GEF-7 Enhancing integrated sustainable management to safeguard Samoa's natural resources Project

PROGRESS REPORT

2ND QUARTER 2025 (April-June)

Prepared by: GEF-7 Samoa IAS- Project Management Unit (PMU)

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1. Summary: progress and highlights for Q2-2025

This report provides a summary or progress of activities implemented within the 2nd Quarter (April-June), 2025. The presentation of the report is made according to the project components and their relative activities implemented according to the quarterly Workplan and budget set out for this quarter.

Highlights for Quarter 2 are stated below:

1. The systems developer responsible for designing and developing the IAS information system/database commenced his contract in the end of March. The contractor has completed the assessment of IAS systems to assess gaps in systems and information locally and regionally and has been working on the design and development of the database with a series of consultations with the MNRE ICT and Project Management Unit (PMU). An internal consultation with the division of water resources and forestry division took place in July to present the draft design of the database and gauge perspectives and views on the design. A national workshop is tentatively planned for the last week of August to receive feedback from key stakeholders.
2. The Communications specialist is now on board and has developed the project's communications plan. The communications plan has been presented by the consultant during a one on one session with the Biosecurity division of the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries (MAF) for their feedback and input. The final communications plan to be presented to the project board for endorsement once feedback and comments have been incorporated from the project team and project stakeholders.
3. The biosecurity x-ray unit for Faleolo airport has arrived in Samoa and the PMU has been working closely with the Biosecurity division to clear the container from the local port. The x-ray unit has been transported by the Biosecurity team to Faleolo airport.

A variation to the existing contract was proposed during a special board meeting on the 30th May 2025 to consider additional costs for the change in sea-freight of the x-ray unit and the supply, airfreight and commissioning of the roller system for the x-ray unit. This proposal was endorsed by the project board and the Government of Samoa's tender's board with the MAF Biosecurity division to proceed to draft and finalise the contract variation. Due to delays in the drafting and finalisation of the contract variation internally by the MAF Biosecurity division with the absence of a legal unit within the MAF, the MNRE is now utilizing its legal unit to draft and finalise the contract variation.

2. Progress on specific outputs/results achieved according to Q2 2025 Quarterly workplan

Component 1- Enhancing institutional and technical capacity in safeguarding indigenous species, natural ecosystems and production systems from IAS.

Output 1.1: Multi sectoral institutional framework strengthened to implement the National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plan

- The Request for proposals (RfP) for the IAS Capacity Needs Assessment and development of educational modules on IAS for key agencies and communities was re-advertised for the sixth time with deadline for submissions on the 30th June 2025. The first five advertisements saw no bids from consultants. The evaluation committee is now carrying out evaluations of technical proposals received from two bidders. The value for this consultancy is USD 90,000.00 for 10 months.

- The first SNITT meeting for 2025 is took place on the 28th July 2025. The Project Management Unit also the Invasive Species Unit has been coordinating this work with the Secretariat of the SNITT.

Output 1.2: Decision making tools aimed at informing cost effective management decisions to address IAS threats to biodiversity in globally significant ecosystems and key sectors developed and utilized.

- The contract for the "Systems developer to design and develop a national IAS database and information exchange platform has been awarded to Mr. Hilton So'o trading as Encode Software Solutions. The consultant commenced his contract on the 3rd March. The contractor has completed the assessment of IAS systems to assess gaps in systems and information. The contractor has also provided the first few drafts of the design of the database and has carried out a few internal consultations with MNRE divisions to receive feedback on the look and data incorporated. A national workshop is planned for end of August to present the final look of the database to key stakeholders for further feedback and to collect baseline data.

Output 1.3 Strengthened national capacity to screen for, identify and control prioritized IAS.

- The final draft of the NISSAP 2025-2030 was presented during the SNITT meeting in July to gather final reviews and feedback. Final reviews and feedback from the SNITT were received a week after the meeting and now incorporated in the final plan.

- Contract for the supply, delivery and commissioning of an x-ray machine for Faleolo airport has been awarded to the Rapiscan Company in Australia. The contract has been signed with the first deliverable of the contract cleared for payment. The x-ray unit has arrived in Samoa and is now at Faleolo airport. The MNRE legal unit is working on drafting and finalising the contract variation. Payments for all other deliverables can only be cleared once the contract variation is signed off by both MAF and the supplier. The new value for this consultancy following variation no.1 is AUD 193,679.24.

- The PMU is working closely with the Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa (SROS) to procure laboratory equipment for SROS to assist with their IAS related research and laboratory. The PMU have processed POs for two companies with a pending PO for an overseas company for the supply of laboratory equipment. The total value for this procurement is USD 24,000.00.

- The refurbishment of the laboratory at the Biosecurity division headquarters at Matautu wharf: The PMU is still working closely with the MAF on this activity. The PMU is awaiting the list of laboratory equipment from the MAF Biosecurity to initiate procurement as well as the facility plan for the laboratory to coordinate needed construction works.

- A Terms of reference has been finalised for a national facilitator to lead and facilitate the simulation training for the Samoa Invasive Species Emergency Response Plan (SISERP) 2025-2030. A request for a direct appointment of the national consultant who was engaged to develop the SISERP 2025-2030 is underway internally. The total value for this consultancy for a total of 30 days is WST 24,000.00.

Output 1.4. Sustainable Financing Strategy for safeguarding biodiversity, including natural ecosystems and production systems, from IAS and climate-induced impacts scoped, developed and implemented.

- The consultancy for the development of the Sustainable finance strategy has been pushed forward to FY2026*)* as endorsed during the 4th Project board meeting in Q4 2024*.*

Component 2- Demonstrating integrated management of catchments from ridge to reef to safeguard indigenous species, natural ecosystems and food production systems from IAS and unsustainable land use practices

Output 2.1 Identification and prioritization of Invasive Alien Species in community production areas.

- The RfP for the tender "Assessment of current status of IAS in demonstration sites and development of a simple IAS monitoring framework" has been advertised for third time to recruit a firm to carry out the assessment of IAS status in the nine project catchments, development of demonstration actions and a monitoring framework for measuring IAS prevention and management in community sites and review Community Integrated Management Plans (CIMP) to assess gaps in SLM, SFM and land management and develop IAS plans to CIMPs. Bids were opened on the 12th August with the PMU now coordinating the commencement of evaluations for technical proposals. The value for this consultancy is USD72, 000.00 for a duration of 9 months.

Output 2.2 Community Integrated Management Plans interventions assessed and safeguards prioritized and implemented to enhance management of IAS risks in community areas

- This work is completed under the same consultancy above under Output 2.1 for the tender "Assessment of current status of IAS in demonstration sites and development of a simple IAS monitoring framework"

Output 2.3: Biological conservation and ecological restoration of terrestrial and marine protected areas, community conservation areas and community fish reserves

- The PMU has advertised the tender for the Review of rapid assessments completed under previous projects (SMSMCL and ICCRIFS) to validate key IAS within the Protected Areas which include the design ground demonstration activities for IAS management in the PA and Marine Protected Areas. The evaluation committee is finalizing evaluation of bids received in response to the RFP advertised. The plan is for a consortium to be on board by end of August or beginning of September 2025. The value for this consultancy is USD 60,000.00 for a duration of 7 months.
- The PMU working closely with the project's Chief Technical Officer (CTA) is finalising the TOR with feedback from the Water Resources Division to recruit a firm to carry out the restoration of two critical catchments to provide demonstration models of conservation practice (LS). The value for this consultancy is USD 100,000.00.

Output 2.4. Improving capacity of communities for management of IAS

- Linked to the consortium carrying out the IAS Capacity needs assessment and development of training program for key agencies and communities with the design of a focused training to communities to identify, prevent and manage IAS as well as preparation of training curriculum, tools and materials for conduct of these training courses

Component 3-Gender mainstreaming and knowledge management

Output 3.1. . Gender mainstreaming plan implemented, and its results monitored and reported.

- MNRE is now drafting the contract for the selected bidder for the Project's Gender specialist to mainstream gender into project activities, project monitoring and evaluation and to carry out gender related training for key agencies and stakeholders. The project hopes to have the

Gender Specialist on board with signed contract by end of August 2025. Total contract value is WST 40,000.00.

Output 3.2: A national IAS awareness and engagement strategy and action plan is developed and implemented, with steps to ensure that international good practice related to IAS and R2R is embedded in policy and practice.

- Communications Specialist engaged in April 2025 has prepared a draft project communications strategy for the project and will assist the PMU with implementation of the communication strategy. The Communication Specialist has also developed samples of the project logo. The total contract value for this consultancy is WST 60,000.00.

3. Financial progress and Expenditures

Table 2. Cumulative financial summary

2025		
Quarter	**Advance (SAT)**	**Expenditure (SAT)**
1 (Jan-Mar)	772,826.02 (First Advance remitted on the 4th March)	125,862.67
2 (Apr-Jun)		95,994.43
Utilization % of the Quarter one advance	28.7%	

Current commitments not yet cleared (Invoices processed)

Commitment	*Value (WST)*
Venue hire for consultation workshop for NISSAP 2025-2030- 07.03.2025	*2,500.00*
Deliverable 2: report on the assessment of IAS systems- Systems developer	*19,129.50*
Stationeries for PMU	*3,285.80*
Deliverable 1- 10% on contract signing with MAF- x-ray machine	*24,948.97*
Procurement of promotional materials (caps) for Biodiversity day 2025	*4,199.00*
IT equipment for PMU use during field work	*29,950.00*
Lunch supplies for SNITT meeting 28.07.2025	*426.00*
TOTAL	*84,439.27*

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4. Issues and challenges

Issues and challenges the project has experienced during Q2, potential impacts on the project and the team's responses and results

Issues	Description and risk rating	Resolutions
1. Delayed commencement of consultants/companies to carry out consultancies planned for Q2-4 due to the reasons below: • No bids received from advertised Request for proposals which meant further re-advertisements and delays in recruitment of consultants and ultimately the use of allocated funds. 2. Closure of the Government of Samoa financial system from beginning of June to mid-July lead to delays in processing new POs and clearing invoices which had been due for payment. 3. Delayed drafting of contract variation for the supply the x-ray unit due to the absence of a legal unit under the MAF.	Delayed advertisement and procurement needed for consultants and implementation of activities for Q4 (Medium) hence the low utilization of fund	The PMU will continue to find solutions such as re-advertising or possibly utilizing direct appointments for engaging consultants for tenders which have been advertised at least 3 times (where relevant). The MNRE legal unit has now taken over the drafting of the contract variation for the supply of the x-ray machine with delays due to the absence of a legal unit under the MAF.

5. Annexes

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