



2017
Project Implementation Review (PIR)
Strengthening Natural Resource Management



Basic Data	Empowered lives. 2
Overall Ratings.....	Resilient nations. 3
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A. Basic Data

Project Information	
UNDP PIMS ID	5168
GEF ID	5348
Title	Conserving biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem functions through a “ Ridge to Reef” approach in the Cook Islands
Country(ies)	Cook Islands, Cook Islands, Samoa
UNDP-GEF Technical Team	Ecosystems and Biodiversity
Project Implementing Partner	Government
Joint Agencies	
Project Type	Full Size

Project Description

In August 2012, the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Hon. Henry Puna, announced the creation of the Cook Islands Marine Park encompassing approximately 1.1 million square kilometres of the country's southern Exclusive Economic Zone (or more than 50% of its EEZ) at the opening ceremony of the 43rd Pacific Islands Forum. By creating the Park, the Government signalled its commitment to sustainable development and intention to balance economic growth interests in sectors such as such as tourism, fishing and agriculture, with biodiversity conservation objectives. This project will enhance the Cook Islands' capacities to effectively manage its protected area estate, focusing more specifically on the operationalization of the Marine Park and community conservation areas falling within it. The project will assist the government to tailor its policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks to suit the specific characteristics of this large marine protected area where protection and sustainable use will need to be carefully planned and zoned, with the recognition that tenure over most land areas is vested in local communities through a traditional tenure system. This project has been designed to engineer a paradigm shift in the management of marine and terrestrial PA sites from a site centric approach to a holistic ridge to reef management approach, whereby activities in the immediate production landscapes adjacent to marine and terrestrial protected areas will be managed to reduce threats to biodiversity stemming from key production activities (tourism and agriculture).

Project Contacts

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Other Partners	MMR (b.ponia@mmr.gov.ck)

B. Overall Ratings

Overall DO Rating	Moderately Unsatisfactory
Overall IP Rating	Moderately Unsatisfactory
Overall Risk Rating	Substantial

C. Development Progress

Objective or Outcome	Description				
Objective:	To build national and local capacities and actions to ensure effective conservation of biodiversity, food security and livelihoods and the enhancement of ecosystem functions within the Cook Islands Marine Park				
	Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target level at end of project	Level at 30 June 2016	Cumulative progress since project start
	Overall framework in place for conservation in the Southern Group of the Cook Islands	Cook Islands Marine Park (CIMP) declared as protected, but with no legal designation or active management	1.1 million sq. km. of CIMP legally designated and actively managed, with dedicated staff implementing planning and coordination of the entire CIMP by end of year 2		<p>Whole of Cook Islands EEZ is now under CIMP and the Marae Moana Bill 2017 is in parliament waiting to be passed. The CIMP has been expanded to include the entire Cook Islands EEZ of 1.9 million square kilometres. The Marae Moana Park Policy has been completed and endorsed by Cabinet in May 2016.</p> <p>A 50 nautical mile buffer zone around (all) islands was endorsed in March 2017 for domestic fishing.</p>
	Area of inhabited Outer Islands in Southern Group managed for BD conservation through Island Development Plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrestrial • Marine 	0 0	By end of project: 6 islands totalling 15,110 ha. 6 islands totalling 16,174 ha.		These targets are still realistic, and achievable, it requires more communication and support to both Outer Island coordinator based at the Office of the Prime Minister and the Pa enua Island Administrators themselves. The ability to have measures for area coverage in targets is still achievable currently but may need some technical expertise to verify these targets.
	Tracking Tool IW1: Innovative solutions implemented for reduced pollution, improved water use efficiency, sustainable fisheries with rights-based management, IWRM, water supply protection in SIDS, and aquifer and catchment protection	Limited local capacity exists for overseeing and monitoring of water quality in lagoons	Water quality improved through small demonstrations and monitoring mechanisms in place for project related indicators		Water quality testing by MMR and NES is operational only on Rarotonga and Aitutaki on a monthly basis. Water for Rarotonga is currently managed by Infrastructure Cook islands. They have the mandate for this operation. Respective outer islands have their island administration who manage these

					<p>resources with technical support from ICI.</p> <p>Planning and consultation with the Aitutaki Island Council has proceeded well with agreement reached for NES, MMR and the ADB/GoCI GHD Project to align and collaborate on the development of the Aitutaki Lagoon Master Plan.</p> <p>Many partners are engaged in different activities on different islands under this project: it may pay to review this during the MTR.</p>
The progress of the objective can be described as:		Off track			
Outcome 1:	Strengthening Protected Areas Management				
	Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target level at end of project	Level at 30 June 2016	Cumulative progress since project start
	Improved management effectiveness of Cook Islands Marine Park, as measured by GEF BD 1 Tracking Tool (METT)	METT score = 30	METT score > 60 by end of project		<p>Establishing Marae Moana Office within the Office of the Prime Minister would create opportunities for this indicator.</p> <p>Work is progressing, from Marae Moana Policy to the Marae Moana Act 2017: this may need some revision.</p>
	National agencies responsible for PA management are effectively delivering PA management functions (as measured by the Capacity development indicator score for protected area system): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systemic • Institutional • Individual 	50% 47% 52%	By end of project: 70% 70% 70%		<p>Currently, baseline levels have not changed dramatically but may progress towards the 70% end of project target as the Marae Moana Act is implemented and becomes fully functional.</p> <p>Institutional authority has been considered by the project and Protected Areas coordination is a major undertaking as this is spread across several ministries, NES, MMR, and the House of Ariki, TIS. Some technical support has been sought to</p>

					harmonise these activities and better coordinate efforts of all involved. The placement and mandate of Protected Areas has waited on the development and endorsement of the Marae Moana (Cook Islands Marine Park) Policy and Bill. Once this is in place, the need for a Protect Areas Policy and/or necessary regulatory changes will be considered.
	Updated and consolidated legal framework for management of the Cook Islands Marine Park (CIMP) and all other protected areas in the country	Existing legislation for PAs is out-dated and incomplete: CIMP and Ra'ui systems have no legal standing; detailed regulations are not in place	Protected and Managed Areas Act drafted and enacted by end of year 2; detailed regulations for resource restrictions and PA management enacted by end of project		Marae Moana Policy has been endorsed and awaiting the Marae Moana Bill 2017 to be considered/passed in Parliament. Parliament sitting was much delayed due to reasons beyond agencies' control and did not sit from 2016 until July 2017. Parliament is now currently in session with the Marae Moana Bill 2017 prioritised for consideration.
	Consolidated management authority for protected areas in the Cook Islands	Institutional authority for protected areas is spread among various agencies	Marae Moana Office undertaking coordinated management of protected areas by end of project		Marae Moana Policy has been endorsed and now awaits the Marae Moana Bill 2017 to be passed in Parliament, which is currently in session. Coordination to be strengthened, as called for by the Prime Minister Hon. Henry Puna, within the Marae Moana framework to ensure that all activities and partners involved participate actively in the process and its implementation.
	Management of protected area sites on islands in the Southern Group	1 existing protected area site (Takitumu Conservation Area) is actively managed	Management plans for at least 15 protected area sites under implementation by end of project		TOR's are currently being developed for TA's to be able to meet this target. Capacity has been sought for this key indicator and target should be met in time or by end of project.
	% Area of Southern Group islands managed as Protected Areas (protected natural areas, community conservation areas, ra'ui sites) • Terrestrial	2.8% 9.7%	By end of project: 6.7% 12.3%		This indicator and target should be met as there have been some new terrestrial and marine protected areas and Raui sites.

	• Marine (to the outer reef)				Consolidating of all terrestrial and marine information will need to be done by the R2R team during 2017.
	Improved management effectiveness of priority conservation zones, as measured by the GEF BD 1 Tracking Tool (METT): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takitumu Conservation Area (Rarotonga) 26 • Cloud Forest Nature Reserve (Rarotonga) 29 • Manuae Wildlife Sanctuary / Marine Reserve (Manuae) • Moko Ero Nui Leeward Forest Reserve (Atiu) • Takutea Wildlife Sanctuary / Marine Reserve (Takutea) 	64 26 12 26 29	By end of project: METT score >70 METT score >50 METT score >40 METT score >50 METT score >50		Work to be done for these priority conservation zones are in progress with management plans to be developed first. Technical assistance is required for this to be completed. TCA is on track with targets that should be met by end of project. Mokoero Nui has been declared as a Forest Reserve and plans are in place to support this PNA. Consultations with Island councils and landowners for Manuae and Takutea have been carried out with plans in place to carry out terrestrial and marine assessments in late 2017, in order to inform management plans., Cloud Forest work will progress based on the outcomes of the IIB Project Cloud Forest report.
	Lagoon ecosystems are managed in a coordinated manner and with clear ecological conservation objective	Lagoons in the Cook Islands are not actively managed for conservation	Aitutaki Lagoon Master Plan in place, with conservation zoning, goals and targets		The Aitutaki Island Council are fully supportive of the ALMP and a coordinated approach between R2R (NES, MMR), Mei te vai ki te Vai (GHD) looking at sanitation in Aitutaki to be conducted in this process. The passing of the Marae Moana Bill will also provide some guidance from this work and vice versa. It is hoped that this effort in Aitutaki can be replicated for the Muri Lagoon Area also.
	Funds available for management of Protected Areas, as reported in the GEF BD1 Tracking	US\$23,800 US\$63,750	By end of project: US\$523,800		It is envisaged that the target will be met if all partners maintain their

	<p>Tool – Financial Scorecard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-governmental financing mechanisms • Government budget allocations 		US\$148,750		<p>support to protected areas within their current budget allocation. With Marae Moana Bill to be passed also provides opportunity for stakeholders to better coordinate funding and efforts. Some technical advice is required for this financial scorecard to ensure that the Cook islands meet its financial obligations to this indicator.</p>
	<p>Conservation of critical coral reef habitat within the CIMP, as measured by finfish populations at coral reefs around Rarotonga and Aitutaki</p>	<p>Baseline TBD in year 1 of project</p>	<p>No decrease in finfish populations by end of project</p>		<p>The baseline for this indicator is yet to be determined. Living Oceans Foundation has completed surveys on Aitutaki and Rarotonga but their full report is awaited.</p> <p>Finfish surveys were planned by MMR in this reporting term; however due to loss of staff, capacity to implement these surveys was affected with delays in recruiting replacements. This has been reprogrammed to commence in late 2017.</p> <p>Planned surveys for Aitutaki Lagoon Master Plan starting in 2nd half of 2017 will provide information for this indicator as team is planning to carry out reef surveys to inform the plan.</p>
	<p>Conservation of priority species at selected sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Turtle (Takutea and Manuae) • Hawksbill turtle (Takutea and Manuae) • Loggerhead Turtle (Palmerston) • Napoleon (Humphead) Wrasse (Rarotonga & Aitutaki) • Atiu Swiftlet (Atiu) • Manganian Kingfisher (Mangaia) • Rarotongan Monarch (Rarotonga & Atiu) • Mitiaro Tree Palm (Mitiaro) 	<p>Baseline TBD in year 1 of project Baseline TBD in year 1 of project Baseline TBD in year 1 of project Baseline TBD in year 1 of project 420 individuals 1,000 individuals 428 individuals (Rarotonga); 125</p>	<p>By end of project: No net decline in population No net decline in population No net decline in population No net decline in population No net decline in population No net decline in population No net decline in</p>		<p>Surveys to determine baseline levels for the Green turtle (<i>Chelonia mydas</i>) and hawksbill turtle (<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>) on Takutea and Manuae and the loggerhead turtle (<i>Caretta caretta</i>) have yet to completed.</p> <p>The baseline level for the Humphead wrasse (<i>Chelinus undulatus</i>) is yet to be determined but the survey by Living Oceans Foundation on Aitutaki and Rarotonga have been completed</p>

		individuals (Atiu) 375 mature trees	population No net decline in population No net decline in forested area		but only a summary of report is available. Project will work with MMR to source information for Rarotonga. MMR and NES are planning joint terrestrial/marine assessments for Takutea and Manuae late 2017 and surveys will inform this indicator. Follow up surveys for the birds (Mangaian kingfisher and Rarotonga monarch) and mitiaro tree palm are forthcoming.
The progress of the objective can be described as:		Off track			
Outcome 2:	Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats within production landscapes				
	Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target level at end of project	Level at 30 June 2016	Cumulative progress since project start
	Landscape/seascape area covered by the project (ha), as measured by GEF BD 2 Tracking Tool • Directly covered • Indirectly covered	0 0	1.1 million sq. km. (CIMP) 0.83 million sq. km. (Northern Group)		Due to the scope of the CIMP being the entire Cook Islands EEZ of 1.9 million square kilometres, it is safe to say that this meets if not exceeds the target. The entire EEZ was put in as a consideration for the CIMP. This will now receive more attention in terms of managing pockets of different activities within the EEZ whether it be for pure conservation, seabed mining and fisheries.
	Pressures from resources uses in the land- and seascape are reduced through Ridge to Reef management approaches, including: • Reduced use of agricultural chemicals, based on value of annual imports • Fertilizers • Pesticides	• NZ\$339,554 • NZ\$406,701	At least 15% reduction in value of imports of agricultural chemicals by the end of the project		The Ministry of Agriculture is still compiling information pertaining to this indicator and target. Some technical expertise may be required for this purpose specifically either from the National Statistics office as well as the Ministry's market survey activities. This is a key area that needs strengthening within the Ministry as it is, National statistics collect data on this as well as customs, there needs to be some agreement between

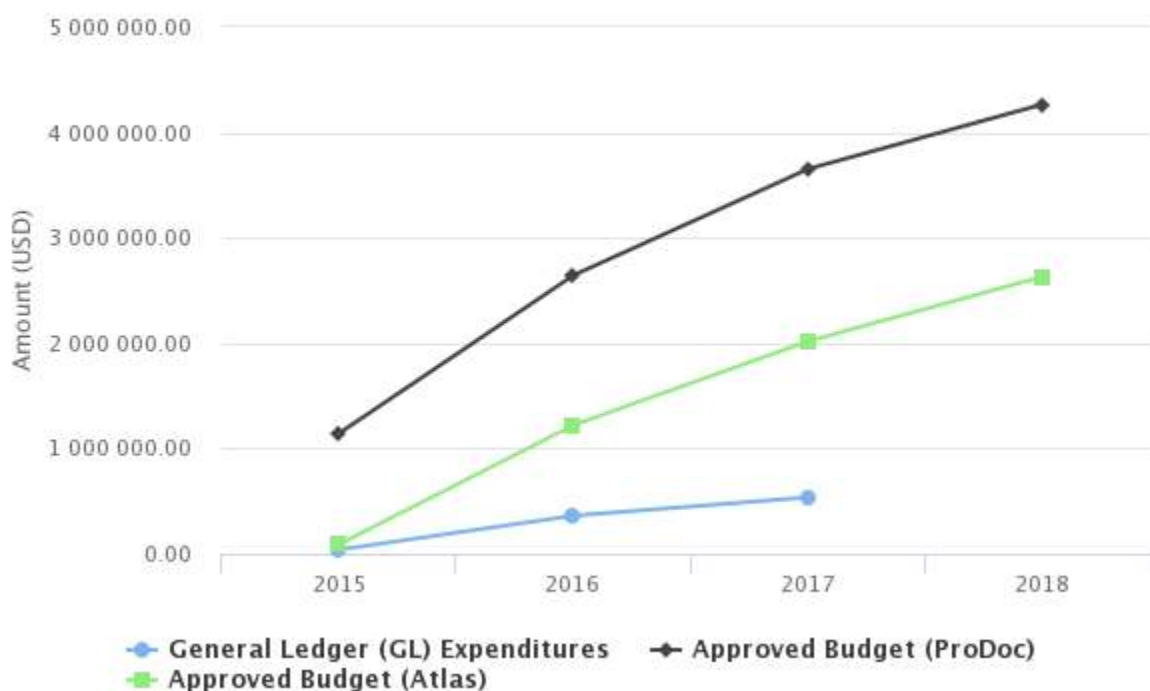
					agencies to be able to access this information to meet their targets.
	Planning approval process for infrastructure and other development	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process depends on self reporting by developers	EIAs for infrastructure development in or around PAs are subject to independent review, and development plans are adapted as necessary to conserve biodiversity		<p>Activities have been carried out to help strengthen the EIA process in the Cook Islands, including through cost shared delivery of a SPREP organised training workshop to all NES Advisory and Compliance officers and capacity development of the Division.</p> <p>Information on EIA applications is currently being inputted into a database within NES. However, further work is needed to develop a policy or make necessary changes to regulations to support additional considerations, such as independent review being given to applications in or around PAs.</p> <p>Further support to the EIA process from the project is planned.</p>
	Forest cover on the 9 islands within the Cook Islands Marine Park	13,245 hectares of natural forested area	No decline in forest cover by the end of the project		This baseline may need to be verified again before end of 2017 to confirm forest cover and the methodology for this assessment. Many of the natural forested areas in the Cook Islands also contain a significant number of invasive species plants and trees which could possibly skew our baselines - as any activity outside the project that positively tackles invasive species will have a negative impact on this indicator.
	Sedimentation and pollution of aquatic and marine habitats	Sedimentation and pollution (pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, waste) have significant negative impacts on	At least 10 sites within CIMP where water quality will be improved through measures to control water pollution and sedimentation (from		Currently only Rarotonga and Aitutaki have consistent water quality testing with monthly reports available upon request from MMR. NES is the only other partner supporting this activity. Ministry of Agriculture is also working in tandem with MMR for testing of

		streams and lagoons in the country	agriculture or other sources)		both soil and water runoff on Rarotonga to test for effects of pesticides and fertilizers if any. There is an opportunity to strengthen water quality testing under the national water policy 2015 for more tests to be done by other agencies. Ministry of Health carry out water testing to be safe enough to drink but only on Rarotonga at this time. Project will endeavor to coordinate with responsible agencies to conduct testing and identify/implement control measures in other sites in the coming year.
	Reduced impacts of human activities on land on the health of inshore marine ecosystems, as measured by algal levels (coralline algae, turf algae, and macro-algae) on coral reefs around Rarotonga and Aitutaki	Baseline TBD during year 1 of project	No increase in algal levels on coral reefs by end of project		This is an outstanding indicator and one that may need some further technical support or advice, particularly in accurately measuring algal levels within lagoons. There is opportunity that the Aitutaki Lagoon Master plan will also be able to inform this indicator for the project. Project will collaborate with responsible agencies to collate/collect information on algal levels around Rarotonga
	Impact of tourism businesses on biodiversity and ecosystem functioning in targeted KBAs	Less than 5 tourism businesses in the Cook Islands actively implement environmental management programs	At least 20 tourism businesses are implementing BD management programs that comply with conservation guidelines developed through the project and included in national accreditation system		This target may need to be reviewed and/or the Tourism Council needs to be provided support to identify 20 tourism businesses that are implementing BD management programs and provide some support to them. Currently, two local businesses have applied through Cook Islands Tourism for support to their biodiversity conservation projects, which has been approved by the NBSC for 3rd Q 2017. It is hoped that these two projects can be demonstration models for other tourism operators in country.

					Work on the national accreditation system has not commenced and technical advice in this area to progress this activity may be necessary as well as in engaging businesses in biodiversity conservation.
	# of projects by tourism operators that support biodiversity conservation (e.g. creating Ra'ui sites / CCAs; coral gardens; beach clean-up; sponsored species conservation)	6 on-going projects in the Southern Group	At least 15 projects operating by the end of the project		This is an ideal target and one that can easily be met if the industry can better coordinate their stakeholders to provide information soon. Two projects are identified but may need support to be able to successfully implement and sustain their activities. Support will be provided to CITC to be able to pull this information out so that they can meet the targets they set out in the R2R Prodoc. Capacity is limited so there should be more effort put to supporting the tourism team.
The progress of the objective can be described as:		Off track			

D. Implementation Progress

Cumulative Disbursements



Highcharts.com

Cumulative GL delivery against total approved amount (in prodoc):	12.56%
Cumulative GL delivery against expected delivery as of this year:	14.67%
Cumulative disbursement as of 30 June (note: amount to be updated in late August):	535,913.02

Key Financing Amounts

PPG Amount	150,000
GEF Grant Amount	4267431
Co-financing	14,950,000

Key Project Dates

PIF Approval Date	Jun 14, 2013
CEO Endorsement Date	Feb 23, 2015
Project Document Signature Date (project start date):	Jul 6, 2015
Date of Inception Workshop	Nov 1, 2015
Expected Date of Mid-term Review	Jan 6, 2018
Actual Date of Mid-term Review	(not set or not applicable)
Expected Date of Terminal Evaluation	Jan 6, 2019
Original Planned Closing Date	Jul 5, 2019
Revised Planned Closing Date	(not set or not applicable)

Dates of Project Steering Committee/Board Meetings during reporting period (30 June 2016 to 1 July 2017)

2016-07-05
2017-04-05
2017-01-09
2016-10-05

E. Critical Risk Management

Current Types of Critical Risks	Critical risk management measures undertaken this reporting period
Operational	<p>Poor collaboration between programme partners leads to fragmented approach to protected areas management - Ridge to Reef team to be more proactive in engaging with stakeholders who are involved in their respective areas to drive the implementation of their respective projects. Some working group needs to start activities with one another to share some of the planning load and support each other with their work. Project team will work with responsible agencies to ensure that there is ownership of the project at the national level by engaging the Head of responsible agencies to be present at least one steering committee meeting within a year and then consistent manager level representative at steering committee to improve collaboration across all responsible sectors.</p>
Operational	<p>Delay in implementation of key activities due to loss of staff within implementing partner agencies and inability for some partners to spend quarter funds. This affects other partners ability to request funds disbursement and therefore implementation. All implementing partners have been reminded to create realistic workplans and budgets in line with their ability to deliver activities. Workplans and budgets are being closely scrutinised by the NBSC and the PMU prior to approval as well as close monitoring of financial expenditure during quarters to ensure this situation does not happen again. The project is exploring the option of engaging a Technical Advisor to the Project to fill the capacity gap and support implementation. UNDP will also support the development of TORs and recruitment of some key consultancies to boost project implementation.</p>

F. Adjustments

Comments on delays in key project milestones

Project Manager: please provide comments on delays this reporting period in achieving any of the following key project milestones: inception workshop, mid-term review, terminal evaluation and/or project closure.

Delay of mid-term evaluation is due to availability of consultant, this has now been rescheduled for the 13-24th of November of this year.

Country Office: please provide comments on delays this reporting period in achieving any of the following key project milestones: inception workshop, mid-term review, terminal evaluation and/or project closure.

The mid-term mission for the R2R project is now scheduled for 13-24 November 2017 due to availability of consultant and project team.

UNDP-GEF Technical Adviser: please provide comments on delays this reporting period in achieving any of the following key project milestones: inception workshop, mid-term review, terminal evaluation and/or project closure.

The delay in fixing the MTR is unfortunate: it is as much to do with the unavailability of key persons within PMU and NES as to do with the Consultant's availability. The latter is unavailable in October but was available for much of August and until later in September. There have also been delays in communication and on the part of PMU with regard to finalising the MTR mission with respect to project island sites to visit. Given the logistic challenges of travel between islands, it is important to plan well ahead and one of the benefits of this delay is the additional time afforded to ensure the mission maximises the opportunity to visit sites other than just Raratonga Island. Hopefully, this will be addressed.

G. Ratings and Overall Assessments

Role	2017 Development Objective Progress Rating	2017 Implementation Progress Rating
Project Manager/Coordinator	Moderately Unsatisfactory	<i>- IP Rating provided by UNDP-GEF Technical Adviser and UNDP Country Office only -</i>
Overall Assessment	<p>As the first PIR for the Cook Islands, the project was implemented on the 6 July 2015 and inception workshop was held on the 20 – 21 October 2015. Personnel were brought on board in September of 2015. A mid term review will be undertaken and as the Project Coordinator, the challenges have been manageable to date, however having ranked our efforts as Moderately unsatisfactory there is room to improve. There is technical support required and needed and key targets to achieve within the Strategic Results Framework Much work has been carried out on the ground, its just the need to seek technical expertise to move on more of the activities that are tied to the Project Outcomes and Objectives to ensure that it is going to be achieved. Delivery at this point is low due to many challenges within the workings of the project however there are always opportunities to build this and move forward. The project has suffered delays and setbacks in implementation due to institutional arrangements not only for financial arrangements and reporting but also implementation of activities of the project. Measures have been taken and are continuously being taken given the breadth of coverage as well as the diverse personalities within other implementing partners. UNDP has been a great partner offering support especially with technical expertise or for the provision of the development of TORs as well as procurement of technical assistance to provide implementation support to the project. Our project team need to monitor and ensure that the activities under MMR, House of Ariki, MOA and CIT are in line with the targets of the project. Outcomes of these measures should become apparent in the end of Quarter 3 as well as be reflected in the mid-term review of the project. The implementation progress is rated as moderately unsatisfactory the cumulative financial delivery of the project is at \$535,913 (13%) of the \$4.2 million grant for this project as well the implementation issues faced by the project. The outcome of the mid-term will also provide some recommendation for the remaining duration of the project. As project coordinator, it remains a challenge for our team, however there is now efforts being given by our implementing partners to see how best to take this forward.</p>	
Role	2017 Development Objective Progress Rating	2017 Implementation Progress Rating
UNDP Country Office Programme Officer	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory
Overall Assessment	<p>This is the first PIR for the Cook Islands R2R project as the project started implementation on the 6 July 2015 and inception workshop was held on the 20 – 21 October 2015. The project comprises of the following 2 components and 6 outputs;</p> <p>Component 1: Strengthening Protected Areas Management</p> <p>Outcome 1.1 Strengthened legal/regulatory and policy frameworks for Protected Areas</p> <p>Outcome 1.2 Expanded and strengthened management systems for Protected Areas</p> <p>Outcome 1.3 Strengthened institutional coordination and capacities at the national and local levels for the participatory management of Protected Areas</p> <p>Outcome 1.4 Financial sustainability framework developed for system of Protected areas</p> <p>Component 2: Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats within production landscapes</p> <p>Outcome 2.1 Ridge to Reef approaches integrated into Land Use and Development Planning</p>	

	<p>Outcome 2.2 Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into agriculture sector Outcome 2.3 Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into tourism sector</p> <p>The duration of the project is four years and it is now in its 2nd year of implementation. A mid-term will be undertaken in 2nd half of 2017. Progress towards meeting the development objective has been rated as moderately unsatisfactory within this reporting phase. Under Outcome 1, the whole of the Cook Islands EEZ has been declared under the Cook Island Marine Park and the Marae Moana Bill 2017 is awaiting enactment by parliament. The review and enactment of other legislation, policy and regulation such as the fisheries regulation and enact regulation of transport of pesticides has have not started. The studies to inform the development of management plans protected areas and Aitutaki lagoon master have not started, although consultations have taken place and the studies are now planned to start in 2nd half of 2017 for Aitutaki and NES is collaborating with UNDP on the development of TORs for development of management plans. The baselines for critical coral habitats as well as priority species for conservation within the CIMP have not been determined but plans are in place for this work to commence in the 2nd half of 2017. Under Outcome 2 indicator 1 is more or less met with the declaration of the entire Cook Islands EEZ of 1.9 million sq.km under the Cook Islands Marine Park. Under indicator 2 the ministry of Agriculture is compiled information but technical expertise is needed to move this activity forward. Work of the EIA process is ongoing with in the National Environment Service. Further surveys on forest cover are planned towards the end of 2017. Under the tourism component 2 local tourism operators have proposed conservation projects that will be supported by project in the 2nd half of 2017. The project has suffered delays in implementation due to institutional arrangements not only for financial arrangements and reporting but also implementation of activities of the project. Measures have been taken in country to resolve these issues and UNDP has also offered to support the project through the development of TORs as well as procurement of technical assistance to provide implementation support to the project. The project team will need to monitor and ensure that the activities under MMR, House of Ariki, MOA and CIT are in line with the targets of the project. Outcomes of these measures should become apparent in the next half of 2017 at the Q3 quarterly meeting and reporting as well as the mid-term review of the project. The implementation progress is rated as moderately unsatisfactory the cumulative financial delivery of the project is at \$535,913 (13%) of the \$4.2 million grant for this project as well the implementation issues faced by the project. The outcome of the mid-term will also provide some recommendation for the remaining duration of the project.</p>	
Role	2017 Development Objective Progress Rating	2017 Implementation Progress Rating
GEF Operational Focal point		<i>- IP Rating provided by UNDP-GEF Technical Adviser and UNDP Country Office only -</i>
Overall Assessment		
Role	2017 Development Objective Progress Rating	2017 Implementation Progress Rating
Project Implementing Partner	Moderately Unsatisfactory	<i>- IP Rating provided by UNDP-GEF Technical Adviser and UNDP Country Office only -</i>
Overall Assessment	<p>See also risk and mitigation descriptions in the Adjustments section.</p> <p>The project has thus far suffered from the revised institutional arrangements for financial expenditure and reporting since this arrangement was first put in place during the first year of the project. It was recognised then that it was not an ideal arrangement for NES as the agency responsible for the reporting and implementation of this project however a compromise was needed and the separate bulk funding arrangements for NES and MMR was that compromise. This arrangement has lead to an excessive amount of time spent by the Project Coordinator, the Project Manager and in particular the Project Finance and Administration Officer, in training partner focal points in UNDP reporting requirements, creating templates to ease the reporting burden, reconciling and correcting expenditure, developing realistic budgets etc. The amount of work that has gone into this area has meant less focus on actual activity implementation</p>	

	which is reflected in the low spend to date. Limited capacity and knowledge of R2R approaches and protected area management has also impacted delivery at the technical and strategic level. Loss of staff and limited number of staff within the implementing partner agencies has not helped the project and outsourcing project deliverables has had to be considered along with the need for a Technical Advisor. Delays to the commencement of the Post Graduate Training Programme delivered through SPC have also contributed.	
Role	2017 Development Objective Progress Rating	2017 Implementation Progress Rating
Other Partners		- IP Rating provided by UNDP-GEF Technical Adviser and UNDP Country Office only -
Overall Assessment		
Role	2017 Development Objective Progress Rating	2017 Implementation Progress Rating
UNDP-GEF Technical Adviser	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory
Overall Assessment	<p>The project's Development Objective is rated as Moderately Unsatisfactory because progress to June 2017 is sufficiently off track for it to be expected to only partially achieve its end-of-project targets by project closure (5 July 2019), with significant shortcomings. Project results might be fully achieved by project closure if major adaptive management is undertaken immediately. The MTR, which commenced in September and is scheduled for a mission to Cook Islands starting on 13 November 2017, is particularly timely and will be identifying suitable adaptive management measures to enable the project get back on track in the light of this PIR and its own findings.</p> <p>The project's Implementation Progress is rated as Moderately Unsatisfactory because of significant implementation issues that need to be resolved this year in order to meet project targets by the closure date (5 July 2019). Key issues relate to financial delivery and the management of critical risks. The former is clearly illustrated by the cumulative expenditure of the project's budget to June 2017, with only 12.6% of the approved budget (ProDoc) having been spent and a widening gap between cumulative expenditure and cumulative approved budget for this reporting period (July 2016 - June 2017). The latter comprises two critical operational risks identified in this PIR: weak internal coordination between implementing partners (representing key sectors, specifically agriculture, marine and tourism); and implementation delays due to loss of staff among implementing partners, with knock-on effects across the project resulting in paralysis of implementation of other activities due to the overall lack of disbursement of funds. A further concern noted here is that the limited cooperation and coordination among implementing partners erodes the integrity of any Ridge-to-Reef approach and is potentially leading to geographically fragmented interventions by the partners, undermining the opportunity to enhance ecosystem functioning, which underpins biodiversity conservation, food security and livelihood prosperity (the project's objective).</p> <p>Another important consideration is that the scale in which the project is operating has changed significantly. The project originated in response to the newly created Cook Islands Marine Park (Marae Moana) established in August 2012 and encompassing 1.1 million square kilometres of the country's southern Exclusive Economic Zone (over 50% of the country's EEZ). It was designed to enhance the Cook Islands' capacities to effectively manage its protected area estate and sustainably manage its productive landscapes at local scales, while engineering a paradigm shift in the management of marine and terrestrial PA sites from a site centric to a holistic "ridge to reef" management approach, whereby activities in the immediate production landscapes adjacent to marine and terrestrial protected areas will be managed to reduce threats to biodiversity stemming from key production activities (tourism and agriculture). Since then, the CIMP has been extended to include the Northern Group of islands and cover the entire 1.9 million square kilometre EEZ (the world's largest multiple-use marine park), all of which has since been legally designated under the long-awaited Maraе Moana Act on 12 July 2017. A further important provision of this Act is the establishment of marine protected areas extending 50 nautical miles around</p>	

	<p>each of its 15 islands (http://www.maraemoana.gov.ck/index.php). While this project does not have the resources to extend its on the ground activities to the Northern Group of Islands, it will be important for it institutional development, capacity building, training and knowledge management elements cover their interests wherever possible.</p>
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All of the above considerations, both challenges and opportunities, should be examined further during the forthcoming MTR.

H. Gender

Progress in Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

This information is used in the UNDP-GEF Annual Performance Report, UNDP-GEF Annual Gender Report, reporting to the UNDP Gender Steering and Implementation Committee and for other internal and external communications and learning.

Has a gender analysis been carried out this reporting period? Please note that all projects approved in GEF-6 (1 July 2014 through 30 June 2018) are required to carry out a gender analysis.
No
If a gender analysis was carried out what were the findings?
NIL
Does this project specifically target woman or girls as direct beneficiaries?
No
Please specify results achieved this reporting period that focus on increasing gender equality and improving the empowerment of women.
Results reported can include site-level results working with local communities as well as work to integrate gender considerations into national policies, strategies and planning. Please explain how the results reported addressed the different needs of men or women, changed norms, values, and power structures, and/or contributed to transforming or challenging gender inequalities and discrimination.
NIL
[RTA notes that gender equality is something that the MTR will examine to identify existing or potential issues and identify opportunities to address them. National and local context is particularly important in the Cook Is, a key point being that women are well represented in many roles requiring leadership and decision-making. This is especially evident at middle management levels, for example in National Environment Services most of the office staff are women.]

I. Communicating Impact

<p>Tell us the story of the project focusing on how the project has helped to improve people's lives. (This text will be used for UNDP corporate communications, the UNDP-GEF website, and/or other internal and external knowledge and learning efforts.)</p>
<p>The project, now in its second year, has improved people's lives by providing a reminder if you will on the responsibility of us as guardians of the natural environment. Cook islanders have a natural affinity towards the natural environment, as reflected in our culture, songs and dances including art and story telling. Traditions and knowledge are passed through these mediums. The concept of 'information is power' rings true and the project is focusing on providing more information leading to biodiversity conservation, using what the people already practice or know of from their culture and language, as well as from legends and stories and how we have come to have the resources from Ridge to Reef still with us today.</p>
<p>What is the most significant change that has resulted from the project this reporting period? (This text will be used for internal knowledge management in the respective technical team and region.)</p>
<p>The most significant change that is clear concerns the other implementing partners such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Cook Islands Tourism, who are both production landscape partners trying to incorporate biodiversity conservation into their workspace within the space of the two years that we have been implementing the project. The appreciation of their contribution has been realized and needs to be further enhanced as this is a key milestone or change to their work activities. Being given the opportunity to adopt biodiversity conservation into their work programme with not only tourists but also with the Tourism industry has given them a stronger foundation that they too can support Ridge to Reef objectives and outcomes through their efforts and still continue to develop the industry.</p>
<p>Describe how the project supported South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation efforts in the reporting year. (This text will be used for internal knowledge management within the respective technical team and region.)</p>
<p>N/A</p>
<p>[RTA notes that this should be examined and explored further in the forthcoming MTR.]</p>

Project Links and Social Media

<p>Please include: project's website, project page on the UNDP website, Adaptation Learning Mechanism (UNDP-ALM) platform, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, as well as hyperlinks to any media coverage of the project, for example, stories written by an outside source. Please upload any supporting files, including photos, videos, stories, and other documents using the 'file upload' button in the top right of the PIR.</p>
<p>Facebook - @nationalenvironmentservices Ministry of Marine Resources - @MinistryofMarine Ministry of Agriculture - @cookislandsagriculture Cook Islands Tourism Corporation - @theCookIslands Website – www.environment.gov.ck Climate Change Cook Islands - @sriccookislands</p> <p>Video hyperlinks to CITC :- Water Use: https://www.facebook.com/nationalenvironmentservices/videos/464595013898155/ Sanitation: https://www.facebook.com/nationalenvironmentservices/videos/464591813898475/ Rubbish: https://www.facebook.com/nationalenvironmentservices/videos/463551597335830/</p> <p>Inland: https://www.facebook.com/nationalenvironmentservices/videos/463546264003030/ Lagoon: https://www.facebook.com/nationalenvironmentservices/videos/463542770670046/ Opener: https://www.facebook.com/nationalenvironmentservices/videos/463537560670567/</p>

J. Partnerships

Give the name of the partner(s), and describe the partnership, recent notable activities and any innovative aspects of the work. Please do not use any acronyms. (limit = 2000 characters).
 This information is used to get a better understanding of the work GEF-funded projects are doing with key partners, including the GEF Small Grants Programme, indigenous peoples, the private sector, and other partners. Please list the full names of the partners (no acronyms please) and summarize what they are doing to help the project achieve its objectives. The data may be used for reporting to GEF Secretariat, the UNDP-GEF Annual Performance Report, UNDP Corporate Communications, posted on the UNDP-GEF website, and for other internal and external knowledge and learning efforts. The RTA should view and edit/elaborate on the information entered here. All projects must complete this section. Please enter "N/A" in cells that are not applicable to your project.

Civil Society Organisations/NGOs
The project has worked with some key partners such as Te Ipukarea Society, Takitumu Conservation Area, in the implementation of some of the key activities during this time period. Certain key individuals have also been engaged in supporting the work of the project. There are many other partners looking to come on board at the end of this year to see how they could also support the objectives of the project in ways that can be aligned to their own work and priorities.
Indigenous Peoples
The project is partnering with the House Ariki who houses all the Traditional chiefs in the Cook Islands, the support given to this partner is by way of promoting the appointment of a Raii Coordinator to reinforce their traditional agenda of raising awareness on Protected Areas management. They too also provide advice to the project as required, especially as the Pa Enea (Outer Islands) have different planning and management mechanisms aside from local government that also govern their support to the project. Local communities have been engaged in the consultation for the R2R project and have been involved in key activities during implementation.
Private Sector
The Chamber of Commerce is the business arm of commercial enterprise in the Cook Islands; it has provided advice to other implementing partners on the best practices components, as well as how to better reach out to the business sector to get buy in to the objectives of this Ridge to Reef project. A list of experts have been compiled by the Chamber of Commerce to be able to provide advice and support to the project ,as needed by any of the implementing partners.
GEF Small Grants Programme
N/A
Other Partners
Cook Islands Natural Heritage is a standalone organisation that is supported by the National Environment Services. The project has utilized and developed a great working relationship with Gerald McCormack, as the manager as well as the current facilitator of the Cook Islands Biodiversity Database. Ministry of Culture has given library space and support to the project for information repository options. The University of the South Pacific also has been keen to participate, as required, in sharing information.

K. Grievances

Environmental or Social Grievance

This section must be completed by the UNDP Country Office if a grievance related to the environmental or social impacts of this project was addressed this reporting period. It is very important that the questions are answered fully and in detail. If no environmental or social grievance was addressed this reporting period then please do not answer the following questions. If more than one grievance was addressed, please answer the following questions for the most significant grievance only and explain the other grievance(s) in the comment box below. The RTA should review and edit/elaborate on the information entered here. RTAs are not expected to answer these questions separately.

What environmental or social issue was the grievance related to?
How would you rate the significance of the grievance?
Please describe the on-going or resolved grievance noting who was involved, what action was taken to resolve the grievance, how much time it took, and what you learned from managing the grievance process (maximum 500 words). If more than one grievance was addressed this reporting period, please explain the other grievance (s) here.
None

L. Annex - Ratings Definitions

Development Objective Progress Ratings Definitions

(HS) Highly Satisfactory: Project is on track to exceed its end-of-project targets, and is likely to achieve transformational change by project closure. The project can be presented as 'outstanding practice'.

(S) Satisfactory: Project is on track to fully achieve its end-of-project targets by project closure. The project can be presented as 'good practice'.

(MS) Moderately Satisfactory: Project is on track to achieve its end-of-project targets by project closure with minor shortcomings only.

(MU) Moderately Unsatisfactory: Project is off track and is expected to partially achieve its end-of-project targets by project closure with significant shortcomings. Project results might be fully achieved by project closure if adaptive management is undertaken immediately.

(U) Unsatisfactory: Project is off track and is not expected to achieve its end-of-project targets by project closure. Project results might be partially achieved by project closure if major adaptive management is undertaken immediately.

(HU) Highly Unsatisfactory: Project is off track and is not expected to achieve its end-of-project targets without major restructuring.

Implementation Progress Ratings Definitions

(HS) Highly Satisfactory: Implementation is exceeding expectations. Cumulative financial delivery, timing of key implementation milestones, and risk management are fully on track. The project is managed extremely efficiently and effectively. The implementation of the project can be presented as 'outstanding practice'.

(S) Satisfactory: Implementation is proceeding as planned. Cumulative financial delivery, timing of key implementation milestones, and risk management are on track. The project is managed efficiently and effectively. The implementation of the project can be presented as 'good practice'.

(MS) Moderately Satisfactory: Implementation is proceeding as planned with minor deviations. Cumulative financial delivery and management of risks are mostly on track, with minor delays. The project is managed well.

(MU) Moderately Unsatisfactory: Implementation is not proceeding as planned and faces significant implementation issues. Implementation progress could be improved if adaptive management is undertaken immediately. Cumulative financial delivery, timing of key implementation milestones, and/or management of critical risks are significantly off track. The project is not fully or well supported.

(U) Unsatisfactory: Implementation is not proceeding as planned and faces major implementation issues and restructuring may be necessary. Cumulative financial delivery, timing of key implementation milestones, and/or management of critical risks are off track with major issues and/or concerns. The project is not fully or well supported.

(HU) Highly Unsatisfactory: Implementation is seriously under performing and major restructuring is required. Cumulative financial delivery, timing of key implementation milestones (e.g. start of activities), and management of critical risks are severely off track with severe issues and/or concerns. The project is not effectively or efficiently supported.