populations across all four countries remains limited.
Level of Achievement:	Partially achieved

Outcome 3.1:	**Biosecurity risks are reduced for the highest-risk pathways and IAS**
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	**Indicator 3.1:** Stable or increased populations of key threatened species in targeted sites. **Indicator 3.2:** Rodent populations reduced to zero at targeted sites. **Indicators 3.3:** Weed control programme operating in Tonga, Niue, RMI and Tuvalu **Indicator 3.4:** Control program underway for Yellow Crazy Ant in Tuvalu
Sources of Information /Evidence:	PIR 2025; Annex 12 Final Report; eradication and post-operational reports; biodiversity monitoring data; EDRR and biosecurity protocols; interviews with national agencies, communities, UNEP, SPREP and technical partners.
Narrative Assessment:	The project generated genuine behavioural and institutional shift in how countries manage biosecurity risk, moving from ad hoc response towards protocol-based, applied practice.

	EDRR systems and risk mitigation measures (Outputs 3.1.1, 3.1.2) are now operational rather than merely designed: quarantine and biosecurity personnel apply risk-based screening routinely, and inter-island biosecurity has visibly strengthened, particularly in Tuvalu, where a completed Yellow Crazy Ant delimiting survey now underpins active inter-island protocols protecting the Funafuti Conservation Area, which has recorded no incursions since. Sustained radio-based community awareness has translated into behavioural change, with communities reportedly more vigilant in checking goods before inter-island transport. However, this consolidation is not yet uniform or fully secure: due to pest re-establishment after apparent eradication success. This underscores that reduced risk cannot yet be treated as durable without sustained post-intervention surveillance. The outcome is substantially, but not fully, achieved.
Level of Achievement:	Fully Achieved

Outcome 3.2:	**Impacts of priority IAS species (identified in Component 2) reduced**
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	**Indicator 3.5:** Restoration programmes operational in each country
Sources of Information /Evidence:	PIR 2025; Annex 12 Final Report; weed and biological-control programme records; eradication and restoration reports; biodiversity monitoring; interviews with national agencies, communities, UNEP, SPREP and technical partners.
Narrative Assessment:	The project shifted countries from largely unmanaged IAS exposure towards active, institutionalised control, with clear evidence of behavioural uptake by field personnel and communities. Weed biological control targeting at least one priority species is now active in all four countries, and three countries (Niue, Tuvalu, Tonga) are implementing sustained containment of high-priority weeds under the "War on Weeds" programme, with trained personnel now applying safe agrichemical handling as routine practice rather than one-off intervention. Restoration is similarly embedded in ongoing government work, with five active sites in Tonga and Niue and adaptive replanting undertaken in Tuvalu in direct response to a pest incursion — evidence of institutional learning, not just delivery. Eradication outcomes are emerging, for example, Tuvalu has independently confirmed two islands rat-free, demonstrating the approach's viability with improved availability of terrestrial crab and seabird in the islets. Similarly, returning of the rare "hengahenga" (Tongan Whistler) bird in Tonga and restoration of the Huvalu Forest are some encouraging examples. The outcome is substantially achieved; post treatment monitoring is still to be improved.
Level of Achievement:	Partially, achieved

Outcome 4.1:	**Sustainable support service comprised of Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies and partners established and enabling four countries to respond to existing and potential IAS threats, and is up scalable to at least the Pacific region**
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	Comprehensive technical support service directly supporting the four national projects and other Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs)
Sources of Information /Evidence:	PIR 2025; Annex 12 Final Report; PRISMSS records and training records; partner MOUs; Battler Resource Base; resource requests and support

	missions; interviews with national coordinators, UNEP, SPREP and regional technical partners.
Narrative Assessment:	The project generated **the strongest and most clearly demonstrated institutional outcome** through the operationalisation and use of PRISMSS. The service, by adopting a hub-and spoke model, moved regional IAS support from fragmented arrangements towards a coordinated technical platform linking SPREP with specialist partners. PRISMSS was fully operational by project completion, supported all four participating countries and had expanded activities to 15 PICTs, while training, biological control, monitoring and restoration programmes were increasingly integrated into national and regional work (Figure 7). Interview evidence confirms practical uptake: RMI and Tuvalu stakeholders described accessing specialist expertise, training and technical assistance, while the platform also helped attract co-financing for subsequent IAS activities. The expansion beyond the four participating countries demonstrates genuine regional demand and scalability. However, sustainability of the service remains less certain than its operationalisation. Tuvalu's limited capacity constrains use of some PRISMSS resources, while long-term financing commitments for PRISMSS remain insufficiently secured. Thus, the service is demonstrably operational and utilised, but its financial sustainability is not yet assured.
Level of Achievement:	Fully Achieved

Summary

238. The project achieved substantial progress across all five outcomes, demonstrating meaningful institutional and behavioural change in IAS management across Tonga, Niue, RMI, and Tuvalu. NISSAPs and TAGs were established and applied, while risk-based surveillance, EDRR systems and species/site management plans shifted national practice from largely reactive responses towards more systematic IAS management. However, the depth of institutionalisation varied, with stronger and more sustained uptake in Tonga and Niue than in RMI and Tuvalu.

239. The project also generated tangible conservation results through island rat eradications, weed biocontrol, Yellow Crazy Ant management and ecosystem restoration. These interventions reduced immediate IAS pressures and provided early evidence of recovery of threatened species and habitats. However, longer-term ecological impacts and sustained containment cannot yet be fully demonstrated, particularly given the rat re-detection on Late Island and uneven post-eradication monitoring.

240. PRISMSS was the project's most significant and enduring institutional achievement, providing an operational regional technical support mechanism that expanded well beyond the four participating countries. Its continued effectiveness is nevertheless constrained by uncertain long-term financing, uneven national capacity, and remaining weaknesses in marine and inter-island biosecurity.

4.4.3 Likelihood of Impact

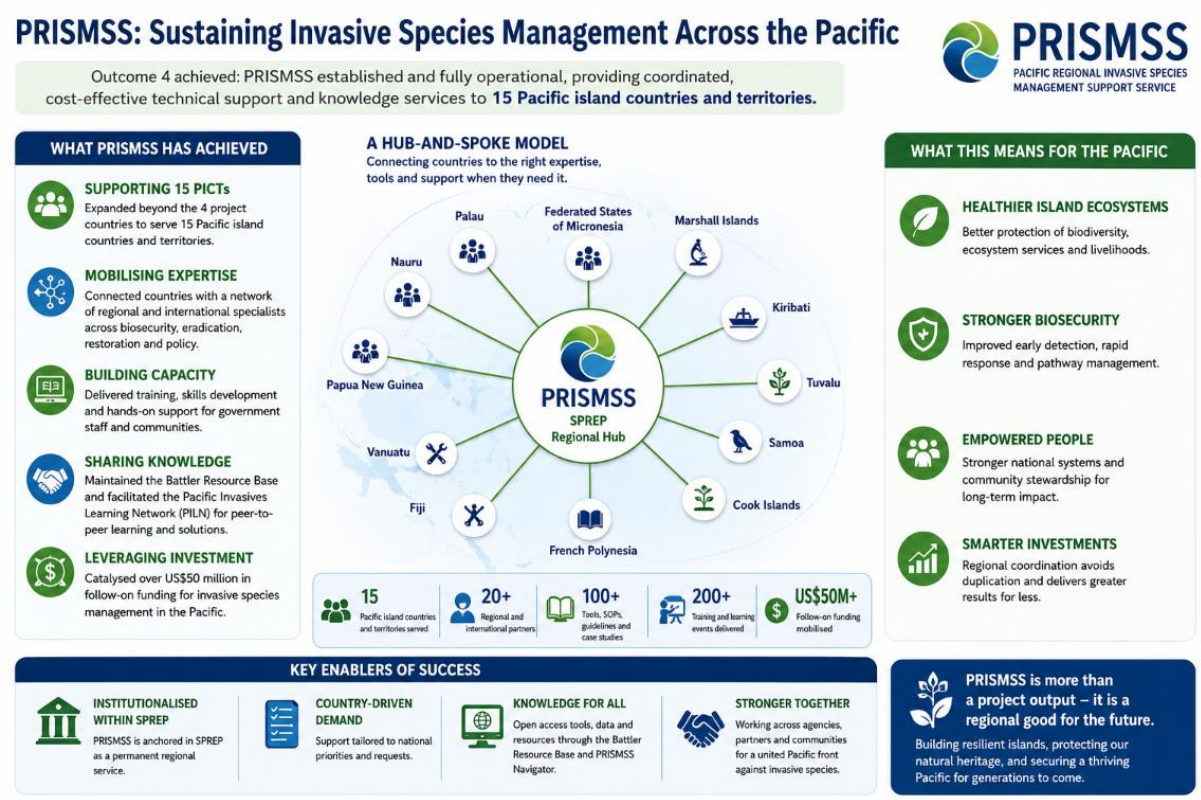
241. The project has a reasonably strong likelihood of contributing to its intended long-term impact, particularly through improved biosecurity systems, stronger national IAS management and restoration of priority habitats. The causal pathway from outputs to outcomes and the intended intermediate states is broadly coherent and supported by evidence. NISSAPs, TAGs, EDRR systems, trained national teams and the PRISMSS regional support mechanism have shifted IAS management towards more systematic and preventive approaches. Eradications, weed biocontrol and restoration have already reduced IAS

pressures at targeted sites and generated early signs of biodiversity recovery. However, these ecological gains remain vulnerable to reinvasion and require sustained surveillance and management. The impact is therefore plausible rather than yet demonstrated at scale.

242. The intermediate states are partially achieved and uneven across countries. NISSAPs and IAS coordination functions are increasingly embedded in government systems, particularly in Tonga and Niue, but institutionalisation remains less secure in RMI and Tuvalu. National capacity in EDRR, surveillance and IAS control has improved and is being applied, but continued effectiveness depends on staff retention, government resources and access to PRISMSS expertise.

243. PRISMSS has demonstrated regional demand and scalability, but its long-term financial base is not yet sufficiently secure comparing the needs at the country level. Early recovery of threatened species and habitats provides encouraging evidence of impact pathways, but ecological recovery and resilience will require considerably longer periods. Besides, the GEF-8 project is ready for launch and offers an opportunity to build on the outcomes of this project, although the current funding envelope remains inadequate to fully address the remaining priorities.

Figure 7: The achievement of PRISMSS



Source: Conceptualized based on the findings by the evaluator (2026)

244. The project has generated important catalytic effects that increase the likelihood of longer-term impact. Successful island eradications and the development of regional technical capacity have strengthened the Pacific's position as a source of transferable IAS management practice and created a platform for subsequent investment and regional cooperation. Community participation has also broadened ownership of biosecurity and restoration activities, including meaningful participation of women and youth. No critical unintended negative environmental or social effects were identified. Nevertheless, continued financing, government ownership, post-eradication surveillance, marine biosecurity and

sustained application of national systems are critical assumptions. Without these, early conservation gains could be reversed.

245. Table 16 provides the status of factors influencing the likelihood of impact of the project.

Table 16: Factors influencing the Likelihood of impact.

Factors influencing likelihood of impact	Assessment	Justification
Drivers to support transition from Outputs to the Project Outcomes	In place	Strong regional cooperation through the PRISMSS, availability of technical expertise from specialist partners, and sustained SPREP institutional commitment provided critical enabling conditions for output-to-outcome transition. However, high NPC staff turnover in RMI and Tuvalu, COVID-19-related disruptions, and uneven government capacity across countries partially constrained the depth of behavioural and institutional change achievable from delivered outputs. Community engagement and women's participation as frontline IAS actors strengthened transition prospects at local level.
Assumptions for the change process from Outputs to Project Outcomes	Partially hold	Core assumptions — that government agencies would actively apply delivered tools, NISSAP TAGs would function effectively, and trained personnel would remain in post — partially held. Tonga and Niue validated these assumptions strongly. In RMI and Tuvalu, high staff turnover, competing government priorities, and limited cross-sectoral coordination undermined assumption fulfilment. Provision of funds at the country level did not materialize as expected. The assumption that operational conditions would enable timely training delivery was significantly disrupted by COVID-19, requiring adaptive management responses.
Proportion of **Project Outcomes** fully or partially achieved	Some	All five project outcomes were at least partially achieved, with Outcomes 3.1 and 4.1 fully achieved. No outcome was fully achieved across all four countries simultaneously. Tonga and Niue consistently demonstrated stronger outcome achievement than RMI and Tuvalu. The PRISMSS operationalisation (Outcome 4.1) and biosecurity risk reduction (Outcome 3.1) represent the strongest outcome-level achievements with clearest attribution to project intervention.
Drivers to support transition from Project Outcomes to Intermediate States	Partially in place	Sustained political commitment to IAS management in Tonga and Niue, continued PRISMSS technical support, and growing community ownership of restoration and biosecurity activities support the transition towards intermediate states. However, long-term PRISMSS financing remains unresolved, NPC position mainstreaming into core government budgets is incomplete in RMI and Tuvalu, and bilateral donor commitments from New Zealand and Australia are not yet formally secured — collectively weakening the strength of drivers supporting intermediate state achievement.
Assumptions for the change process from the Project Outcomes to Intermediate States	Partially hold	The assumption of sustained political commitment holds strongly in Tonga and Niue but remains fragile in RMI and Tuvalu. Partner organisations have largely honoured co-financing and technical commitments under MOU arrangements. The assumption that PRISMSS partnerships would remain viable long-term is partially validated through the regional uptake demonstrated, though formal post-project financing commitments remain outstanding. The assumption that no major external shocks would disrupt

Factors influencing likelihood of impact	Assessment	Justification
		implementation was violated by COVID-19, though the project adapted effectively through no-cost extensions.
Proportion of **Intermediate States** achieved	Some	Intermediate State 1 (NISSAPs fully functional as government core business) is most advanced in Tonga and Niue, partially achieved in RMI and Tuvalu. Intermediate State 2 (country capacity established and maintained with long-term PRISMSS funding) is partially achieved — capacity established but long-term financing unresolved. Intermediate State 3 (conservation status of threatened species significantly improved) shows early positive trends from eradications and restoration, but ecological recovery timeframes extend well beyond the project lifecycle, limiting current verifiable achievement.
Drivers to support transition from Intermediate States to Impact	Partially in place	The ecological urgency of IAS threats in Pacific SIDS, growing regional political commitment to biodiversity conservation, and the PRISMSS's institutionalisation within SPREP provide meaningful drivers supporting long-term impact. The demonstrated proof-of-concept of the PRISMSS model and world-first eradication achievements are generating international interest and prospective investment. However, the absence of formally committed long-term financing for PRISMSS operations and incomplete mainstreaming of IAS positions into government core budgets in RMI and Tuvalu represent significant drivers not yet fully in place.
Assumptions for the change process from Intermediate States to Impact	Partially hold	The assumption that institutionalised systems will continue functioning effectively over the long term holds strongly in Tonga and Niue but remains conditional in RMI and Tuvalu. The assumption that sustained IAS management leads to measurable biodiversity recovery is ecologically sound and supported by early monitoring evidence, though full population-level recovery requires timeframes well beyond the project. The assumption that external conditions — including climate events and new IAS introductions — will not significantly undermine progress remains inherently uncertain given Pacific SIDS' extreme climate vulnerability and increasing globalisation pressures on biosecurity.

Summary

246. The project demonstrates a credible likelihood of contributing to its intended long-lasting impact, with all five outcomes at least partially to substantially achieved and a logically coherent causal pathway from outputs through outcomes towards intermediate states. Key drivers, PRISMSS institutionalisation, regional technical partnerships, and community ownership, are partially in place, supporting continued progress beyond project closure.

247. Intermediate states are partially achieved, strongest in Tonga and Niue where NISSAPs are functioning as government core business. Long-term PRISMSS financing and NPC mainstreaming in RMI and Tuvalu remain the most significant unresolved risks to sustained impact.

248. Catalytic effects, including the world-first Late Island eradication and Niue's country-wide feasibility plan, have generated international conservation interest, strengthening replication and scaling prospects.

Findings Statements on Effectiveness*:*

249. The project demonstrated substantial effectiveness, delivering most of the 15 outputs and achieving substantial progress across all five outcomes. It strengthened national IAS governance through functional NISSAP TAGs, updated NISSAPs, trained teams, risk-based surveillance, EDRR systems and species/site management plans, while also delivering direct eradication, biological control and restoration interventions. Evidence of application and institutional uptake was stronger in Tonga and Niue than in RMI and Tuvalu, where staff turnover, limited capacity and COVID-19 disruptions constrained the depth and continuity of results.

250. The project generated tangible reductions in IAS pressures through successful island eradications, priority species control, biocontrol and restoration. Early evidence of threatened species and habitat recovery is encouraging, particularly in Tonga and RMI, but longer-term ecological impacts and sustained containment cannot yet be demonstrated across all four countries. The effectiveness of marine and inter-island biosecurity also remains uneven.

251. PRISMSS was the project's most significant institutional achievement, evolving into an operational regional support mechanism with demonstrated use and expansion beyond the four participating countries. However, uncertain long-term financing, uneven national institutionalisation and remaining biosecurity capacity gaps constrain the durability and scale-up of results. Overall, the project has established a credible pathway towards longer-term impact, assessed as Likely.

Rating for Effectiveness: Satisfactory

Rating for Availability of Outputs: Satisfactory

Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes: Satisfactory

Rating for Achievement of Likelihood of Impact (Use 'Likely' scale): Likely

4.5 Financial Management

4.5.1 Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

252. Under the PCA, the EA was responsible for applying its own financial policies, procedures and financial management system, while UNEP retained fiduciary oversight. Overall, the project demonstrated broad compliance with the agreed financial arrangements. Required financial and progress reporting was generally submitted, although some reports were occasionally delayed or combined, particularly during COVID-19 and periods of PMU transition. Procurement was undertaken using the EA's applicable procedures as specified in the PCA, rather than UNEP's procurement rules. UNEP confirmed that no major compliance concerns arose, and the 2025 audit reported no adverse findings.

253. The principal financial management weakness was timeliness of fund flow rather than other financial management issues. Fund delays were experienced by both EA and the countries that sometime hampered the timely implementation of the project activities. An interview with UNEP official indicates that vendor registration and the multi-step fund-transfer process can take several weeks or months, particularly for initial disbursements, even when the required documentation is complete. These systemic delays were compounded by COVID-19 restrictions and limited finance capacity within the EA. UNEP mitigated compliance risk by withholding subsequent disbursements until required reports were received. SPREP also advanced its own resources when UNEP fund transfers were delayed, helping maintain implementation momentum.

254. Overall, financial management was adequate and compliant, but fund-flow procedures reduced implementation timeliness in some cases.

4.5.2 Completeness of Financial Information

255. Financial information available to the evaluation was adequate for assessing overall budget utilisation, but insufficient for detailed efficiency analysis according to project component and over the years (Table 17). The latest financial information shows cumulative GEF expenditure of approximately US$ 6.15 million against the approved US$6.25 million budget, indicating high overall utilisation. However, UNEP's internal system records expenditure primarily by budget line and does not readily provide component and annual-level expenditure information, limiting the evaluator's ability to assess expenditure patterns against specific activities, outcomes, organizations and implementation years.

256. Reported co-financing substantially exceeded the original target, largely because PRISMSS attracted additional partner and donor contributions. For co-financing documentation, UNEP relies on EA-certified co-financing because it has no mandate to independently audit national government budgets. The MTR had also identified difficulties in substantiating some in-kind co-finance contributions, particularly from RMI and Tuvalu. Consequently, while reported co-financing demonstrates strong resource mobilisation, the precision and verifiability of some contributions remain limited.

257. It should be noted, however, that these conditions, both for expenditure and co-financing reporting, are part of the agreed scope of work between GEF and UNEP. As such, they apply to all GEF-funded projects and are not specific to this intervention.

258. Annual audits were undertaken by the EA and shared with UNEP. The project shared the audit reports with the evaluator, and no concerns were raised by the auditors.

Table 17: Financial management

Financial management components:	Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's/GEF's policies and procedures:	**S**	
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence[44] to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules	No	All financial operations were conducted in accordance with UNEP's established financial policies and procedures. This was substantiated, for instance, through the review of annual audit reports submitted by SPREP. Additionally, the financial oversight was verified by expenditure statements and procurement executed under agreed EA rules.
Was first disbursement carried out within 9 months of UNEP's project approval date.	Yes	1st cash advanced to EA on 29th July 2019
Were the procurement policies of UNEP and the donor(s) followed? *(where applicable)*	N/A	Followed EA and government policies as per the agreement between UNEP and EA
2. Completeness of project financial information[45]:		
Provision of key documents to the evaluator (based on the responses to A-H below)	**S**	

[44] If the evaluation raises concerns over adherence with policies or standard procedures, a recommendation may be given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.
[45] See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference.

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Aggregate amount is provided according to the budget lines, components and organizations in design but not the expenditure
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	Generally done by the EA and the Task Manager, documents available
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	Followed the requirements and documents available
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	Followed as per the need. The transaction detail along with dates are available to review.
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes	The country and EA provide a written documents to UNEP to compile. Documents available to review.
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Yes	The expenditure is available according to the budget lines.
G	Copies of any completed audits and management responses *(where applicable)*	Yes	Audits were carried out on an annual basis and no issues raised by the audits.
H.	Procure documents[46], including the approved requisition document and Source Selection Plan *(where applicable)*	No	It was reported that project related procurements were carried out by the EAs. Although relevant documents were not received for the review, the FMO confirmed all processes were followed, and there were no comments contrary received from the stakeholders during evaluation consultations.
I.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	N/A	
Overall rating		**S**	

(Source: UNEP/FMO, sent on 3rd Aug 2026)

Findings Statements on Financial Management:

259. Overall, financial management of the project was compliant and satisfactory. While the EA adhered to its own procedures and UNEP confirmed no major issues, the primary weakness was occasional fund-flow delays which hindered implementation timeliness. The evaluation found high-budget utilisation but was limited in conducting detailed efficiency analyses due to UNEP's reporting systems lacking component-level data.

260. Similarly, while co-financing was robustly mobilised, the EA verified the availability of co-financing from the relevant organization. Annual audits reported no adverse findings.

Rating for Financial Management: Satisfactory

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

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Satisfactory

4.6 Efficiency

Cost-effectiveness

261. The project's regional design was inherently cost-effective. Establishing PRISMSS within SPREP avoided duplicating specialist technical capacity across four dispersed SIDS

[46] Relevant for procurement action over USD 10,000 in value.

and enabled pooled expertise from regional partners for training, eradication, biocontrol and biosecurity. Use of pre-existing SPREP, the Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN) and Pacific Invasives Partnership (PIP), complementary GEF projects, and Landcare Research NZ's established biocontrol expertise reduced duplication and implementation time.

262. Regional block-course training also reduced the need for repeated country-level workshops, while procurement of shared field vehicles in Tonga, Niue and RMI provided a practical alternative to recurrent hired transport. However, the project did not undertake formal cost-effectiveness or unit-cost benchmarking, limiting the ability to demonstrate the magnitude of efficiency gains. Interview evidence also identified some avoidable logistical inefficiencies[47], including delayed payment of freight charges in RMI.

Timeliness and Implications of Delays

263. Timeliness was a significant efficiency constraint. Against the original 60-month implementation period, two no-cost extensions extended the project to December 2025[48]. The first extension explicitly responded to COVID-19 disruption, while the second was required to complete remaining activities. COVID-19 restrictions disrupted field missions, training, surveys and eradication activities, particularly under Components 2 and 3. The MTR (October 2022) confirmed these delays were systemic across Components 2 and 3, with baseline surveys, EDRR protocol development, and eradication activities all running behind schedule.

264. Staff turnover (such as in Tuvalu and RMI), competing priorities within the governments, delay created by the logistic challenges and prolonged delays in fund disbursement further affected implementation; the PMU reported that SPREP had to advance funds to prevent activities from being stalled.

265. The extensions were therefore justified, but the prolonged implementation period increased transaction costs, staff costs and placed additional demands on SPREP, and national agencies.

Table 18: Project Extensions

Type of project extension (cost/no-cost)	Duration (# months)	Reason for no-cost extension
No cost extension	From Jan 2024 to April 2025	Impact of COVID-19 pandemic that caused project implementation delays
No cost extension	From April 2025 to December 2025	Country level project implementation delays due to staff turnover and other competing priorities within the governments

Time-saving Measures

266. Several adaptive measures helped contain the impact of delays. The project pivoted to virtual PSC meetings and online training modalities during COVID-19 restrictions, maintaining coordination and knowledge transfer when in-person operations were impossible. Sequential integration of training workshops with immediate in-country follow-up visits, where PRISMSS specialists consolidated field skills shortly after regional courses, reduced the time lag between capacity building and operational application. Budget reallocations, approved through PSC, redirected underspent COVID-period funds toward accelerated field operations in 2023–2025, helping partially recover lost ground.

[47] During design (including during inception phase) this aspect was not given adequate consideration that may affect overall project efficiency.

[48] The II PCA also indicated that the legal instrument remains in force until 31 December 2026 twelve months after the project technical completion date of 31 December 2025 to allow for receipt of all terminal reports.

Use of Pre-existing Institutions, Partnerships and Synergies

267. The project made effective use of pre-existing institutional architecture and partnerships, reducing the need to establish new regional mechanisms. SPREP's established IAS programme, PILN and PIP provided functioning platforms for coordination and knowledge exchange. Complementarity with GEF-5 Ridge to Reef activities helped use existing biodiversity information and community networks, while synergies with UK Government-supported marine invasive species management were established through the adaptation of the UK Overseas Territories Marine Biosecurity Toolkit and the development of a dedicated Pacific Marine Biosecurity Toolkit.

268. Existing NISSAPs in Tonga, Niue and RMI also provided a foundation for implementation. Landcare Research NZ's established Pacific biocontrol expertise facilitated agent testing and release. These arrangements reduced duplication and supported faster access to specialists' capacity, although some technical activities still depended on co-financing because project allocations were not always based on detailed bottom-up costing.

Carbon Footprint

269. The project made a modest contribution to reducing its operational footprint, although this was not systematically measured. Virtual PSC meetings and online engagement during COVID-19 reduced travel, and some virtual arrangements were retained thereafter. Regional block-course training also consolidated participants from several countries into common events, potentially reducing travel compared with separate country workshops.

270. The PRISMSS hub-and-spoke model further supported regional delivery through SPREP rather than repeated long-haul missions from external technical centres. These measures indicate attention to travel efficiency, but the evaluation cannot quantify the resulting carbon savings.

Findings Statements on Efficiency*:*

271. The project demonstrated **reasonable efficiency** through its regional support model, effective use of existing institutions and partnerships, and adaptive measures to maintain implementation during COVID-19. However, the two-time project extensions, occasional fund disbursement delays from UNEP, staff turnover and high logistical costs in dispersed Pacific islands reduced timeliness and efficiency.

Rating for Efficiency: Moderately Satisfactory

4.7 Monitoring and Reporting

4.7.1 Monitoring of Project Implementation

272. The project's M&E plan (ProDoc, Appendix 7) allocated USD 377,500 (GEF) and USD 252,000 (co-finance) for monitoring activities, covering quarterly expenditure reports, biannual progress reports, annual Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), PSC meetings, field monitoring, the MTR, and the terminal evaluation. The Results Framework and country scorecards provided a structured basis for monitoring, and PIRs and PSC processes enabled regular tracking of implementation.

273. Country respondents reported that SPREP and other technical teams visited project sites and provided regular feedback which enabled the country team to make timely improvement when necessary. This field monitoring support from SPRP was highly appreciated by the country project team. UNEP and SPREP also reviewed progress through online meetings and identified corrective measures as needed. However, some outcome-level indicators lacked quantified baselines at approval, limiting the ability to demonstrate change

beyond output delivery. Monitoring was therefore stronger for activities and outputs than for outcomes and impacts.

274. The MTR also identified insufficient evidence linking project outputs to measurable changes in IAS management, a weakness that persisted through project completion. Interview evidence highlighted the practical difficulty of obtaining complete and timely monitoring data from four dispersed countries.

275. Nevertheless, the monitoring system supported adaptive management through the PSC, which was well managed by the PMU. MTR findings contributed to budget reallocations and the subsequent no-cost extension, while risk ratings and implementation progress were reviewed through successive PIRs.

4.7.2 Project Reporting

276. Project reporting complied with UNEP requirements under the PCA, with quarterly expenditure reports, biannual progress narratives, and annual PIRs produced throughout implementation. PIRs from 2020 to 2025 documented continuing output delivery and were appropriately reviewed and signed by responsible project staff. The reporting system thus provided a consistent administrative record of implementation progress.

277. While operational reporting was broadly adequate, outcome-level reporting lacked robust substantiation, frequently conflating delivered outputs with genuine behavioural, institutional, or systemic changes among stakeholders. Annual audit reports were produced and audited on a yearly basis.

278. While the project was designed with five outcomes, reporting on Outcome 3.2 was consistently omitted from the PIRs. The UNEP project team explained that this outcome was excluded from the results framework submitted to and cleared by the GEF Secretariat. This omission reflects a weakness in the project's approach to monitoring and reporting on its stated outcomes.

279. Reporting incorporated gender considerations over time. The gender strategy guided participation in TAGs, NISSAP consultations, and eradication planning, and sex-disaggregated participation data was collected where applicable. However, reporting remained focused more on participation numbers than on whether women's participation influenced decisions or generated differentiated benefits.

Findings Statements on Monitoring and Reporting*:*

280. The project maintained a functional M&E system that supported implementation oversight, regular PIR reporting, and adaptive management. SPREP managed field-level monitoring and provided regular feedback, while UNEP and SPREP engaged in periodic reviews and applied corrective measures as needed.

281. Reporting was compliant with UNEP requirements and progressively incorporated gender-disaggregated information. However, reporting remained focused mainly on activities and participation rather than meaningful behavioural, social, or ecological change. Documentation of marginalised groups was inconsistent, and evidence of knowledge utilisation remained limited.

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Satisfactory

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Satisfactory

Rating for Project Reporting: Satisfactory

4.8 Sustainability

4.8.1 Socio-political Sustainability

282. The project has established stronger socio-political foundations for sustaining IAS management beyond closure. Cabinet endorsement of all four NISSAPs, including Niue's endorsement in 2025, demonstrates that IAS management has gained formal national policy ownership. School-based IAS education in Tonga and Niue, radio awareness in Tuvalu, and community restoration initiatives have extended ownership beyond government agencies and demonstrate behaviour-change efforts embedded in social structures beyond direct project activities. The legislation review for biosecurity was also completed and the findings were well received by the countries.

283. Interview evidence also confirms that sustained project support helped governments recognise the value of maintaining dedicated IAS capacity, including RMI's decision to internalise its coordinator position. These are important foundations for continued political and community support.

284. Interview evidence also noted that local initiatives either through civil society organizations or government helped to create favourable condition at the local level for continuation of the project activities. For example, VEPA[49] plays a pivotal role in community engagement[50] for invasive species management in Tonga.

285. However, socio-political sustainability remains uneven across countries. Tonga, Niue and RMI have institutionalised IAS coordinator positions within government structures, while Tuvalu has not, owing to limited staffing and budget capacity. Staff turnover, particularly in RMI and Tuvalu, has also weakened institutional memory and continuity. Although changing government priorities remained a low-rated risk, political endorsement has not yet been consistently translated into confirmed domestic financing.

4.8.2 Financial Sustainability

286. The project established a potentially useful regional financing pathway through PRISMSS and demonstrated strong demand for continued technical support. By closure, PRISMSS was supporting 15 PICTs beyond the original four countries, while UNEP and SPREP were developing GEF 8[51] and Adaptation Fund opportunities. Interview evidence also indicates that GEF 6 capacity enabled countries to pursue larger successor programmes, creating a pipeline for continued investment. However, this demonstrates demand and leveraging potential more clearly than a financially self-sustaining mechanism such as user-pay instruments.

287. Financial sustainability therefore remains the unresolved risk. Evidence of confirmed domestic budget allocations to support NISSAP implementation remains limited across the

[49] VEPA is a community-based NGO in Vava'u, Tonga, focused on conserving biodiversity through community programs. It manages the Mount Talau National Park conservation site. Through its network of local youth ambassadors, VEPA maintains bait and snap stations to control invasive rats, protecting the endangered Tongan Whistler and allowing native species to recover. This program employs, trains, and empowers local youth ambassadors, turning conservation into livelihoods.

[50] For example, VEPA coordinated the Protect Our Islands Vava'u Festival and Boat Parade in July 2025, involving 23 boats to promote inter-island biosecurity. They engaged local schools through educational sessions and involved women's groups in awareness skits (https://www.sprep.org/news/empowering-vavau-a-celebration-of-climate-resilience-biodiversity-and-inter-island-biosecurity)

[51] GEF 8 project, which was at the final stage of approval at the time of evaluation, would help to continue the good result of this project.

countries. In Tuvalu, in particular, NISSAP coordination to rely on existing staff who perform IAS responsibilities alongside their regular duties, rather than a dedicated funded coordinator position. This creates a risk to continuity, sustained coordination and implementation after project support ends. PRISMSS's continued core support also remains dependent on external donor financing, and the sustainable financing at the national level as planned under Output 4.1.2 did not emerge as a viable option specific to the national level.

288. Country respondents consistently reported the financing instruments and financial gaps at the national level to work on IAS management. Interview evidence reinforces this concern: RMI's Quarantine Division, for example, remains highly dependent on external project funding because its planned revenue mechanism has not yet been secured. Thus, the project created a credible financing platform but did not yet secure a durable post-project financing architecture at national level. This is quite important when the international development funding is drastically shrinking.

4.8.3 Institutional Sustainability

289. The project has created a substantial institutional foundation for continued IAS management. PRISMSS is embedded within SPREP, a permanent regional support service with an established IAS mandate, rather than operating as a stand-alone project entity[52]. All four NISSAP TAGs are operational, while Tonga, Niue and RMI have institutionalised IAS coordinator positions within government.

290. The PRISMSS Navigator[53] and regional knowledge platforms further preserve institutional knowledge beyond individual project staff. The NISSAP toolkit and EDRR templates have also been adopted by non-participating countries, demonstrating that institutional benefits have extended beyond the four target countries.

291. Nevertheless, institutional sustainability depends on continued staffing, financing and operational application. Although low, staff turnover and out-migration posed some risks to retaining trained capacity, particularly in RMI and Tuvalu; the project partly mitigated this through train-the-trainer approaches. PRISMSS's continued functionality also depends on maintaining dedicated IAS expertise within SPREP, for which confirmed post-project budget commitments were not available.

Findings Statements on Sustainability*:*

292. The project established strong socio-political foundations for continued IAS management, including cabinet-endorsed NISSAPs in all four countries, government-funded IAS coordinator positions in three countries, and community-based awareness and stewardship initiatives. However, staff turnover and limited fiscal capacity in some countries remain important vulnerabilities.

293. Domestic financial sustainability is the still unresolved risk. PRISMSS has demonstrated substantial regional demand and created opportunities for successor funding, but long-term financing of core regional services and national IAS programmes is not secured.

[52] The PRISMSS is a coordinating mechanism designed to facilitate the scaling up of operational management of invasive species in the Pacific. PRISMSS brings together experts to provide support within the Pacific region with a focus on protection of indigenous biodiversity and ecosystem function. The intention is to provide a comprehensive suite of support services in a cohesive, effective, efficient and accessible manner to Pacific Island countries and territories. The goal is to reduce the ecological and socio-economic impact of invasive species on ecosystems through the management or eradication of prioritised species and the protection of valued sites. PRISMSS currently provides technical support across the five regional programmes for the Pacific region (https://www.sprep.org/invasive-species-management-in-the-pacific/prismss)

[53] An online platform streamlining country access to IAS tools and coordination mechanisms (PIR 2025, p.31)

The absence of a completed sustainable financing study and confirmed domestic budget commitments significantly reduces confidence in financial sustainability.

294. Institutional sustainability is promising yet emerging, with PRISMSS anchored in SPREP, operational TAGs, and government-funded IAS positions in three countries. However, sustained staffing, financing and post-eradication monitoring are essential to convert these institutional foundations into durable ecological outcomes.

295. In overall, the project has created sustainable structures, but not yet secured the resources needed to sustain those structures. This is particularly evident with PRISMSS: its expansion to 15 PICTs demonstrates strong institutional demand and regional relevance.

Rating for Likelihood of Sustainability (*use 'Likely' scale*): Moderately Likely

Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: Likely

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: Moderately Likely

4.9 Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

4.9.1 Quality of Project Management and Supervision

4.9.1.1 UNEP / Implementing Agency:

296. The project document assigned UNEP a comprehensive implementing agency role covering project oversight, GEF policy compliance, technical guidance, fund disbursement, commissioning and supervising the MTR. The Task Manager provided regular support and maintained direct communication with the PMU. However, some respondents reported delays in communication and feedback, partly due to the time-zone differences. The remote oversight model limited opportunities for direct observation in the project sites and relied substantially on progress reports.

297. Evidence from PIR ratings indicates that UNEP's oversight was broadly effective. Progress towards outcomes was rated 'Satisfactory' in all PIRs, while overall risk ratings declined from Moderate in PIRs 1–2 to Low by PIRs 4–6, indicating that major implementation risks were progressively managed (PIR 2025, p.7).

298. UNEP also responded to implementation constraints through two no-cost extensions, allowing delayed activities to be completed rather than prematurely closing the project. The MTR was commissioned and completed in October 2022, and interviewees confirmed regular six-monthly progress reporting, annual PIRs and direct communication between the Task Manager and Project Manager to address emerging issues.

299. The Task Manager provided remote support to monitor and review progress through virtual meetings, during which progress was discussed, challenges were identified, and mitigation measures were considered. This support was acknowledged by the executing agency. However, no site visit for direct observation was carried out during the project implementation period. The MTR, however, provided an opportunity to get the formal assessment of progress of the project.

300. The one frequently referred weakness by the respondents was the longer fund-disbursement process of UNEP. Interview evidence indicates delays, sometimes extending for several weeks or longer, which affected implementation and required SPREP to advance its own resources to maintain activities. In addition, not all MTR recommendations were addressed through appropriate management response to evaluation.

301. Furthermore, Outcome 3.2 was omitted in project PIR reporting, even though reporting against its outputs (3.2.1 and 3.2.2) was provided. In this instance, no action or oversight from UNEP was evident to address this gap, despite the inconsistency between output-level reporting and the missing outcome-level assessment.

302. Overall, UNEP provided **effective oversight and adaptive support**, but remote supervision, communication delays and fund-flow procedures sometime reduced the efficiency of implementation support.

4.9.1.2 Partners / Executing Agency:

303. The project document assigned SPREP responsibility for project execution, PMU management, PRISMSS technical leadership, PSC coordination and quality assurance of outputs and reporting. The PMU structure combined project management with substantive IAS expertise, providing an appropriate institutional base for managing a technically complex regional project.

304. Evidence from documentation and interviews indicates that SPREP performed this role effectively. PSC, PRISMSS partner and national TAG processes provided continuing governance and coordination, complemented by bilateral engagement and country visits. UNEP interviewees viewed the project as performing particularly well compared to comparable projects in the Pacific, reflecting SPREP's institutional and technical capacity. Regular reporting and communication with UNEP enabled emerging implementation issues to be identified and addressed. PRISMSS's expansion beyond the four participating countries further demonstrates SPREP's regional leadership and ability to generate benefits beyond contracted obligations.

305. Adaptive management was evident in SPREP's response to COVID-19, implementation delays and changing country circumstances. Activities and schedules were adjusted, while SPREP advanced its own resources when UNEP transfers were delayed, helping maintain implementation momentum. Regional partnerships and co-financing were also used to extend technical support and knowledge exchange. The operationalisation of PRISMSS was a particularly significant institutional achievement, creating a platform for continued regional collaboration.

306. Management constraints nevertheless remained – they were not critical. Consolidating information from four countries created challenges in obtaining complete and timely data, requiring close checking and follow-up by the Project Manager. Staff movement and changes among national counterparts also created continuity risks.

307. These constraints did not materially undermine delivery. Overall, SPREP demonstrated strong technical leadership, effective regional coordination and adaptive management, although data consolidation, knowledge management and staff continuity could have been stronger.

308. The project was **well managed overall**, with complementary strengths at the UNEP and SPREP levels. UNEP provided appropriate oversight and flexibility, while SPREP demonstrated stronger day-to-day operational and technical leadership. The principal weaknesses were not failures of management but **systemic constraints affecting the quality and efficiency of management,** particularly UNEP fund-flow delays, remote supervision, country-level data quality and staff turnover. These limitations reduced efficiency but did not substantially prevent achievement of the project's major outputs and outcomes.

4.9.2 Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

309. The project established a broad, multi-level stakeholder architecture involving regional organisations, national government agencies, NGOs, PRISMSS partners and communities. PSCs[54], national TAGs, PILN meetings and bilateral country engagements were consistently used, with nine PSC meetings and regular TAG and partner processes documented through 2025. Participation also extended beyond the four countries through the PILN regional network[55,] with more than 70 participants from 18 Pacific Island Countries in the 2024 meeting. This provided a functioning platform for coordination, peer learning and regional ownership.

310. Partner cooperation was a significant strength. PRISMSS partners contributed specialised expertise across eradication, biocontrol, marine biosecurity and legislative strengthening, while national stakeholders and TAG members were involved in NISSAP and EDRR processes. Interview evidence suggests that stakeholder engagement was particularly effective where community access and long-term stewardship were essential. Local councils, traditional authorities and communities in Tonga and Tuvalu were involved in securing access and supporting eradication and restoration activities. Fishermen and other local actors were also engaged around temporary access restrictions and biosecurity requirements.

311. Community engagement was meaningful but uneven. For example, communities in Tonga were engaged through VEPA (NGO) in restoration activities. Country respondents mentioned provided a detailed process of how communities perspectives and concerns (such as introduction of bio-control agents and customary land rights) were negotiated and integrated in IAS eradication process. Similarly, Niue and Tonga embedded IAS education in schools and Tuvalu used community radio to ensure community participation.

312. However, evidence of sustained engagement of outer-island communities, particularly in RMI, was less consistent, and participation of persons with disabilities was not adequately documented. Private-sector participation was mainly through specific actors such as fishermen rather than a systematic private-sector engagement mechanism. These gaps limit the assessment of inclusiveness, although they did not substantially weaken overall stakeholder ownership.

313. Overall, the strongest evidence is that participation and cooperation contributed to implementation and ownership, rather than being limited to consultation. In Tonga and Tuvalu, community involvement enabled access to customary land and supported continued stewardship of eradication sites. This is consistent with the project's strong country-ownership assessment. The main remaining gap is not the absence of stakeholder engagement, but uneven depth and documentation of participation in geographically dispersed and more marginalised communities, especially in RMI.

4.9.3 Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

314. The project demonstrated a meaningful when evaluated against the approved Project Results Framework. Gender integration at the project design stage was relatively basic, the project team demonstrated strong commitment by developing and executing a formal Gender Strategy. The project team successfully met and exceeded all gender-related targets in the

[54] The first meeting was organized on 14 November 2019 and the last was the 9th meeting (no date provided). The membership of the Committee comprised of (a) A representative from the Implementing Agency (UNEP); (b) Representatives from the Executing Agency (SPREP); (c) National Invasive Species Coordinator or representative of the National Executing, Agency from each of the participating countries; and (d) Representatives from PRISMSS partner organisations. The Committee shall meet twice a year for the duration of the Project. It is, however, noted that the senior government officer from the government department was missing in the membership list.

[55] The Pacific Invasive Learning Network (PILN) connects Pacific professionals and practitioners to share knowledge, expertise, tools, and ideas that are vital to managing invasive species effectively (https://www.sprep.org/invasive-species-management-in-the-pacific/piln).

logframe. For example, female government staff engagement exceeded planned targets (15 female officers actively involved versus the target of 14), women occupied senior leadership positions across national environment and biosecurity departments in three of the four countries, and female representation was consistently maintained across National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plan (NISSAP) Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs).

315. However, viewed retrospectively, the project approach to gender equality was largely participation-focused rather than gender-responsive. The evidence is less conclusive regarding influence, decision-making and differentiated benefits. Sex-disaggregated information and qualitative evidence on whether women shaped priorities and decisions were not systematically collected, limiting assessment of substantive gender outcomes.

316. Country interviews also indicated that gender was generally not perceived as a major barrier because women's roles in community, household and national development are already relatively embedded in Pacific contexts. This is an important contextual strength, but it also suggests that a conventional participation-focused approach may have overlooked opportunities to examine women's influence, leadership and benefit sharing. Overall, the project mainstreamed gender considerations planned, but gender responsive approach could have been further enhanced.

317. Human-rights responsiveness was partially demonstrated through engagement with customary landowners, local councils, and communities, particularly where access and stewardship were essential to eradication and restoration. Interviewees reported that national coordinators worked with traditional authorities to secure community consent and local ownership of activities. However, participation of people with disabilities and marginalised communities was not consistently monitored or documented, although some interview respondents indicated that these issues were considered during implementation.

4.9.4 Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)

318. At design stage, UNEP's Environmental, Social and Economic Review Note (ESERN, ProDoc, Appendix 14) classified the project as low risk. The relevant risks included management of chemical and waste, Biodiversity, natural habitat and Sustainable Management of Living Resources, involuntary resettlement; indigenous peoples; labour and working conditions; cultural Heritage; gender equity; and economic sustainability. Mitigation measures included SOPs for chemical[56] storage, handling and disposal, community consultation, and gender-responsive engagement.

319. The 2025 PIR reported no new environmental or social risks and no complaints or grievances during the reporting period. The project used appropriate protocols and processes for these issues to minimize the risks. For example, while using the pesticides for controlling the IAS, SPREP respondents mentioned that the project followed the NZS 8409:2021 standard for the management of agrichemicals.

320. Safeguard risks were reviewed through the annual PIR process and remained rated 'Low' during the final three implementation years. Operational controls were supported by PRISMSS guidance and training, including health and safety plans for eradication activities and protocols for bait and herbicide use.

[56] The project followed the NZS 8409:2021 standard for the management of agrichemicals (**NZS 8409:2021** is the official New Zealand Standard for the Management of Agrichemicals. Published in August 2021, it serves as the primary industry code of practice and reference resource for the safe, responsible, and effective storage, transport, use, and disposal of agricultural chemicals)

321. Interview evidence at the country level also confirms that field teams applied established procedures and that community and traditional authorities were engaged where access to customary land was required. The project also used regional training and virtual engagement to reduce travel requirements, although associated carbon benefits were not measured. The project ESS assessment is provided in Annex VI.

322. Important gaps nevertheless remain. No formal FPIC documentation was established for eradication and restoration activities conducted on traditionally owned, particularly in Niue and Tonga.

4.9.5 Country Ownership and Driven-ness

323. The project generated strong and demonstrable country ownership, particularly at national policy and institutional levels. The strongest evidence is cabinet endorsement of all four NISSAPs, including Niue's endorsement in 2025, signalling that IAS management has been formally adopted as a national policy priority. This represents progress beyond project-level ownership towards the intended transition of IAS management into government systems. However, endorsement alone does not confirm that NISSAP priorities are fully financed and implemented as routine government business.

324. National agencies played an active role throughout implementation through PSCs, TAGs, NISSAP reviews and country-level planning. Three countries, i.e., Tonga, Niue and RMI, institutionalised IAS coordinator positions within permanent government structures, demonstrating a shift from project-funded capacity towards government ownership. Interview evidence also shows that sustained project support helped governments recognise the value of maintaining these functions, including RMI's decision to internalise its coordinator position. Tuvalu remains the main exception, with limited staffing and budget capacity constraining institutionalisation.

325. Ownership also developed at community level, although unevenly. In Tonga and Tuvalu, national coordinators worked with traditional authorities and communities to secure land access and support eradication and restoration, helping build local ownership of results.

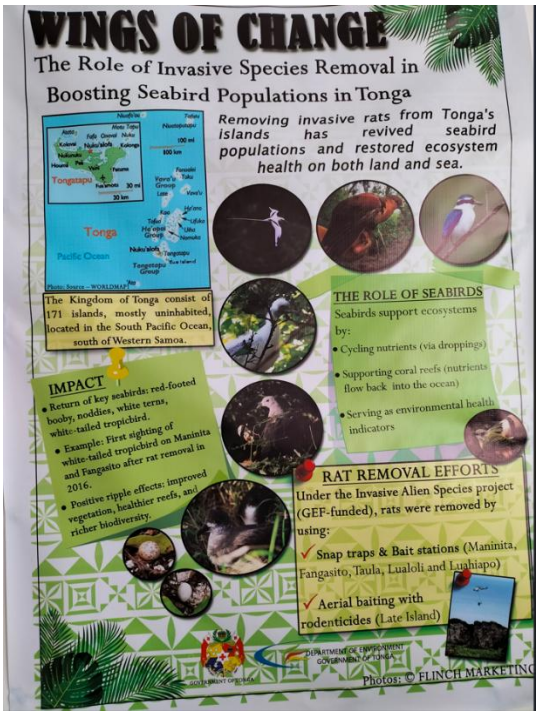
326. Local council, such as in Tuvalu, was also engaged in some activities related to IAS eradication activities. School-based IAS education in Tonga and Niue and Tuvalu's community radio programme further embedded project priorities beyond direct beneficiaries. However, evidence of sustained engagement of outer-island communities in RMI was less consistent, despite the important role of traditional and local authorities there. This remains a residual gap in subnational ownership and could affect the durability of IAS management in dispersed atoll settings.

4.9.6 Communication and Public Awareness

327. The project established a broad communication and public awareness approach centred on the Battler Resource Base (BRB[57]), PILN, social media, community outreach and national awareness activities. These mechanisms were substantially operationalised and supported knowledge exchange both within the four participating countries and across the wider Pacific.

[57] The Battler Resource Base (BRB) is to assist Pacific Island invasive species practitioners in their battle against invasive species. The ultimate goal of the BRB is to provide a one-stop-base for all our invasive species stakeholder's information needs. It is a searchable knowledge resource to support your invasive species management (https://brb.sprep.org/about).

Figure 8: Use of knowledge product for sensitization of government officials and other stakeholders in Tonga



328. Knowledge sharing was a clear strength. The project prepared a wide range of communication and outreach tools based on the project experience. The 6th PILN Regional Meeting[58] and regional skills training brought together practitioners from well beyond the four participating countries, while the BRB was strengthened as a searchable repository of case studies, tools and SOPs. NISSAP and EDRR templates were also adopted by non-participating countries / territories, including Pitcairn and Samoa, demonstrating transfer of project knowledge beyond its original boundaries. The PRISMSS Navigator further strengthened regional access to knowledge and coordination.

329. National awareness activities were contextually adapted (Figure 8). Niue and Tonga incorporated IAS education into school curricula, while Tuvalu used community radio to reach communities with limited internet access. The Tonga Restoration Exchange also brought together youth, women, NGOs and government stakeholders, while the Pacific Battler recognition initiative helped raise the visibility of local IAS champions.

330. However, evidence of communication effectiveness beyond participation and reach remains limited. PIRs did not systematically document feedback or behavioural change resulting from awareness activities, and communication with outer-island communities in RMI was less well evidenced. The long-term sustainability of the BRB also depends on continued SPREP staffing and technical infrastructure after project closure. Thus, communication was effective in spreading knowledge and building awareness, but its longer-term influence on behaviour is less clearly demonstrated.

Findings Statements on Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues*:*

331. UNEP provided effective implementing agency oversight, supported by regular PIRs, timely commissioning of the MTR and responsive processing of two no-cost extensions, although communication delays, remote supervision and fund-flow constraints reduced efficiency. SPREP demonstrated strong technical and regional leadership as executing agency, with nine PSC meetings, adaptive management, expansion of PRISMSS support to 15 PICTs, and strong coordination of national implementation.

332. Stakeholder participation was broad and substantive, involving PRISMSS partners, national agencies, communities and regional practitioners through PSCs, TAGs, PILN and country engagements. Country ownership was strong, demonstrated by cabinet endorsement of all four NISSAPs and institutionalisation of IAS coordinator positions in three countries, although subnational ownership in dispersed RMI outer islands was less consistently

[58] 6th Pacific Invasive Learning Network (PILN) meeting was hosted by the Government of the Cook Islands in Rarotonga. The event focused on sharing success stories, tools, and case studies for managing invasive species, during which the Cook Islands officially joined the network (https://sprep.org/news/cook-islands-host-the-sixth-pacific-invasive-learning-networking-piln-meeting).

evidenced. Communication and knowledge sharing performed well through the BRB, PILN and national awareness activities, with knowledge products reaching non-participating PICTs.

333. Gender was meaningfully integrated, and the female government staff target was exceeded. However, the absence of formal FPIC documentation and grievance mechanisms, limited monitoring of marginalised groups, and incomplete safeguard documentation remain important weaknesses.

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues: Satisfactory

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: IA: Moderately Satisfactory and EA: Satisfactory

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Satisfactory

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: Satisfactory

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: Satisfactory

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: Satisfactory

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Satisfactory

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

334. Overall, the project performed at the **Satisfactory level**. Its strongest features were strategic relevance, country ownership, stakeholder participation, and establishment of a regionally scalable IAS support architecture through PRISMSS.

335. Comparative weaknesses were evident in outcome-level reporting, financial sustainability, and incomplete social safeguard documentation, particularly the absence of formal FPIC processes for activities on customary lands.

336. Major achievements included cabinet endorsement of all four NISSAPs, successful rodent eradications in Tuvalu and targeted sites in Tonga and RMI, operational EDRR and biosecurity systems, institutionalisation of IAS coordinator positions in three countries, and expansion of PRISMSS support to 15 PICTs. These results were supported by SPREP's strong technical leadership, specialised PRISMSS partnerships, sustained country engagement, and the decision to anchor regional support within a permanent regional institution.

337. The PRISMSS hub-and-spoke model was arguably the project's most significant institutional innovation, combining pooled specialist expertise with customised country support and generating benefits beyond the four participating countries. The PRISMSS Navigator further strengthened this model by embedding coordination, knowledge and technical resources in a digital platform.

338. Sustainability prospects are mixed. Socio-political sustainability is assessed as Likely, supported by cabinet-endorsed NISSAPs. Institutional sustainability is rated Moderately Likely, given mixed results regarding the absorption of IAS coordinator positions into government structures. Similarly, financial sustainability is Moderately Likely, as national-level sustainable financing instruments did not emerge as a viable option. While PRISMSS has shown positive signs, long-term financing remains uncertain in the context of shrinking international development support.

339. The project enhanced women's participation in TAGs, consultations, and project activities, and exceeded the target for female government staff engagement. However, human-rights responsiveness remained more limited. While community engagement was evident, formal Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) documentation, a structured grievance mechanism, and systematic monitoring of marginalised groups were not established.

340. The project provides valuable lessons for island biodiversity conservation, IAS eradication and regional technical-support models for SIDS, particularly through PRISMSS. Its results contribute to broader Pacific and global IAS objectives, but the durability of ecological gains will depend on sustained financing, institutional capacity and continued regional cooperation.

341. The project achievements contribute significantly to the global body of work on island biodiversity conservation, IAS eradication best practice, and regional support service models for SIDS, directly advancing CBD Aichi Target 9, SDG 15.8, and UNEP's Nature Action sub-programme priorities.

Responses to Key Strategic Questions

342. The evaluation Terms of Reference included a set of strategic question of interest to UNEP. The evaluation addressed three strategic questions outlined in the Terms of Reference. The following section summarizes project achievements based on interviews with governments and other stakeholders, project progress reports, and direct observations. The synthesized findings are presented below.

Q1: In what ways, and to what extent, were the recommendations from the Mid Term Review actioned upon?

343. The response to the MTR's six recommendations was substantial but uneven. According to the task manager, all recommendations were discussed in bilateral meetings with the Executing Agency and during PSC meetings. Progress reports and PIRs also tracked actions taken to address the recommendations.

344. The no-cost extension, stakeholder engagement, and gender mainstreaming recommendations were implemented, with gender integration showing continuous improvement rather than a one-off fix.

345. Sustainable financing was addressed through PRISMSS, which mobilised roughly USD 50 million, a response that substantially exceeded the recommendation's intent. Partner contracting processes were also improved over the years.

346. However, three recommendations saw limited follow-through: expenditure tracking by component/year was not available to review, meaning financial reporting still cannot be disaggregated below budget-line level; cross-regional knowledge exchange with non-Pacific UNEP/GEF projects did not occur beyond website availability; and fund transfer management still witness both system limitations and organisational process delays and was still cited by stakeholders as a constraint even after the MTR.

347. Overall, SPREP demonstrated strong responsiveness on programmatic and partnership recommendations, while UNEP-side systemic issues (financial tracking granularity, disbursement speed) went substantially unaddressed.

Q2: In what ways, and to what extent did the project facilitate and strengthen knowledge sharing among stakeholders during project implementation and beyond?

348. Knowledge sharing was a notable project strength. The updated Battler Resource Base provided accessible, searchable IAS tools and case studies for practitioners across 15 PICTs (PIR 2025, p.13). Six PILN regional meetings facilitated peer learning among Pacific practitioners well beyond participating countries, with the Project Manager citing the sixth PILN meeting in the Cook Islands and an Auckland study tour as examples where GEF 6 pooled funds with parallel projects to maximise cross-country participation and networking.

349. NISSAP and EDRR templates were adopted by non-participating countries /territories including Pitcairn and Samoa (PIR 2025, p.20); a SPREP respondent additionally confirmed the NISSAP toolkit was directly shared with and is being actively used by Cook Islands and Kiribati, and that the regional marine biosecurity toolkit, co-developed with a New Zealand technical partner, has been taken up by Palau, a non-participating country, evidencing knowledge transfer beyond the project's contracted scope. The PRISMSS Navigator institutionalised coordination digitally. However, systematic feedback mechanisms to measure knowledge utilisation effectiveness remained underdeveloped across reporting periods.

Q3: In what ways, and to what extent, was the private sector involved in project design, implementation and monitoring?

350. Private sector engagement was planned but remained limited in practice. The project document identified airlines, hotel chains, commercial importers, and tourism operators as potential biosecurity partners (ProDoc, Section 2.5; 3.8), with countries signalling intentions to engage national chambers of commerce and hardware importers.

351. The Project Manager confirmed this gap: private sector involvement in project design was not evident, and during implementation engagement was confined largely to NGO partners and fishermen; where business representatives were reached, this occurred incidentally through broader community consultations rather than through deliberate, targeted private sector outreach.

352. PIR reporting similarly provides minimal evidence of substantive private sector participation materialising during implementation. No private sector co-financing was recorded, and monitoring of private sector engagement was absent from PIR documentation, representing a gap against the project's own design intentions and a missed opportunity for broader biosecurity mainstreaming.

353. The table below provides a summary of the ratings and finding discussed in Chapter 4 (Table 19). Overall, the project demonstrates a rating of 'Satisfactory'.

Table 19: Summary of project findings and ratings[59]

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
Strategic Relevance	Fully aligned with UNEP mandates, GEF-6 priorities, CBD commitments and Pacific frameworks, with clear contributions to biodiversity governance and IAS management. Complementarity with other interventions was strong.	**HS**
1. Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities	Full alignment with the relevant UNEP MTS/POW priorities on healthy ecosystems, biodiversity management, environmental governance, capacity development and South-South learning, with identifiable contributions through national systems and PRISMSS.	**HS**
2. Alignment to UNEP Donor/GEF/Partner strategic priorities	Fully aligned with GEF-6 BD-2, SDG 15.8, SPREP's regional IAS mandate and partner strategies, with implementation directly contributing to regional IAS capacity and biodiversity conservation priorities.	**HS**
3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	Fully responsive to CBD commitments, Aichi Targets including target 9, SDG 15.8 and SDG 14.2, S.A.M.O.A Pathway, Pacific IAS priorities and country-specific NISSAP needs, with tangible contributions to national policy and management capacity.	**HS**
4. Complementarity with existing interventions/ Coherence	Strong complementarity was established with Ridge to Reef, GloFouling and related IAS initiatives, with shared expertise, data and partnerships reducing duplication.	**HS**

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

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
Quality of Project Design	The design provided strong problem analysis, governance arrangements, regional technical support platform (PRISMSS) and country capacity building. However, the results framework conflated outputs and outcomes, outcome indicators lacked sufficiently quantified baselines, and the marine component was underdeveloped.	**S**
Nature of External Context	COVID-19 and geographic isolation substantially disrupted travel, logistics, staff training and field operations and contributed to extensions. Political and economic conditions were generally stable and climate/weather disruptions caused additional but more localised logistical constraints.	**MF**
Effectiveness	The project delivered substantial outputs and achieved meaningful outcome-level change in national governance, surveillance, biosecurity, IAS control and regional support. Ecological impacts are emerging, but less evidence based and uneven across countries.	**S**
1. Availability of outputs	Most outputs were delivered and made usable by intended beneficiaries, including NISSAPs, TAGs, EDRR systems, eradication interventions and PRISMSS. Some outputs, particularly sustainable financing and marine baseline work, remained incomplete or less developed.	**S**
2. Achievement of project outcomes	The most important outcomes were partially achieved: NISSAPs and TAGs were applied, risk-based surveillance and EDRR were operationalised, biosecurity and IAS management practices changed, and PRISMSS was used beyond the four countries. National policy frameworks are strengthened, and governments have used the results in decision making process and IAS management actions.	**S**
3. Likelihood of impact (use 'likely' scale)	The project established credible institutional and ecological pathways towards lasting biodiversity protection, supported by national ownership, PRISMSS and early conservation gains. Financial sustainability, reinvasion risks and uneven institutional capacity leave moderate uncertainty over durability and scale.	**L**
Financial Management	Financial management was broadly compliant and controlled, with regular reporting and high overall budget utilisation, but fund-flow constrained efficiency.	**S**
1. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	Required financial and progress reports were generally produced, procurement followed the agreed EA procedures, audits reported no concerns, and budget adjustments were appropriately managed. Fund-transfer delays reduced timeliness but did not indicate financial non-compliance.	**S**
2. Completeness of project financial information	Core budget, transfer, expenditure, co-financing and audit documentation was available, but expenditure information was principally available by budget line only.	**S**
Efficiency	The regional PRISMSS model, pooled expertise, existing partnerships and adaptive measures generated important efficiency gains. These were partly offset by COVID-19 disruptions, fund-flow delays, staff turnover and high Pacific logistics costs.	**MS**
Monitoring and Reporting	The M&E and reporting system was functional and supported implementation management, but outcome-level monitoring and quantitative baselines were weaker than output tracking, limiting robust demonstration of behavioural, ecological and impact-level change.	**S**

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
1. Monitoring of project implementation	SPREP carried out regular monitoring visit whereas UNEP and SPREP engaged in regular online review. PSCs, PIRs and the MTR provided regular implementation oversight and supported adaptive decisions, including budget reallocation and extensions. COVID-19 disrupted field verification.	**S**
2. Project reporting	Reporting met UNEP requirements with all required reports developed and submitted, generally, although minor delays occurred in some reporting instances. Reporting of evidence-based outcome reporting was however inconsistent, limiting assessment of behavioural change among the stakeholders. In addition, outcome 3.2 reporting was missing in the PIRs.	**S**
Sustainability (use 'likely' scale)	Strong socio-political sustainability was established whereas institutional foundations were emerging. Financial sustainability remains uncertain mainly at the national level. This could undermine the continuation of national and regional IAS functions as anticipated after project closure.	**ML**
1. Socio-political sustainability	Cabinet endorsement of all four NISSAPs, government ownership and community stewardship create strong prospects for continued IAS attention. Biosecurity related actions are well received by the government whereas communities are actively engaged in IAS management.	**L**
2. Financial sustainability	PRISMSS has demonstrated strong regional demand and attracted follow-on financing, but the sustainable financing model at national level was yet proven as a durable mechanism and national operational budgets remain uncertain.	**ML**
3. Institutional sustainability	PRISMSS is anchored within SPREP, TAGs remain operational and IAS coordinator positions are institutionalised in three countries. However, dedicated financing for ongoing field implementation is limited, staffing capacity remains thin and turnover could weaken institutional memory and continuity.	**ML**
Factors Affecting Performance	Strong project management, stakeholder engagement and country ownership supported delivery. Residual weaknesses include financial and human resource management constraints, uneven inclusion of marginalised groups, and incomplete safeguard documentation.	**S**
1. Quality of project management and supervision	UNEP provided remote oversight and adaptive support, while SPREP demonstrated strong technical and regional leadership. Remote supervision, fund-flow constraints and staff movement reduced efficiency but did not significantly undermine delivery.	**S**
2.1 UNEP/ Implementing Agency:	UNEP maintained regular oversight, commissioned the MTR, and processed two extensions in response to implementation constraints. However, fund-flow bottlenecks and challenges associated with remote oversight, particularly the provision of field-based feedback, affected the efficiency of support.	**MS**
2.2 Partners/ Executing Agency:	SPREP provided strong technical leadership, maintained governance mechanisms, adapted implementation and expanded PRISMSS regionally. Staff movement, country-data consolidation and knowledge management presented manageable operational constraints.	**S**

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
2. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	Engagement was broad and substantive through PSCs, TAGs, PILN, PRISMSS partners and community activities. Participation contributed to implementation and ownership, although outer-island, local council and marginalised-group engagement was less consistently documented.	**S**
3. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	The project enhanced women's participation in NISSAP Technical Advisory Groups but focused primarily on participation rather than influence. Gender was not perceived as a major barrier, reflecting its embeddedness in Pacific culture. Human-rights responsiveness was demonstrated through community engagement, yet systematic monitoring of marginalized groups was not consistently undertaken.	**S**
4. Environmental and social safeguards	The project was classified as low risk with safeguards implemented through SOPs and training. No major issues were reported. However, gaps remained: no formal Free, Prior and Informed Consent documentation and limited monitoring of marginalized groups.	**S**
5. Country ownership and driven-ness	The project achieved strong ownership through NISSAP endorsements, institutionalized IAS coordinator positions in three countries, and community engagement. However, Tuvalu lagged, and sustained engagement in RMI's outer islands remained uneven.	**S**
6. Communication and public awareness	The project established strong knowledge-sharing through the Battler Resource Base and regional networks, with tools adopted beyond participating countries. Awareness activities were contextually adapted. However, evidence of behavioural change and long-term platform sustainability remains limited.	**S**
Overall Project Performance Rating		**S**

5.2 Lessons Learned

354. Based on the findings of the evaluation, the following learning are identified for future projects.

Lesson Learned #1:	**Regional technical support works when it is institutionalised and demand-driven**
Context/comment:	PRISMSS worked because it functioned as 'hub-and-spoke' approach and consolidated fragmented regional support into a single, integrated service platform. It addressed a structural constraint in SIDS: individual countries cannot sustain specialist expertise in eradication, biocontrol and biosecurity. Interviews indicate that countries previously had to deal with fragmented programmes, whereas PRISMSS brought partners together and provided coordinated, country-requested support. Anchoring the service in SPREP also preserved institutional memory and enabled expansion beyond the four participating countries to 15 PICTs. The model also helped attract substantial follow-on donor support. The lesson is that regional services should be embedded in a permanent institution but designed around country demand, with flexible funding that allows services to expand or adapt rather than remain tied to a fixed set of countries.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant sections: Quality of Project Design; Efficiency; Effectiveness	

Lesson Learned #2:	**National coordination roles need to be institutionalised early to ensure institutional memory and continuity of specialised IAS management**
Context/comment:	The project showed that dedicated National Invasive Species Coordinator roles were important for translating NISSAPs from plans into implementation, coordinating agencies, retaining technical knowledge and maintaining continuity when projects or staff changed. Tonga, Niue and RMI institutionalised these positions within government, while Tuvalu was unable to fully absorb the role because of limited staffing and budget capacity. Interview evidence confirms that sustained project support helped governments recognise the value of retaining these functions, with RMI's internalisation of the coordinator position providing an important example of transition from project-funded to government-owned capacity. The contrasting experience of Tuvalu shows that policy endorsement alone does not secure institutional continuity. Future projects should therefore establish an institutionalisation pathway early, including agreement on government financing, clear mandates, succession arrangements and knowledge-transfer mechanisms, rather than waiting until project closure.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant sections: Sustainability; Factors Affecting Performance**.**	

Lesson Learned #3:	**Technical feasibility is not enough; social licence must be built before implementation**
Context/comment:	The project demonstrated that eradication and restoration depend on community trust, particularly where activities affect customary land, access or livelihoods. Interviews found that national coordinators and traditional authorities were central to securing access and community acceptance; in Tonga and Tuvalu, local involvement also strengthened ownership of subsequent management. Stakeholders noted that consultation can take longer than technical planning and that communication needs to connect IAS management with locally valued concerns such as food security and livelihoods. The lesson is that future projects should budget and schedule repeated, culturally appropriate engagement from the start, using local leaders, languages and community institutions. Formal FPIC documentation should also be built into project procedures rather than relying only on informal consent.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant sections: Stakeholder Participation; Socio-political Sustainability.	

Lesson Learned #4:	**IAS management works best as a continuum from prevention to recovery**
Context/comment:	A major strength of the project was its integration of biosecurity, EDRR, eradication, control and restoration rather than treating these as separate interventions. Interviews described this as a deliberate management continuum, with inter-island biosecurity serving as an "insurance policy" for eradication investments and community participation supporting continued surveillance and management. The re-detection of rats on Late Island demonstrates the risk of treating eradication as an endpoint rather than part of a longer management cycle. Future projects should therefore link prevention, early detection, eradication/control, restoration and post-eradication monitoring, with responsibilities and financing defined for the period after the main intervention.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant sections: Effectiveness; Strategic Relevance.	

Lesson Learned # 5:	**Gender mainstreaming should focus not only on participation, but also on influence, decision-making and equitable benefits**
Context/comment:	The project's Gender Strategy provided a flexible framework for integrating gender considerations into TAG membership, NISSAP consultations, recruitment and project activities across different country contexts. The approach contributed to achieving and exceeding the target for women's participation in government roles. Interviews suggest that women's participation in project activities is generally well accepted and increasingly integrated into broader development and community processes in the Pacific, rather than being a major barrier to implementation. The more relevant gap would be whether participation translates into influence over decisions and equitable access to project benefits. Evidence on women's influence in decision-making, leadership, access to opportunities and differentiated benefits was limited, while monitoring beyond participation numbers was weak. Future projects should therefore retain context-specific gender approaches but assess how women influence decisions, shape priorities, access capacity-building and share benefits, rather than relying primarily on sex-disaggregated participation figures.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant sections: Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality; Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation; Environmental and Social Safeguards	

5.3 Recommendations

355. Based on the evaluation findings, the following recommendations are made for future UNEP-supported projects in Pacific Island countries. These recommendations are particularly timely given that the GEF-8 project is ready for final approval.

Recommendation #1:	**Institutionalise PRISMSS as the Pacific's long-term regional IAS support service** **Specific recommendation:** To preserve the project's most important institutional legacy and enable the model to be applied to other shared environmental challenges, UNEP, GEF, SPREP and Pacific governments should formally recognise PRISMSS as a long-term regional public-good service, supported by a multi-year financing and governance framework. The framework should define core services, responsibilities of CROP agencies and partners, sustainable financing sources, and a mechanism for PICTs to request and prioritise technical support.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	GEF-6 demonstrated that a regional technical-support model can overcome the specialist-capacity constraints of Pacific SIDS. PRISMSS expanded from the four participating countries to 15 PICTs and has become a platform for technical assistance, knowledge sharing and mobilisation of follow-on resources.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Sustainability; Financial Sustainability; Quality of Design.
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	Partners
Responsibility:	SPREP Management, UNEP Task Manager, and National Ministries
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 18 months

Recommendation #2:	**Further institutionalise a Pacific IAS knowledge platform within PRISMSS to compile, update and share evidence, lessons and good practices across Pacific countries** **Specific recommendations:** To convert the project's knowledge assets into a continuing regional environmental governance function, based on the learning so far, SPREP, PRISMSS and national IAS coordinators should further institutionalize the Pacific IAS knowledge platform to compile, update and share project evidence, country indicators and lessons through policy briefs, investment priorities, technical guidance and regional decision-making processes. The platform should track not only resources produced, but their uptake in national plans, financing proposals, legislation and field management.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	GEF-6 generated substantial knowledge through the Battler Resource Base, Pacific Invasive Species Indicators, NISSAP/EDRR tools, eradication experience and the PRISMSS Navigator. These resources are already being used beyond the four participating countries, including adoption of templates by non-participating PICTs. However, systematic evidence on how knowledge is used to influence policy, investment and management decisions remains limited.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Sustainability, Knowledge management
Priority Level:	Important
Type of Recommendation	Partners
Responsibility:	SPREP Management, National Ministries and UNEP
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 12 months

Recommendation #3:	**Protect the ecological gains from eradication and restoration through sustained surveillance and inter-island biosecurity** **Specific recommendations**: National governments, supported by SPREP/PRISMSS and conservation partners, should develop a post-project protection framework for priority eradication and restoration sites, with clearly assigned national responsibility, minimum monitoring standards and operational inter-island biosecurity protocols. Priority should be given to maintaining the gains already achieved rather than repeatedly financing eradication after reinvasion. GEF should treat biosecurity and post-eradication monitoring as essential components of future conservation investments.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project produced important conservation gains through eradication, control and restoration. However, the re-detection of rats on Late Island demonstrates that successful eradication does not by itself secure long-term ecological outcomes and that sustained biosecurity and monitoring are essential.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Effectiveness, sustainability
Priority Level:	Important
Type of Recommendation	Partners
Responsibility:	SPREP Management and National Ministries
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 12 months

Recommendation #4:	**Translate endorsed NISSAPs into funded government programmes and measurable national commitments** **Specific recommendation:** National governments, supported by SPREP and UNEP, should use the endorsed NISSAPs as the basis for **costed, government-owned IAS work programmes**, with priority activities incorporated into annual sector plans and budgets. Future regional financing should increasingly be used to leverage rather than substitute domestic allocations, while NISSAP implementation and financing should be periodically reviewed through existing national and regional governance mechanisms.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	All four countries achieved cabinet endorsement of their NISSAPs, and three countries institutionalised IAS coordinator positions. These are strong foundations for country ownership, but financial sustainability remains weak, and endorsed plans do not automatically guarantee operational budgets. The evaluation identified long-term domestic financing as a major unresolved issue.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Effectiveness, sustainability
Priority Level:	Important
Type of Recommendation	Partners
Responsibility:	SPREP Management and National Ministries
Proposed implementation time-frame:	With 12 months

Recommendation #5:	**Strengthen rights-based and inclusive practice as a standard feature of future Pacific biodiversity investments** Specific Recommendation: UNEP, GEF, SPREP and future executing agencies should establish standard FPIC, grievance and inclusive-participation protocols for Pacific biodiversity projects during project preparation, while allowing implementation to reflect country-specific customary systems. Future monitoring should assess not only participation, but also women's influence in decision-making and whether benefits are equitably distributed.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Community participation was an important contributor to project success, particularly for access to customary land and local stewardship. However, the evaluation found no standardised FPIC documentation or structured grievance mechanism, and engagement of some marginalised groups was not consistently monitored.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Effectiveness, Gender mainstreaming
Priority Level:	Important
Type of Recommendation	Partners
Responsibility:	SPREP Management, National Ministries and UNEP
Proposed implementation time-frame:	With 12 months

Recommendation #6:	**Improve UNEP's financial and knowledge-management systems for future regional projects** Specific Recommendation: UNEP should review its financial and results-information systems for regional GEF projects, with a focus on predictable fund flows, clear service standards for disbursement, and expenditure data that can be analysed by component, year and major result. These improvements would reduce transaction costs for regional executing agencies and strengthen UNEP's ability to assess value for money, sustainability and results across geographically dispersed projects.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Although financial management was broadly compliant and SPREP was able to maintain implementation, UNEP's vendor registration and fund-transfer processes caused recurrent delays, while the financial system provided limited component- and year-level expenditure information for evaluation. The project also showed that regional projects need reliable information systems to demonstrate outcome and impact, not only activity delivery.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Financial Management; Quality of Management; Efficiency
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	UNEP-wide
Responsibility:	UNEP Budget/Finance Officer and Division Director
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 12 months

ANNEX I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the evaluator(s), where appropriate

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Evaluator(s) Response	UNEP Evaluation Office Response
Page 2 and 3	The statement that the extensions increased transaction costs and contributed to a Moderately Satisfactory efficiency rating should be reconsidered. The two project extensions were approved as no-cost extensions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions, rather than project management inefficiencies. Despite these unprecedented external challenges, the project remained within its approved GEF budget allocation, did not overspend, achieved 98.3% budget utilisation, exceeded its co-financing target (148.3%), and successfully delivered all planned outputs. These results demonstrate prudent financial and project management and suggest that the impact of external factors on the efficiency rating should be more appropriately distinguished from project performance.	Not accepted: Following a careful re-assessment against UNEP Evaluation Policy and OECD DAC criteria, the Moderately Satisfactory rating is justifiable. Under UNEP criteria, a 'satisfactory' rating is strictly benchmarked against a no-cost extension of one year or less. GEF 9410 required a two-year (24-month) no-cost extension (two times) due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, disbursement lags, and SIDS logistical constraints. While the project achieved good results and cost-efficiencies through PRISMSS, OECD DAC efficiency standards require assessing timeliness. Maintaining 'Moderately Satisfactory' provides an objective, criteria-compliant rating that accurately reflects these multi-year timeline adjustments without diminishing the project's overall effectiveness.	The rating for efficiency by the Evaluation Consultant is consistent with guidance contained in the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix.
Page 3	The complete absence of formal free prior and informed consent process for customary lands is incorrect and overexaggerated. Numerous consultations were delivered with landowners in Tuvalu through the Kaupule and in Marshall Islands and Tonga. This can be confirmed by Sam Panapa (Tuvalu NISC) Viliami Hakaumotu (Tonga NISC) and Byrelson Jacklick (RMI NISC) and Huggard Tongatule (Niue NISC) who sought necessary approvals to access the land areas where project interventions took place. If the concern relates to the documentation of FPIC processes against current UNEP safeguard requirements, this should be distinguished from suggesting that no community consultation or consent processes occurred.	Not fully accepted/clarification/ slightly revised: I agree that informal discussions and interactions with communities and indigenous leaders did take place within the project, and this has been duly reflected in the report. However, it is important to distinguish between such informal engagements and a formal, structured FPIC process. The project did not have an agreed strategy for FPIC, nor was there any systematic or documented work provided (as evidence) that could be considered as evidence of adopting FPIC in practice. Furthermore, in the countries visited by the evaluation team, no formal FPIC procedures were found to have been developed or agreed upon, despite requests for such documentation. In light of these findings, and while acknowledging the value of the informal negotiations that occurred, I have a minor revision to accurately reflect the absence of a formal FPIC mechanism.	

ANNEX II. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
Strategic Questions		
Q1: In what ways, and to what extent, were the recommendations from the Mid Term Review actioned upon?	Primary data collection and desk review	- Project documents/reports - Interviews with the project team and the stakeholders and the beneficiaries - Observations by the evaluator
Q2: In what ways, and to what extent did the project facilitate / strengthen knowledge sharing among stakeholders during project implementation and beyond?	Primary data collection and desk review	
Q3: In what ways, and to what extent, was the private sector involved in project design, implementation and monitoring?	Primary data collection and desk review	
Strategic Relevance: (Key question: To what extent were the Project interventions and objectives relevant and suited to the priorities, policies and strategies of the target groups, implementing agencies and donors?)		
Alignment to the UNEP Medium-term strategy (MTS), programme of Work (POW), and other strategic priorities - Was the Project in line with UNEP's Mandate and how? - Is the Project responding to UNEP strategies and programmes of work, and how (qualitative and quantitative contributions)?	Desk review and primary data collection	- UNEP publications (MTS, PoW) - ProDoc - progress reports - Interviews with Task / Project Manager) - UNEP publications (including BSP, S- SC)
Alignment to Donor Strategic Priorities - Was the Project responding to the GEF's Strategic priorities, and how?	Desk review and primary data collection	- ProDoc - Reports/progress reports - Interviews with UNEP staff, Project/stakeholders
Relevance to Regional, Sub-Regional and National Environmental Priorities - Was the Project responding to the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries/sub-regions/regions and was aligned with SDGs/UNDAF, and climate policies? - Did the project contribute to national policy frameworks relevant to project objectives?	Desk review and primary data collection	- ProDoc - Project progress reports - Final report - Interviews with Ex-project staff, and national project stakeholders - Interviews/surveys with the government representatives
Complementarity with existing interventions - To what extent did the Project, at the design and/or mobilization phase, take account of ongoing initiatives?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Project progress reports - Final report

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
- To what extent did the Project team make efforts to ensure that the Project was complementary to other UNEP (regional and sub-progarmmes) and other interventions (i. e. other UN organizations, one-UN programming), and optimize any synergies?		- Interviews with Ex-project staff, national project stakeholders, and communities - Interviews/surveys with the government representatives
Quality of Project Design (How adequate was the Project design to achieve the Project Outputs, Outcomes and Objectives?)		
Relevance and logic of Project Objectives, Activities, Outputs and Outcomes according to Project Quality Design template - To what extent was the project design to achieve the project outputs, outcomes and objectives? - To what extent the activities, outputs and proposed outcomes, and their indicators logically linked? What could have been improved?	Desk review and primary data	- ProDoc, including the Project Review Committee review sheet - Interviews with Task/project M and stakeholders/communities
Nature of External Context (To what extent the project faced external factors which might affect project implementation?)		

Aspects related to external operating context (considering the prevalence of conflict, natural disasters and political upheaval)
- Has the Project faced an unusually challenging operational environment that negatively affected project performance, such as:
  o Conflicts or security issues?
  o Risks of natural disasters? and Government instability?
- To what extent did the external context support or hamper the project implementation?
- How did the project team mitigate and respond to changes in the external context?
	Primary data and desk review	- ProDoc
		- Project progress reports
		- Final report
		- Interviews with Ex-project staff, national project stakeholders, and communities
		- Interviews/surveys with the government representatives

Effectiveness (Key question: To what extent did the projects achieve the expected outputs and Outcomes?)		
Availability of Outputs[60]		
- To what extent has the produced outputs and which factors contributed to the achievement of Outputs (and/or what were the reasons Outputs were not produced)?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Project progress reports - Final report

[60] Outputs are the availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness of individuals or within institutions (UNEP, 2023)

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
- Were outputs and milestones delivered on time and as planned? What is the quality of these Outputs? If not, what were the reasons for the delay/changes? - How useful did beneficiaries find the outputs produced by the project? - What level of ownership of outputs among the beneficiaries? - To what extent have the Outputs contributed to their planned Outcomes? - Did the assumptions in the ToC hold or were adaptations put in place to mitigate any risks where assumptions didn't hold?		- Interviews with Ex-project staff, national project stakeholders, communities, and the government representatives - Observation during the Evaluation Mision
Achievement of Project Outcomes[61]		
- To what extent have Outcomes (as per the reconstructed TOC) been achieved and what evidence support these achievements? - Are these Outcomes a result of Project intervention? - Would these have been achieved without the direct involvement of UNEP? Why? - What were the major challenges witnessed and what learning can be drawn? - Did the assumptions in the ToC hold or were adaptations put in place to mitigate any risks where assumptions didn't hold?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Project progress reports - Final report - Interviews with Ex-project staff, national project stakeholders, and the government representatives - Interviews with communities
Likelihood of impact		
- What is the likelihood of expected positive (intended/unintended) impacts to be realized? - Were there any (possible) negative effects identified in the Project? - To what extent does the project play a catalytic role and/or promote the scaling up or replication of Project results? - Is the Project likely to contribute to the long-lasting changes represented by the Sustainable Development Goals, and/or the intermediate states reflected in UNEP's MTS, POW and national strategic priorities in the project countries?	Primary data collection and desk review	- Likelihood of Impact Assessment - Reconstructed ToC at Design and Evaluation - ProDoc - Project progress reports - Final report - Interviews with ex-project staff, project stakeholders, and government representatives - Interviews/ with communities
Financial Management (Key question: How conducive was the financial management to the achievement of project Outputs and Outcomes?)		
Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures - Was the Project implemented in compliance with UN financial management standards and procedures?	Primary data collection and desk review	- Project budget - Financial reports, audit reports

[61] An outcome is a change at institutional level, or changes in behaviors, attitudes or conditions achieved from the use (i.e., adoption, application) of outputs by intended beneficiaries (UNEP, 2023).

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
Completeness of financial information - What was the actual expenditure across the life of the Project? - To what extent were the projects' expenditures in line with the corresponding approved budget? - To what extent the financial documentation follows the UNEP's standard procedures? - How effective is the coordination among the project and finance team? - What changes, if any, have been made to the projects' budget and why?	Primary data collection and desk review	- Interview with UNEP Fund Management Officer, ex-project staff, and Project partners that received financial support - UNEP staff
Communication between financial and Project management staff - To what extent did the quality of communication between project management and financial management staff affect project efficiency?	Primary data collection and desk review	
Efficiency (Key question: To what extent and how were cost-effectiveness and timeliness considered during Project implementation? How did these factors affect project performance?)		
Cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution - To what extent does the project deliver the maximum results from the given resources? - Were any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed-upon project timeframe? - Did the Project make use of / build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, etc. to increase project efficiency? How? - What factors have caused delays (if any) and have affected project execution, costs and effectiveness? How? - Were activities leading to the completion of outputs sequenced efficiently? - What was the role of the Project's Governance structure and management approach on its efficiency?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Mid-term review reports - Project budget - Financial reports - Monitoring reports - Interviews with ex-project staff
Monitoring and Reporting (Key question: How were monitoring, evaluation and reporting used to support, adapt and improve Project implementation?)		
Monitoring of project implementation		
- To what extent were the monitoring plans operational? - To what extent did the monitoring system facilitate the timely tracking of results and progress toward Project Objectives? - To what extent was the information generated by the monitoring system, (such as baseline) used to adapt and improve Project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability? - To what extent did the stakeholders/beneficiaries participate in the M & E process?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Mid-term review reports - Project budget - Financial reports - Monitoring reports - Interviews with Ex-project staff - UNEP Staff

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
- To what extent were the allocated funds for monitoring used to support monitoring?		
Project reporting		
- Have the 6-monthly status and other reports been delivered on time? - Whether the project followed the established standard process to ensure quality and accurate reporting (such as generating evidence, tracking results)? - To what extent have other UNEP and donor reporting requirements (such as disaggregated groups) been fulfilled?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Mid-term review reports - Project budget - Financial reports - Monitoring reports - Interviews with Ex-project staff, and UNEP Staff
Sustainability (Key question: How do socio-political, financial and institutional factors affect the probability of project outcomes being maintained and developed after the projects end?)		
Socio-political sustainability		
- To what extent do the existing social and political factors support sustainability? What is the likelihood that the Project achievements will be taken forward at the national level, by the government (including integration in the national programme, and extension of technologies) and the main stakeholders? - What is the level of ownership, interest and commitment among governments and other main stakeholders including communities to continue the project results? - What is the likelihood that capacity development efforts continue?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Project progress reports - Steering Committee meetings - Final report - Interviews with Ex-project staff/ national stakeholders, and government representatives
Financial sustainability		
- To what extent are project outcomes dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained? - Is there any government funding secured to sustain the IAS restoration, extension of sustainable, and inclusive natural resource management technologies at the project sites?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Project progress reports - Final report - Interviews with Ex-project staff / National Invasive Species Coordinator (NISC) / other national stakeholders, and - government representatives
Institutional Sustainability		
- To what extent were institutional frameworks, policies, and legal and Accountability frameworks in place and robust enough to support the sustainability of project outcomes?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Project progress reports - Final report

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
		- Interviews with Ex-project staff / NISC / other national stakeholders, and government representatives
Factors affecting project performance and cross cutting issues		
Quality of project management and supervision		
- Were project management technical backstopping and supervision by UNEP proactive and responding timely and adequately to any issues encountered within the Project? To what extent does the UNEP provide leadership for the adaptive management of the project? - How do UNEP, the government and the service provider collaborate in the smooth management of the project? - To what extent and how were risks managed?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Project progress reports - Final report - Interview with UNEP Task Manager - Interviews with Ex-project staff / NISC / other national stakeholders - Interviews/surveys with government representatives - UNEP staff
Stakeholder participation and cooperation		
- Were key project stakeholders properly identified at Project design and to what extent have they duly involved in project implementation? - What level of communication mechanisms and consultation were carried out to ensure active stakeholder engagement and ownership? To what extent were these effective? - What measures were taken to ensure inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender and vulnerable groups?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Project progress reports - Final report - Interviews with Ex-project staff / NISC / other national stakeholders - Interviews/surveys with government representatives
Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity		
- To what extent did the project intervention adhere to UNEP policy and strategy for gender and human right? - To what extent did project implementation and monitoring take into consideration (gender; specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups, political and resource conflict to environmental degradation or disasters)	Primary data collection and desk review	- UN policies and strategies on gender and human rights: - UN Common Understanding on the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) - ProDoc - Project progress reports - Final report - Interviews with Ex-project staff / NISC / other national stakeholders
Environmental and social safeguards		

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
- To what extent were UNEP's requirements, for environmental and social safeguards, met (through the process of environmental and social screening at the project approval stage, risk assessment and management) of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities? - To what extent were the following activities carried out (Review of risk ratings regularly; Monitoring of Project implementation for possible safeguard issues; and providing responses to safeguard issues) - To what extent did the project management minimise UNEP's environmental footprint? What measures, if any, were taken?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Project progress reports - Final report - Interviews with Ex-project staff / NISC / other national stakeholders, and government representatives
Country ownership and driven-ness		
- To what extent was the government involved in the project? (with respect to the need to embed the Outputs and Outcomes of Project work in their respective institutions) - How did government ownership contribute to embedding changes in their respective institutions and offices?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Project progress reports - Final report - Interviews with Ex-project staff / NISC / other national stakeholders, and government representatives
Communication and public awareness		
- How was project learning communicated with the project partners and interested groups? - Which public awareness activities were undertaken during project implementation? - To what extent did the project influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large? How? - To what extent were existing communication channels and networks used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gendered or marginalized groups?	Primary data collection and desk review	- ProDoc - Project progress reports - Final report - Interviews with Ex-project staff / NISC / other national stakeholders - Interviews/ with government representatives and beneficiaries

ANNEX III. STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED DURING THE EVALUATION

Organisation	Position	Role in the Project	Gender
Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce, RMI	Chief of Quarantine	RMI	F
SPREP (RMI)	Liaison Officer SPREP	RMI	M
Dept of Environment, Niue	National Invasive Species Coordinator	Niue	M
Dept of Environment, Tonga	National Invasive Species Coordinator	Tonga	M
Dept of Environment, Tonga	Deputy Director	Tonga	F
Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Forests, Tonga	Head of Quarantine & Quality Management Division	Tonga	F
Department of Environment - Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change, Communication and Cert, Tonga	Project Officer Tonga	Tonga	F
Ministry of Agriculture Food and Forestry, Tonga	Agriculture Officer		F
Ministry of Agriculture Food and Forestry, Tonga	Senior Agriculture Officer		M
Vava'u Environmental Protection Agency (NGO), Tonga	Manager	Tonga	F
Department of Environment, Tuvalu	Acting Director of Environment	Tuvalu	F
	Environment Officer	Tuvalu	F
	EAS Support Officer	Tuvalu	M
	Principal Quarantine Officer/Acting Director	Tuvalu	F
	Quarantine Officer		M
Independent, Tuvalu	Former National Invasive Species Coordinator	Tuvalu	M
Birdlife International Fiji	Head of Island Restoration	Fiji	M
SPREP	Project Manager	Samoa	F
	Invasive Species Adviser	Samoa	M
	Invasive Species Officer	Samoa	M
	PRISMSS Manager	Samoa	M
Island Conservation	Technical Lead Predator Free Pacific	New Zealand	M
Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research	PRISMSS Partner - Technical Lead Natural Enemies Natural Solutions.	New Zealand	F
Earth Science[62] ()	Chief Science Advisor	New Zealand	F
UNEP	Task Manager	Thailand	M
	FMO	Kenya	M
	FMO	Kenya	F
	FMO	Kenya	F
	Sub Programme Coordinator	Kenya	F
Flinch Marketing	Director	New Zealand	M
Consultant and the former Task Manager – UNEP	Independent	New Zealand	M

[62] Formerly known as National Institute of Water & Atmospheric Research Ltd (NIWA)

ANNEX IV. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

- UNEP / GEF Terminal Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR).
- Project Document
- ProDoc Annex 1 (project budget) and annex 2 (cofinance)
- CEO Endorsement Request & Project Identification Form (PIF).
- Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) from 2020 to 2025
- Final Technical Progress Report.
- Mid-Term Review (MTR) Report, 2022
- Financial reports from various years
- CEO EndorsementLetter_ID9410 CEO Endorsement Letter
- Co-financing Letters of Co-finance_23Nov2018
- PCA Amendment 1 and PCA Amendment 2
- Project Budget reports from 2019 to 2025) and project workplans
- Reports from the Executing Agency
- Inception reports
- Project Steering Committee Minutes (first to ninth meetings)
- Various output related reports, documents, materials produced by the project
- Reports from the countries (such as NISSAP)
- Reports available from ttps://brb.sprep.org/search?f%5B0%5D=project%3A7.
    - *Clean Boats, Clean Ports Framework* – biosecurity at points of entry
    - *Manage Marine Biosecurity in the Pacific* – marine IAS toolkit
    - *Protect Our Islands with Biosecurity* – preventing spread between islands
    - *Catch it Early: Invasive Species Early Detection and Rapid Response*
    - *Manage low-incidence priority weeds to conserve Pacific biodiversity*
    - Online training video for invasive animal suppression resources, launched by PRISMSS and NZ DOC (2024)
    - Pacific Marine Biosecurity Toolkit – with accompanying Battler Guide
    - New invasive animal suppression resources – "Battler" package
    - PRISMSS Triannual Newsletter (e.g., July 2023)
    - Project Overview fact sheet (1 page)
    - Inception Meeting Report
    - BRB tutorial (English and French) guiding users on how to navigate the platform
    - Case studies and lessons learned from eradication and restoration activities
    - School-based IAS education materials (Niue, Tonga)
    - Community radio programmes (Tuvalu)
    - Social media content and awareness campaigns

ANNEX V. EVALUATION ITINERARY

Field mission dates: **26 June to 10th July 2026**

Field mission to Tuvalu and Tonga including Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with government authorities, and civil society organizations.

Country	Dates	Activity
Tuvalu	30th June 2026	KIIs with government authorities and Local council in Tuvalu
	1st July 2026	KII with ex-national IAS coordinator
	2nd July 2026	Visiting the project sites (Funafuti Conservation Areas) and having group discussions with the government officials and ex- national IAS coordinator
Tonga	6th July 2026	KIIs with government authorities
	7th July 2026	KIIs with government authorities and NGO representative
	8th July 2026	Site visit – agriculture / entomology (research division) and Toloa Rainforest

ANNEX VI. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS ASSESSMENT

ESS PLANNING AT PROJECT DESIGN	
List any ESS issues identified at project design[63]	Possible ESS issues mentioned: (Appendix 14) a. Will the proposed project use, cause the use of, or manage the use of, storage and disposal of hazardous chemicals, including pesticides? b. Will the proposed project require the procurement of chemical pesticides that is not a component of integrated pest management (IPM) or integrated vector management (IVM) approaches? c. Will indigenous peoples be present in the proposed project area or area of influence? d. Will the project potentially affect the traditional livelihoods, physical and cultural survival of indigenous peoples?
For any ESS issues identified at project design, were mitigation strategies developed (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	**The ESERN (Appendix 14) rates all risks as "Low," except economic sustainability and** mitigation strategies were developed for the risks identified. See below. For a and b above, strict adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for storage, handling, application, and disposal of toxins. The project used NZS 8409:2021 standard which is the official New Zealand Standard for the Management of Agrichemicals. In addition, the project used a single intervention such as distributing toxin (safely) whereas weed control or eradication will use IPM approaches. For c and d issues above, the project engaged communities and indigenous community leaders to discuss on the use and access of land (under customary practices) and other general use of resources.
Were any gaps in ESS issues identified at the evaluation inception phase (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	There was no issue noted during the evaluation inception phase.

ESS MONITORING AT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	
Is there evidence that the potential emergence of ESS issues was actively monitored during project implementation (Y/N)? [64] (If yes, briefly describe)	Yes. ESS risks were monitored annually through the PIR process across all six reporting cycles. PIR 2025 confirms no new social or environmental risks emerged during implementation, and no safeguard-related complaints or grievances were received (PIR 2025, p.12).

[63] Select from the list of Environmental and Social Safeguards Risks in Table 1 of the template (tool 14, Safeguards Assessment Template).
[64] **Low risk:** Negative impacts minimal or negligible: no further study or impact management required.
Moderate risk: Potential negative impacts, but limited in scale, not unprecedented or irreversible and generally limited to programme/project area; impacts amenable to management using standard mitigation measures; limited environmental or social analysis may be required to develop an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP). Straightforward application of good practice may be sufficient without additional study.
High risk: Potential for significant negative impacts (e.g. irreversible, unprecedented, cumulative, significant stakeholder concerns); Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) (or Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA)) including a full impact assessment may be required, followed by an effective comprehensive safeguard management plan.

	Risk ratings for all safeguard-relevant factors were reviewed and maintained at Low in final PIRs (PIR 2025, pp.32–35). PRISMSS-guided SOPs, which followed the NZS 8409:2021 standard for the management of agrichemical, governed agrichemical use throughout field operations. Interviews at country level noted that there were some concerns raized by the community initially (especially on introduction of biological control options) but that was addressed through series of dialogues. However, there was no no formal Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) documentation or grievance mechanism for Indigenous peoples; lack of a standalone Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) with monitorable indicators; and no specific environmental footprint reduction targets for field operations.
Is there a justification for the absence of ESS monitoring (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe[65])	**N/A**. ESS monitoring was conducted throughout implementation via the annual PIR risk review process, consistent with the project's low-risk classification at CEO endorsement.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIVENESS DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	
Identify the ESS issues/events triggered [66] by the project.[67]	No such information or document available confirms there has been issues emerged due to project interventions.
Describe consequences of ESS issues/events during project implementation.	Based on the document available, no systematic assessment was carried out and no issues reported because of ESS issues. However, no formal FPIC documentation was established for activities on customary lands.
Describe the management response and identify supporting documentation. [68, 69]	As there were no notable concerns emerged during the project implementation. SPREP/PRISMSS enforced industry-standard SOPs, which followed NZS 8409:2021 standard for the management of agrichemical, for all chemical applications, consistent with ESERN commitments.
Were negative ESS effects offset by management response (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	No negative issues reported and there was no management response.

[65] For instance, during COVID, access to the field may have been restricted
[66] 'Triggered' refers to environmental or social issues/events that are caused or exacerbated—directly or indirectly—as a result of the project's activities, interventions, or presence.
[67] Select from the list of Environmental and Social Safeguards Risks in Table 1 of the template (tool 14, Safeguards Assessment Template).
[68] For most low-moderate risk projects, good practice approach may be sufficient. Project should demonstrate safeguard management approach in the project activities, budget, risks management, stakeholder engagement or/and monitoring segments of the project document to avoid or minimize the identified potential risks without preparing a separate safeguard management plan.
[69] E.g., GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR), Progress Report, Minutes, etc.

ANNEX VII. BRIEF CV OF THE EVALUATOR

Name	Ram Khanal
Profession	Evaluator
Nationality	Nepal
Country experience	• Africa: Sudan, Madagascar, Uganda, Malawi • Asia: Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Thailand, Viet Nam, Cambodia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Mongolia, Laos and Tajikistan
Education	• MSc – Agriculture System, PhD – Development Studies

Short biography

Dr. Ram Khanal is a seasoned Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) expert with over 20 years of experience leading complex evaluations and impact measurement systems across climate resilience, agroforestry, and livelihoods. With an MSc in agriculture and a PhD degree in education/development studies and development policy, he has worked extensively across Asia and Africa with institutions such as FAO, UNEP, UNDP, DFID/FCDO, and ADB. Dr. Khanal has developed MEL frameworks for large-scale, multi-country programs, including nature-based solutions, climate-smart agriculture, and forest landscape restoration. His leadership spans strategic MEL planning, capacity development, experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation designs, and integration of MEL into adaptive programming. Known for promoting participatory, data-driven decision-making, he successfully managed approaches that drive both accountability and learning. His work is focused on deep technical rigor, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and a commitment to evidence-informed environmental and social outcomes.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- Over two decades leading MEL design and implementation in agroforestry, climate resilience, and livelihoods
- Strong background in building MEL systems aligned with Theory of Change and strategic goals
- Experience leading large MEL teams across multiple countries and training partners/staff
- Proven track record in impact assessment
- Skilled in designing cost-effective, rigorous data collection systems (quantitative and qualitative)
- Active engagement to global evaluation standards
- Extensive experience working with UN agencies, international NGOs, and government partners

Thematic Experience:

- Climate actions and policy (adaptation, resilience and mitigations): climate risk assessment, identification of adaptation options, priority ranking & planning, resilience assessment and strategy development,
- Agriculture, food security and policies: agriculture value chain, agro-advisory, food security mapping/analysis, develop and manage agriculture and food security-related projects
- Natural Resources Management: participatory resource management, management of biodiversity and ecosystems services, Livelihood enhancement: livelihoods assessment and planning.

ANNEX VIII. GEF PORTAL INPUTS

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

Question: What was the performance at the project's completion against Core Indicator Targets? (For projects approved prior to GEF-7[70], these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided[71]).

Response:

The project achieved substantial progress against Core Indicator Targets retrospectively identified from GEF-6. For Indicator 11, the project fully materialized its target, benefiting 124,000 people. For Indicator 4, the project achieved 7,441 hectares of landscapes under improved practices against a target of 7,550 hectares. For Indicator 1, terrestrial protected areas under improved management materialized at 19,681 hectares against the target of 22,389 hectares. These outcomes were driven by successful rodent eradications on priority islands in Tuvalu, Tonga, and the Marshall Islands, alongside site-led forest restoration across five active locations, which enhanced ecological integrity.

Project Core Indicators	Targets	Actual at TE
Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management	22,389 hectares	19,681 hectares
Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)	7,550 hectares	7,441 hectares
Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments	124,000 people	124,000 people

[Report References: PIRs, Section 2.2, Section 4.4)

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

Response:

The project established a robust, multi-level stakeholder architecture since the MTR. Engagement was driven through nine Project Steering Committee meetings, national Technical Advisory Groups, and the Pacific Invasives Learning Network, which gathered over 70 practitioners from 18 countries. Communities actively participated in site-level rodent eradication and weed management, securing critical access to customary lands. However, challenges included uneven engagement across outer islands, particularly in the remote Marshall Islands, and the private sector was only marginally involved through local fishermen. The systematic documentation of participation by marginalized groups and people with disabilities remained relatively weak across reporting periods.

[Report References: Section 4.9 and PIRs]

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

Response:

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

[71] This is not applicable for Enabling Activities

The project implemented a formal Gender Strategy to promote equal participation in biodiversity conservation. High-level representation was achieved in national NISSAP consultations and Technical Advisory Groups, with women occupying senior environment positions in three of four countries. The project exceeded its target for female government staff engagement, with fifteen women actively involved. PRISMSS also supported crucial research exploring cultural values and gender dynamics, contributing to a forthcoming Pacific Protocols Toolkit to strengthen women's leadership. However, monitoring remained focused primarily on quantitative participation figures rather than measuring the qualitative influence of women on final decision-making.

[Report References: Section 4.9 and PIRs]

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

Response:

The project maintained its original "Low" risk classification, which was verified through annual PIR risk reviews. To manage chemical and waste risks, SPREP/PRISMSS enforced industry-standard Standard Operating Procedures following the NZS 8409:2021 standard for agrichemical management, ensuring safe pesticide storage and application during eradication. Community consultations addressing biocontrol introductions successfully resolved local concerns. However, major gaps persist. There was a lack of a standalone Environmental and Social Management Plan with monitorable indicators and no formal Free, Prior, and Informed Consent documentation or grievance mechanisms for indigenous communities on customary lands in Niue and Tonga.

[Report References: Section 4.9 and PIRs]

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

Response:

The principal knowledge management outcome was the comprehensive upgrade of the Battler Resource Base, which now serves as a searchable regional repository hosting over 1,200 technical resources. PRISMSS integrated these assets into the user-friendly online Navigator platform, streamlining country-level indicators and requests. Reusable templates for National Invasive Species Strategies and Action Plans and EDRR toolkits were successfully designed and adopted by non-participating jurisdictions, demonstrating regional scaling. However, key challenges include the lack of a standalone KM strategy, most materials being limited to English, and uneven monitoring of how local communities actually utilize this disseminated knowledge.

[Report References: Section 4.9 and PIRs]

Question: What are the main findings of the evaluation?

Response:

The project achieved an overall "Satisfactory" rating, demonstrating exceptional performance in strategic relevance, country ownership, and regional cooperation. Key outcomes include the cabinet endorsement of four NISSAPs and the institutionalization of invasive species coordinator positions in three countries. Programmatic successes feature landmark rodent eradications in Tuvalu, Tonga, and the Marshall Islands, and the establishment of five active forest restoration sites. SPREP's leadership operationalized the PRISMSS hub-and-spoke model, which successfully expanded services to fifteen Pacific countries. However, critical weaknesses remain in national-level financial sustainability, high staff turnover in RMI and Tuvalu, and missing formal safeguard consent documentation for customary lands.

[Report References: Section 5 and PIRs]

ANNEX IX. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

Evaluand Title: Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF Project: "Strengthening national and regional capacities to reduce the impact of Invasive Alien Species on globally significant biodiversity in the Pacific" GEF ID 9410" (2019-2025)

All UNEP evaluations are subject to a quality assessment by the Evaluation Office. This is an assessment of the quality of the evaluation product (i.e. evaluation report) and is dependent on more than just the consultant's efforts and skills.

Report Quality Criteria	**UNEP Evaluation Office Comments**	**Final Report Rating**
Section A: Executive Summary	Assessment	
1. Does the ***Executive Summary*** act as a concise, accurate standalone section, especially to inform decision-making? Consider how clearly and concisely the report presents: • a clear summary of the evaluation object • evaluation objectives, scope and methodology • the overall project evaluation rating • a summary of main evaluation findings, including key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) • summary responses to key strategic evaluation questions • summary of main conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations	Coverage/omissions: The executive summary includes all the expected sections. Strengths/weaknesses: The executive summary presents a concise summary of the evaluation report and includes a concise description of the evaluand, evaluation objectives, scope, a summary of the findings, recommendations, lessons learned and the overall rating.	6
Section B: The Project	Assessment	
2. Does the report clearly describe the ***key parameters, scale and complexity of the evaluand***? Consider how well the report presents: • an overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address • timeline, including dates of project approval, duration and number of phases (where appropriate) • geographic coverage (regions/countries) • total secured budget and project financing, including a table with funding sources • implementing and funding partners • institutional context (i.e. UNEP sub-programme, Division, Branch etc) • implementation structure with diagram • UNEP results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. PoW Direct Outcome) • summary of results framework as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised) • stakeholder groups organised according to relevant common characteristics • whether the project has been evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, by an external agency, etc.) • substantive or significant changes in design during implementation	Coverage/omissions: All elements adequately addressed. Strengths/weaknesses: The report presents a comprehensive description of the key dimensions of the evaluand as expected.	6
Section C: Evaluation Methods and Theory of Change	Assessment	

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
3. Does the report present a clear, comprehensive and adequate description of the ***evaluation methodology***? Consider how well it presents the following elements, and their adequacy based on the scope of the evaluation: • statement of the purpose of the evaluation and the key intended audience for the evaluation findings • data collection methods and information sources • justification for methods used (e.g. electronic/face-to-face interviews, qualitative/quantitative analysis) • criteria and sampling strategies used to select stakeholders for consultations, and for sites/countries visited • number and types of respondents *(including in a table broken down by gender)* • strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and response rate • methods used to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. women, marginalised) • data verification methods (e.g. triangulation) • data analysis methods (e.g. scoring, thematic analysis) • evaluation limitations and mitigation measures (e.g. how these were addressed by the evaluator) • consideration for ethics and human rights issues, including how anonymity and confidentiality were protected	Coverage/omissions: The evaluation methods section presents a detailed description of the evaluation process. All expected elements are included. Strengths/weaknesses: The evaluation methods section passes the reproducibility test. It explains in sufficient detail how the evaluation was conducted while highlighting challenges encountered and mitigation measures.	6
4. Does the report describe an assessment and reformulation of the ***Theory of Change***, and present an adequate articulation of the TOC causal pathways that were used to assess project performance (*narratively and diagrammatically)?* Consider how well the report presents: • whether the project design included a TOC • how the *TOC at Evaluation*[72] was designed (e.g. who was involved, etc) • confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions (*including reformulation table, which may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear in the Main Evaluation report.)* • articulation of causal pathways • identification of drivers and assumptions • identification of key actors in the change process	Coverage/omissions: All expected sections are included in the section on the project theory of change. Strengths/weaknesses: This section of the report presents a reconstructed theory of change (TOC at evaluation) in both diagrammatic and text form. The section also presents reconstruction of results in the prescribed format while providing justification for the reconstruction. The ToC also articulates the causal pathways and identifies the key assumptions, drivers and actors involved in the change process.	6
Section D: Evidence and Analysis	Assessment	
5. Is the report based on ***sufficient and adequate data*** and ***clear and credible evidence***? Consider how well the report presents: • sufficient evidence that is consistent throughout the report • evidence that is supported by data sources (e.g. quotes, reports, etc)	Strengths/weaknesses: The report provides sufficient evidence to support findings. Evidence has sufficiently been triangulated and gaps in evidence sufficiently explained.	6

[72] During the Inception Phase of the evaluation process a *TOC at Evaluation Inception* is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions), formal revisions and annual reports etc. During the evaluation process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the *TOC at Evaluation*.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
• evidence that is explicitly triangulated, unless noted as having a single source • gaps in data are explained and justified • data sources that are reliable, adequate, sufficient for the scope of the evaluation		
6. Does the report include ***rigorous analysis*** and ***logical findings***? Consider the extent to which the findings are: • supported by clear analysis that is consistent with the evidence presented • logical, clear and coherent • aligned with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix • aligned with the evaluation framework • more than descriptions and provide insights into 'how' and/or 'why' the project performed a certain way • balanced, presenting both successes and weaknesses	Strengths/weaknesses: The presents clear, coherent and logical findings. The ratings are also aligned with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix.	5
Section E: Evaluation Findings	Assessment	
7. Does the report present evidence and analysis of project ***Strategic Relevance*** with respect to UNEP, partner and geographic policies and strategies at the time of project approval? Consider how well the report addresses: • Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities • Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities • Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities • Complementarity with Existing Interventions: complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation[73]), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups.	Coverage/omissions: This section of the report tackles all the dimensions of strategic relevance as expected. Strengths/weaknesses: The evaluation report presents a detailed analysis of the relevance of the evaluand to the strategic priorities of UNEP, GEF and the Global, Regional, Sub-regional and national priories of the target countries. The report also includes an analysis of the complementarity of the evaluand with other existing interventions.	6
Does the report present a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the ***Quality of Project Design***, based on the detailed assessment presented in the Inception Report?	Coverage/omissions: The evaluation report includes a section on Quality of Project Design as expected. Strengths/weaknesses: The quality of project design section presents a balanced critique of both the strengths and weaknesses in project design.	***NOT RATED**
Does the report recognise and describe, when appropriate, key features of the ***Nature of the External Context*** under which the project was implemented that limited the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval[74]), and how they affected performance?	Coverage/omissions: The evaluation report includes a section that analyses the nature of the external context. Strengths/weaknesses: The report presents an excellent analysis of the project implementation context that covers the negative externalities that affected project	****NOT RATED**

[73] A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.
[74] Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
	implementation. The analysis also includes an analysis of the effects of these negative externalities to project implementation.	
8. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the ***Availability of Outputs*** to the intended beneficiaries? Consider how well the report presents: • a convincing, evidence-supported and clear presentation of the outputs made available by the project compared to its approved plans and budget • assessment of the nature and scale of outputs versus the project indicators and targets • assessment of the timeliness, quality and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries • identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Coverage/omissions: The report presents a section that analyses the availability of all planned project outputs. Strengths/weaknesses: The report presents an evidence-based and detailed analysis of the availability of outputs. Also included in the analysis is the quality, timeliness of the delivery of the outputs.	6
9. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the ***Achievement of Outcomes***, as a result of the uptake, adoption and/or implementation of outputs by the intended beneficiaries? This may include behaviour changes at an individual or collective level. Consider how well the report presents: • a convincing and evidence-supported analysis of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries • assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets • discussion of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself • any constraints to attributing effects to the projects' work • identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Coverage/omissions: The report presents a section that analyses the achievement of project outcomes. Strengths/weaknesses: The evaluation presents a well-reasoned analysis on the achievement of project outcomes as compared to targets. The analysis also includes evidence of uptake of project outputs by the target beneficiaries.	5
10. Does the report present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to ***Likelihood of Impact***? Consider how well the report presents: • an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and the resulting change processes • an explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out • an explanation of roles played by key actors and change agents • identification of any unintended negative effects of the project, especially on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Coverage/omissions: The evaluation report includes a section on the analysis of the likelihood of impact. Strengths/weaknesses: The report includes a well-reasoned analysis of the likelihood of impact. The analysis also includes the actors, and analysis of the drivers and assumptions involved the change process.	6
11. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under ***Financial Management*** and include a completed 'financial management' table? Consider how well the report addresses the following:	Coverage/omissions: The report includes a section that assesses quality of project financial management.	6

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
• *adherence* to UNEP's financial policies and procedures • *completeness* of financial information, including the actual project costs and actual co-financing used and explanation of any variances between planned and actual expenditures	Strengths/weaknesses: The evaluation report presents an analysis of the project financial management. The analysis adequately covers adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures, and completeness of financial information.	
12. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under ***Efficiency***? Consider how well the report presents: • cost-effective or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe • implications of any delays and no cost extensions • discussion of making use, during project implementation, of/building on pre-existing institutions, partnerships and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. • the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.	Coverage/omissions: The report includes a section on measures by the project to ensure efficiency. Strengths/weaknesses: This section of the report presents an analysis of the two dimensions of efficiency i.e. time and cost effectiveness. The analysis includes the cost effectiveness measures put in place by the project key of which include leveraging pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships for synergy. Also included in the analysis are the effects of the project extension on project performance.	5
13. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the project's ***Monitoring and Reporting***? Consider how well the report addresses the following: • the quality of *monitoring of project implementation* (including use of monitoring data for adaptive management) • the quality of *project reporting* (e.g. PIMS and donor reports)	Coverage/omissions: A section of the quality pf monitoring and reporting is included in the evaluation report. Strengths/weaknesses: The evaluation report presents a detailed analysis of the performance of the project in relation to the two dimensions of monitoring and reporting i.e. quality of monitoring of project implementation and quality of project reporting. The report analyses project monitoring and reporting arrangements.	5
14. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under ***Sustainability*** (i.e. the endurance of benefits achieved at outcome level)? Consider how well the report addresses the following: • socio-political sustainability • financial sustainability • institutional sustainability	Coverage/omissions: The report includes a section on the tree dimensions of sustainability. Strengths/weaknesses: The report presents a succinct analysis of the three dimensions of sustainability i.e. socio-political, financial and institutional sustainability.	5
15. Does the report present a well-evidence analysis of the ***Factors Affecting Performance***, either in this section or in cross-referenced sections? *These factors are not always discussed in stand-alone sections and may be integrated in the other performance criteria as appropriate. However, if not addressed substantively in this section, a cross reference must be given*	Coverage/omissions: The evaluation report includes a section that analyses each of the factors affecting project performance. Strengths/weaknesses:	6

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
to where the topic is addressed, and that entry must be sufficient to justify the performance rating for these factors. Consider how well the report addresses the following cross-cutting issues: • quality of project management and supervision[75] • stakeholder participation and co-operation • responsiveness to human rights and gender equality • environmental and social safeguards • country ownership and driven-ness • communication and public awareness	The evaluation report includes an excellent analysis of the factors affecting project performance. These include: quality of project management and supervision, stakeholder participation and co-operation, responsiveness to human rights and gender equality, environmental and social safeguards, country ownership and driven-ness, and communication and public awareness.	
Section F: Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations	Assessment	
16. Do the ***Conclusions*** present a summative assessment of the evaluand as a whole, reflecting on prominent aspects of the project's performance? Consider how well the conclusions: • provide a compelling narrative and integrated assessment of project project's performance (i.e. achievements and limitations) • add deeper insights and analysis beyond the findings under each individual criterion • are derived from the synthesized analysis of evidence gathered during the evaluation process • provide clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions • address the human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on) • provide lessons that are rooted in real project experiences, describe the context from which they are derived, and do not duplicate recommendations	Coverage/omissions: The evaluation report includes a conclusions section which includes summative statements on the performance of the evaluand. Strengths/weaknesses: The report presents concise summative statements on the performance of the evaluand as a whole. The report also includes human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention and clear and succinct responses to the key strategic questions.	6
17. Does the report present ***Recommendations*** for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results? Consider how well the recommendations: • are clearly formulated and logically derived from the findings and/or conclusions • are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when • include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions • represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. NOTES:	Coverage/omissions: The report includes recommendations aimed at addressing problems in project execution and proposed actions to ensure sustainability of project results. The recommendations are also presented in the prescribed format. Strengths/weaknesses: The recommendations presented are actionable and are derived from actual project implementation challenges and desire to increase likelihood of sustainability of project results.	5

[75] In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UNEP. This includes providing the answers to the questions on Core Indicator Targets, stakeholder engagement, gender responsiveness, safeguards and knowledge management, required for the GEF portal.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
(i) In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance. **(ii)** Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.		
Section G: Report Structure and Presentation	Assessment	
18. Is the report ***well-structured and complete***? Does it: • follow the Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines • include all required sections and annexes, as applicable • not exceed 50 pages in length from the Executive Summary to the end of the Conclusion Does the report ***present*** information clearly and appropriately? Is it written: • in clear and accessible language • largely free from grammar, spelling and punctuation errors • in an adequate and professional tone • with the use of visual aids, such as maps, graphs tables and photos	Coverage/omissions: The report is complete and follows the Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines. Strengths/weaknesses: The evaluation report is written in clear English language and uses visual aids (figures and tables) appropriately. The tone used in the report is professional as expected of such a document.	5
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING	**Highly Satisfactory**	**5.6**

A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion, with half-point increments allowed (e.g., 3.5 or 4.5). Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1. The overall rating is based on a simple average of the ratings for each criterion.

* The Quality of Project Design criterion is not rated in this table because the majority of the analysis is presented in the Inception Report and the Final Terminal Evaluation report only contains a summary.

** The Nature of External Context is not rated in this table because it is not consistently applicable across all projects. Some evaluation reports will simply record that there was no unexpected unfavourable external factors, while others may have to describe critical external events.

Rating the Report Quality Criteria

Rating (1–6)	Description
6 (90 – 100%)	Provides all content with high quality. *(i.e. exemplary)*
5 (70 - 89%)	Provides all content with minor weaknesses.
4 (50 – 69%)	Provides most content with minor weaknesses.
3 (30 - 49%	Provides most content with significant weaknesses.
2 (11 – 29 %)	Omits substantive content with significant weaknesses.
1 (0 -10%)	Omits almost all content with major weaknesses.

At the end of the evaluation, compliance of the evaluation process against the agreed standard procedures is assessed, based on the table below. *All questions with negative compliance must be explained further in the table below.*

Evaluation Process Quality Criteria	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Consultant's independence:		
1. Were possible conflicts of interest of proposed Evaluation Consultant(s) appraised and addressed in the final selection?	☒	
2. Was the Evaluation Consultant given direct access to identified external stakeholders?	☒	
3. Did the Evaluation Consultant raise any concerns about being unable to work freely and without interference or undue pressure from project staff or the Evaluation Office?		☒
4. If Yes to Q3: Were these concerns resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both the Evaluation Consultant and the Evaluation Manager?	*Not Applicable*	
Project's engagement and support:		
5. Did the project make available all required/requested documents?	☒	
6. Did the project make all financial information (and audit reports if applicable) available in a timely manner and to an acceptable level of completeness?	☒	
7. Was adequate support provided by the project to the evaluator(s) in planning and conducting evaluation missions?	☒	
8. Were the project team, relevant UNEP senior staff, partners and interviewed stakeholders given an opportunity to provide comments on key deliverables, as appropriate (e.g. Terms of Reference, Inception Report and Draft Evaluation Report)?	☒	
Quality assurance of key deliverables:		
9. Were the Terms of Reference peer-reviewed?	☒	
10. Was the inception report peer-reviewed, including the Theory of Change?	☒	
11. Were evaluation preliminary findings presented to the project team in a format allowing discussion, before drafting the report?	☒	
12. Was the draft report peer-reviewed?	☒	
Transparency and commenting:		
13. Was the inception report, including the (reconstructed) TOC, sent to the project team, relevant UNEP senior staff and partners, with a minimum of eight working days to comment?	☒	
14. Was the draft evaluation report sent directly by the Evaluation Consultant to the Evaluation Office?	☒	
15. Were all stakeholder comments to the draft evaluation report sent directly to the Evaluation Office	☒	
16. Did the Evaluation Consultant(s) respond adequately to all factual corrections and comments?	☒	
17. Did the Evaluation Office share substantive comments and Evaluation Consultant responses with those who commented, as appropriate?	☒	
Financial Resources:		
18. Was the evaluation budget approved at project design available for the evaluation? If not, comment in the table below on the sufficiency of the funds made available.	☒	
19. Were the agreed evaluation funds readily available to support the payment of the evaluation contract throughout the payment process? If not, comment in the table below.	☒	
Timeliness:		
20. If a Terminal Evaluation: Was the evaluation initiated within six months after project operational completion and not more than three months prior? (Or, if a Mid Term Evaluation: Was the evaluation initiated within a six-month period prior to the project's mid-point?)	☒	
21. Was the inception report delivered and reviewed/approved prior to commencing any travel?	☒	
22. Were all submission and commenting deadlines met as set by the Evaluation Manager and as far as unforeseen circumstances allowed? If not, comment in the table below on exceptional delays.	☒	

Provide comments / explanations / mitigating circumstances below for any non-compliant process issues.

Evaluation Process Criterion Number	Evaluation Office Comments
Not Applicable	*Not Applicable*