

# **Cook Islands Ridge to Reef End-of-Project Performance Report**

**Prepared for UNDP and Ridge to Reef Project**

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

BD	Biodiversity
BDDT	Biodiversity Tracking Tool
CCA	Community Conserved Area
CCCI	Climate Change Cook Islands
CDS	Capacity development scorecard
CIMP	Cook Islands Marine Park
CIT	Cook Islands Tourism Corporation
CNAR	Capacity Needs Assessment Report
CTA	Chief Technical Adviser
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EoP	End-of-Project
FAD	Fish aggregating device
FY	Financial year
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GCI	Government of Cook Islands
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic information system
HoM	Head of Ministry
IMSP	Island Marine Spatial Plan ( <i>synonymous with Inshore Marine Spatial Plan</i> )
ICI	Infrastructure Cook Islands
IEA	Island Environment Authorities
IW	International waters
IWTT	International Waters Tracking Tool
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KBA	Key Biodiversity Area
KPIs	Key performance indicators
L2BL	Lessons to be learned
Marae Moana	Cook Islands Maori term for the Cook Islands marine estate; means 'Our nourishing source of life; respected, cared for and used wisely, today and for generations to come'.
MMCO	Marae Moana Coordination Office
MESV	Marine ecosystem services valuation
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MMR	Ministry of Marine Reserves
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoH	Ministry of Health
MFEM	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management

MoT	Ministry of Transport
MPA	Marine protected area
MSP	Marine spatial plan
MTEC	Mana Tiaki Eco Certification program
MTR	Mid-term review
NBSP	National Biodiversity Steering Committee
NEP	National Environment Policy
NES	National Environment Service
NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
NGO	Non-government Organisation
nm	nautical miles
NRM	Natural resources management
NSDP	National Sustainable Development Plan
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PA	Protected area
PAMP	Protected Areas Management Policy
PACS	Protected Areas Classification System
PMU	Project Management Unit
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
Ra'ui	traditional form of resource management and conservation as used in Cook Islands
R2R	Ridge to Reef
SBMA	Seabed Minerals Authority
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SOE	State Owned Enterprise
SPREP	Secretariat of Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SRF	Strategic results framework
SUMA	Significant, unique marine area
SWOT	Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
TBD	To be determined
TCA	Takitumu Conservation Area
TE	Terminal evaluation
TIS	Te Ipukarea Society
ToR	Terms of reference
TTV	To Tatou Vai
TTs	Tracking Tools
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDP MCO	UNDP Multi Country Office

## Executive summary

The Cook Islands Ridge-to-Reef (R2R) project started in July 2015 upon signature of the project document and was originally intended to be completed and close in July 2019. However, approval was provided in early 2019 for a no-cost project extension to 6 January 2021. In December 2020, UNDP and Global Environment Facility (GEF) approved a further no-cost extension of five months due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated impacts on project implementation. The project closure date is 6 June 2021.

This report aims to:

- Undertake a quantitative and qualitative performance assessment of the project in achieving key performance indicator (KPI) targets as set in the Strategic Results Framework (SRF).
- Apply a mixed methods assessment approach to identify lessons to be learned from R2R: what was done well, what needs some refinement, and what should be discontinued.
- Compile a comprehensive register of resources (*knowledge library*) produced through R2R support.
- Act as a major resource and input to the UNDP Terminal Evaluation (TE).

## Performance assessment

By end-of-project (EoP), overall performance results are anticipated as follows:

- 14 KPIs (41%) where target is achieved or exceeded.
- 13 KPIs (38%) where target is partially achieved.
- Seven (7) KPIs (21%) where the target is not achievable (due to no baseline and/or indicator being poorly designed).

From a purely quantitative perspective, these are modest results. However, this report emphasises that consideration of target completion rates alone is misleading as not all indicators and targets are of equal importance, consequence and durability. Very substantial progress and achievements have been made in high impact areas, notably:

- Legal designation, active management, research, marine spatial planning, and improved management effectiveness of Marae Moana (Cook Islands Marine Park).
- Establishment of an extensive network of legislated MPAs (over 135,000km<sup>2</sup> in area).
- Development of a Protected Areas Classification System (PACS) and a comprehensive protected and managed areas inventory.

These achievements will be sustained beyond R2R and will be an enduring legacy of the project.

Despite this, the desired outcomes remains incomplete and at EoP will be only partially achieved; substantial pieces of work remain incomplete. Elsewhere, progress has been slow and tangible evidence of action for some activities is lacking.

This report attributes performance shortcomings to three important factors: **firstly**, extended delays in actioning the necessary planning and implementation of KPIs under Outcome #1; **secondly**, major capacity gaps in the Project Management Unit (PMU) (especially in technical, project management, procurement and contracting skills) and failure to mobilise consultants (and therefore capacity) until very late in the project lifecycle; and **thirdly**, having 21% of KPIs assessed as 'not achievable' due to there being no baseline and/or the indicator being poorly designed.

## Lessons to be learned

Using a mixed methods approach, the report documents *lessons identified* or *lessons to be learned* from the implementation of R2R, and reinforces that it is only where identified lessons are acted on and changes made, are lessons learned.

Strategic, high-level lessons and recommendations, those that had most consequence for the project, are identified against the following key themes:

- Project design
- Strategic Results Framework
- Capacity of Project Management Unit
- Procurement and contracting of consultants (including procurement activity and progress, and use of government and UNDP systems)
- Effectiveness of project implementation partners (including activity management, and decentralisation of staff and financial management)
- Cross-sectoral partnerships and collaboration
- Governance (including Project Steering Committee and PMU performance and oversight).

### **Knowledge library**

R2R commissioned a significant number of reports and other resources. Collectively, these resources are an important knowledge resource for the Cook Islands. Major outputs are identified and organised by the two major outcomes of the project and then by broad thematic area.

### **Summary of recommendations**

The recommendations made throughout this report are listed below:

- Recommendation #1: Through project design, ensure project scope is narrowed and more tightly focused on fewer issues, that projects are as simple as possible, have stronger coherence, and fewer interested parties and stakeholders.
- Recommendation # 2: Thoroughly review - and change where needed – the SRF and its KPIs and targets, during the design stage (by UNDP) and again during inception (by both UNDP and PMU).
- Recommendation # 3: Procure and mobilise a long-term Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) as the key technical and management resource for the project. This position would have flexible work inputs throughout the life of the project (inception to closure) including surge capacity to coincide with peak periods of activity.
- Recommendation # 4: Fully explore the two approaches towards management of project-funded staff (outposted and placed in partner agencies versus centralised and attached to the PMU); carefully consider the benefits and risks of both approaches.
- Recommendation # 5: Senior management of NES (as project execution agency) should be hands-on and actively monitor and manage the performance of Project Management Unit (PMU) staff.
- Recommendation # 6: Introduce annual activity agreements, jointly developed between the PMU and partner agency, and signed-off by the Director NES and relevant Head of Ministry, as the main tool to identify project-funded activities and to improve accountability and alignment of activities with broader project objectives and outcomes.
- Recommendation # 7: Use Cook Islands Government systems and processes for all project procurement and contracting. The only exception should be those positions where a higher level of contractual independence from the project itself is required (ie. MTR, terminal evaluation); in these cases, UNDP processes should be used.
- Recommendation # 8: For large, complex, high value projects, establish a separate standalone Project Steering Committee with terms of reference centred on high-level decision making, strategic management, and cross-agency collaboration.

- Recommendation # 9: For future GEF project proposals, and other suitable development projects, give high priority to inclusion of the following key outputs that were commenced under R2R but not completed:
  - Protected Areas Management Policy (PAMP)
  - Protected Areas Classification System (PACS)
  - Marae Moana marine spatial planning (MSP) and application of zoning scheme
  - Establishment of Rarotonga Cloud Forest and Manuae Island as protected areas.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Project outline

The Cook Islands Ridge to Reef (R2R) project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in partnership with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Cook Islands Government. The project aims to enhance the capacity of the Cook Islands to effectively manage its protected areas and sustainably manage its productive landscapes at local scales while considering food security and livelihoods. This includes the operationalisation of the Marae Moana and the establishment and strengthening of various forms of protected and locally managed areas including protected natural areas, community conservation areas, and ra'ui sites.

In so doing, the project will support the Cook Islands in maintaining traditional resource management and conservation systems and approaches. This includes a lead role for traditional and local leaders, and the local communities they represent, in the identification, declaration and management of protected areas, while also integrating these traditional systems into a formal legal and institutional system of protected areas.

The project will support the Government in tailoring policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks to suit the specific characteristics of the Cook Islands and of the Marae Moana, recognising that protection and sustainable use will need to be zoned and planned carefully, and that tenure over most land areas is vested in local communities through traditional tenure systems.

The project has been designed to engineer a paradigm shift in the management of marine and terrestrial protected areas - from a site centric approach to a holistic 'ridge to reef' management approach, whereby tourism and agriculture activities in production landscapes adjacent to marine and terrestrial protected areas will be managed to reduce threats to biodiversity.

The project started in July 2015 and was originally intended to be completed in July 2019. However, approval was provided for a no-cost project extension to 6 June 2021.

The Cook Islands National Environment Service (NES) is the lead executing agency for R2R, responsible for project management, coordination and collaboration with implementation partners.

The project has seven outputs:

- Output 1.1: Strengthened legal / regulatory and policy frameworks for protected areas
- Output 1.2: Expanded and strengthened management systems for protected areas
- Output 1.3: Strengthened institutional coordination and capacities at the national and local levels for the participatory management of protected areas
- Output 1.4: Financial sustainability framework developed for system of protected areas
- Output 2.1: Ridge to Reef approaches integrated into land use and development planning
- Output 2.2: Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into agriculture sector
- Output 2.3: Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into tourism sector.

### 1.2 Aims

This report aims to:

- Undertake a quantitative and qualitative performance assessment of the project in achieving key performance indicator (KPI) targets as set in the Strategic Results Framework (SRF).
- Apply a mixed methods assessment approach to identify lessons to be learned from R2R: what was done well, what needs some refinement, and what should be discontinued.
- Compile a comprehensive register of resources (*knowledge library*) produced through R2R support.
- Act as a major resource and input to the UNDP Terminal Evaluation (TE).

### 1.3 Structure of this document

This report is structured as follows:

**Section 1 Introduction:** R2R project overview, report aims and structure.

**Section 2 Project performance assessment:** assessment and analysis of the end-of-project performance against the 34 key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets in the R2R strategic results framework (SRF).

**Section 3 Lessons to be learned (L2BL):** lessons identified or lessons to be learned from the implementation of R2R. If acted on, and changes made, then these would be lessons learned from the project.

**Section 4 Knowledge library:** identification of the major outputs produced through R2R interventions; outputs are organised by the two major outcomes of the project and then by broad thematic area.

## 2. Project performance assessment

### 2.1 Assessment approach

The following sections include an assessment of end-of-project (EoP) status for each of the KPIs in the R2R Strategic Results Framework. There are three completion status categories.

1. By EoP, target will be achieved or exceeded (target achieved).
2. By EoP, target will not be achieved in full (target partially achieved).
3. Not achievable (due to no baseline and/or indicator being poorly designed).

R2R was designed to use **GEF Tracking Tools** (TTs) to establish baselines, set targets and provide the basis for monitoring at key decision points throughout the project lifecycle [mid-term review (MTR) and end of project (EoP)/ terminal evaluation (TE)]. The GEF TTs in use are the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), Financial Scorecard, Biodiversity Tracking Tool (BDTT), and International Waters Tracking Tool (IWTT).

The following KPIs are based on TTs:

#### Outcome #1

- KPI #3: 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 (measured by the IWTT).
- KPI #4: Improved management effectiveness of Cook Islands Marine Park, as measured by GEF BD 1 Tracking Tool (METT).
- KPI #10: Improved management effectiveness of priority conservation zones, as measured by the GEF BD 1 Tracking Tool (METT):
  - KPI #10a: Takitumu Conservation Area (Rarotonga)
  - KPI #10b: Takutea Community Conserved Area (CCA) (Takutea)
  - KPI #10c: Rarotonga Cloud Forest
  - KPI #10d: Manuae Island
  - KPI #10e: Moko'ero Reserve (Atiu)
- KPI #12: Funds available for management of Protected Areas, as reported in the GEF BD1 Tracking Tool – Financial Scorecard:
  - KPI #12a: Non-governmental financing mechanisms
  - KPI #12b: Government budget allocations

## Outcome #2

- KPI #15: Landscape/ seascape area covered by the project (ha), as measured by GEF BD 2 Tracking Tool:
  - KPI #15a Directly covered
  - KPI #15b Indirectly covered

A comprehensive R2R Tracking Tool assessment report is available (Twyford & Weeks 2021); results are incorporated into the R2R Performance Report in the following sections.

The **assessment results** are structured around the two levels in the SRF:

- Project 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 (Section 2.2).
- Outcome<sup>3</sup>:
  - Outcome #1: Strengthening protected areas management (Section 2.3).
  - Outcome #2: Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats within production landscapes (Section 2.4).

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<sup>3</sup> Referred to as 'Components' in ProDoc and SRF.

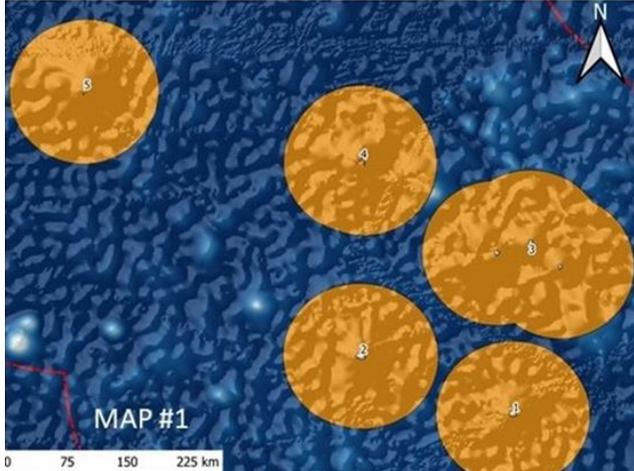
**2.2 Objective: To build national and local capacities and actions to ensure effective conservation of biodiversity, food security and livelihoods and the enhancement of ecosystem functions within the Cook Islands Marine Park**

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>4</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
1	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	1	1.9 million sq. km. of CIMP has been legally designated and is actively managed	<p><b>Target achieved.</b></p> <p>This output was in place and the target achieved upon dedication of the Marae Moana Act 2017 and the establishment of the Marae Moana Coordination Office (MMCO) and staff. The Marae Moana (CIMP) covers all of the Cook Islands' waters of 1.9 million km<sup>2</sup>, thus exceeding the project target of 1.1 million sq. km by a further 72%.</p> <p>The CIMP is being actively managed including through a range of government and R2R-supported policy and planning activities. The 2020 R2R Project Strategy identified there were opportunities for substantial investment into the institutional capacity and knowledge bank for Marae Moana (Cook Islands Marine Park) (outlined in Twyford 2020a). Management activity included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for conduct of Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and Marae Moana Council meetings.</li> <li>• Support for Marae Moana communications.</li> <li>• Establishment of GIS user group and Spatial Information Management Policy, with dedicated division housed at Infrastructure Cook Islands (ICI).</li> <li>• Inshore marine resource assessments of Southern Group islands: Palmerston, Atiu and Takutea, Mitiaro, Aitutaki and Manuae, Mangaia.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Status categories: 1. Target achieved; 2. Target partially achieved; 3. Not achievable (refer Section 2.1).

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>4</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research into and completion of a sustainable financing options report for Marae Moana.</li> <li>• Completion of inaugural draft Marae Moana Outlook Report.</li> <li>• Independent scientific review of the draft Outlook Report as required by the Marae Moana Act 2017. A subsequent process is underway to rewrite the draft report through a new scientific team (final report will be completed before EoP).</li> <li>• Support for Island Marine Spatial Planning (IMSP) workshops held in the outer islands. These were led by House of Ariki, traditional leaders and island governments, including collaboration with other donor partners such as Nia Tero and Conservation International.</li> <li>• Development of a marine spatial planning (MSP) policy paper to inform and guide development of Regulations and amendments to the Act.</li> <li>• Development of special and unique marine areas (SUMA), bioregional assessment, and marine ecosystem services valuation (MESV) reports (key inputs for MSP).</li> <li>• Collection, collation and analysis of substantial spatial data and information management packages as the basis for MSPs.</li> </ul> <p>Beyond the R2R project, significant additional support will be required to Marae Moana Coordination Office (MMCO) and implementation agencies to fully realise legislative commitments, develop MSPs and begin effective operational management of Marae Moana.</p>

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment																																									
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2a	<p>Area of inhabited Outer Islands in Southern Group managed for biodiversity conservation through traditional systems and island bylaws and supported through capacity development of traditional leaders and communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terrestrial</li> </ul>	0 ha	6 islands totalling 15,110 ha.	3	5,942 ha	<p><b>Not achievable</b></p> <p>Significant progress can be reported: 5,942 ha (42.6%) of inhabited Outer Islands in Southern Group is managed for terrestrial biodiversity conservation (Twyford 2021b) but area target will not be met in full.</p> <p>The target indicator is indicative of poor project design as it is beyond what can possibly be achieved. The target of 15,110 ha exceeds the total island area of the six inhabited outer islands in the Southern Group (area is 13,947 ha); this target is unattainable.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Island</th> <th>Area (km<sup>2</sup>)</th> <th>Area (ha) note 1</th> <th>Area of "Protected Areas" (ha) note 2</th> <th>Area of "Protected Areas" (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Palmerston</td> <td>2.5</td> <td>254</td> <td>0</td> <td>0.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Aitutaki</td> <td>18.0</td> <td>1798</td> <td>71</td> <td>3.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mitiaro</td> <td>22.9</td> <td>2287</td> <td>373</td> <td>16.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Atiu</td> <td>28.5</td> <td>2846</td> <td>333</td> <td>11.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mauke</td> <td>19.2</td> <td>1920</td> <td>323</td> <td>16.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mangaia</td> <td>48.4</td> <td>4842</td> <td>4842</td> <td>100.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Sth Group</b></td> <td><b>139.47</b></td> <td><b>13947</b></td> <td><b>5942</b></td> <td><b>42.6</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Note 1. Island areas as per MMCO GIS Officer calculation  Note 2. Source: Cook Islands Protected and Managed Areas Database, PACS (Twyford 2021b)</p>	Island	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Area (ha) note 1	Area of "Protected Areas" (ha) note 2	Area of "Protected Areas" (%)	Palmerston	2.5	254	0	0.0	Aitutaki	18.0	1798	71	3.9	Mitiaro	22.9	2287	373	16.3	Atiu	28.5	2846	333	11.7	Mauke	19.2	1920	323	16.8	Mangaia	48.4	4842	4842	100.0	<b>Sth Group</b>	<b>139.47</b>	<b>13947</b>	<b>5942</b>	<b>42.6</b>
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2b	Area of inhabited Outer Islands in Southern Group managed for biodiversity conservation through traditional systems and island bylaws and supported through	0 ha	6 islands totalling 16,174 ha.	1	13,560,930 ha	<p><b>Target achieved.</b></p> <p>Target exceeded by more than 800x.</p> <p>This has been achieved under the Marae Moana Act 2017 section 24 marine protected areas zone, which extend to 50nm around all islands. The legislated purpose of these MPAs is to protect marine habitats; all large-scale commercial fishing and mining activities are prohibited in these areas.</p>																																								

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment																																			
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	capacity development of traditional leaders and communities <sup>5</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marine</li> </ul>					<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">Area of inhabited outer islands (Southern Group) managed for biodiversity</th> </tr> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Obj ID#</th> <th rowspan="2">Name</th> <th colspan="2">Area managed for biodiversity</th> </tr> <tr> <th>km<sup>2</sup></th> <th>ha</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Mangaia</td> <td>29,427</td> <td>2,942,659</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Rarotonga</td> <td></td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Mauke/Mitiaro/Atiu</td> <td>46,342</td> <td>4,634,204</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Aitutaki</td> <td>30,727</td> <td>3,072,689</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>Palmerston</td> <td>29,114</td> <td>2,911,378</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Total</td> <td>135,609</td> <td>13,560,930</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Maps demonstrate the extent of these MPAs (see below; Rarotonga MPA shown in figure but excluded from statistical analysis as it is not an Outer Island).</p> 	Area of inhabited outer islands (Southern Group) managed for biodiversity				Obj ID#	Name	Area managed for biodiversity		km <sup>2</sup>	ha	1	Mangaia	29,427	2,942,659	2	Rarotonga		0	3	Mauke/Mitiaro/Atiu	46,342	4,634,204	4	Aitutaki	30,727	3,072,689	5	Palmerston	29,114	2,911,378		Total	135,609	13,560,930
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SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>4</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
3	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	1	NA	<p><b>Target achieved.</b></p> <p>Water quality has been improved through small demonstrations and monitoring mechanisms in place for project-related indicators.</p> <p>Cumulative progress towards these IW indicators throughout the life of the project includes the following:</p> <p><b>Indicator: reduced pollution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erosion &amp; Sediment Control Guidelines 2019 were developed by the R2R IW project, which are planned to be brought under the revised Environment Act 2003, demonstrating sustainability and strengthened governance in this area.</li> <li>ICI have replaced many culverts throughout Rarotonga to improve water drainage and reduce lagoon pollution caused by unmanaged storm water.</li> <li>Ministry of Health conduct monthly testing of all public water stations to ensure they are safe for public use and consumption; dated test results are posted at each station. If polluted, the station is closed, and measures are implemented to rectify this. Once the water is again safe to consume, new signage is installed, and monthly tests resume.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator: improved water use efficiency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mana Tiaki Eco Certification scheme under Cook Islands Tourism (CIT) was established by R2R and encourages tourism operators and providers to conserve water; water conservation is an assessment criteria under the scheme.</li> </ul>

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>4</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Island-wide notices and warnings are issued when water is running low in certain areas/intakes so the community can limit their usage.</li> <li>To Tatou Vai (TTV) was set up in 2018 as a State Owned Enterprise (SOE) responsible for managing and maintaining the public water supply on Rarotonga. TTV plan to install water meters at all Rarotonga households and monitor and charge for water use.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator: sustainable fisheries with rights-based management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Island Marine Spatial Planning (IMSP) process supported by the project, and led by MMCO and HoA, is conducting extensive workshops and consultations with traditional leaders and communities for each island. IMSPs aim to ensure community livelihoods and food are maintained with strong emphasis on fish conservation and local management.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator: IWRM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated water resource management is being achieved under TTV as a coordinated approach to water resource management.</li> <li>National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) goals and targets point to this as well with progress reported in annual indicator reports.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator: water supply protection in SIDS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As mentioned above, TTV has been established to be responsible for public water supply on Rarotonga.</li> </ul>

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>4</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The PEARL project, funded by the Adaptation Fund and housed at Climate Change Cook Islands (CCCI), has been handling water security in outer islands by providing infrastructure such as water tanks.</li> <li>The 2019 NSDP indicator report states “major improvements made with improved water storage capacity for the Pa Enea through aid-funded water tank projects”.</li> <li>The Cook Islands Building Code 2019 developed by ICI includes elements of water protection and efficiency for both private and public buildings (parts D5/6/7 and NF5/6/7). CCCI have a project proposal with Green Climate Fund (GCF) to help implement these parts of the building code for enhanced water security.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator: aquifer and catchment protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Takuvaine water catchment was established under Environment Act regulations in 2006; the area has a management plan and local community-based committee of traditional landowners.</li> <li>All Rarotonga catchments are proposed to be protected or managed under TTV Authority Bill.</li> </ul> <p><b>Overview</b></p> <p>Compared against the baseline, local capacity for overseeing and monitoring of water quality in lagoons has been significantly increased since start of project. Evidence for this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>monthly lagoon water quality assessments (NES &amp; MMR)</li> </ul>

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>4</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MMR laboratory improvements supported by R2R</li> <li>monthly water quality newsletters distributed by MMR</li> <li>improvements to Ministry of Health (MOH) water quality assessments have been made based on support from the PEARL project (Adaptation Fund)</li> <li>establishment of TTV, including ongoing monitoring and management activities.</li> </ul>

### 2.3 Outcome 1: Strengthening protected areas management

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>6</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
4	Improved management effectiveness of Cook Islands Marine Park, as measured by GEF BD 1 Tracking Tool (METT)	30	METT score > 60	1	METT score of 61 at end of project	<p><b>Target achieved.</b></p> <p>Final METT assessment was undertaken in January 2021 and score of 61 was confirmed (Twyford &amp; Weeks 2021), thereby exceeding the target. The substantial strategic and targeted interventions made by R2R in specific areas since the MTR (2018) and CNAR (2019) (described against KPI #1; summarised by Twyford 2020a), along with complementary government and NGO activities, have undoubtedly contributed to this positive result.</p>

<sup>6</sup> Status categories: 1. Target achieved; 2. Target partially achieved; 3. Not achievable (refer Section 2.1).

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				Category <sup>6</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements																																																																																						
5a	National agencies responsible for PA management are effectively delivering PA management functions (as measured by the capacity development indicator score for protected area system): • Systemic	50%	70%	3	Assessed in CNAR: 42% Not assessed at EoP	<p><b>Not achievable.</b></p> <p>Twyford (2019a) assessed and described the various issues and deficiencies with this KPI. Extract from this report follows:</p> <p>As part of baseline design, UNDP carried out an assessment of capacity at three levels – systemic, institutional, individual – using the capacity development assessment scorecard (UNDP 2015). Results were aggregated and summarised in the project design document and are shown below.</p> <p><b>1E. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT SCORECARD</b> <i>The table below is a summary of the Capacity Development Assessment scores; see Separate File for detailed scorecard information</i></p> <table border="1"> <caption>Matrix of the Capacity Development Assessment Scorecard for Protected Area Systems (Summary)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Strategic Areas of Support</th> <th colspan="3">Systemic</th> <th colspan="3">Institutional</th> <th colspan="3">Individual</th> <th rowspan="2">Average %</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Project Scores</th> <th>Total possible score</th> <th>%</th> <th>Project Scores</th> <th>Total possible score</th> <th>%</th> <th>Project Scores</th> <th>Total possible score</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>(1) Capacity to conceptualize and develop sectoral and cross-sectoral policy and regulatory frameworks</td> <td>3</td> <td>6</td> <td>50%</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>67%</td> <td>NA</td> <td>NA</td> <td>NA</td> <td>63%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(2) Capacity to formulate, operationalize and implement sectoral and cross-sectoral programmes and projects</td> <td>4</td> <td>9</td> <td>44%</td> <td>13</td> <td>27</td> <td>48%</td> <td>7</td> <td>12</td> <td>58%</td> <td>50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(3) Capacity to mobilize and manage partnerships, including with the civil society and the private sector</td> <td>4</td> <td>6</td> <td>67%</td> <td>3</td> <td>6</td> <td>50%</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>67%</td> <td>60%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(4) Technical skills related specifically to the requirements of the SPs and associated Interventions</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>33%</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>33%</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>33%</td> <td>33%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(5) Capacity to monitor, evaluate and report at the sector and project levels</td> <td>3</td> <td>6</td> <td>50%</td> <td>2</td> <td>6</td> <td>33%</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>33%</td> <td>40%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>TOTAL Baseline Scores and average for %'s</b></td> <td><b>15</b></td> <td><b>30</b></td> <td><b>50%</b></td> <td><b>21</b></td> <td><b>45</b></td> <td><b>47%</b></td> <td><b>11</b></td> <td><b>21</b></td> <td><b>52%</b></td> <td><b>49%</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Care is needed in use of this data for various reasons. Firstly, the capacity result categories (listed under column headed 'Strategic Areas of Support') do not correspond to the categories used in the CDS (refer template at Annex 3); this suggests that the baseline assessment was undertaken using a different scorecard tool. Furthermore, aggregation of results (and non-availability of the original file) means that detailed analysis and longitudinal comparison of trends over time is fraught with methodological problems - risks exist that we are not comparing "apples with</p>	Strategic Areas of Support	Systemic			Institutional			Individual			Average %	Project Scores	Total possible score	%	Project Scores	Total possible score	%	Project Scores	Total possible score	%	(1) Capacity to conceptualize and develop sectoral and cross-sectoral policy and regulatory frameworks	3	6	50%	2	3	67%	NA	NA	NA	63%	(2) Capacity to formulate, operationalize and implement sectoral and cross-sectoral programmes and projects	4	9	44%	13	27	48%	7	12	58%	50%	(3) Capacity to mobilize and manage partnerships, including with the civil society and the private sector	4	6	67%	3	6	50%	2	3	67%	60%	(4) Technical skills related specifically to the requirements of the SPs and associated Interventions	1	3	33%	1	3	33%	1	3	33%	33%	(5) Capacity to monitor, evaluate and report at the sector and project levels	3	6	50%	2	6	33%	1	3	33%	40%	<b>TOTAL Baseline Scores and average for %'s</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>49%</b>
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						<p>apples". Finally CDS assessment was not undertaken at MTR.</p> <p>For these reasons, lack of data means it is not possible to assess quantitative changes in capacity over time.</p> <p>However CDS were completed as part of the CNAR. These results show that at system level, total capacity score was 42% of maximum possible. Highest rated was result area #3 (strategy, policy and legislation development) with 56%; lowest rated were areas #1, #4 and #5 with 33% each.</p>
5b	• Institutional	47%	By end of project: 70% Baseline	3	<p>Assessed in CNAR: average of 46%</p> <p>Not assessed at EoP</p>	<p><b>Not achievable.</b></p> <p>At organisational level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MMCO self-assessed at 24% (lowest of all agencies) and CIT at 60% (highest)</li> <li>• NES self-assessed at 51% and was peer assessed at 38%</li> </ul> <p>Across all organisations average score was 46% (range 24 – 51%); area #1 (engagement) was highest rated at 57%; lowest rated was area #5 (monitor and evaluate) at 36%.</p>
5c	• Individual	52%	By end of project: 70% Baseline	3	<p>Not assessed in CNAR</p> <p>Not assessed at EoP</p>	<p><b>Not achievable.</b></p>

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>6</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
5	Overall					<p>Whilst target scores will not be reached by EoP due to the above-mentioned methodological issues, progress is being made to instil shifts in the way PAs are co-managed in the Cook Islands.</p> <p>The R2R Capacity Needs Assessment Report (CNAR) and R2R Capacity Strengthening Action Plan (CSAP) set the framework for targeted and coordinated action. Important implementation activities are described throughout this EoP performance report. Collectively, these activities are increasing the systemic, institutional and individual capacities within national management agencies to deliver PA management functions more effectively.</p>
6	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	Review of legislative framework for protected areas and development of a Protected and Managed Areas Policy, national protected areas classification system developed through policy <sup>7</sup>	2	NA	<p><b>Target partially achieved.</b></p> <p>Key outputs:</p> <p><b><i>Marae Moana Act 2017</i></b> developed and approved by Parliament. The Act provides a consolidated legal framework for management of the Marae Moana (Cook Islands Marine Park - CIMP). Passage of the legislation was undertaken by the Cook Islands Government and was not directly attributable to the R2R Project.</p> <p><b><i>National Environment Policy (NEP)</i></b> is being developed as an initiative of the National Environment Service (NES). R2R has provided extensive inputs and technical advice to this process.</p> <p><b><i>Protected Areas Management Policy (PAMP)</i></b> – Stage 1 of project completed and includes literature</p>

<sup>7</sup> Revised indicator as per project extension request to UNDP.

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>6</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
						<p>review (Sheppard 2020a) and PAMP discussion paper (Sheppard 2020b).</p> <p>Stage 2 PAMP was planned prior to EoP however has been cancelled because of lack of funds.</p> <p><b>National protected areas classification system policy paper (PACS)</b> prepared (Twyford 2021b); this is an important resource for future development of PAMP by the government.</p> <p><b>Marae Moana (CIMP) marine spatial planning</b> MSP policy paper developed (Twyford 2021 a). This policy paper assesses the Act and aims to identify implications, issues and constraints that the legislation may pose to the effective development of MSPs. The paper provides the policy basis for technical and policy advice by the Marae Moana Technical Advisory Group, decision making by the Marae Moana Council, and development of MSP Regulations and changes to the Act.</p>
7	Consolidated management authority for protected areas in the Cook Islands	Institutional authority for protected areas is spread among various agencies	Legislative review and policy identifies appropriate mechanisms for coordination and management of protected	2	NA	<p><b>Target partially achieved.</b></p> <p>Stage 1 PAMP Discussion Paper completed (Sheppard 2020b).</p> <p>Stage 2 PAMP was planned prior to EoP however has been cancelled because of lack of funds.</p>

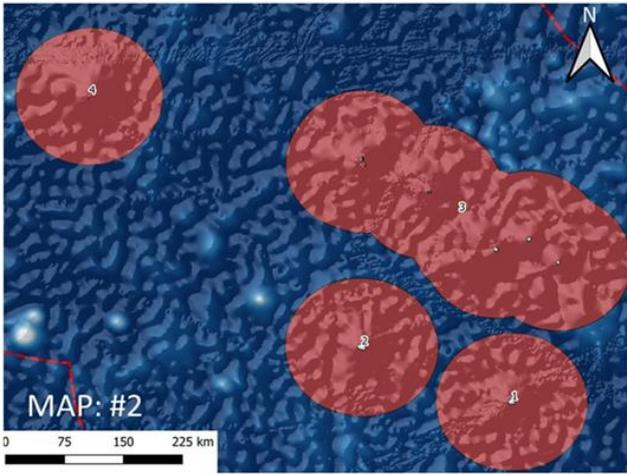
SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
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			areas by end of project <sup>8</sup>			
8	Management of protected area sites on islands in the Southern Group	One existing protected area site (Takitumu Conservation Area) is actively managed	Management plans for at least 15 protected area sites under implementation by end of project	2	Management plans for three sites	<p><b>Target partially achieved.</b></p> <p>Management plans for at least 15 protected area sites under implementation by end of project will not be achieved by end of project. Currently, management plans have been completed and are being implemented for three sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takitumu Conservation Area Management Plan completed (Robertson et al. 2020).</li> <li>• Palmerston Island Natural Resource Management Plan is under development and will be completed before project closure (TIS 2021).</li> <li>• Assessment report with management recommendations into Palmerston Atoll coconut crab completed (Kora &amp; Munro 2020).</li> </ul> <p>A catchment management and restoration plan for Rarotonga Cloud Forests (Wildlands Consultants 2015, 2016) was prepared under the UNDP GEF Integrated Island Biology Project; there is no active implementation.</p> <p>The Aitutaki Lagoon Management Plan (ALMP) is being developed; stakeholder consultations are underway.</p> <p>Extensive delays throughout the project at various levels have prevented this target from being achieved. When assessed in mid-2019, there had been no discernible progress against this indicator. Accordingly, the 2019 Project Strategy (in Twyford</p>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>6</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
						<p>2019b) acknowledged this and the KPI was assessed as being '<i>Category 4: Not able to be completed</i>'. This rating was because the prospects of meeting targets and completing outputs were very poor or nil.</p> <p>A consultant can develop a management plan quickly and cheaply. However, such action results in damage, to relationships and the prospects of better management and resource protection. Done well, management plans are time consuming and costly to develop, requiring extensive community and other stakeholder consultation. These inputs and complexities are even more significant when dealing with privately and/or community owned lands as is the case with the majority of the Cook Islands.</p> <p>Apart from work already underway (TCA, Palmerston, Aitutaki), a strategic decision was made to not place any more project resources into development of management plans. The project strategy highlighted that efforts and project resources should be placed on targets more realistically achievable by end of project.</p> <p>Field assessment reports for Mokoero (on Atiu) and Takutea are completed (Bridger 2020), but management plans for these are not expected within the remaining project life due to inter-island travel restrictions (from Covid-19) preventing island community consultations.</p> <p>Management plans for sites scheduled as protected areas under the Aitutaki Environment Act Regulations are planned once these regulations come into place; this will be undertaken by NES as part of the R2R exit and sustainability strategy.</p>

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9a	% Area of Southern Group islands managed as Protected Areas (protected natural areas, community conservation areas, ra'ui sites): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Terrestrial</li> </ul>	2.8%	6.7%	1	30.1%	<p><b>Target achieved.</b> Completed and target exceeded.</p> <p>Total area of "protected areas" (protected natural areas, community conservation areas, ra'ui sites) on Southern Group islands is at least 6,471 ha (area of two ra'ui on Palmerston is not known); this represents 30% of the total island area and exceeds the target by over 4x.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Island</th> <th>Area (km<sup>2</sup>)</th> <th>Area (ha) note 1</th> <th>Area of "Protected Areas" (ha) note 2</th> <th>Area of "Protected Areas" (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Penrhyn</td><td>10.0</td><td>997</td><td>128</td><td>12.8</td></tr> <tr><td>Rakahanga</td><td>4.0</td><td>396</td><td>114</td><td>28.8</td></tr> <tr><td>Manihiki</td><td>5.1</td><td>513</td><td>131</td><td>25.5</td></tr> <tr><td>Pukapuka</td><td>3.9</td><td>394</td><td>373</td><td>94.7</td></tr> <tr><td>Nassau</td><td>1.2</td><td>120</td><td>0</td><td>0.0</td></tr> <tr><td>Suvarrow</td><td>1.1</td><td>114</td><td>114</td><td>100.0</td></tr> <tr><td><b>Nth Group</b></td><td><b>25.34</b></td><td><b>2534</b></td><td><b>860</b></td><td><b>33.9</b></td></tr> <tr><td>Palmerston</td><td>2.5</td><td>254</td><td>0</td><td>0.0</td></tr> <tr><td>Aitutaki</td><td>18.0</td><td>1798</td><td>71</td><td>3.9</td></tr> <tr><td>Manuae</td><td>6.9</td><td>689</td><td>0</td><td>0.0</td></tr> <tr><td>Takutea</td><td>1.1</td><td>113</td><td>113</td><td>100.0</td></tr> <tr><td>Mitiaro</td><td>22.9</td><td>2287</td><td>373</td><td>16.3</td></tr> <tr><td>Atiu</td><td>28.5</td><td>2846</td><td>333</td><td>11.7</td></tr> <tr><td>Mauke</td><td>19.2</td><td>1920</td><td>323</td><td>16.8</td></tr> <tr><td>Rarotonga</td><td>67.7</td><td>6772</td><td>416</td><td>6.1</td></tr> <tr><td>Mangaia</td><td>48.4</td><td>4842</td><td>4842</td><td>100.0</td></tr> <tr><td><b>Sth Group</b></td><td><b>215.21</b></td><td><b>21521</b></td><td><b>6471</b></td><td><b>30.1</b></td></tr> <tr><td><b>Total</b></td><td><b>240.55</b></td><td><b>24055</b></td><td><b>7331</b></td><td><b>30.5</b></td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Note 1. Island areas as per MMCO GIS Officer calculation Note 2. Source: Cook Islands Protected and Managed Areas Database, PACS (Twyford 2021b)</p>	Island	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Area (ha) note 1	Area of "Protected Areas" (ha) note 2	Area of "Protected Areas" (%)	Penrhyn	10.0	997	128	12.8	Rakahanga	4.0	396	114	28.8	Manihiki	5.1	513	131	25.5	Pukapuka	3.9	394	373	94.7	Nassau	1.2	120	0	0.0	Suvarrow	1.1	114	114	100.0	<b>Nth Group</b>	<b>25.34</b>	<b>2534</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>33.9</b>	Palmerston	2.5	254	0	0.0	Aitutaki	18.0	1798	71	3.9	Manuae	6.9	689	0	0.0	Takutea	1.1	113	113	100.0	Mitiaro	22.9	2287	373	16.3	Atiu	28.5	2846	333	11.7	Mauke	19.2	1920	323	16.8	Rarotonga	67.7	6772	416	6.1	Mangaia	48.4	4842	4842	100.0	<b>Sth Group</b>	<b>215.21</b>	<b>21521</b>	<b>6471</b>	<b>30.1</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>240.55</b>	<b>24055</b>	<b>7331</b>	<b>30.5</b>
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<b>Total</b>	<b>240.55</b>	<b>24055</b>	<b>7331</b>	<b>30.5</b>																																																																																																	
9b	% Area of Southern Group islands managed	9.7%	12.3%	1	15.9%	<p><b>Target achieved.</b> Completed and target exceeded</p>																																																																																															

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	as Protected Areas (protected natural areas, community conservation areas, ra'ui sites): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marine (to the outer reef)</li> </ul>					<p>At EoP, 174,965 km<sup>2</sup> is managed as a marine protected area in the Southern Group; this represents 15.9% of the total area of the Marae Moana in Southern Group.</p> <p>This has been achieved under Marae Moana Act 2017 section 24 marine protected areas, which extend to 50nm around all islands; all large-scale commercial fishing and mining activities are prohibited in these areas.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">Area of islands (Southern Group) managed for biodiversity</th> </tr> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Obj ID#</th> <th rowspan="2">Name</th> <th colspan="2">Area managed for biodiversity</th> </tr> <tr> <th>km2</th> <th>ha</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Mangaia</td> <td>29,427</td> <td>2,942,659</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Rarotonga</td> <td>29,906</td> <td>2,990,563</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Aitutaki/Mauke/ Mitiaro/ Atiu/ Takutea/ Manuae</td> <td>86,519</td> <td>8,651,910</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Palmerston</td> <td>29,114</td> <td>2,911,378</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>174,965</b></td> <td><b>17,496,510</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Area of islands (Southern Group) managed for biodiversity				Obj ID#	Name	Area managed for biodiversity		km2	ha	1	Mangaia	29,427	2,942,659	2	Rarotonga	29,906	2,990,563	3	Aitutaki/Mauke/ Mitiaro/ Atiu/ Takutea/ Manuae	86,519	8,651,910	4	Palmerston	29,114	2,911,378		<b>Total</b>	<b>174,965</b>	<b>17,496,510</b>
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10a	<p>Improved management effectiveness of priority conservation zones, as measured by the GEF BD 1 Tracking Tool (METT):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Takitumu Conservation Area (Rarotonga)</li> </ul>	64	METT score >70	2	65	<p><b>Target partially achieved.</b></p> <p>EoP METT score for TCA was assessed as 65: small change since MTR and baseline when scored as 64 points (Twyford &amp; Weeks 2021).</p> <p>Lack of appreciable change is attributable to scoring at MTR and inception being unrealistic and in error. For instance, scoring of 3/3 for Q7 and 1/1 for each of Q7a-7c regarding a management plan being in place. Clearly, this is incorrect – score should have been 0 as no plan was in place at that time.</p>

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10b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cloud Forest Nature Reserve (Rarotonga)</li> </ul>	26	METT score >50	2	13	<p><b>Target partially achieved.</b></p> <p>It is important to recognise that this area is not designated in any way; establishment of a Cloud Forest protected area was an aspirational aim from the R2R ProDoc however unfortunately R2R did not put any resources or apparent effort into this initiative. No progress has been made towards the Cloud Forest as this is much more complex than expressed in the project design, with traditional land tenure, 'uninvestigated' land, multiple land-owning families, traditional leaders, etc. Given this was not initiated at the start and early years of the project, the decision was made in mid-2019 (through the Project Strategy) to defer any activity.</p> <p>Final METT score of 13 is a more realistic view of the status of management effectiveness than the baseline assessment (score 26).</p> <p>Establishment of this protected area will remain a goal for NES.</p>
10c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manuae Wildlife Sanctuary / Marine Reserve (Manuae)</li> </ul>	12	METT score >40	2	25	<p><b>Target partially achieved.</b></p> <p>It is important to recognise that this area is not designated in any way; establishment of a reserve/sanctuary on Manuae was an aspirational aim from the R2R ProDoc however unfortunately only minimal effort and resources were put into this initiative.</p> <p>On-site management is progressing with Manuae rangers built into the 2021 organisational structure for NES demonstrating commitment, legacy and sustainability beyond the project. The legal status of the landowners committee is being updated. Once this</p>

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						is completed, further management can be progressed such as rat eradication as part of native bird conservation programs. The Aitutaki Island Council (including Manuae) is also progressing with updated regulations under the Environment Act which will afford greater legal protection to Manuae than at present.
10d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moko Ero Nui Leeward Forest Reserve (Atiu)</li> </ul>	26	METT score >50	2	30	<p><b>Target partially achieved.</b></p> <p>There has been limited R2R support provided to the establishment of Mokoero and its management. Funding was provided for a biodiversity assessment and report (Brider 2020). Establishment of the reserve was facilitated by the NHT in conjunction with local landholders.</p>
10e	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Takutea Wildlife Sanctuary / Marine Reserve (Takutea)</li> </ul>	29	METT score >50	2	37	<p><b>Target partially achieved.</b></p> <p>There has been limited R2R support provided to the ongoing management of Takutea. Funding was provided for terrestrial and marine biodiversity assessments (Brider 2020; Kora et al. 2019).</p>
11	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	2	NA	<p><b>Target partially achieved.</b></p> <p>Little progress was achieved in this activity until 2020, by which time it was too late to fully achieve this target within the remaining project lifespan.</p> <p>An international consultant has been contracted by MMR to undertake multi-stakeholder consultations on Aitutaki and progress the lagoon management plan.</p> <p>Covid-19 has significantly delayed progress of this activity with ongoing restrictions in international and domestic travel. MMR staff along with representatives</p>

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						of other agencies are needing to lead the consultations, which creates increased delays.
12a	Funds available for management of Protected Areas, as reported in the GEF BD1 Tracking Tool – Financial Scorecard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-governmental financing mechanisms</li> </ul>	US\$23,800	US\$523,800	2	NA	<b>Target partially achieved.</b> Precise figures are not available because government systems are not adequate to capture all NGO funding. External funding from development partners, NGO's and community groups is still in existence (eg. ADB, Seacology, Nia Tero, Conservation International) however is expected to be less than the target of US\$523K.
12b	Funds available for management of Protected Areas, as reported in the GEF BD1 Tracking Tool – Financial Scorecard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government budget allocations</li> </ul>	US\$63,750	US\$148,750	1	US\$6,435,838 NZ\$9,034,214	<b>Target achieved.</b> The low baseline figure of US\$63K needs to be understood in the context that the Marae Moana (CIMP) had not been established at that time (2015), hence funding for management of 'Protected Areas' was very low and limited to island (terrestrial) protected areas. Establishment of the CIMP in 2017 meant that government budget allocations for agencies such as MMR, MoT and SBMA – all of whom operated within the CIMP and contributed to its management and implementation – were included in the calculations of actual EoP performance. The Marae Moana Sustainable Financing Mechanism Report (Conservation International 2020) included a comprehensive analysis of FY19/20 government

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						<p>budget allocations for “protected area” management and estimated that approximately NZ\$9.0 million (US\$6.4 million) were available for management of Protected Areas (refer figures below). This report also highlighted the difficulty of accurately assessing implementation costs because government budgets do not separate out Marae Moana or other protected area allocations from broader agency budgets.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ministry</th> <th>2019 Budget (Gross)</th> <th>% Total Budget</th> <th>% Ministry Budget to MM</th> <th>Marae Moana Spending</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>National Environmental Services</td> <td>\$ 1,686,417</td> <td></td> <td>9%</td> <td>\$ 160,045</td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 1: Advisory and Compliance</td> <td>640,178</td> <td>38</td> <td>25</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Infrastructure Cook Islands</td> <td>\$ 6,285,169</td> <td></td> <td>1%</td> <td>\$ 53,958</td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 7: National Hydrography Office</td> <td>53,958</td> <td>1</td> <td>100</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ministry of Marine Resources</td> <td>\$ 2,372,618</td> <td></td> <td>100%</td> <td>\$ 2,372,618</td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 1: Offshore Fisheries</td> <td>477,289</td> <td>100</td> <td>100</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 2: Pearl Industry Support and Laboratory Services</td> <td>571,872</td> <td>100</td> <td>100</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 3: Inshore Fisheries Management &amp; Aquaculture</td> <td>857,786</td> <td>100</td> <td>100</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 4: Policy and Legal Services</td> <td>142,597</td> <td>100</td> <td>100</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 5: Corporate Services</td> <td>323,074</td> <td>100</td> <td>100</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Office of the Prime Minister</td> <td>\$ 2,721,886</td> <td></td> <td>3%</td> <td>\$ 80,600</td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 8: Marae Moana</td> <td>80,600</td> <td>3</td> <td>100</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cook Islands Police Service</td> <td>\$ 5,375,199</td> <td></td> <td>23%</td> <td>\$ 1,252,351</td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 1: Crime and Operations</td> <td>4,174,503</td> <td>78</td> <td>30</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cook Islands Seabed Minerals</td> <td>\$ 295,292</td> <td></td> <td>100%</td> <td>\$ 295,292</td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 1: Effective Seabed Minerals Sector</td> <td>230,188</td> <td>100</td> <td>100</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 2: Stakeholder Engagement</td> <td>20,000</td> <td>100</td> <td>100</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 3: Corporate Services</td> <td>45,104</td> <td>100</td> <td>100</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cook Islands Tourism Corporation</td> <td>\$ 9,274,662</td> <td></td> <td>50%</td> <td>\$ 4,637,331</td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 1: Destination Sales and Marketing</td> <td>7,396,520</td> <td>78</td> <td>50</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 2: Destination Development</td> <td>958,670</td> <td>10</td> <td>50</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 3: Corporate Services</td> <td>919,472</td> <td>10</td> <td>50</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ministry of Transport</td> <td>\$ 1,160,232</td> <td></td> <td>16%</td> <td>\$ 182,020</td> </tr> <tr> <td>  OUTPUT 2: Maritime Division (Taka o te Moana)</td> <td>182,020</td> <td></td> <td>100</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total Cook Island Budget/Marae Moana Spending 2019</b></td> <td><b>\$ 141,370,725</b></td> <td></td> <td><b>6%</b></td> <td><b>\$ 9,034,214</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>Figure 1: Marae Moana spending across Cook Island Ministries (Ministries not presented are expected to have no spending).</i></p> <p>For FY20/21, Covid-19 has drastically affected government allocations in all areas<sup>9</sup>, including for management of protected areas. Although analysis of FY20/21 figures are not available at time of writing, we are confident that government allocations for 2020/21 still exceed the target, despite budget cuts.</p>	Ministry	2019 Budget (Gross)	% Total Budget	% Ministry Budget to MM	Marae Moana Spending	National Environmental Services	\$ 1,686,417		9%	\$ 160,045	OUTPUT 1: Advisory and Compliance	640,178	38	25		Infrastructure Cook Islands	\$ 6,285,169		1%	\$ 53,958	OUTPUT 7: National Hydrography Office	53,958	1	100		Ministry of Marine Resources	\$ 2,372,618		100%	\$ 2,372,618	OUTPUT 1: Offshore Fisheries	477,289	100	100		OUTPUT 2: Pearl Industry Support and Laboratory Services	571,872	100	100		OUTPUT 3: Inshore Fisheries Management & Aquaculture	857,786	100	100		OUTPUT 4: Policy and Legal Services	142,597	100	100		OUTPUT 5: Corporate Services	323,074	100	100		Office of the Prime Minister	\$ 2,721,886		3%	\$ 80,600	OUTPUT 8: Marae Moana	80,600	3	100		Cook Islands Police Service	\$ 5,375,199		23%	\$ 1,252,351	OUTPUT 1: Crime and Operations	4,174,503	78	30		Cook Islands Seabed Minerals	\$ 295,292		100%	\$ 295,292	OUTPUT 1: Effective Seabed Minerals Sector	230,188	100	100		OUTPUT 2: Stakeholder Engagement	20,000	100	100		OUTPUT 3: Corporate Services	45,104	100	100		Cook Islands Tourism Corporation	\$ 9,274,662		50%	\$ 4,637,331	OUTPUT 1: Destination Sales and Marketing	7,396,520	78	50		OUTPUT 2: Destination Development	958,670	10	50		OUTPUT 3: Corporate Services	919,472	10	50		Ministry of Transport	\$ 1,160,232		16%	\$ 182,020	OUTPUT 2: Maritime Division (Taka o te Moana)	182,020		100		<b>Total Cook Island Budget/Marae Moana Spending 2019</b>	<b>\$ 141,370,725</b>		<b>6%</b>	<b>\$ 9,034,214</b>
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						The main sources of funding in FY20/21 are through NES for the management of Suvarrow National Park (NZ\$150,000), rangers for Manuae (included in the NES organisational structure - NZ\$70,000), central support through Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) for MMCO (NZ\$100,000), and annual budget for MMR all of which is directed towards marine resource management within Marae Moana (NZ\$2.239M in FY19/20). Collectively these government budget allocations surpass the target.
13	Conservation of critical coral reef habitat within the CIMP, as measured by finfish populations at coral reefs around Rarotonga and Aitutaki	Baseline TBD in year 1 of project	No decrease in finfish populations by end of project	3	Not known	<p><b>Not achievable.</b></p> <p>Performance against this indicator by EoP cannot be assessed or determined: this is because a baseline was never established by R2R PMU at the start of the project. This means that performance and change cannot be assessed with confidence.</p> <p>Nearshore surveys of all Southern Group islands have been completed by MMR (R2R funded activities), with results published in associated reports that are now available. These reports are a useful resource that provide data on marine species populations and habitat trends. Additionally, MMR have conducted activities to reduce harvest pressure on reef fish and to improve coral reef habitats.</p> <p>However, scientific advice from MMR is this is a poorly designed indicator because fish populations and live coral cover are not necessarily positively correlated. Many studies have shown finfish densities on coral reefs are correlated more with habitat complexity, rather than with live coral cover (MMR's 2019 survey of Manihiki found similar results where the sites with the highest live coral cover had the lowest complexity</p>

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						<p>and the least number of finfish whereas the area with the lowest live coral cover had the highest complexity and the highest number of finfish).</p> <p>MMR conducted a range of activities to reduce reef fish harvest pressure, improve coral reef habitats and assess marine resources including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lagoon and nearshore biodiversity surveys (Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Manuae).</li> <li>• Ra'ui workshop with House of Ariki and other agencies regarding enforcement of <i>ra'ui</i> in Rarotonga and. lagoon management</li> <li>• Developed methodology for regular coral health monitoring (Rarotonga, Aitutaki).</li> <li>• Water quality monitoring</li> <li>• Outreach and awareness activities highlighting the importance of habitat and resource conservation.</li> <li>• Creation and deployment of FADs designed to relieve localised fishing pressure.</li> <li>• Collection and analysis of genetic material from pa'ua (giant clams) to inform management decisions regarding coral reef habitats and conservation.</li> <li>• Hatchery rearing and outplanting of giant clams and coral as part of an on-going habitat restoration project at Aitutaki.</li> </ul>
14a	<p>Conservation of priority species at selected sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Turtle (Takutea and Manuae)</li> </ul>	Baseline TBD in year 1 of project	No net decline in population	3	Not known	<p><b>Not achievable.</b></p> <p>Due to design flaws, the final result for this KPI is indeterminate: it is not known if the target is achieved. Performance against this indicator by EoP cannot be assessed or determined: this is because a baseline was never established by R2R PMU at the start of the</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hawksbill turtle (Takutea and Manuae)</li> <li>Loggerhead Turtle (Palmerston)</li> <li>Napoleon (Humphead) Wrasse (Rarotonga &amp; Aitutaki)</li> </ul>					<p>project. This means that performance and change cannot be assessed with confidence.</p> <p>Furthermore, scientific advice from MMR is this is a poorly designed indicator because there are multiple external factors affecting marine species population densities, as well as long-term responses, which are difficult to measure in the relatively short-term period of the project.</p> <p>MMR conducted turtle population surveys on the islands of Takutea (twice - May 2018, October 2020), Manuae (twice - November 2017, October 2020), and Palmerston (once - October 2018). Only green turtles were recorded; no hawksbill or loggerhead turtles were observed.</p> <p>MMR prepared nearshore marine assessment reports with management recommendations for Palmerston, Atiu and Takutea islands.</p> <p>NES held turtle monitoring workshops for tourism operators to increase awareness about turtle species, their threatened status, identification tips, conservation needs, and how operators and visitors can support management. This led to the establishment of a local turtle conservation NGO 'Te Ara o te Onu', who has taken over turtle monitoring, education and awareness activities.</p> <p>During 2017 surveys at Aitutaki, Napoleon wrasse were surveyed at close to the highest densities recorded in published literature. MMR consulted with the world's leading Napoleon wrasse expert who travelled to Aitutaki to observe these fish and provide advice on the local assessments.</p>

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						Outreach and awareness activities were conducted with Aitutaki community and other stakeholders to highlight the importance of Napoleon wrasse conservation.
14b	Conservation of priority species at selected sites:					<b>Target achieved.</b> Of the terrestrial species, all have remained stable or increased against their baseline population densities at selected sites (refer reports by TIS); targets have therefore been achieved.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Atiu Swiftlet (Atiu)</li> </ul>	420 individuals	No net decline in population	1	>420 individuals	<b>Target achieved.</b> The Atiu Swiftlet (locally called Kopeka) was estimated in 2016/17 as having good population numbers of around 600, surpassing the baseline figure. Numbers are expected to be stable with no adverse effects currently identified to impact population size (TIS 2020a). Natural Heritage Trust are investigating the feasibility of translocating a small number of the Atiu population to another island within the Southern Group to provide an “insurance policy” against any severe threatening events (eg. disease or cyclone) that may threaten the Atiu population.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mangaian Kingfisher (Mangaia)</li> </ul>	1000 individuals	No net decline in population	1	>1000 individuals	<b>Target achieved.</b> The Mangaian Kingfisher (Tangaeo) was assessed in 2019 and numbers recorded exceeded the baseline population figures (TIS 2020b). The population appears to be on the rise, which has been attributed to forest regeneration replacing previous pineapple plantations; this has increased the availability of suitable bird habitat.

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>6</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rarotongan Monarch (Rarotonga &amp; Atiu)</li> </ul>	Rarotonga - 428 individuals Atiu - 125 individuals	No net decline in population	1	Rarotonga - >428 individuals Atiu - >125 individuals	<p><b>Target achieved.</b></p> <p>The Rarotongan Monarch (Kakerori) has seen continual population increases, attributable in large part to extensive on-going predator control within the TCA (on Rarotonga). The population in and around the TCA increased to at least 471 birds in 2017. These results are reported in the R2R-funded TCA Management Plan (Robertson et al. 2020).</p> <p>Translocations of a total of 40 young kākērōri to form an ‘insurance’ population on ship rat-free Ātiu has been successful, with a minimum population of 150 birds recorded in 2017, bringing the global total to well over 600 birds, or over 20 times the number of kākērōri alive in 1989 (Robertson et al. 2020).</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitiaro Tree Palm (Mitiaro)</li> </ul>	375 mature trees	No net decline in forested area	1	>375 mature trees	<p><b>Target achieved.</b></p> <p>Mitiaro Fan Palm (Iniao) was surveyed in 2019 using drone technology; this technique allows for more in-depth and accurate aerial surveying. These surveys found population numbers to be higher than the baseline; this was attributed to more accurate counts as well as recent population growth (TIS 2020c).</p>

## 2.4 Outcome 2: Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats within production landscapes

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>10</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
15a	Landscape/seascape area covered by the project (ha), as measured by GEF BD 2 Tracking Tool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directly covered</li> </ul>	0 ha	1.1 million sq. km. (CIMP)	1	1.1 million sq. km. (CIMP) of landscape/seascape area has been covered by the project	<b>Target achieved.</b> All of Southern Group of CIMP is covered by the project as evidenced by numerous R2R-funded activities that support Marae Moana, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment and research of biodiversity values of inshore marine areas.</li> <li>• Research into and completion of a plan for sustainable financing.</li> <li>• Completion of the first ever Outlook Report and comprehensive review by independent scientific experts.</li> <li>• Development of a policy paper to inform and guide development of Regulations for marine spatial planning (MSP).</li> <li>• Data collection as basis for marine spatial plans for all of the Cook Islands marine estate.</li> </ul>
15b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indirectly covered</li> </ul>	0 ha	0.83 million sq. km. (Northern Group)	1	0.83 million sq. km. (Northern Group) of landscape/seascape area has been covered by the project	<b>Target achieved.</b> All of the Northern Group of CIMP is covered by the project as evidenced by numerous R2R-funded activities that support Marae Moana and are targeted at the entire CIMP (see above).

<sup>10</sup> Status categories: 1. Target achieved; 2. Target partially achieved; 3. Not achievable (refer Section 2.1).

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>10</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
16a	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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fertilizers</li> </ul>	NZ\$339,554	At least 15% reduction in value of imports of agricultural chemicals by the end of the project	1	25% reduction in value of imports of fertilisers	<p><b>Target achieved.</b></p> <p>Most recent (2019) figures show 25% reduction in value of imports of fertilisers. Despite some discrepancies in baseline figures listed in the UNDP Prodoc against those held at Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), analysis has demonstrated a reduction in fertilisers &gt;15% (25% in value), and a total value much less than the baseline of NZ\$339K.</p>
16b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pesticides</li> </ul>	NZ\$406,701	At least 15% reduction in value of imports of agricultural chemicals by the end of the project	2	13% reduction in value of imports of pesticides	<p><b>Target partially achieved.</b></p> <p>Most recent (2019) figures show 13% reduction in value of imports of pesticides. For pesticides there are also discrepancies in the baseline figures used, however a reduction in value of 13% has been achieved.</p> <p>The MoA considers that there has been a steady decrease in pesticide usage since the project inception. Steady progress has been made against this target, with multiple R2R-funded activities by MoA including:</p>

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>10</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training across the Southern Group islands aimed at improved understanding of pesticide management and increased uptake of bio-agricultural practices.</li> <li>• Transitions to organic farming across the Southern Group Islands through associated support and training.</li> <li>• New opportunities provided for island communities in beekeeping to increase natural pollination.</li> <li>• School programs led by a local NGO to foster traditional, sustainable, organic agricultural practices amongst the youth.</li> </ul> <p>There remains a need to review the Pesticide Act 1979 and Ministry of Agriculture Act 1978.</p>
17	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	2	Not known	<p><b>Target partially achieved.</b></p> <p>There has been no substantive change in the approach towards EIAs for infrastructure development in or around PAs; EIAs are not subject to independent review, and development plans are not adapted as necessary to conserve biodiversity.</p> <p>Following a detailed gap analysis report (IW R2R funded) on permitting processes (Tonkin &amp; Taylor 2019), NES has undertaken an extensive review of the Environment Act 2003 to address gaps, weaknesses and overlaps with other</p>

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>10</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
						<p>agencies. This includes the EIA process and governance.</p> <p>This legislative review process is ongoing and engaged in extensive consultation with many stakeholders; this review will continue beyond the life of the project. It is anticipated that the review will propose changes to the composition of Island Environment Authorities (IEA's) who approve EIAs (a higher level of technical expertise is to be included on IEAs). Securing this change in legislation is a long-term and enforceable solution to ensuring biodiversity is fully considered in the EIA process, particularly in key areas such as within and adjoining PAs.</p>
18	Forest cover on the nine 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	1	At least 13,245 ha	<p><b>Target achieved.</b></p> <p>The 2018 State of Environment Report found that forest cover across the Cook Islands was 'stable' (SPREP 2018). This trend of stable forest cover is assumed by the report authors to apply across the entire country. On that basis, it is anticipated that forest cover of the nine Southern Group islands has not declined from a baseline of 13,245 hectares since the start of the project.</p>
19	Sedimentation and pollution of aquatic and marine habitats	Sedimentation and pollution (pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers,	At least 10 sites within CIMP where water quality will be improved through measures to control	2	More than 10 water monitoring sites in place; not known if there is improved water quality	<p><b>Target partially achieved.</b></p> <p>Monitoring sites (&gt;10) are in place however data is not adequate to demonstrate that water quality has</p>

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>10</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
		waste) have significant negative impacts on streams and lagoons in the country	water pollution and sedimentation (from agriculture or other sources)			<p>improved due to pollution and sedimentation control measures. Whilst water quality testing has been routinely conducted throughout the life of R2R, in collaborative efforts between MMR &amp; NES, measures to control pollution were not directly implemented in these same areas. Consequently, whilst water quality may have improved in five areas (with an additional site showing no increase or decrease in water quality), this target is unlikely to be fully achieved as little direct management was implemented at these sites.</p> <p>In 2019, erosion and sediment control guidelines were produced by Infrastructure Cook Islands as part of the IW R2R project. NES is now looking to integrate these into the National Environment Policy as part of the Environment Act review that is currently underway. This will result in sustainability beyond the life of the project; there will be enhanced governance frameworks to support the management of this issue, resulting in impactful change despite this indicator not being directly achieved.</p>
20	Reduced impacts of human activities on land on the health of inshore marine ecosystems, as	Baseline TBD during year 1 of project	No increase in algal levels on coral reefs by end of project	3	NA	<p><b>Not achievable.</b></p> <p>Due to design flaws, the final result for this KPI is indeterminate: it is not known if the target is achieved.</p>

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>10</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
	measured by algal levels (coralline algae, turf algae, and macro-algae) on coral reefs around Rarotonga and Aitutaki					<p>Performance against this indicator by EoP cannot be assessed or determined: this is because a baseline was never established by R2R PMU at the start of the project. This means that performance and change cannot be assessed with confidence.</p> <p>Whilst MMR algae survey and monitoring programs are in place on coral reefs around Rarotonga and Aitutaki (drone mapping and surveys, water sampling, genetic and molecular taxonomy review, herbarium established) we cannot demonstrate that algal levels have declined. Algal growth was found to be seasonal, with higher levels in the hotter, wetter summer months.</p> <p>To address one of the input factors contributing to elevated algal growth, MMR assisted MFEM and GHD consultants to conduct preliminary surveys on a proposed ocean sewage outfall location. This is currently still in feasibility stages and public consultation is underway.</p> <p>NES is also addressing these human impacts by more stringent EIA and permitting processes, particularly in vulnerable coastal and foreshore environments.</p> <p>Mitigating poor water quality that enters marine environments and influences aquatic algae levels is complex and involves multiple agencies - Ministry of</p>

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>10</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
						Health (MoH), ICI, MoA, NES and MMR. External factors such as climate change and increased temperatures also contribute to algae levels. This has proved to be a much larger issue than anticipated and the Cook Islands is seeking future support for continued activities in this area to reduce human pressures on freshwater and marine ecosystems.
21	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	1	40 tourism businesses	<p><b>Target achieved.</b></p> <p>A tourism industry assessment report commissioned by R2R validates completion of this target (TRC Tourism 2020).</p> <p>At least 40 tourism businesses are implementing biodiversity management programs that comply with conservation guidelines developed through the project and included in national accreditation system. This target has therefore been achieved and surpassed.</p> <p>The Mana Tiaki Eco Certification program (MTEC) developed under the project in 2018 is now being widely implemented within the tourism industry, with over 40 businesses signing up in its first year.</p> <p>In early 2020, R2R contracted TRC Tourism to review the MTEC criteria, particularly the biodiversity component, to assess how this can be further strengthened and applied across the</p>

SRF #	Indicator	Baseline	Target by EoP	Status at EoP	Performance assessment	
				Category <sup>10</sup>	Quantitative	Summary of achievements
						<p>industry; TCA final report has been completed.</p> <p>The R2R project supported business subscriptions to MTEC for its first year, after which businesses were to take on this commitment. However, the second year of MTEC operation was negatively impacted by Covid-19; the ability of operators to re-register to MTEC was impacted by travel restrictions and associated loss of tourism revenues.</p> <p>As such, the project has agreed to support subscriptions for a second year so that the private sector can continue their environmental initiatives throughout 2020. However, support will be specifically targeted to those businesses implementing biodiversity focused activities (as opposed to other elements of MTEC such as energy or waste reduction).</p>
22	Number of projects by tourism operators that support biodiversity conservation (eg. creating ra'ui sites/CCAs; coral gardens; beach clean-up; sponsored species conservation)	Six on-going projects in the Southern Group	At least 15 projects operating by the end of the project	1	At least 20 projects	<p><b>Target achieved.</b></p> <p>A tourism industry assessment report commissioned by R2R validates completion of this target (TRC Tourism 2020).</p> <p>At least 20 projects by tourism operators that support biodiversity conservation are in operation at EoP; this target has therefore been achieved and surpassed.</p>

## 2.5 Strategic overview

### 2.5.1 Summary of performance

Table 1 and Figure 1 summarises EoP performance results as measured by the number of KPIs against the three completion status categories.

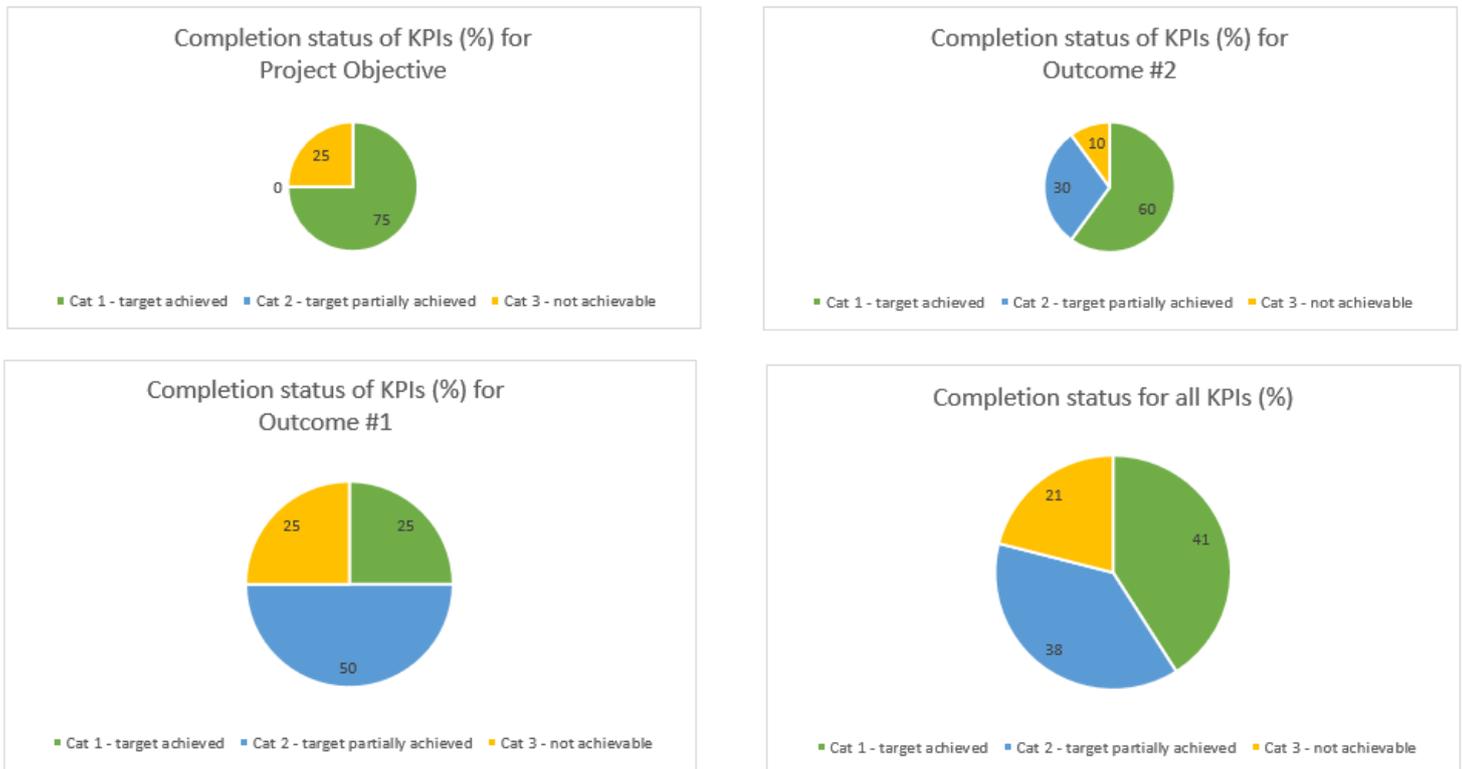
**Table 1. Summary of performance results at EoP (as at February 2021)**

SRF level	KPI # and completion status category (note 1)			Total
	1 - target achieved	2 - target partially achieved	3 not achievable	
<b>Objective</b>	1, 2b, 3	-	2a	4
<b>Sub-total (no.)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sub-total (%)</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Outcome #1</b>	4 9a, 9b 12b 14b	6 7 8 10a, 10b, 10c, 10d, 10e 11 12a	5a, 5b, 5c 13 14a	
<b>Sub-total (no.)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Sub-total (%)</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Outcome #2</b>	15a, 15b 16a 18 21 22	16b 17 19	20	
<b>Sub-total (no.)</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Sub-total (%)</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>TOTAL (no.)</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>TOTAL (%)</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>

Note 1:

**Completion status category:**

1. By EoP, target will be achieved or exceeded (target achieved).
2. By EoP, target will not be achieved in full (target partially achieved).
3. Not achievable (due to no baseline and/or indicator being poorly designed).



**Figure 1. Completion status of KPIs for R2R objective, outcomes and overall project**

## 2.5.2 Analysis and main findings

By EoP, overall performance results are anticipated as follows:

- 14 KPIs (41%) where target is achieved or exceeded.
- 13 KPIs (38%) where target is partially achieved.
- Seven (7) KPIs (21%) where the target is not achievable (due to no baseline and/or indicator being poorly designed).

When analysed against the different levels of the SRF (objective and outcome), indicator completion rates at the level of **Objective** and **Outcome #2** are high (75% and 60% respectively) and represent very good performance.

Completion rates for **Outcome #1 - Strengthening protected areas management** are relatively low - only 25% of KPIs where the target was achieved or exceeded, and 50% of KPIs were partially achieved.

However, consideration of target completion rates alone is misleading as not all indicators and targets are of equal importance, consequence and durability. Very substantial progress and achievements have been made in high impact areas, notably:

- Legal designation, active management, research, marine spatial planning, and improved management effectiveness of Marae Moana (mix of Objective and Outcome #1).
- Establishment of an extensive network of legislated MPAs (over 135,000km<sup>2</sup> in area).
- Development of a PACS and a comprehensive protected and managed areas inventory.

These achievements will be sustained beyond R2R and will be an enduring legacy of the project.

Despite this, the desired outcome remains incomplete and at EoP will be only partially achieved. There are substantial pieces of unfinished work including:

- Development of a Protected Areas Management Policy (PAMP) that would include identification of appropriate mechanisms for coordination and management of protected areas.

- The PACS proposal is completed but not yet considered and approved by government.
- There was no progress to establish new terrestrial 'protected areas' at Rarotonga Cloud Forests and Manuae Island.
- Management plans for 15 areas.

Elsewhere, progress has been slow and tangible evidence of action for some activities is lacking. The MTR suggested that more focus had been placed on the smaller and more easily achievable goals and less so on the bigger, harder ones. At EoP, the results of this performance report support this suggestion.

Our view is these results are attributable to three important factors.

**Firstly**, the majority of the Outcome #1 KPIs were reliant on the PMU taking responsibility for the activity (initially at least) and thereby progressing the indicator targets. This did not occur until the last 12 months of the project (January 2020 onwards<sup>11</sup>). Although important work was able to be achieved in the closing periods of the project – indeed overall project performance is far higher at EoP than was anticipated by the MTR Consultant (in 2018) and CNA Consultant (late 2019) – by 2020, five years had elapsed and with one year remaining, completion of activities that required long-term commitment was just not feasible.

**Secondly**, many of the indicators assessed as category 2 are complex and involve multiple organisations, significant policy and legislative reforms, and time-consuming planning with communities and leaders in outer islands. Completion of this type of work is definitely achievable in a 5-6 year project (with two extensions, R2R had a final duration of one month shy of six years), however there are essential precursors including:

- Strong project management.
- Complex work needs to be initiated at the start of the project (year 1) and not towards the end.
- Capacity supplementation through procurement and contracting of advisers and consultants is essential. Again, this needed to happen at the commencement and early stages of the project and taper off at the end. For R2R, the opposite occurred: there were very few consultants involved from 2015-19 followed by a significant surge in 2020 (discussed in detail in Section 3).

**Thirdly**, having 25% of Outcome #1 KPIs being assessed as 'Not achievable (due to no baseline and/or indicator being poorly designed)' highlights particular problems with project design. Furthermore, 25% of Objective and 10% of Outcome #2 KPIs were respectively rated as 'Not achievable'. These flaws should have been detected during design review, and/or at inception, and rectified. That they were not caused significant problems with implementation and has meant that overall 21% of all KPIs cannot be assessed due to failure to establish necessary baselines and/or KPIs and targets being so poorly crafted that they were not measurable.

### 3. Lessons to be learned

#### 3.1 A word about terms

This report uses the title of lessons to be learned (or L2BL) rather than the often used one of 'lessons learned'. The reason for this is to highlight the important distinction between a lesson identified and a lesson learned. A common flaw in development – and indeed in many sectors – is to keep identifying the same lesson over and over but never learning it. A lesson needs to be accompanied by an action, by a change, or changes, if it is to be considered 'learned'. If nothing changes, nothing has been learned (Twyford 2017).

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<sup>11</sup> Although the project closes on 6 June 2021, for all intents and purposes, closure occurred on 6 January 2021, the date of the first extension. This was because project funding had largely been exhausted by this time, meaning that the only substantive activity that will continue to final closure on 6 June 2021 is the PMU staff and operations, and consultant contracts already committed (CTA support for exit and closure, Outlook Report development, Terminal Evaluation Team).

Milton (2009) gives an eloquent summary of this issue<sup>12</sup>. He proposed that a 'lesson learned' can only be called that where there is a change in personal or operational behaviour as a result of experience.

On this basis, the information captured in this report constitutes *lessons identified* or *lessons to be learned* from the implementation of R2R. If we act on them, and make changes, then we are in the realm of lessons learned.

### 3.2 Purpose and approach

The purpose of this part of the report is ultimately continual improvement in project management by the Project Management Unit within the National Environment Service (NES), R2R implementation partners, and UNDP. The report aims to identify what was done well, what needs some refinement, and what should be discontinued.

This section has been compiled using a mixed methods assessment approach - quantitative and qualitative:

- Referral to performance results (see Section 2).
- Feedback was sought from a diverse range of stakeholders who were involved in R2R. In November 2020, a feedback survey (Annex 1) was developed and distributed to 51 people (mix of government, NGO and UNDP personnel). Stakeholders were asked to consider “the good, the so so, and the ugly” from R2R, to identify ‘three things’ against each of these elements, and recommend management actions to improve the project and systems. Response rate was relatively poor (nine surveys, 18%) although surveys were received from the majority of R2R partner organisations (UNDP MCO and MMCO were unfortunate and notable gaps).
- The report also draws on the findings of key reports that assessed project performance, namely MTR (Laurie 2018), Capacity Needs Assessment Report (Twyford 2019a), and our observations and reflections as the authors of this report<sup>13</sup>.

Major issues, identified lessons and recommendations are described in the following sections. In the interests of brevity, emphasis is given to identification of just a handful of strategic, high-level lessons, those that had most consequence for the project.

### 3.3 Project design

The R2R MTR (Laurie 2018) identified wide-ranging concerns with, and limitations of, project design, the SRF, and its applicability; a comprehensive SWOT analysis of design was provided (Laurie 2018, Table 4). These results are not repeated here and readers are referred to the MTR for in-depth commentary about design issues.

The fact that at EoP R2R is anticipated to only attain targets for 14 of 34 KPIs (41%) (Section 2.5) clearly points to significant issues. It is our opinion that this result is attributable to (a) an overly ambitious and in places flawed design, and (b) inadequate implementation. This is further borne out by the MTR, CNAR, and qualitative assessment methods used in this report, all of which highlighted concerns with design and significant issues with timely and effective implementation.

This report considers that overall the R2R design suffered from trying to do far too much. It was a case of trying to be all things to all people. The design had indicators, outputs and activities ranging from things as disparate as protected areas legislation on the one hand, to numbers of fish and birds and trees on the other, and much of everything in between. The design was extremely broad in its topical coverage and similarly its national geographic scope, across all islands and the entire marine estate.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.nickmilton.com/2009/05/what-is-lesson-learned.html#ixzz3O16uYDBe>

<sup>13</sup> Keith Twyford, Capacity Development Consultant and Chief Technical Adviser (June 2019 - present), Hayley Weeks, R2R Project Officer (November 2018 – September 2019) and Project Manager (October 2019 – present).

This design breadth meant that R2R lacked coherence and focus. It also meant that there were too many disparate partners involved and this posed particular problems for the PMU who were unable to effectively manage and galvanise the necessary partnerships and collaboration across multiple government agencies, island communities and other stakeholders.

A significant identified lesson is the need to narrow scope to a project of less complexity and breadth; this would greatly increase the chances of project success and positive outcomes.

For instance, a project design that centred on specific aspects of R2R Outcome #1 (Strengthening protected areas management) - policy and legislative reform, management planning, management effectiveness, and targeted expansion of the protected areas estate (terrestrial and marine) – would have been more manageable and may have achieved better outcomes than the very broad and ambitious scope of R2R. A curtailed design of this type would have explicitly excluded any aspects outside this scope namely population status of priority species (KPIs #13-14) and the majority of KPIs from Outcome #2.

#### **Lesson identified**

- The R2R design was extremely broad in its topical and geographic scope and this, along with some KPIs being flawed, contributed to sub-optimal project implementation and performance.

### **3.4 Strategic Results Framework**

The MTR provides a thorough critique of the SRF, indicators and targets. It found that “many of the indicators are flawed” due to measurement of outputs and not outcomes; lack of quantification; excessive complexity; difficulties of attribution; and being impractical (Laurie 2018).

The EoP performance assessment (Section 2, this report) found that seven of 34 KPIs (21%) were “not achievable” due to there being no baseline and/or the indicator being poorly designed. This is an unacceptably high number of KPIs and highlights the imperative for very close scrutiny at project start-up and inception; change is required at that time otherwise the SRF is ‘locked in’ and poorly designed KPIs are perpetuated throughout the life of the project.

It is important to recognise that such scrutiny can only be undertaken if there is adequate technical capacity in the PMU. For R2R, this capacity was lacking throughout much of the project and certainly was absent at start-up and inception. This emphasises the need for a CTA-type position to be on-call to the PMU from start-up.

The R2R SRF features several KPI focussed on water quality (KPI #19, 20). Effective implementation of these KPIs required that a properly designed scientific study – with establishment of suitable baselines - was resourced and put into place, early in the project. This was not done and meant that individual survey and monitoring activities were funded and implemented however these were piecemeal and did not specifically address the requirements and targets of the KPIs.

#### **Lessons identified**

- The R2R SRF included a relatively large number of KPIs that were fundamentally flawed and/or without baselines, and therefore unable to be measured. Such flaws should have been identified during the design process and/or the inception stage, and rectified, rather than being allowed to remain and perpetuate implementation difficulties.
- Rectification of design issues, SRF flaws, and establishment of baselines, requires appropriate technical capacity (eg. Chief Technical Adviser or similar) in the PMU at the inception stage.

### **3.5 Capacity of Project Management Unit**

The R2R PMU had, and still has, very broad, quite complex and demanding responsibilities; how it performs has very important consequences for the project as a whole. However, the way the PMU has been staffed, resourced and supported throughout much of the project did not match these requirements.

The PMU was well serviced by a team of staff with adequate skills and experience in project operations (logistics, donor reporting, administration, finances). However, overall project implementation was slow (refer MTR findings and recommendations) and at end-of-project below what was expected (see Section 2 for performance results). Slow and at times poor implementation can be attributed, in large part, to the lack of technical, policy, project management and leadership expertise in the PMU.

The CNAR found that the PMU required increased capacity in the following areas:

- Project and activity implementation, with emphasis on (a) determined and unwavering attention towards achieving R2R targets as specified in the SRF, and (b) implementation of activities and bringing them to completion.
- Technical and policy knowledge of protected area management and biodiversity conservation (land and marine), strategy, and integrated NRM.
- Partnership management skills. Lack of capacity in this area meant that cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder work did not proceed as expected; it also meant that silo mentality and compartmentalised operations continued largely unabated.
- Translation of scientific data into useful and meaningful information suitable for management decision making.
- Adaptive management, judgement and confidence to use the project design document as a guide rather than a prescription.
- Strategic and cohesive whole-of-project communication (Twyford 2019a).

Respondent feedback (see Annexes 2-5) reinforced the finding that the PMU lacked capacity in the key technical and policy areas that R2R required.

Despite some limitations, a very important outcome has been the establishment of a permanent PMU in NES with staff on long term contracts and therefore guaranteed employment and funding. Initiated under the leadership of the Director NES, this is a very important result and should mean that the capacity growth in the PMU, arising from R2R, will be sustained and on-tap for future development partner projects.

### Lessons identified

- The R2R PMU required a very broad range of skills and experiences in order to function effectively and achieve project objectives and desired outcomes. Operational capacity is important for a PMU, however, technical and policy expertise in the content matter of the project – protected area management and integrated NRM – is also essential.
- Too often, almost always, PMUs close with the project, and capacity and staff are lost. The establishment of a permanently staffed PMU in NES means this will not be the case and capacity will be sustained.

## 3.6 Procurement and contracting of consultants

### Procurement activity and progress

The R2R design envisaged that consultants – local and international – would be a key mechanism to bolster managerial and technical capacity for the project. The project design identified a need for 21 different consultancies and included draft ToR for most of these; the R2R procurement plan set aside budget for all (Twyford 2019a).

Despite this, for the first four years of the project, there was very slow progress by the PMU to source and contract consultants. At the time of the MTR (late 2017), this was flagged as a major issue as just two of 21 consultancies had been filled (Laurie 2018). The MTR was pointed in its findings:

*“There are highly qualified and experienced staff in the NES and MMR, but the PMU is not set up in a way that ensures quality and does not feel able even to write TORs for recruitment of consultants that they have planned to recruit. If PMU does not know what should be done, use of consultants will be suboptimal” (Laurie 2018, p24).*

The CNAR also identified the lack of consultant procurement and associated capacity constraints as a significant barrier to project implementation and an important factor behind sub-optimal quality of some activities and outputs (Twyford 2019a). Rectification of these shortcomings was at the heart of the 2020 Project Strategy and procurement of consultants has been a high priority for the past 12-15 months.

From late-2019 and into early 2021, under leadership of the CTA and new R2R Project Manager, an extensive amount of time and effort has gone into the design of interventions for consultants and advisers, and subsequent procurement and contracting. As at July 2019, there were just four consultants in place, two procured by MMCO to support Marae Moana operations (positions #3, #7 – see Table 2) and two by NES (positions #1, #6a). At time of writing this report (February 2021), a team of 27 consultants (national and international) had been in place (most had completed their work and were no longer contracted) across a diverse range of functions (Table 2).

The surge in procurement over the past 15 months, whilst necessary, is not sound practice. Ideally, consultant procurement and inputs should commence early in a project and reach maximum levels by say year 3-4, and then taper off. What actually happened with R2R was the opposite: very little procurement of consultants occurred until 2020 (year 5 and close to project end) at which time there was a significant surge.

Root causes behind slow progress to procure consultants were explored in the CNAR and can in part be attributed to the lack of available expertise in-country and some previous negative experiences of hiring overseas expertise (reluctance exists amongst some government officials to rely on consultants particularly international candidates).

That aside the overall slow performance points towards a capacity gap – there was a need to strengthen the managerial and procurement capacity of the PMU and specifically in the following areas:

- Development of ToR for consultancies that fit the needs of the project.
- Procurement expertise including skills and ability in activity design, and use of government systems (and those of UNDP – see comments below) to rapidly source, recruit and contract consultants.
- Technical knowledge to manage a team of consultants with diverse responsibilities in policy, planning and science.

There was an apparent need for a core position (such as a CTA or similar) to be brought onto the project from the outset and to be a long-term resource for the PMU and broader project. The MTR made a similar recommendation, and this was eventually acted upon by UNDP and PMU (CTA contract commenced in December 2019), however, by then significant time had elapsed.

Efforts were made to source and procure local consultants. R2R experiences are the local market is shallow: there are very few capable consultants and those that do exist are usually already fully committed. It is near impossible for a project like R2R to address this market situation in any effective manner. One strategy offered for consideration is procurement of local consultants on a long-term basis with extensive input days (say 50-75% of full-time over 2-3 years). This would represent an attractive option for skilled local consultants and might improve attraction and retention. It would also allow for international consultants to work alongside local consultants to further develop the capacity of the local private sector<sup>14</sup>. This should be seen as a sound investment in private sector development and country capacity. It would build the pool of local consultants upon which future projects could draw and represent a tangible example of capacity development of the private sector and project sustainability.

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<sup>14</sup> It is understood that this model is used by Climate Change Cook Islands (CCCI) on GCF-funded projects (Wayne King, Director CCCI, pers. comm., March 2020).

**Table 2. Procurement of consultants by PMU and partner agencies**

Agency	Position title and unique ID	Total	
		No.	%
PMU	Chief Technical Adviser (#5)	16	59
	PAM Policy Adviser (Stage 1) (#6b)		
	Marae Moana Outlook Report (independent reviewers) (#18, 19, 20)		
	Marae Moana Marine Spatial Planning Team (#9, 15, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28)		
	Sustainable Tourism Adviser (#8)		
	Marae Moana Outlook Report (rewrite) (#7ai, 7aii, 7aiii)		
NES	Natural Heritage Trust (# 1)	3	11
	Island biodiversity assessments (#2)		
	Takitumu management plan (#6a)		
MMCO	Sustainable Financing Mechanism (#3)	3	11
	GIS Officer (#4)		
	Marae Moana Outlook Report (initial draft) (#7)		
MMR	Aitutaki Lagoon plan (#23)	1	4
GCI systems	Sub-total	23	85
UNDP MCO	Mid-term Review (-)	4	15
	Capacity Needs Assessment Consultant (-)		
	Terminal Evaluation Team Leader (-)		
	Terminal Evaluation Team Member (-)		
UNDP systems	Sub-total	4	15
<b>Total</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>100</b>

### Government vs UNDP procurement and contracting

The majority of procurement used government systems (23 of 27 positions; 85%), and most was undertaken by the PMU (16 positions, 59%) (Table 2). This EoP report considers that this is highly appropriate and an important contribution to strengthening of government systems and capacity development of PMU staff. It is an important sustainability outcome that will endure beyond R2R.

A comment about use and reliance on UNDP procurement and contracting for consultants is warranted. R2R did use the resources of the UNDP MCO for procurement of some consultants (four positions as shown in Table 2 plus two others that were not proceeded with). However, in late-2019 a strategic decision was made by the PMU to discontinue use of UNDP procurement services and to divert all procurement and contracting through Government of Cook Islands (GCI) systems. This was done for the following reasons:

- UNDP MCO procurement was not found to be responsive enough for project needs. Extensive delays were experienced in advertising, evaluation of bids, and award of contracts. Use of UNDP accounts payable processes were also problematic: long payment delays were experienced by some consultants and this resulted in reputational damage to the project.
- Furthermore, UNDP tendering requirements were too onerous for small-medium scale consultancies of the type required by R2R.
- Use of UNDP systems did not build capacity of PMU staff in procurement and nor did it serve to strengthen partner government systems.
- Use of government systems gave the PMU greater control over and ownership of procurement and contracting, and more efficient and responsive payments.

## Lessons identified

- Lack of procurement capacity in the PMU had a very significant bearing upon project implementation and is considered to be an important root cause behind relatively modest performance results.
- Effective and timely procurement, and subsequent management of consultants and their outputs, depends upon having adequate technical capacity in the PMU. Procurement expertise (through a CTA or other suitable resource) should have been mobilised early in the lifecycle of R2R (not towards the end as was the actual case) and maintained throughout with surge capacity at peak periods.
- Consultant procurement and contracting should be undertaken using government systems. UNDP systems should only be used as a stop-gap and primarily for those positions where a higher level of contractual independence from the project itself is required (ie. MTR, terminal evaluation).

### 3.7 Effectiveness of project implementation partners

The project implementation partners were NES, MMR, MoA, and CIT. The MMCO was not identified as a partner agency in the ProDoc (a major oversight as identified by Laurie 2018) however once the Marae Moana Act was established in 2017 it was treated as one. Similarly, the House of Ariki (HoA) was not an identified implementation partner, however, the project and HoA worked closely together, with R2R providing financial support for staff and operations.

#### Activity management

Throughout much of the life of R2R (from inception in 2015 to 2019), the majority of R2R project activities were (a) developed and implemented by partner organisations (primarily MMR, MoA and more recently MMCO) and (b) focussed on biological surveys and assessments, research projects (such as giant clam genetics), and operational activities, much of which was relatively low-level and lacked coherence (also a finding of the MTR). Through this period, the PMU itself conducted very little activity implementation.

As reported by the MTR (Laurie 2018, p23), and reinforced through the CNAR, much of the MoA work has focussed on economic development, crop production and farm productivity that seems distant and unrelated to the specific R2R outcomes and targets as expressed in the SRF. Some of the MMR R2R-funded activity similarly seemed to lack alignment with project targets. This lack of alignment points to a capacity gap in project planning and funding within MMR and MoA, and within the PMU, as project manager and the ultimate approver of funds release.

The activities of MMCO (led by the former director) were somewhat different, being more strategic and high-level in nature. Key activities funded by R2R were an assessment of sustainable financing mechanisms (Conservation International 2020), development of the draft Outlook Report (Rongo et al. 2020), and GIS support for marine spatial planning. These activities were designed by MMCO and procured using government resources and systems.

Throughout the life of R2R, implementation agencies were required to develop and submit work plans and progress reports as part of routine project management arrangements. However, there were no robust mechanisms in place for implementation agencies to develop and submit activity proposals that sought R2R funding, nor any transparent assessment and approval processes by the PMU, and as necessary the project steering committee. Furthermore there was insufficient if any oversight and monitoring by the PMU of 'on-ground' activity implementation by partners.

Another important gap in project management were formal agreements between the PMU and implementation agencies that clearly defined the individual activities to be funded by R2R, expected outcomes, alignment with project design, and the roles and responsibilities of the PMU and implementation agencies. The CNAR considered this to be a major gap in project management capacity and approach (although this was contested by the then R2R Coordinator who felt that such agreements would have made no difference) (Twyford 2019a).

Our opinion is the lack of formal agreements between the PMU and the key implementation agencies had several negative impacts:

- Detrimently affected inter-agency relationships due to misunderstandings and inadequate communication about expectations.
- Lack of accountability and controls on implementation agencies such that they could and at times did proceed to implement projects that had doubtful connections back to R2R goals, outputs and targets. This problem was compounded by turnover of Heads of Ministries.
- At same time these agencies expressed frustration at having to obtain approvals and funds released on a case-by-case basis.

A finding of the CNAR, and reinforced by this EoP report, is the absence of activity management plans, signed off by the relevant head of ministry and Director NES<sup>15</sup>, represented a major shortcoming in project management and contributed to less effective outcomes.

### **Decentralisation of staff and financial management**

R2R funding was used to fully fund the salaries of staff<sup>16</sup> in partner organisations as follows:

- MMR – two Marine Scientists; Project Officer; Communications Officer
- NES - Project Officer
- HoA - Ra'ui Coordinator

These officers were outposted and embedded in partner organisations, formed part of the organisational structure, reported to agency management (not R2R PMU), and ostensibly carried out R2R work.

Feedback from partner organisations, complemented by our observations, are these staff made important contributions to the capacity and functioning of the agencies and their presence enhanced agency capacity to administer and implement R2R activities (this was particularly the case in MMR which had a heavy load in activity implementation).

However, overall return on investment and value for money was questionable as it was evident that staff were, at times, drawn onto the core business of implementation agencies rather than activity that aligned with R2R goals and targets. Intervention and remediation in these circumstances was complicated by the fact that officers were in-line and not supervised or performance managed by the PMU.

This calls into question the out-placement of R2R-funded staff to partner agencies. An alternative would be the establishment of a core team in the PMU that provides services to partner agencies. Greater management control and coordination may have been achieved by having out-posted project officers reporting to the PMU as opposed to reporting to managers within implementation agencies. This option would have the added benefit of creating a stronger, more unified project team with a broad range of skills and experiences that could be used across the entire project and multiple organisations, not just one. Future projects should carefully and critically consider the two approaches.

In addition to decentralisation of staff, for part of the project, financial management functions were delivered by both the PMU and MMR. This approach was wracked by problems and assessed in detail by the MTR (refer Laurie 2018). One of the recommendations of the MTR, and accepted through the management response, was to discontinue this arrangement and to consolidate all financial management functions back into the PMU. We strongly support this action.

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<sup>15</sup> NES being the designated Executing Entity/Implementing Partner of R2R (refer ProDoc).

<sup>16</sup> As distinct from short and longer term consultants engaged on government consultancy contracts for specific R2R work.

## Lessons identified

- The absence of annual activity management plans (or agreements) meant that some R2R funding was allocated towards activities of doubtful relevance to project design and goals. Furthermore, lack of such plans meant that the level of accountability and controls were not as strong as was required.
- R2R funding was used to fully fund the salaries of outposted staff in MMR, NES and HoA (all important implementation agencies of R2R). However, return on investment was questionable as it was evident that staff were, at times, drawn onto the core business of implementation agencies. This calls into question the out-placement of R2R-funded staff in partner agencies; a more centralised approach should be considered.

### 3.8 Cross-sectoral partnerships and collaboration

At the heart of R2R was integrated NRM (from ridge to reef and beyond) and the use of cross-sectoral partnerships to achieve project outcomes and to deliver activities. The R2R project is seen by many stakeholders as an 'experiment' in cross-agency collaboration. However, the ability of R2R to put in place effective and integrated activities through use of cross-agency and cross-sector partnerships and collaboration was relatively mixed. R2R design and implementation performance in this area are seen by multiple sources – MTR, CNAR, feedback to this report (see Annexes 2-5) - as a weakness and largely missed opportunity.

The MTR report (Laurie 2018) found that the R2R design did not adequately address and resource cross-sector collaboration and nor were risks adequately recognised. The CNAR presented qualitative and quantitative evidence of poor performance and results in cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships; it found there were significant issues and difficulties in this area and substantial capacity limitations (Twyford 2019a).

Furthermore, the PMU was resourced with relatively junior officers who had logistical and project coordination functions, and a limited mandate and indeed capacity to resolve complex, multi-agency coordination and integration issues. Serious conflicts, differences of opinions, and relationship breakdowns - all of which occurred throughout the course of R2R – could not be resolved by the PMU. Other mechanisms needed to be activated, and at higher levels, such as dialogue between heads of ministries, and use of higher-level committees and decision-making forums such as the Marae Moana TAG.

## Lessons identified

- ✓ R2R design is grounded in integrated, large scale NRM, across land and sea. Achieving project objectives and outcomes was fundamentally dependent upon working across organisational mandates and land/sea tenure boundaries. There is a need to build skills and experience in cross-sectoral partnerships, collaboration and relationships; such capacity should be recruited and brought in if necessary.
- ✓ Multi-stakeholder projects are very difficult to implement; they require substantial time and effort to make work and require skilled personnel with strong experience and skills in consensus building, collaboration and partnership. This is a capacity that needs to be sought and secured.
- ✓ Cross-sectoral partnerships and collaboration needs to occur at multiple levels and is not the responsibility of the PMU alone: executive coordination and integration forums are needed to resolve higher level issues and broker decisions.
- ✓ The need for cross-agency collaboration and multi-agency partnerships will persist and demand will only grow beyond R2R: more partnerships and collaboration will be needed, not less. Capacity needs will remain, if not grow, post-R2R.

### 3.9 Governance

#### Project Steering Committee

As per the R2R design (ProDoc), the National Biodiversity Steering Committee (NBSC), chaired by the NES, functioned as the Project Steering Committee (PSC) for R2R and for all other UNDP GEF biodiversity projects in the Cook Islands (can be up to five at one time). Membership of the PSC is wide-ranging, including representatives from over 10 institutions, and was reviewed during the Inception Phase (Laurie 2018).

The Cook Islands is a small country and suffers from a plethora of committees and decision-making forums that pose significant demands on a small number of government officials and citizens. Use of NBSC, an existing governance structure, as the R2R PSC was a sound idea but it was not without its share of problems. The MTR highlighted issues with poor attendance levels by senior officials.

We concur with this and emphasise that, although NBSC meetings were regularly held and usually well attended, partner organisations were generally represented by junior officers who could not make decisions and had to defer to heads of ministries who were rarely in attendance. Furthermore, the very large size of the PSC, its diverse government and NGO membership, and scope across all GEF UNDP biodiversity projects, meant that it had to, by necessity, be less about decisions and more about information sharing.

It should be recognised that R2R was by far the largest, biggest budget (US\$ 4.2 million) and most complex GEF project ever managed by the Cook Islands, and an order of magnitude larger than anything ever managed by NES (who had previously only been responsible for small projects valued at US\$0.5 million and less). On this basis, it is advocated that R2R warranted a dedicated, not shared, PSC with senior level membership of HoMs and directors. Furthermore, the R2R PSC should have had terms of reference that were very tightly focussed on strategic management decision-making, as distinct from information sharing, namely:

- Approval of the annual work plan and budget.
- Monitor overall project performance and progress against the SRF and intervene when progress lags.
- And most importantly, help the project to work across agencies and sectors, and be the primary forum for dispute resolution.

#### PMU performance and oversight

NES management has been actively involved in R2R governance and project implementation since inception. As NES is the designated Executing Entity/Implementing Partner of R2R, the NES Director has overall leadership responsibility and accountability for the project; he also co-chaired the National Biodiversity Steering Committee (functions as R2R project steering committee). For majority of the project, the NES Deputy Director was R2R project manager<sup>17</sup>.

Feedback including from within NES itself highlighted that workload demands and other agency priorities meant that NES did not provide the level of senior management oversight and inter-agency coordination that was required to optimise project results. Clearly, R2R required close and at times hands-on and very active management throughout its life cycle, yet NES management did not always manage as close or as hard as it should have (Twyford 2019a). There were also issues with performance and productivity of individual PMU officers that could only be dealt with by NES management, however that was not adequately provided.

#### Lessons identified

- ✓ Having a shared PSC as the principal governance forum for R2R was ineffective and not suited to the scale, complexity and risks of the project. A separate, standalone PSC with a smaller number of organisations represented (NES and government partner organisations would suffice) and sharpened ToR focussed on strategic management and cross-organisational collaboration was required.

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<sup>17</sup> Until late 2019 when a dedicated R2R Project Manager (Hayley Weeks) was appointed.

- ✓ To be effective and productive throughout the project lifecycle, the R2R PMU required active and ongoing managerial oversight and performance management by NES senior management.

### 3.10 Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to address the major lessons identified in Section 3; they are provided for the consideration of the Cook Islands Government, UNDP and GEF, when developing and implementing future projects such as R2R.

- Recommendation #1: Through project design, ensure project scope is narrowed and more tightly focused on fewer issues, that projects are as simple as possible, have stronger coherence, and fewer interested parties and stakeholders.
- Recommendation # 2: Thoroughly review - and change where needed – the SRF and its KPIs and targets, during the design stage (by UNDP) and again during inception (by both UNDP and PMU).
- Recommendation # 3: Procure and mobilise a long-term Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) as the key technical and management resource for the project. This position would have flexible work inputs throughout the life of the project (inception to closure) including surge capacity to coincide with peak periods of activity.
- Recommendation # 4: Fully explore the two approaches towards management of project-funded staff (outposted and placed in partner agencies versus centralised and attached to the PMU); carefully consider the benefits and risks of both approaches.
- Recommendation # 5: Senior management of NES (as project execution agency) should be hands-on and actively monitor and manage the performance of Project Management Unit (PMU) staff.
- Recommendation # 6: Introduce annual activity agreements, jointly developed between the PMU and partner agency, and signed-off by the Director NES and relevant Head of Ministry, as the main tool to identify project-funded activities and to improve accountability and alignment of activities with broader project objectives and outcomes.
- Recommendation # 7: Use Cook Islands Government systems and processes for all project procurement and contracting. The only exception should be those positions where a higher level of contractual independence from the project itself is required (ie. MTR, terminal evaluation); in these cases, UNDP processes should be used.
- Recommendation # 8: For large, complex, high value projects, establish a separate standalone Project Steering Committee with terms of reference centred on high-level decision making, strategic management, and cross-agency collaboration.
- Recommendation # 9: For future GEF project proposals, and other suitable development projects, give high priority to inclusion of the following key outputs that were commenced under R2R but not completed:
  - Protected Areas Management Policy (PAMP)
  - Protected Areas Classification System (PACS)
  - Marae Moana marine spatial planning (MSP) and application of zoning scheme
  - Establishment of Rarotonga Cloud Forest and Manuae Island as protected areas.

## 4. Knowledge library

R2R commissioned a significant number of reports and other resources. Collectively, these resources are an important knowledge resource for the Cook Islands.

Major outputs are identified below and organised by the two major outcomes of the project and then by broad thematic area.

### 4.1 Outcome 1 knowledge resources

#### R2R project management

Laurie, A. (2018) Mid-term review: Conserving biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem function through a “Ridge to Reef” approach in the Cook Islands. GEF/UNDP/Government of Cook Islands.

Twyford, K. (2019) *Capacity and Competency Needs Assessment and Strengthening for Cook Islands Ridge to Reef Approaches and Protected Area Management - Inception Report*. Report prepared for Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project and UNDP.

Twyford, K. (2019a) *Capacity and Competency Needs Assessment and Strengthening for Cook Islands Ridge to Reef Approaches and Protected Area Management - Capacity Needs Assessment Report*. Report prepared for Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project and UNDP.

Twyford, K. (2019b) *Capacity and Competency Needs Assessment and Strengthening for Cook Islands Ridge to Reef Approaches and Protected Area Management - Capacity Strengthening Action Plan*. Plan prepared for Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project and UNDP.

Twyford, K. & Weeks, H. (2021) Cook Islands Ridge to Reef Project: Performance report against Global Environment Facility tracking tools. Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project, Cook Islands

Twyford, K. & Weeks, H. (2021) Cook Islands Ridge to Reef Exit and Sustainability Strategy. Prepared for UNDP and Ridge to Reef Project.

#### Protected area management – policy and strategy

Sheppard, D. (2020a) Cook Islands Protected Areas Management Project: Literature Review. Report prepared for Ridge-to-Reef Project.

Sheppard, D. (2020b) Towards a Protected Areas Management Policy: Final Discussion Paper. Prepared for Cook Islands National Environment Service and Ridge to Reef Project

Twyford, K. (2021b) Towards a Protected Areas Classification System for the Cook Islands: Policy paper. Prepared for Cook Islands National Environment Service and Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project.

#### Marae Moana

Brander, L.M., Passfield, K., McKessar, K., Davey, K., Guisado, V., Eppink, F., Conner, N. and Weeks, H. (2021) Cook Islands Marine Ecosystem Service Valuation. Report to the Cook Islands National Environment Service.

Ceccarelli, D.M., Davey, K., Twyford, K., Weeks, H., Passfield, K., White, M., Wendt, H., Wainiqolo, G., Kaitu’u, J., & Burrah, M. (2021) Biophysically special, unique marine areas of the Cook Islands. Ridge to Reef Project, Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

Ceccarelli, D.M., Davey, K., Weeks, H., Twyford, K., Wendt, H., Wainiqolo, G., Kaitu’u, J. & Bhurrah, M. (2020) Marine bioregions of the Cook Islands. Ridge to Reef Project, Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

Conservation International (2020) Sustainable Financing Mechanism for Ridge to Reef Approaches and Protected Area Management within Marae Moana: An Assessment of Options. Report to the Cook Islands Marae Moana Coordination Office and National Environment Service.

IUCN (2020) Spatial data and information management package for the Marae Moana. IUCN Oceania Regional Office, Suva, Fiji.

Rongo, T., Rongo, T.T., Rongo, J. (2020) Cook Islands Marae Moana: Marine Outlook Report 2020. Government of the Cook Islands. 123 p.

Johnson, J., Ceccarelli, D.M. & Smith, A. (in prep.) Outlook Report for Marae Moana (Cook Islands Marine Park). Government of the Cook Islands.

Twyford, K. (2021a) Advancing Marine Spatial Planning in Marae Moana: Policy paper. Prepared for Marae Moana Technical Advisory Group and Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project.

Wootton, N. (2018) Marae Moana Overarching Communications Strategy 2018 – 2021 Prepared for MMCO and Cook Islands Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project.

### **Terrestrial biodiversity assessments and plans**

Bridger, J. (2020) Moko'ero Reserve and Takūtea Wildlife Sanctuary Terrestrial Assessment Report. Cook Islands Natural Heritage Trust.

Kora, J. & Munro, E. (2020) Assessment of the coconut crab (*Birgus latro*) at Palmerston Atoll, Cook Islands. Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Noumea, New Caledonia

Robertson, H., Adams, L., Karika, I., Nia, L. & Saul, E. (2020) Takitumu Conservation Area management plan 2020–2030. New Zealand Department of Conservation & Takitumu Conservation Area Project. Plan prepared for Ridge-to-Reef Project.

TIS (2020a) Atiu Swiftlet, Kopeka (*Aerodramus sawtelli*): Species Status Report 2020. Report prepared by Te Ipukarea Society for Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project.

TIS (2020b) Mangaia Kingfisher, Tanga'eo (*Todiramphus ruficollaris*): Species Status Report 2020. Report prepared by Te Ipukarea Society for Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project.

TIS (2020c) Mitiaro Fan Palm (Iniao) (*Pritchardia mitiarioana*): Species Status Report 2020. Report prepared by Te Ipukarea Society for Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project.

TIS (2020d) Rarotonga Flycatcher, Kakerori (*Pomarea dimidiata*): Species Status Report 2020. Report prepared by Te Ipukarea Society for Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project.

TIS (2021) Palmerston Island Natural Resource Management Plan. Report prepared by Te Ipukarea Society for Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project.

### **Marine biodiversity assessments**

Ainley, L. & Morejohn, K. (2019) Palmerston Nearshore Marine Assessment. Ministry of Marine Resources, Cook Islands.

Morejohn, K., Ainley, L. and Kora, J. (2018) Mangaia Nearshore Marine Assessment. Ministry of Marine Resources, Cook Islands

Kora, J., Ainley, L. & Morejohn, K. (2018) Mitiaro Nearshore Invertebrate and Finfish Assessment. Ministry of Marine Resources, Cook Islands

Kora, J., Ainley, L. & Morejohn, K. (2019) Atiu and Takutea Nearshore Marine Assessment. Ministry of Marine Resources, Cook Islands

Morejohn, K., Ainley, L. and Kora, J. (2019) Aitutaki and Manuae Nearshore Marine Assessment. Ministry of Marine Resources, Cook Islands

Ariihee, B., Ainley, L. & Morejohn, K. (2020) Mauke Nearshore Marine Assessment. Ministry of Marine Resources, Cook Islands

## **4.2 Outcome 2 knowledge resources**

### **Legislation**

Tonkin & Taylor (2019) Cook Island Permitting Process - Gap analysis. Report prepared for Infrastructure Cook Islands and IW R2R.

### **Tourism**

TRC Tourism (2020) Tourism Accreditation and Biodiversity Conservation Projects: An assessment of indicators and targets for the Ridge to Reef Project, Cook Islands. Prepared for National Environment Service and Ridge to Reef.

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- Bridger, J. (2020) Moko'ero Reserve and Takūtea Wildlife Sanctuary Terrestrial Assessment Report. Cook Islands Natural Heritage Trust.
- Conservation International (2020) Sustainable Financing Mechanism for Ridge to Reef Approaches and Protected Area Management within Marae Moana: An Assessment of Options. Report to the Cook Islands Marae Moana Coordination Office and National Environment Service.
- Kora, J. & Munro, E. (2020) Assessment of the coconut crab (*Birgus latro*) at Palmerston Atoll, Cook Islands. Prepared for the Palmerston Island Council and Community. Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Noumea, New Caledonia
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- Milton, N. (2009) What is a lesson learned? <http://www.nickmilton.com/2009/05/what-is-lesson-learned.html#ixzz3O16uYDBe>
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- Sheppard, D. (2020b) Towards a Protected Areas Management Policy: Final Discussion Paper. Prepared for Cook Islands National Environment Service and Ridge to Reef Project
- SPREP (2018) Cook Islands: State of Environment Report 2018. Apia, Samoa.
- TIS (2020a) Atiu Swiftlet, Kopeka (*Aerodramus sawtelli*): Species Status Report 2020. Report prepared by Te Ipukarea Society for Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project.
- TIS (2020b) Mangaia Kingfisher, Tanga'eo (*Todiramphus ruficollaris*): Species Status Report 2020. Report prepared by Te Ipukarea Society for Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project.
- TIS (2020c) Mitiaro Fan Palm (Iniao) (*Pritchardia mitiarioana*): Species Status Report 2020. Report prepared by Te Ipukarea Society for Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project.
- TIS (2021) Palmerston Island Natural Resource Management Plan. Report prepared by Te Ipukarea Society for Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project.
- Tonkin & Taylor (2019) Cook Island Permitting Process - Gap analysis. Report prepared for Infrastructure Cook Islands and R2R.
- TRC Tourism (2020) Tourism Accreditation and Biodiversity Conservation Projects: An assessment of indicators and targets for the Ridge to Reef Project, Cook Islands. Prepared for National Environment Service and Ridge to Reef.
- Twyford, K. (2017) Lessons to be Learned Report, Papua New Guinea Partnership Fund (PPF). Abt Associates, Brisbane, Australia.
- Twyford, K. (2019a) *Capacity and Competency Needs Assessment and Strengthening for Cook Islands Ridge to Reef Approaches and Protected Area Management - Capacity Needs Assessment Report*. Report prepared for Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project and UNDP.
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## Annex 1. Lessons to be Learned stakeholder survey

### Cook Islands Ridge to Reef Project – What did we learn?

October 2020

#### Context and aims

After five years in operation, the Cook Islands Ridge to Reef Project (R2R) is set to close on 6 January 2021.

For long term projects like R2R it is good practice to look back at what worked well, what didn't, and what could be improved. This type of assessment is aimed at identification of lessons that should be learned and applied in future projects.

Many people and organisations have been a part of and beneficiaries of the project. The R2R Project Management Unit (PMU) would like to hear from you about your experiences and opinions of the project. The purpose of this exercise is to obtain your feedback about the project. We want your personal opinions about what went well, what went OK but should be changed, and what didn't go well. And what management action we should take.

This type of feedback is one of several ways that we are collecting information that we will use to identify lessons learned and to continually improve our approach towards project management.

#### Instructions for completing the survey

It will assist our analysis if we know a little about you – your organisation, how long you were associated with R2R and in what capacity. We don't need your name and contact details although you can provide this if you would like us to know this.

Responses will be confidential and all information that is received will be aggregated into an overall report. We will not report information in a way that can be traced back to an individual or an organisation.

We really want open, frank and constructive feedback. Please tell us what you think!

Please email your survey back to Hayley Weeks, R2R Project Manager on [Hayley.weeks@cookislands.gov.ck](mailto:Hayley.weeks@cookislands.gov.ck) by no later than COB Friday 4th December 2020.

### ‘THREE THINGS’ EXERCISE

Personal details (optional)		
Name (optional)		
Email address (optional)		
Gender (optional)	Male:	Female:
Organisation		<i>place X below</i>
Implementation partner: R2R worked with partner organisations to implement project activities. Partners were as follows ( <i>place X against your organisation</i> ):	National Environment Service (NES)	
	Marae Moana Coordination Office (MMCO)	
	Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)	
	Cook Islands Tourism Corporation (CITC)	
	Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)	
	Ministry of Marine Resources (MMR)	
	House of Ariki (HoA)	
R2R Project Management Unit (PMU)		
Cook Islands Government: – <i>please specify ministry/agency</i> _____		
UNDP		
Non-Government Organisation (NGO) – <i>please specify</i> _____		
Consultant/adviser		
Other – <i>please specify</i> _____		
Not applicable		
Your involvement		
<b>How long have <u>you</u> been personally involved with R2R?</b>	<i>place X below</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• &lt; 12 months</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-2 years</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3-4 years</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the start of the project (July 2015) and continually through to now</li> </ul>		
<b>How were you involved with R2R?</b> Please briefly describe the role that you played with R2R and how you were involved.		

### 'THREE THINGS' EXERCISE

In each box, identify 'three things'. You may want to consider topics such as some or all of the following:

- Project design including the strategic results framework (outputs, indicators, targets)
- Project start-up
- Quality of project implementation by government partner organisations (NES, MMCO/OPM, MMR, MoA, CITC, HoA)
- Project outcomes and benefits
- Technical and operational support provided by the PMU (procurement, finance, logistics, project coordination and operation, planning and reporting, etc)
- Governance and decision-making including by the Project Steering Committee
- Support provided by the UNDP Samoa office
- Sustainability of R2R activities and outcomes once the project closes.

However, please feel free to identify the things that you consider to be most important - its up to you.

In each box, identify 'three things'...

#### **The Good - Three things that you thought went really well in R2R**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

#### **The So So, the OK – Three things that went OK in R2R but improvement is required**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

#### **Recommended management actions:**

- 

#### **The Ugly - Three things that went badly in R2R and should be stopped or fundamentally changed. Or it might be things that R2R didn't do for whatever reason but should have.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

#### **Recommended management actions:**

- 

#### **Want to write more? Additional comments? Fire away! Add another page if needed**

Thank-you for providing this feedback. Please email back to Hayley Weeks, R2R Project Manager on [Hayley.weeks@cookislands.gov.ck](mailto:Hayley.weeks@cookislands.gov.ck) by no later than COB Friday 4th December 2020.

## Annex 2. Lessons to be Learned - The Good

This annex identifies those things that were done really well and should be continued.

### Respondent

- Project design
- Support by the UNDP
- Project start up

### Respondent

- Project outcomes and benefits: Funding for marine surveys- We collected a giant chunk of marine data from all southern group islands that will function as another data point to see change over time. Within this work we noted species declines that informed managers to stop certifying international pa'ua export as sustainable. These marine surveys also identified areas with endangered species in high densities and where some species have disappeared. This data is helping drive new biodiversity conservation programs and projects within the ministry.

### Respondent

- Project start up.
- Quality of project implementation by government partner organisations.

### Respondent

- The technical and operational support by the PMU team was outstanding. Good communication and timely updates within our two agencies.
- Flexibility to re-program activities - as this was a 3-year project, some changes on the project activities needed to be done. The Donors and PMU accepted and endorsed these changes (Crop Bank, bee -keeping).
- Availability of additional funding – favourable consideration and endorsement given to our agency for additional funding to procure equipment.
- Encouraging support from PMU team and CEO.

### Respondent

- We were very fortunate that our partner MOA allowed us to manage the funds and deliver our 'Ātui'anga ki te Tango programmes with our own expertise. This was key because it allowed Kōrero o te 'Orau to access the expertise of its members and others (indigenous Cook Islanders with local knowledge) on the various activities involved. Such collaboration between Government Ministries and NGOs in line with project criteria should be encouraged as opposed to Government implementing projects themselves, as this arrangement strengthens community buy-in and ownership as well as reduces financial waste (which all too often occurs with Government projects). In support, despite limited funding, NGOs are resourceful and members volunteering their time tend to go above and beyond to ensure the success of projects.
- Reporting was submitted on time from KO to MOA each year, with MOA pleased with our outputs and happy to support subsequent years of funding.

### Respondent

- Project implementation of Partners.
- Technical Reports are a great baseline for follow ups and decision making/management plans.
- Sustainability of new PMU team with current Manager from GEF 5 (R2R) involved with design of GEF 7 (Next R2R/?) ensuring realistic targets and indicators.

**Respondent**

- Opportunities for increased interaction between the tourism sector, and agencies and organisations involved in environment management.
- Support from UNDP and consultants despite extensions, delays, and not achieving targets.
- Establishment of eco standards for the tourism industry, and production of R2R videos.

**Respondent**

- Relationship and network building between partners.
- Successful outcomes/outputs achieved, such as TCA management plan, creation of Mana Tiaki eco certification, creation of permanent PMU division in NES, etc.
- Capacity building of national participants in both academic contexts (JCU postgrad course) as well as in national systems such as procurement, and at general levels.

**Respondent**

- Change in PMU leadership with Hayley Weeks joining the team brought vast improvements on the running of the programme
- Provision of funds and resources has allowed valuable work and data collection to take place that has the potential to have positive, long lasting effects for the Cook Islands (if used wisely).
- Flexibility in interpreting Prodoc and being able to include alternative projects that were in line with the overall programme aims although not originally set out in the project design.

### Annex 3. Lessons to be Learned - The So So

This annex identifies those things that were done adequately however improvement is required.

#### Respondent

- Quality of the Project implementations
- Governance and Decision Making
- Project Outcomes and Benefits

#### Respondent

- Support provided by the UNDP Samoa office
- Governance and decision-making including by the Project Steering Committee

#### Respondent

- Availability and timeliness of payments - delay in transfer of funds to the Cook Islands thereby delaying our payments to suppliers. We had to use our Agency operational budget to cater for some expenses and then claim reimbursement at a later date.
- Accessibility to other assets from other project partners - some of the project partners have brought assets that can be shared across the partners. Although we had been promised that our agency will also have accessibility to these assets but still to-date this seems to be distant.
- Lack of ability of other participating agency not achieving targets or utilizing their funds fully – impacting the agencies that are doing well and needing more funds.
- Agencies not collaborating and working in silos- could have combined some of the travelling and trips together and have achieved indicators together.

Recommended management actions:

- Clear agreement with the participating agencies when procuring larger assets.
- Discussion with donor and with participating agencies on the spending of funds and timely acquittal to the donors.
- Commend agencies that can achieve targets and spend the funds in a timely manner and according to timelines set – provide the incentive for further funding to be accessed by the agency.

#### Respondent

- Kōrero o te 'Ōrau's 'Ātui'anga ki te Tango programme run on Rarotonga has the Ridge to Reef concept as the foundation of the programme. With more funding, Kōrero o te 'Ōrau could have expanded and implemented its programme into the Pa Enuā as well. To date, we are still seeking funding to support this.

#### Respondent

- Quality of Technical reports were not too specific indicated species more so Ministry outputs instead of project – more technical reports on land base of the endangered species as mentioned in the TIS KBA and other relevant documents.
- Inception meeting showcasing of indicators needed more involvement of partners to truly understand wants needed from them and if the measurable targets and indicators are realistic.
- Tertiary Studies of R2R sustainable Post Grad with James Cook Universities – need of contract for those that fail or pull out as well as ensuring members are involved with project during the life span even if they have moved job – (have it less than 4 years maybe 2-4 papers a semester).

Recommended management actions:

- Inception phase is given more time and one on ones, ensure that HOM's (current and especially the new incoming) are kept up to date. Ensuring partners with those looking to carry out the on ground are in these meetings to give the challenges and lessons on what's achievable – Not over committing.
- More regional trainings with UNDP to also include the partners and their finance team for the project life.
- Island Management Plans should be developed based on past technical reports of marine and terrestrial and not more survey. Important to distribute all island technical or reports during life of project to all island council/Government.
- Database of reports, survey, plans, and information to be housed within the ministry (working with research (OPM) and statistics) for literature research and follow ups.

### **Respondent**

- Urgency applied to achieving milestones and producing outcomes.
- Media and publicity of the project objectives and especially achievements.
- Capacity building at NES.

Recommended management actions:

- Effective project management tools and experienced personnel must be procured at the outset. This will keep everyone on track. Project Management software should be considered.
- Communications Strategy and Plan must be included in the project planning documents. Effective branding and use of slogans and catch phrases will enhance 'visibility' of the project. This will lead to greater buy-in and understanding of the project and eventually the overall success and effectiveness.
- Job rotations amongst NES staff to allow for personnel development particularly in project management. This will allow for skills transfer across the team decreasing the risk associated with losing key personnel during the lifetime of the project.

### **Respondent**

- Communication between all stakeholders – UNDP/PMU/partners.
- Regular NBSC meetings but could be more interactive and involved in the planning rather than just PMU reporting back.
- Many surveys were conducted during the project but with varying applicability, replicability, reporting, etc.

Recommended management actions:

- Communications plans, data requirements and methodologies, schedules of meetings, etc. should all be set at the start of the project or annually with milestones, proposed dates, smaller scale specific indicators, etc. to guide it and ensure it remains on track, or otherwise highlight when it goes off-track. A dedicated communications officer or part time/draw down contract would be useful to support this.

### **Respondent**

- Good in theory to have a biodiversity and conservation project, just not so great in the actual execution.
- Project steering committee was good but little ability to influence NES' oversight.
- Did good work but didn't meet (m)any of the project's official targets.

Recommended management actions:

- Accountability, transparency, responsibility, consequences for not meeting deadlines.

## Annex 4. Lessons to be Learned - The Ugly

This annex identifies those things that went badly and should be stopped or fundamentally changed, or that were not done for whatever reason but should have been.

### Respondent

- Don't agree with the Sub-project Implementation Strategies. The projects were spread too thinly becoming too difficult to accurately and properly assess.
- Using other efforts to justify work not undertaken by R2R.
- Strong, consistent and robust Governance and management of R2R could have returned huge tangible returns to the country.

### Respondent

- SRF
- Delays in hiring technical staff and consultants at project inception.

### Respondent

- Project design including the strategic results framework (outputs, indicators, targets).
- Technical and operational support provided by the PMU (procurement, finance, logistics, project coordination and operation, planning and reporting, etc).

### Respondent

- At the beginning of the project, PMU staff were driving the project as they desired. Some of the activities for my agency was never carried out or was not approved at the PMU level, without consultation with our agency.
- No Information available on the development of the initial targets or indicators.
- Even the indicators seem to be unrealistic, unachievable and incorrect.

Recommended management actions:

- PMU staff to be broad minded with the project activities - try to assist the agency in a creative way to link activities to the project outcomes like they are doing now!
- All the initial project documents and how the indicators were developed should be well maintained and verified.
- The benchmark for the indicators to be reliable and needs to be specific and measurable.

### Respondent

- Kōrero o te 'Ōrau has other projects that are within the scope of R2R that could have been supported by these funds. For example, Operation Taramea (Crown-of-Thorns Starfish eradication) currently underway to remove them from the fore reefs of Rarotonga to save the reefs. This project has been on-going since July 2020, with much publicity via the different media outlets. Yet, we were not approached by R2R for any type of support for this project.

Recommended management actions:

- Government should recognize the NGO initiatives in line with the scope of the project and support accordingly instead of taking over.

### Respondent

- Delay in team and understanding of the ProDoc

- Unrealistic indicators and targets made it near impossible to reach 50% of achievement due to not understanding from the management level during early stages.
- Financial delay – Communication with UNDP – PMU as well as PMU – Partners (Overspending in some areas or underspending in others)

Recommended management actions:

- Next project proposal to place more on Procurement >85% of financial commitments (more flexible).
- Great working relationship with Partners HOMs/Directors for smooth communication and direction

### **Respondent**

- Lack of, and in some cases complete break-down in, cooperation and coordination between project partners!
- Poor management of the Monitoring and Evaluation framework of the project leading to subsequent delays in implementation.
- Purchase of large asset items, and their effective and timely use.

Recommended management actions:

- Improve timeliness of the initial stages of the project (planning and approvals). It is important to plan as much as possible, but then get started as soon as possible, so that priorities and workloads do not shift during the lag time. An improved process is needed to engage project partners from the start so as to improve cooperation and coordination through the project life.
- The Monitoring and Evaluation framework must be both strictly implemented to achieve timely targets. But it needs to be flexible enough for changes to be made during implementation. Also approvals for changes need to be timelier. This will improve implementation and successful outcomes.
- UN and CI Government Policy must be clear regarding joint ownership of large asset items (and for the joint use of these assets across Government agencies and community organisations that would benefit).

### **Respondent**

- Delays in project implementation at all levels.
- No repercussions for poor performance early in the project.
- Knowledge management and marketing/communications.

Recommended management actions:

- The project suffered extreme challenges, delays and in some cases pure incompetence early in the project, which were perpetuated throughout causing some issues to be insurmountable by the time corrective action was applied. Key milestones were continually missed, right from project inception and staffing of PMU, to mid-term review, procurement of technical expertise for capacity needs assessment and other essential project activities, and even to the end with delays in terminal evaluation due to unnecessary delays in waiting for extension request decisions from UNDP/GEF. At all levels, these delays caused knock on effects to reporting, spending, planning, monitoring, etc.
- UNDP should have had a much closer eye on the project, its spending and lack of performance and been more involved in guiding the project and staff to avoid this pattern continuing throughout the entire project. It has been apparent that the focus of the UNDP MCO has been on its national (Samoa) projects than that of regional partners (Niue and Cook Islands), due to extreme delays, in acknowledgements, responses, input, processing requests, etc. Corrective action was needed much earlier in the project, as it was too little too late by the end.

- Staff employed under the project, primarily PMU, should undergo performance review with UNDP/GEF to ensure the project is being delivered as agreed and promised under the project agreement document – national performance review is not sufficient if there is inherent lack of capacity in the system as a whole.

### **Respondent**

- Project targets were unrealistic, unachievable, and sometimes even nonsensical. SRF had many flaws, with measurements required to demonstrate the indicators having nothing to do with the goal. The assessment done for feasibility of goal was irrelevant also.
- Capacity needs assessment done in final year of project rather than at the inception where it should have been done to drive the programme activities.
- Lack of transparency across implementing partners, in planning, budgeting and results.

#### Recommended management actions:

- Use Steering Committee to improve transparency, discuss planned activities and seek input.
- Use appropriate indicators and goals, which should be achievable, feasible, reasonable, and logical.
- Steering committee should have had a stronger voice and ability to challenge plans.

## Annex 5. Lessons to be Learned - Additional comments

### Respondent

- The Pro-Doc of R2R was not properly comprehended by the stakeholders. From my perspective, I pursued what “Rauī” traditionally meant to our people and to the ecosystem. The regulatory framework was not ranked as a matter of priority. In fact we received mixed messages that other agencies were contracted to do the Regulatory framework of the Rauī – and the HoA was only a facilitating agency;
- The lack of financial information relating to the tranches of the HoA – Kaumaroro was entitled to – throughout the initial 4 years was a nightmare. How do you plan and execute a program if you don’t know? We kept being told that we would get our budget but not one was ever made available to help me get ourselves properly organized.
- I believe large Projects need not be broadly spread out over multiple agencies because agencies have core responsibilities. If projects from say R2R are second or third priorities to agencies, the chance is that unless the return is significant to the agency, unless the outcome stands out in their Annual reports and audits the delivery will be a fruit-salad. Setting a focal band-width to capture say – Terrestrial issues - should seriously be considered. Keep the Project tight, ensure deliveries, and everyone can benefit either directly or from the spill over effects.
- Committing long term projects to an agency whose personnel are already committed to the agencies’ Annual Business Plan is not going to receive full commitments. While it is not advised to recruit whole-sale personnel for every faction of the Project, it is important that key deliveries must have their own personnel recruited under the Project to carry out the tasks and responsibilities from beginning to end. Commitments need to be demonstrated throughout the life of the project.
- Managements and Project Coordinators need to demonstrate better skills, competencies, flair and genuine people-caring qualities. The ability to get into the nitty gritty concerns at the grassroots is crucial. In addition, proclaiming and committing publicly to communities to undertake a task and failing to deliver creates mistrust, distancing and suspicions amongst the local communities. Subsequent projects naturally suffer the consequences! The R2R registered several such incidents in the outer islands.

### Respondent

- The SRF pertaining to MMR’s work was mostly impossible to accomplish. This was due to the way the targets were written and the way fisheries and nearshore marine resources are managed within the Cook Islands. These issues were raised numerous times, including at the mid-term review, however, no corrections were made to the PRODOC to realign, rewrite or create achievable targets for impactful activities. At the point of the Capacity Strengthening Action Plan, these issues hadn’t been solved and implementing partners were directed to only work on activities they were likely to accomplish by the end of project.

### Respondent

- The R2R project was poorly designed in my opinion. Coming into the project mid-way, the outcomes were predetermined prior to data collection and analysis from surveys. The Ministry of Marine Resources has traditionally managed fisheries since its inception and under the projects outcomes was now expected to initialize marine reserves for conservation purposes. Considering the difficulty this is at the coastal fisheries level, in the Cook Islands the small island communities already have limited habitat and areas of fishing grounds (which is traditionally why the customary practice was introduced).
- The project document does not classify ‘ra’ui’ as a marine reserve because resources are harvested after a point in time. Thus the perspective of biodiversity conservation in this case ‘marine reserve’ comes from countries with much larger land mass and EEZ boundaries (e.g NZ, Australia, America) that can afford to close an area and continue fishing other habitats/areas.

In this case, I am relating marine reserves to coastal and not offshore (not Marae Moana).  
Therefore,

- *Does this project of 'biodiversity conservation' actually favour the Cook Island people? Or is this part of a larger global environmental scheme to tick a box where another percentage of ocean is legally reserved.*
- *Does including marine reserves enhance ecosystem functions in islands in the Cooks? This was not tested through our surveys and in some personal observations from diving on remote atolls, there seemed to be no change to habitat or ecosystem. The only observed increase tend to be species specific. For example, greater density of giant clams.*
- The other problem was technical and operational support provided by the PMU (procurement, finance, logistics, project coordination and operation, planning and reporting, etc). This impacted logistical planning for outer island expeditions on numerous occasions. Some trips that would be planned for March would be difficult to execute as funds weren't received by PMU (from UNDP Samoa) on time. Not sure if this PMU fault but it did impact the delay of some expeditions by up to several months.

### **Respondent**

- NGOs should be considered to manage projects such as R2R in the future.

### **Respondent**

- Lessons learnt need to be published and awareness should be disbursed to all partners and not left internally. This will help educate ourselves and our partner/future partners. Need more visible exposure of benefits to the Country to show what the project has done – thousands used on reports and surveys is great for researchers but no more so for the people on the ground that already know what to manage and how – only for reports to say overharvesting – options we make such as moving to other food resources bring more problems such as waste that end up having a direct impact.
- I believe incentives/environmentally sound solutions ensure buy-in from our community for management due to land rights or individuals.

### **Respondent**

- UNDP needs to assess its internal structures and processes. Whilst the Samoa office provided support with the best of intentions, their own capacity gaps has consequential impacts on the quality and quantity support available to us. At times, this caused delays up to 4 months in receiving funds, setting implementation activities back well over a quarter at an essential time in the project. Furthermore, the time taken to undertake procurement via UNDP systems was slower than national systems, causing us to use national systems more and increase the burden on PMU to develop TORs, undertake advertising, review applications, write quote reports for tender committee approval, write contracts, monitor outputs etc. Additionally, when contracts were issued via UNDP processes, consultants complained of very slow and late payments, creating a bad reputation for the project and the Cook Islands government.
- Basic project management skills such as acknowledgements to emails or receiving documents, meeting deadlines, providing regular and comprehensive updates, etc. were continually lacking from MCO office, requiring PMU to continually follow up, check, double check, ask again, etc, placing additional burdens and workloads on PMU.
- This is not intended to lay all the blame for project performance with UNDP, indeed there have been significant shortcomings and incompetence by national partners and individuals that require serious review and reflection to avoid repetition in future, and these have been well documented in the capacity needs assessment as well as in feedback from others to this questionnaire. However, as the GEF agency assigned to support and help build capacity for the national OFP, it was felt that this left much to be desired for and calls into question our national willingness to choose the same agency again in future.

## Respondent

- Too often we were told there was no money in the bank, because the 70% spend threshold hadn't been met to activate the next payment. Quarterly planning meetings were done a month into the quarter rather than ahead of the quarter, leaving no time to carry out the activities and spend the money so that the 70% threshold could be met for the next quarter.
- On a day to day basis there were a lot of mistakes made on the financial processes and reporting, not enough care and attention to detail given.
- Biodiversity steering committee meetings v R2R steering committee meeting – not clear on objectives or difference.
- Interagency collaboration felt problematic and felt like it was a constant fight rather than working together for a common goal eg: number of signatures required for approval or sharing travel costs for trip to outer islands.
- NES played PMU role as NES, rather than an independent, impartial unit.
- It was decided that Marae Moana was the most important set of activities that required redirection of all uncommitted funds from other activities and agencies. Agencies weren't allowed to continue planned but uncommitted work.
- Project allowed for capacity building but it was felt that this was not always targeted appropriately, and the investments will not have long term, sustainable benefits for the Cook Islands.
- Actual results and successes of activities not visible.