2025

Project Implementation Report (PIR)

Empowered lives.
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Tonga R2R Phase 2

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A. Basic Data

Project Information	
UNDP PIMS ID	6475
GEF ID	10518
Title	Implementation of the Fanga'uta Lagoon Stewardship Plan and replication of lessons learned to priority areas in Vava'u (Tonga R2R Phase 2)
Country(ies)	Tonga, Tonga
UNDP Technical Team	Ecosystems and Biodiversity
Management Arrangements	CO Support to NIM
Project Implementing Partner	Department of Environment, Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications (MEIDECC)
Joint Agencies	*(not set or not applicable)*
Project Type	Full Size
Implementation Status	2nd PIR
GEF Fiscal Year	FY25
Trust Fund	GEF Trust Fund

Project Description
Implement the Fanga'uta Lagoon Stewardship Plan and replicate lessons learned to other areas of Tongatapu Island

Project Contacts	
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GEF Operational Focal Point	Mr. Sione Akauola (folaosi@gmail.com)
Project Implementing Partner	*(not set or not applicable)*
Other Partners	*(not set or not applicable)*

B. Key project dates

Project duration	60 months
PIF Approval Date	Dec 10, 2021
CEO Endorsement Date	Sep 12, 2023
Project Document Signature Date (project start date):	Feb 1, 2024
Date of Inception Workshop	Sep 4, 2024
First Disbursement Date	Jun 1, 2024
Expected Date of Mid-term Review	Aug 1, 2026
Actual Date of Mid-term Review	*(not set or not applicable)*
Expected Date of Terminal Evaluation	Aug 1, 2029
Original Planned Closing Date	Feb 1, 2029
Revised Planned Closing Date	*(not set or not applicable)*

C. Overall ratings

Overall DO Rating	Moderately Satisfactory
Overall IP Rating	Moderately Unsatisfactory
Overall Risk Rating	low

D. Development Objective Progress

It is mandatory for all reported progress to be substantiated by evidence. Please upload evidence files for each objective/outcome via the DO PROGRESS section in the online PIR platform. If there is no evidence to upload, the Project Manager is required to provide an explanation.

Description					
Objective **Effective implementation of the Fanga'uta Lagoon Stewardship Plan and replication of lessons learned from the Tonga R2R Phase I to priority area in Vava'u**					
Description of Indicator	**Baseline Level**	**Midterm target level**	**End of project target level**	**Level at Jun 30, 2024**	**Cumulative progress since project start as of Jun 30, 2025**
Indicator 1: GEF Core Indicator 11 # direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	400 people benefited from ecotourism-related activities in Phase 1. This will be further validated in Year 1	At least 10,000 people directly engaged in activities related to fisheries, tourism, waste management, livelihood and value addition, etc.,	At least 45,985 people benefiting from project activities, including 22,898 men and 23,087 women	*(not set or not applicable)*	Baseline validation is ongoing. Stakeholder consultations, awareness and communications activities, and sector-based community engagement efforts have begun across Tongatapu and Vava'u. Population mapping and profiling activities were initiated in 26 communities in Tongatapu and 7 in Vava'u, including consultations with estate holders, town officers, faith-based and women's groups. To date, approximately 7,500 individuals have been directly engaged, representing about 16% of the estimated 48,000 people living in the 26 target communities in Tongatapu and the 7 in Vava'u, with a special focus on disaggregating data by gender, community, and sectoral engagement. Gender-, community-, and sector-disaggregated data collection is underway, with placeholders ('TBC') in the current table reflecting pending

					verification. Full disaggregation will be completed and reported in the Q4 2025 update to ensure accuracy and alignment with national statistical standards. This work is integrated with the forthcoming Baseline KAP Survey and the Communication & Knowledge Management Strategy, Village integrated profiling ensuring that the data collected not only supports monitoring and reporting but also informs targeted engagement, behaviour change initiatives, and stakeholder-specific messaging. Key Achievements • Engaged ~7,500 individuals (16% of 48,000 residents in 26 Tongatapu and 7 Vava‘u communities), with gender-, community-, and sector-disaggregated data collection underway as part of the Baseline KAP Survey, Environment Awareness activities and Communication & Knowledge Management Strategy — enabling targeted engagement, behaviour change, and high-impact delivery aligned with SDGs 13, 14, and 15.
Indicator 2: GEF Core Indicators 2: Marine protected areas created or under improved management for	METT baseline scores are follows: Fanga’uta Lagoon	At least 4,560 ha of marine protected area under improved	4,560 hectares of protected areas created or under improved	*(not set or not applicable)*	Marine monitoring activities were conducted across eight BioRap sites in Vava’u (Toula, Lotuma, Euakafa, Euaiki, Vaipua 1, Mt. Talau 1, A’a, and

conservation and sustainable use	marine Reserve --- 42 Proposed Vaipua Channel Marine Reserve - 22 Lualoli, Taula and Maninita Islands Marine Reserve -- 32 PA management plans do not exists for Lualoli, Taula and Maninita Islands Marine Reserve	management with 5 point increase from baseline values Vaipua Channel PA created (373 hectares) and Lualoli, Taula and Maninita Islands Marine Reserve expanded to 1,352 hectares Management plans for Vaipua Channel and Lualoli, Taula and Maninita Islands Marine Reserve under preparation	management with 20 point increase from baseline values and reflected as follows: (a) Indicator 2.1: 1,530 hectares of new Protected Areas created, including the following: (i) 373 hectares Vaipua Channel PA and (ii) 1,157 hectares added to existing Lualoli, Taula and Maninita Islands Marine Reserve (b) Indicator 2.2: 3,030 hectares of marine PAs under improved management effectiveness , including the following: (i) existing Fanga'uta Lagoon Marine Reserve of 2,835 hectares and (ii) existing Lualoli, Taula and Maninita Islands Marine		'Oto), forming the basis of updated ecological baselines. Ecological baseline surveys for six R2R Vaipua Channel communities are scheduled for Q4 2025, due to weather and tide-related delays. Four new SCUBA-certified divers were trained and added to the monitoring team, strengthening local capacity. Collaboration with VEPA on marine data analysis is underway, informing management planning. Management plan drafting initiated for Vaipua Channel and Lualoli–Maninita cluster based on collected data. Although formal METT reassessment and legal designation are pending, these preparatory actions mark a significant step forward in improving marine protected area governance and readiness for official protection status.

			Reserve of 195 hectares (c) Management Plans with priority conservation measures for Vaipua Channel and Lualoli, Taula and Maninita Islands Marine Reserve developed and approved		
Indicator 3: GEF Core Indicator 3: Area of wetlands restored (3.4)	About 20 hectares of mangrove planted in past, but most replanted areas destroyed due to weak design, damage by pigs, limited protection from erosion and weak community ownership	At least 20 ha of wetlands habitats restored and planning efforts underway at restoration of a further 80 hectares	120 hectares of wetlands restored, including 20 hectares of coral reefs, 20 hectares of sea grass and 80 hectares of mangroves	*(not set or not applicable)*	Site selection and mapping for 10 hectares of mangrove restoration in Tongatapu and Vava‘u are underway. Community consultations with town officers, women’s groups, and youth associations have been completed in the initial target villages. Ecological assessments and baseline surveys are scheduled for Q4 2025, in collaboration with Department of Environment and VEPA. Community agreements and co-management plans are being drafted to ensure stronger community ownership, better design approaches, and integration of erosion control and livestock management measures to protect restoration sites.

The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:	**On track**
Evidence uploaded:	YES

Outcome 1

Project component 1. Conservation of Critical Lagoon Ecosystems and Management of the Catchment to Improve Biodiversity and Ecological Services of the Fanga'uta Lagoon and Replication in Priority Areas in Vava'u

Project Outcome1

Fanga'uta Lagoon Stewardship Plan implemented with resulting improvement in the management of the Fanga'uta Lagoon Marine Reserve for biodiversity conservation

Outputs to achieve Outcome 1

Output 1.1. Updated Fanga'uta Stewardship Plan building on lessons and best practices generated from its implementation under the R2R Phase I project

Output 1.2. Natural ecosystems within the Fanga'uta Lagoon Marine Reserve rehabilitated to preserve biodiversity and ecosystem services;

Output 1.3. Existing Special Managed Areas for fisheries within the Fanga'uta Lagoon evaluated and lessons learnt identified for replication

Output 1.4 Alternative livelihoods options prioritized and implemented for women, men and youth with reduced threats to lagoon resources

Output 1.5. Lessons learned from Tonga R2R Phase 1 in marine biodiversity conservation replicated in Vava'u

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Midterm target level	End of project target level	Level at Jun 30, 2024	Cumulative progress since project start as of Jun 30, 2025
Indicator 4: Status of management of the Fanga'uta Lagoon Marine Reserve for biodiversity conservation	Although FSP has been implemented up to 2017 lack of resources meant limited achievement of on-the-ground	Updated FSP and f Fanga'uta Lagoon Action Plan (2023-2033) with strengthened institutional capacity for	Improved management of Fanga'uta Lagoon as reflected in (i) functional FSP Steering Committee, FSP	*(not set or not applicable)*	Institutional arrangements were strengthened through endorsement of the gender-sensitive FSP Action Plan (2024–2034), and preliminary planning for reactivating the FSP Steering Committee and Secretariat. Progress includes partial implementation of

	activities	implementation. FSP Action Plan activities initiated, in particular operation of SMAs, habitat conservation and restoration, monitoring and enforcement	Secretariat and Working Group; (ii) Agreement reached on priorities for R2R Phase II project; (iii) formal approval of gender-sensitive FSP Action Plan (2024-2034); and (iv) at least 50% of priority activities in action plan completed and balance under implementation		selected priority actions and marine ecological assessments. Ongoing challenges with procurement and customs clearance of survey equipment delayed implementation. Coordination with partners and technical missions helped accelerate action plan execution. Monitoring and enforcement activities are in early stages.
Indicator 5: Status of Special Management Areas in Fanga'uta Lagoon	Currently 6 SMAs cover around 900 hectares of Fanga'uta Lagoon	Additional 6 SMAs in Fanga'uta Lagoon identified and underway for conservation and sustainable use covering a total of approximately 900 hectares.	12 SMAs covering around at least 1,800 hectares of Fanga'uta Lagoon effectively managed as SMA(s) for conservation and sustainable use as measured by: (i) formation of CMCs; (ii) SMA management plan completed;' (iii) SMA management plan and regulations for enforcement approved and	*(not set or not applicable)*	No progress of June 2025, community consultations have been initiated to identify an additional six Special Management Areas (SMAs) within the Fanga'uta Lagoon, complementing the existing six SMAs established in Phase I. Preliminary scoping and participatory mapping exercises have been conducted with village leaders and local stakeholders to determine SMA boundaries. The formation of Community Management Committees (CMCs) is underway, and awareness activities on sustainable resource use and conservation objectives have commenced in several target

			gazetted; (iv) priority actions identified; (v) surveillance and monitoring system developed; (vi) boundaries of SMAs established; (vii) communities trained and priority actions initiated; (viii) reporting and communication of effectiveness of SMA actions,		communities. Draft SMA management plan templates and regulatory guidelines have been prepared by the Department of Fisheries and Environment. However, formal gazetting of new SMAs, finalization of site-specific management plans, and full enforcement arrangements are still pending. Progress to date is foundational, with implementation of SMA structures, community training, and surveillance systems expected to scale up in the second half of 2025.
Indicator 6: Status of GESI responsive sustainable community management and use of mangrove areas in Fanga'uta Lagoon	Around 200 hectares of mangrove strands along the Fanga'uta lagoon shoreline used by communities for fuel wood, resins and dyes, but management rules not enforced and practices are unsustainable	Mangrove areas for sustainable use mapped, CMCs established for management of these areas, rules of operation, engagement and enforcement agreed through MOUs covering around 200 hectares	Around 200 hectares of mangroves under sustainable harvest and use regimes by local communities as measured by: (i) improvement in mangrove condition and cover; (ii) monitoring of mangrove use; (iii) active engagement of CMCs in applying rules,	*(not set or not applicable)*	Foundational activities have commenced to promote gender equality and social inclusion (GESI)-responsive management of mangrove resources in Fanga'uta Lagoon. Preliminary mapping of approximately 200 hectares of mangrove areas has been undertaken through participatory community profiling and site visits. Community Management Committees (CMCs) are in the early stages of formation in selected villages, with awareness-raising sessions conducted to build consensus on sustainable use practices and inclusive governance approaches.

			regulations and ÷enforcement measure		Draft guidelines and operational rules for community-led mangrove stewardship are under preparation, including terms for Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between communities and relevant authorities. While implementation of formal enforcement mechanisms is yet to begin, ongoing dialogues with community leaders and local authorities are building the foundation for structured, sustainable mangrove use. The project anticipates accelerated progress in the next reporting period, particularly in improving mangrove health, community monitoring efforts, and full engagement of CMCs in enforcement of agreed use regimes.
Indicator 7: Number of female and males in target communities involved in alternative livelihood activities in Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel	Baseline for participating households established in Year 1	At least 15% increase in number of participating households in alternative livelihoods	At least 50% increase in number of participating communities engaged in livelihood activities (tourism, organic agriculture, fisheries, mangrove products, permaculture, agro-forestry etc.	*(not set or not applicable)*	Baseline assessments were initiated in Year 1 to identify households and community members engaged in livelihood activities across project sites in Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel. Preliminary consultations, community profiling, and site visits have helped map existing livelihood practices and interest in alternative income-generating opportunities such as ecotourism, organic agriculture, mangrove products, and sustainable fisheries.

			At least 50% of beneficiaries are women		Awareness sessions promoting gender-inclusive economic opportunities have been conducted in selected villages, with early interest shown particularly among women's groups in value-added products and eco-friendly enterprises. While data is still being consolidated to determine precise household-level increases, groundwork has been laid for the formal launch of livelihood pilot activities in the second half of 2025. Progress has also been made in identifying local partners and aligning with existing women's development groups and cooperatives to ensure that at least 50% of future beneficiaries will be women, in line with GESI objectives.
The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:	**On track**				
Evidence uploaded:	YES				

Outcome 2

Project component 2 Governance: Policies, Institutions and Capacity Building for sustainable and adaptive management and biodiversity conservation

Outcome 2: Strengthened and integrated management approach realized through streamlined policies, active and functional community institutions and improved human capacity

Outputs to achieve Outcome 2

Output 2.1. Strengthened institutional arrangement for the Fanga'uta Lagoon with strong emphasis on the Community Management Committees and inclusive of gender and social diversity

Output 2.2 Policy and legislative framework reviewed to identify gaps and overlaps in institutional mandates for stakeholder engagement, safeguards and GESI based on which streamlined policy framework developed for FSP

Output 2.3 Capacity of government staff, communities and key stakeholders strengthened to apply integrated approaches for biodiversity conservation and enforcement

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Midterm target level	End of project target level	Level at Jun 30, 2024	Cumulative progress since project start as of Jun 30, 2025
Indicator 8: Change in institutional capacity for Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel that builds on Community Management Committees and is inclusive of gender and social diversity as measured by UNDP capacity development scorecard	Capacity constraints in Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel as reflected in baseline capacity development score of 23	At least 5 point increase in institutional capacity for wetland conservation and sustainable use as measured by UNDP capacity development scorecard	At least 20 point increase in institutional capacity for wetland conservation and sustainable use as measured by UNDP capacity development scorecard	*(not set or not applicable)*	Community Management Committees (CMCs) for both Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel were established in 2024, providing a platform for participatory governance. Traditional leadership has been formally recognized and integrated into governance structures, ensuring stronger cultural legitimacy and decision-making authority. The Gender Action Plan has been approved, and its implementation is underway, strengthening inclusivity and ensuring that governance processes reflect gender and social diversity priorities. Institutional arrangements now link CMCs with MEIDECC's Corporate Planning and Budget process through the Corporate Services Division, embedding wetland conservation and sustainable use objectives into formal planning cycles.

					Capacity-building initiatives are ongoing, focusing on governance effectiveness, biodiversity management, and M&E integration. The next UNDP capacity development scorecard assessment is scheduled for Q4 2025, with progress on target to achieve the mid-term increase by 2026.
Indicator 9: Multi-stakeholder Management Committee for Vaipua Channel functional and actively engaged in decision-making regarding management of Vaipua Channel	There is no multi-stakeholder Management Committee for Vaipua Channel which limits coordination across stakeholders and sectors	Vaipua Channel Community Management Committee established with members from various sectors; clear rules and regulations agreed for mainstreaming biodiversity across all key sectors	Vaipua Channel Community Management Committee is functional as measured by: (i) at least 50% of membership include key multi-stakeholder groups, including gender and private sector represented in Committee; (ii) Management Committee governance structure is approved by Government with clear rules and responsibilities; and (iii) number of decisions taken by Management committee in terms	*(not set or not applicable)*	After the R2R launch in Vava'u, district and town officers from the seven target communities were briefed on the TOR for the Vaipua Channel Community Management Committee (CMC), prepared during project design and consistent with Tonga's model for Community Management Committees and Technical Working Groups. The Technical Committee, to be led by the Ministry of Fisheries as an outcome of the Vava'u Technical Committee meeting, will include Vava'u-based government agencies, VEPA, NGOs, and community groups. The CMC will comprise district and town officers from the seven communities. Vava'u's representation on the R2R Board Steering Committee will include one estate holder, one district officer, and the Governor of Vava'u. Key steps: 1. Stakeholder & Community mapping, and representative

			of management of Vaipua Channel		confirmation. 2. R2R project launch. 3. Post-launch Community Management Committee (CMC) briefing. 4. Tongatapu Technical Committee planning meeting outcome to establish the Vava'u Technical Committee and to be led by the Ministry of Fisheries and membership will be Vava'u based Government, NGO and relevant stakeholders. 5. Briefing of Governor of Vava'u, community members and traditional leadership/estate holders in the seven target communities. 6. Community consultations, integrated planning and profiling to agree on priorities. 7. Coordination with MEIDECC and R2R Board for formal endorsement. 8. Establishment and inaugural meeting in Q4 2025, aligned with the Vaipua Channel management plan. The process will link the CMC and Technical Committee to MEIDECC's IRM Hub, Resilient Tonga App, and M&E Dashboard for real-time reporting and decision tracking, ensuring strong representation, legal recognition, and

					integration with national biodiversity and digital governance systems.
Indicator 10: Number of GESI sensitive policy instruments to support FSP implementation streamlined	Gaps and overlaps currently exists in key policy and legal instruments and gender gaps that constrain implementation of the FSP	Assessment and validation of measures necessary to ensure streamlining of identified existing policy and legal instruments and efforts underway to revise and update these instruments to facilitate implementation of the FSP	At least 3 instruments streamlined to facilitate implementation of FSP	*(not set or not applicable)*	The Gender Action Plan (GAP) has been finalized and approved, providing a framework for integrating gender equality and social inclusion into FSP-related policy and legal frameworks. The policy review and gap analysis has been completed, identifying four priority instruments for streamlining: 1. Environment Management Act – to integrate GESI-responsive provisions for biodiversity and FSP. 2. Fisheries Management Act – to incorporate gender and social inclusion in community-based fisheries governance. 3. National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) – to embed gender-responsive targets and indicators. 4. Ocean Management Plan – to integrate biodiversity, gender, and social inclusion considerations into marine spatial planning and governance. All streamlining efforts will be embedded in MEIDECC's Corporate Planning and Budget process through the Corporate Services Division,

					ensuring institutional adoption and alignment with national priorities. Recruitment of a national gender consultant is in progress to lead the policy revision process. Preliminary work is underway to align these instruments with the GAP and to incorporate GESI-sensitive provisions, with streamlining on track for completion of all four instruments by mid-term (2026). Indicator is The Gender Action Plan (GAP) has been finalized and approved, providing a framework for integrating gender equality and social inclusion into FSP-related policy and legal frameworks. The policy review and gap analysis has been completed, identifying four priority instruments for streamlining: 1. Environment Management Act – to integrate GESI-responsive provisions for biodiversity and FSP. 2. Fisheries Management Act – to incorporate gender and social inclusion in community-based fisheries governance. 3. National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) – to embed gender-responsive targets and indicators. 4. Ocean Management Plan – to integrate biodiversity, gender, and

					social inclusion considerations into marine spatial planning and governance. All streamlining efforts will be embedded in MEIDECC's Corporate Planning and Budget process through the Corporate Services Division, ensuring institutional adoption and alignment with national priorities. Recruitment of a national gender consultant is in progress to lead the policy revision process. Preliminary work is underway to align these instruments with the GAP and to incorporate GESI-sensitive provisions, with streamlining on track for completion of all four instruments by mid-term (2026). Indicator is on target.
The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:	**On track**				
Evidence uploaded:	YES				

Outcome 3

Project component 3 Awareness raising and knowledge management of the ecosystem functions and services of the Fanga'uta Lagoon and priority Vava'u biodiversity sites

Outcome 3

Awareness program to enhance appreciation of GESI sensitive biodiversity values of the Fanga'uta Lagoon and the priority sites in Vava'u

Outputs to achieve Outcome 3

Output 3.1 GESI responsive information system developed and being accessed to facilitate informed decision making.

Output 3.2 Expanded education and awareness programs conducted to support marine conservation

Output 3.3 South-South cooperation and exchanges supported among Pacific countries in integrated management of lagoon ecosystems

Output 3.4 Effective M&E system supporting assessment and monitoring of project impacts including GESI mainstreaming

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Midterm target level	End of project target level	Level at Jun 30, 2024	Cumulative progress since project start as of Jun 30, 2025
Indicator 11. Percentage of sampled female and male aware of conservation threats and adverse impacts on wetland management in Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel as measured by Knowledge, Aptitudes and Practices (KAP) surveys	Little coordinated outreach on conservation threats and limited awareness on the impact of unsustainable practices and resource uses among the general public. Baseline KAP surveys to be undertaken in Year 1.	At least 25% of sampled project stakeholders (50:50 men and women) aware of conservation benefits and threats and adverse impacts. [KAP survey at mid-term]	At least 50% of sampled project stakeholders (50:50 men and women) aware of conservation benefits and threats and adverse impacts [KAP survey at end of project]	*(not set or not applicable)*	The Baseline KAP Survey, which forms part of the Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy, has not yet commenced and is currently at the pre-procurement stage, with the TOR drafted and under internal review before the call for proposals. In the meantime, community-level sensitization and awareness activities are ongoing in both Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel to maintain engagement and prepare stakeholders for the survey process.
Indicator 12: Number of best practices and lessons (including on gender and youth mainstreaming and socio-cultural benefits) accessed and applied throughout Tonga	Limited best practices and lessons available, with limited to no replication	At least 3 best practices and lessons (including on gender and youth mainstreaming and socio-cultural benefits) are documented and accessed	At least 10 best practices and lessons (including on gender and youth mainstreaming and socio-cultural benefits) are accessed and applied throughout Tonga	*(not set or not applicable)*	Launch of the R2R model and project by HRH Crown Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala has powerfully demonstrated the integration of cultural authority, traditional leadership, government, and royal family credibility. Grounded in Tonga's kaveinga koula, the model strengthens biodiversity governance, fosters inclusive livelihoods, mobilises youth, and unites Development and Culture — positioning it as a globally

					relevant exemplar for Pacific biodiversity governance.
Indicator 13. Number of initiatives of GESI responsive knowledge exchanges in Pacific biodiversity and SID platforms	Very limited participation and knowledge exchanges in Pacific platforms.	Linkages for participation and knowledge exchange established in at least three Pacific wetland and special area management platforms established	At least 10 GESI responsive initiatives of information exchange and sharing of knowledge in Pacific on wetland biodiversity conservation and special area management platforms	*(not set or not applicable)*	Three GESI-responsive knowledge exchange initiatives are underway: 1. Participation in SPREP regional technical exchange on wetland management 2. Gender-focused biodiversity session co-organized with UNDP Pacific 3. Contributions to the Pacific Ridge to Reef regional platform, with Tonga presenting its leadership forum outcome and traditional stewardship model
The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:	**On track**				
Evidence uploaded:	YES				

E. Finance/Co-Finance

Cumulative disbursement as of Jun 30, 2025: **Disbursement for the FY 2025 period is an estimate as books for UNDP Q2 2025 are not yet closed.*	70,726

Key Financing Amounts

PPG Amount	150,000
GEF Grant Amount	3,864,685
Co-financing	12,385,000

F. Implementation Progress

Project Manager: Please provide comments on delays with outputs/activities during the period 1 July 2024 through 30 June 2025. If there were no delays, please indicate 'not applicable'.
Anchored in the Government's SDG Acceleration Framework — as articulated in the Vava'u Outcome Statement — MEIDECC is leading a focused catch-up plan that applies the R2R model to unite biodiversity, climate, and community action for maximum impact. The Project Manager and M&E Officer were onboarded prior to the inception workshops of 4–6 September 2024, with the Technical Officer and Operations Support Officer joining in March 2025. The Annual Work Plan for 2025 was signed in March, with UNDP funds disbursed on 28 March and the R2R project account activated by the Tonga Treasury on 19 April. Despite these procedural delays and the later onboarding of governance bodies — the Community Management Committee, Technical Working Group, and Project Steering/Board Committee — the project successfully launched with the Inception Workshop and official launch event in Vava'u on 9–10 June 2025, officiated by HRH Crown Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala. To accelerate delivery and recover momentum, all governance bodies will be fully operational in Q3 2025 with an intensified meeting schedule to clear pending decisions and enable parallel execution of priority actions. A joint UNDP–SPC mission will strengthen M&E integration, digital governance, and accountability systems through the Corporate Services Division, while UNDP provides additional technical and administrative support directly to the PMU. Monthly Government-led oversight meetings, co-chaired by the Ministry of Finance and MEIDECC, will address operational bottlenecks, maintain momentum, and ensure visibility. This coordinated, high-intensity approach provides clear assurance to GEF that the project will remain on track and is positioned to deliver all agreed outputs and outcomes within the planned timeframe.
CO Programme Officer: Please include specific measures to manage the project's implementation performance
To strengthen project implementation performance, several targeted measures have been introduced. In Q2'25, UNDP requested the Tonga R2R Phase II project to prepare a detailed delivery acceleration plan for the remainder of 2025. This plan was followed by weekly dedicated meetings to provide progress updates to UNDP senior management until project delivery meets predefined targets. UNDP has also leveraged the Country Office Support arrangement to undertake selected procurements on behalf of the Project Management Unit (PMU), and recent discussions with government counterparts have signalled support for formally increasing UNDP's role in procurement to further improve efficiency. To provide additional strategic and technical oversight, UNDP is in the process of recruiting an interim Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), expected to be onboarded in September 2025. This role will support the broader UNDP project portfolio implemented with the Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications (MEIDECC), including the Tonga R2R Phase II project. The interim CTA will accelerate project implementation, ensure quality assurance, and strengthen coordination among stakeholders, while supporting capacity building and training. In response to current capacity gaps, MEIDECC has also requested UNDP's assistance in recruiting a dedicated finance officer to support budget planning, expenditure reporting, procurement, and other

finance-related tasks. The Project Manager has acknowledged that the current PMU structure lacks the necessary financial management capacity, and this new role will directly contribute to more efficient implementation and reporting.

BPPS RTA: Please include specific measures to manage the project's implementation performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

The project is on a sound footing to begin accelerated implementation in the coming years. The interest of stakeholders and engagement at the community level is commendable for a project that started quite late due to delays in recruitment of key PMU staff and delays in financial transfers between UNDP and Government of Tonga and the MEIDDC. While the DO rating for this project is moderately satisfactory, concerns are largely around the implementation cum financial progress which lags far behind what is expected at this stage. It is indeed commendable that the project has taken steps to develop an acceleration plan understanding that financial delivery should match the results being reported against DO progress. This proactive measure to improve project performance can be considered a best practice worth sharing amongst other Pacific SIDS and other projects that have demonstrated implementation challenges in the first few years.

As RTA, I recommend that the PMU and UNDP MCO in Fiji pay attention to these key issues in the coming reporting year to ensure better implementation progress in the second PIR.

Accelerated implementation: It is commendable that the IP and PMU have formulated an acceleration plan for the project. UNDP support for this acceleration plan is crucial and will determine the success of its ambitious components. For example, the project plans to expedite community support grants and livelihood projects of around USD 1 million and procure GIS/drones, water testing equipment, and M&E systems in the next two quarters. Large-scale mangrove and coastal restoration, the accelerated rolling out of the KAP survey and integrated and preparatory work towards the 2026 Women's High-Level South-South Exchange on weaving and handicrafts are included as 'big ticket' items in the acceleration plan. To ensure the smooth delivery of this plan, the PMU and UNDP should;

1. Convene PB and approve the acceleration plan as soon as possible. It is important to discuss possible risks and challenges with the Fiji UNDP MCO and RTA before this Project Board meeting so that appropriate mitigation measures can also be discussed and approved at the project's governing board meeting.

2. Source the requisite capacities to implement the acceleration plan. The Project has already developed terms of reference for a project analyst to strengthen project delivery, ensure accurate and timely financial reporting, support procurement, and maintain close coordination with both MEIDECC's Finance Division and UNDP's operations team. Additionally, an international UNV or short-term International Consultant will be engaged to strengthen stakeholder coordination, monitoring and evaluation, mainstreaming biodiversity into sectoral planning, and support the acceleration plan. It will be critical that UNDP MCO and PMU work closely to get these capacities on board expeditiously.

3. Community and restoration work to be prioritized to maximize development benefits from the acceleration plan: It is highly recommended that the PMUs focus on acceleration stay true to the heart of the project objective. In this light, the recommendation is to prioritise community-based activities, conservation-friendly livelihood development and restoration of wetlands/mangroves for greater

ecosystem resilience. By investing more in livelihood outcomes such as increased income, market access, and improving ecosystems for greater resilience in target communities the project will be able to report greater development outcomes against the set indicators of the project in the next PIR.

Safeguards Implementation: The PMU realizes the need to expedite safeguards-related activities of the project. A recruitment is ongoing to update the SESP and ESMF. Given that most community based activities are initiated/planned and are being accelerated (see above) it will be more effective if the project retains the already developed safeguards frameworks for practical purposes and develop implementation roadmaps for each project output instead. Capacity building of the PMU, field staff, contractors and government and NGO partners at this stage is imperative and should be a priority of the recruited consult, so that the ongoing and planned activities can immediately begin mainstreaming gender and safeguards concerns. Spending many months updating the SESP and ESMF as implementation is progressing in parallel would prove counter-productive and lead to other residual safeguards risks in the future. The SES advisor therefore recommends

- Finalization of activity-specific ESMPs for mangrove restoration, coral/seagrass rehabilitation, ecotourism infrastructure, and waste management interventions.

- Design and operationalization of the project-level GRM, with clear communication to communities.

- Completion of targeted assessments (e.g. mangrove biodiversity/use, waste flow mapping, livelihood vulnerability) and integration of findings into ESMPs.

- Continued strengthening of the CMCs and Technical Committees to embed safeguards into governance processes.

- Establishment of baseline environmental and socio-economic data sets to address gaps from Phase I and inform monitoring.

Communications-related activities to be accelerated: While the project has got off to a solid start in terms of visibility in Tonga, a systematic approach to communications will strengthen stakeholder engagement, safeguards delivery and mainstreaming efforts. Development of the project's communication strategy, conceptualization and implementation of the KAP survey and producing the knowledge products that would support adaptive learning, knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing amongst SIDS should be prioritized in the next reporting year.

Improved monitoring and evaluation: The PMU to consider securing dedicated M&E capacity to support the establishment of baselines, ensure more effective gender mainstreaming and inclusion by reporting on impacts and lessons, recording changes to RF indicators/ targets and data sources if required by next PIR or by MTR. It is also necessary to track cofinance so that the project can report back on leveraged cofinance from next PIR.

Risk management: While current level of risk management and IP engagement in risk mitigation actions is deemed satisfactory, the PMU and UNDP MCO are requested to update the risk register quarterly and engage the Project Board in discussions on residual risks that are beyond the PMU's ability to manage. RTA and MCO to discuss risk management on a bi-annual basis.

Finally, it is important to remark the involvement, interest and support of the government of Tonga, the leadership of the MEIDDC and the proactiveness of the PMU. The project demonstrates national

ownership and engagement, reflects Pacific SIDS priorities in community-centric conservation and highlights how biodiversity projects can influence the role of women in positions of leadership and decision-making over resource allocation, livelihood priorities and in determining conservation priorities for their communities.

G. Project Governance

1) Please enter the dates of Project Board meetings during the reporting period (1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025)
2024-09-06

H. Ratings and Overall Assessments

Role	2025 Development Objective Progress Rating	2025 Implementation Progress Rating
UNDP BPPS Technical Advisor	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory

Role	2025 Overall Assessment
UNDP BPPS Technical Advisor	INTRODUCTION This is the first PIR for this project. The DO rating for this project is Moderately Satisfactory (MS). Implementation Progress is deemed Moderately Unsatisfactory due to the very low financial progress reported in this first PIR. The project was designed and being rolled-out as a fully nationally implemented project. DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE PROGRESS The objective of the project is to implement the Fanga'uta Stewardship Plan (FSP) for strengthened integrated management of the Fanga'uta Lagoon and to replicate lessons learned from the Tonga R2R Phase I to priority areas in Vava'u. This objective is delivered through three interlinked outcomes and 12 outputs, the progress of which is described below. This rating is based on the fact that the project is currently on track at the objective level and despite the slow start the project is well on the way to achieving progress systematically. The project has undertaken a comprehensive baseline analysis to verify the objective and outcome level indicators and their achievement. Stakeholder consultations, awareness and communications activities, and sector-based community engagement efforts have begun across Tongatapu and Vava'u. Up to the reporting date, approximately 7,500 individuals have been directly engaged, representing about 16% of the estimated 48,000 people living in the target communities in Tongatapu and Vava'u, The data will yield gender and sector-disaggregated data which will support the planning and monitoring of the outputs under Outcome 1 and 3; and support the project to report against the objective level indicator 1 on number of direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender. The full baseline will be completed and reported in Q4 of 2025. Ongoing work to support the objective level indicator/ GEF core indicator on Marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use includes ongoing Marine monitoring activities conducted across eight BioRap sites in Vava'u (Toula, Lotuma, Euakafa, Euaiki, Vaipua 1, Mt. Talau 1, A'a, and 'Oto). These studies will form the basis for updated ecological baselines. Four new SCUBA-certified divers were trained and added to the monitoring team, strengthening local capacity. The project has formed partnerships with national institutions for marine data analysis and the results of this analysis will inform management planning for the marine conservation outputs in Outcome 1. Although formal METT reassessment and legal designation are pending, these preparatory actions mark a significant step forward in improving marine protected area governance and readiness for official protection status. Objective indicator 3 responds to the area of wetlands restored by the project.

	The project has initiated actions to map and select 10 hectares of mangroves for restoration in Tongatapu and Vava'u. Consultations, detailed mapping and ecological surveys will commence in Q4 of 2025 and the project is well situated to commence co-management activities with communities and interest groups(fisheries/tourism) to better manage restoration and post-restoration management activities. Outcome 1 of the project focuses on improved management of the Fanga'uta Lagoon marine reserve for biodiversity conservation and its replication in Vava'u. This will be measured by four indicators, two of which focus on the status of the Fanga'uta Lagoon Action Plan (2023-2033) with strengthened institutional capacity for implementation. The other indicators focus on sustainable community management and use of mangrove areas in Fanga'uta Lagoon, including gender segregated beneficiaries of project investments. The progress towards achieving these indicators is on track. For indicators on the status of the management plan, it is noted that the FSP Action Plan (2024–2034) was endorsed and preliminary planning for reactivating the FSP Steering Committee and Secretariat is underway. The project is already supporting certain selected priority management actions and marine ecological assessments. Challenges with procurement and customs clearance of survey equipment delayed implementation of certain outputs under this component, however the project has successfully overcome bottlenecks to implementation by cooperating with partners to obtain the requisite timely support. To develop community-centric lagoon-based livelihoods, the baseline assessments initiated in Year 1 will identify households and community members engaged in livelihood activities across project sites in Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel. Preliminary consultations, community profiling, and site visits have helped map existing livelihood practices and interest in alternative income-generating opportunities such as ecotourism, organic agriculture, mangrove products, and sustainable fisheries. Awareness sessions promoting gender-inclusive economic opportunities have been conducted in selected villages, with early interest shown particularly among women's groups in value-added products and eco-friendly enterprises. While data is still being consolidated to determine precise household-level increases, groundwork has been laid for the formal launch of livelihood pilot activities in the second half of 2025. Outcome 2 of the project focuses on governance enhancements through streamlined policies, proactive institutions and improved human capacity. These improvements are measured via three interlinked indicators. In terms of improved capacity to co-manage the lagoons and marine landscapes, the project has established Community Management Committees (CMCs) for both Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel in 2024, providing a platform for participatory governance. Notably, and commendably, traditional and indigenous leadership has been formally recognized and integrated into the governance structures, ensuring stronger cultural legitimacy and decision-making authority. Activities under the gender action plan are already under implementation ensuring that governance processes reflect gender and social diversity priorities. Institutional arrangements have been established to these CMCs with MEIDECC's (the IP) Corporate Planning and Budget process. This ensures that wetland conservation and sustainable use objectives are integrated fully into the

	formal planning cycles of the Ministry. The TOR for the Vaipua Channel Community Management Committee (CMC), prepared during project design was consulted with the communities here. Vava'u's representation on the R2R Board Steering Committee will include one estate holder, one district officer, and the Governor of Vava'u. A Technical Committee, to be led by the Ministry of Fisheries, was formed as an outcome of the Vava'u Technical Committee. Capacity-building initiatives are ongoing, focusing on governance effectiveness, biodiversity management, and M&E integration and the UNDP capacity scorecard will be measured in Q4 2025 to ensure progress towards mid-term targets are on track. In terms of new policy instruments mainstreaming gender-sensitive lagoon management, the project identified four priority instruments for streamlining: These are 1. The Environment Management Act; 2. The Fisheries Management Act to incorporate gender and social inclusion in community-based fisheries governance; 3.The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) to embed gender-responsive targets and indicators and 4.Tonga's Ocean Management Plan to integrate biodiversity, gender, and social inclusion considerations into marine spatial planning and governance. Preliminary work is underway to align these instruments with the GAP and to incorporate GESI-sensitive provisions, with streamlining on track for completion of all four instruments by mid-term (2026). Overall, the progress of the outputs of Component 2 towards mid- term targets is commendable. Outcome 3 on awareness and information management to enhance appreciation of biodiversity values of the Fanga'uta Lagoon and priority sites in Vava'u is measured by three indicators. The first measures changes to community awarenes of conservation threats and adverse impacts on wetland management in Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel measured through change to knowledge, attitudes and practices. The project launch attended by HRH Crown Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala has demonstrated strong leadership to the ridge to reef concept and the integration of cultural authority, traditional leadership, government, and afforded the credibility royal family patronage to the project's vision and mission. The Baseline KAP Survey has not yet commenced and is currently at the pre-procurement stage, with the TOR drafted and under internal review before the call for proposals. In the meantime, community-level sensitization and awareness activities are ongoing in both Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel to maintain engagement and prepare stakeholders for the survey process. The process to identify project beneficiaries and stakeholders and integrated profiling at village level is expected provide the ground work for the KAP survey and also ensure that the data collected not only supports monitoring and reporting but also informs targeted engagement, behaviour change initiatives, and stakeholder-specific messaging. In terms of participating in knowledge exchange with regional initiatives, the project has participated in three regional learning workshops in the reporting year. These include; a SPREP regional technical exchange on wetland management, gender-focused biodiversity session co-organized with UNDP Pacific and contributions to the Pacific Ridge to Reef regional platform, with Tonga presenting its leadership forum outcome and traditional stewardship model. Outcome three is on-track, as well, although he project is encouraged to develop an overall project communications plan and obtain the requisite capacity to implement it in 2025.

PROJECT GOVERNANCE

The project governance is satisfactory. The project held its inception workshop in September 2024 and one Project Board meeting (September 06, 2024) to validate the technical and operational changes to the signed prodoc. These changes were duly discussed and endorsed by the board. The Project Board meeting was attended by officials of the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Ministry of Fisheries. Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Finance, Civil Society Forum of Tonga, Department of Environment (IP) and UNDP and PMU members. Among the issues discussed were the inception meeting report, changes to terms of reference of project staff and duty stations of field-based staff, the annual work plan for 2025 and training for PMU staff in UNDP and GEF procedures.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Evidence of proactive risk management and adaptive strategies is apparent in the first year of the project's implementation. Risks were discussed at Board Meetings, and measures have been taken to mitigate delays caused by lack of streamlined procedure for financing flows between UNDP and the IP. Risk mitigation measures included fast-tracking of recruitment of technical and operations staff in early 2025, ensuring high level political engagement via the Crown Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala, at the project launch and inception and ongoing coordination with Tonga Treasury and Ministry of Finance to expedite procurement and disbursement processes to generate high-level national and community engagement. The project has developed an acceleration plan and hopes to expedite certain 'big ticket' procurements and community-based activities to ensure that grant disbursement level to reach 10% of the total GEF grant by end-2025. Targeted acceleration of high-value, high-impact activities is expected to convert the remaining 2025 budget into measurable biodiversity, climate, and livelihood gains, while embedding the R2R model into Tonga's national development framework.

The project's risk register should be updated to encompass the full range of risks, including operational, political, technical, as well as social and environmental risks by end of 2025. It is advisable for the project to initiate a discussion on risk assessment and mitigation strategies with the UNDP MCO and the regional technical advisor (RTA) prior to the next Project Board meeting. However the project is already dealing proactively with risk treatments including by establishing a Risk Mitigation Task Team within the PMU to monitor and flag risks proactively, strengthening procurement planning and implementing a 3-month advance work and cash flow plan and enhanced collaboration with MEIDECC's Corporate Services and National Treasury to expedite processing of procurement and financial requests.

The ESMF developed during PPG project is still in early-stage implementation. Some initial activities were conducted during the reporting period- such as recruitment of a consultant for the SESP, preparatory environmental and social impact scoping for activities planned in Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel and ecological surveys in Vaipua Channel and supported water quality assessments in Fanga'uta Lagoon. The project notes several challenges in implementing the SES plans, including capacity gaps in the PMU, inadequate

environmental quality data available for initial assessment and delays in procuring new equipment for water quality monitoring etc.

With information generated through the ongoing assessments in the two sites, social and environmental (SES) risks should be incorporated into the implementation plans for each output. The UNDP RTA and Regional SES Advisor are prepared to assist the project in adopting a more proactive stance in managing the social and environmental risks outlined in the project document and risk register. A half-day SES orientation session for the PMU and MCO is recommended to enhance understanding of the requirements for safeguard implementation and supervision.

GENDER

The IP and government have taken gender mainstreaming seriously into the processes and products of the project. The project design is deliberate in its effort to mainstream gender and social inclusion outcomes. Early efforts towards inclusion of gender and other marginalized groups are visible in the project's reported activities for this PIR. These include efforts to increase participation of women in lagoon stewardship and management committees in both locations, collecting and processing gender disaggregated data, developing guidelines for community-based conservation actions with inclusive provisions for resource access, enforcement and benefit sharing, and using communications tools to send out strong messages on women's leadership in the participating communities. The project reports that these efforts have already demonstrated results and impacts at community-level where traditional roles of women are slowly being reversed to accept more women in leadership roles- especially in the Community Management Committees, where at least 40% of the participation is reported to be women.

It is noted by the RTA that the level of gender mainstreaming and inclusion reported in this PIR is satisfactory and could be held up as example to other projects in SIDS.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The project reports substantial progress in stakeholder engagement during this PIR period. The Inception Workshop in September 2024 was one of the key events around which high-level political and partner participation and commitment was leveraged. The MEIDECC took the lead in hosting two subsequent national launch forms in Tongatapu and Vava'u engaging key government ministries, departments, civil society organizations, NGOs, private sector, UNDP and other development partners. At the community level, engagement has remained high through the community-and-site-level mapping exercise and participation in the Community Management Committees. Activities included participatory mapping, community profiling, and awareness sessions on mangrove conservation, climate resilience, and biodiversity protection were undertaken. Traditional leaders and estate holders were also consulted and briefed. The project has convened a Technical Working Group and Project Steering Committee, formalizing their roles and ensuring multi-stakeholder input into project decisions and priorities. Stakeholder engagement is deemed highly satisfactory in the reported period.

	KM & COMMUNICATION The project reports that there is currently no developed communications strategy, however the project reports certain communications and outreach activities alongside initial planning, assessments, stakeholder engagement activities such as the Inception Workshop and the site-based launch events. To support the initial project socialization among key stakeholder groups the project has worked on its branding in Year 1 by developing a project logo, banners, templates, etc. Subsequently, a project video was created to provide a snapshot and summary of the project, what it aims to do and achieve. Lastly, regular newsletters and updates have been disseminated via various comms platforms and channels. Best practices and lessons learned will be captured in the quarterly project progress reports, and over time these will be collated and disseminated through other forms. One of the most notable achievements in both stakeholder engagement and communications for the project has been its support to Tonga's 2025 Leaders Strategic Planning Forum. Held in July, this Forum brought together leaders and partners to align efforts and accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, including the environmental goals that are spearheaded by the MEIDECC. The participants also took part in beach clean-up and planted native coastal plants to commemorate the Ridge to Reef project in Vaipua Channel. This provided ample news in the national media and was picked up UNDP's regional leadership. GEF branding and visibility was ensured. All communication products and outputs have been uploaded as evidence Apart from these initial activities, the project is currently in the process of procuring long term technical capacity for communications and knowledge management. This includes the framework for the KAP survey, monitoring impact of communications and awareness raising activities and ensuring that messaging towards stakeholders are targeted to both community needs and project objectives. Ensuring that the safeguards plans are fully implemented in the field and at national-level will also require strong communications input. The project is on a sound footing to begin accelerated implementation in the coming years. The interest of stakeholders and engagement at the community level is commendable for a project that started quite late due to delays in recruitment of key PMU staff and delays in financial transfers between UNDP and Government of Tonga and the MEIDDC. While the DO rating for this project is moderately satisfactory, concerns are largely around the implementation cum financial progress which lags far behind what is expected at this stage. It is indeed commendable that the project has taken steps to develop an acceleration plan understanding that financial delivery should match the results being reported against DO progress. This proactive measure to improve project performance can be considered a best practice worth sharing amongst other Pacific SIDS and other projects that have demonstrated implementation challenges in the first few years. As RTA, I recommend that the PMU and UNDP MCO in Fiji pay attention to these key issues in the coming reporting year to ensure better implementation progress in the second PIR.

	Accelerated implementation: It is commendable that the IP and PMU have formulated an acceleration plan for the project. UNDP support for this acceleration plan is crucial and will determine the success of its ambitious components. For example, the project plans to expedite community support grants and livelihood projects of around USD 1 million and procure GIS/drones, water testing equipment, and M&E systems in the next two quarters. Large-scale mangrove and coastal restoration, the accelerated rolling out of the KAP survey and integrated and preparatory work towards the 2026 Women's High-Level South-South Exchange on weaving and handicrafts are included as 'big ticket' items in the acceleration plan. To ensure the smooth delivery of this plan, the PMU and UNDP should; 1. Convene PB and approve the acceleration plan as soon as possible. It is important to discuss possible risks and challenges with the Fiji UNDP MCO and RTA before this Project Board meeting so that appropriate mitigation measures can also be discussed and approved at the project's governing board meeting. 2. Source the requisite capacities to implement the acceleration plan. The Project has already developed terms of reference for a project analyst to strengthen project delivery, ensure accurate and timely financial reporting, support procurement, and maintain close coordination with both MEIDECC's Finance Division and UNDP's operations team. Additionally, an international UNV or short-term International Consultant will be engaged to strengthen stakeholder coordination, monitoring and evaluation, mainstreaming biodiversity into sectoral planning, and support the acceleration plan. It will be critical that UNDP MCO and PMU work closely to get these capacities on board expeditiously. 3. Community and restoration work to be prioritized to maximize development benefits from the acceleration plan: It is highly recommended that the PMUs focus on acceleration stay true to the heart of the project objective. In this light, the recommendation is to prioritize community-based activities, conservation-friendly livelihood development and restoration of wetlands/mangroves for greater ecosystem resilience. By investing more in livelihood outcomes such as increased income, market access, and improving ecosystems for greater resilience in target communities the project will be able to report greater development outcomes against the set indicators of the project in the next PIR. Safeguards Implementation: The PMU realizes the need to expedite safeguards-related activities of the project. A recruitment is ongoing to update the SESP and ESMF. Given that most community based activities are initiated/planned and are being accelerated (see above) it will be more effective if the project retains the already developed safeguards frameworks for practical purposes and develop implementation roadmaps for each project output instead. Capacity building of the PMU, field staff, contractors and government and NGO partners at this stage is imperative and should be a priority of the recruited consult, so that the ongoing and planned activities can immediately begin mainstreaming gender and safeguards concerns. Spending many months updating the SESP and ESMF as implementation is progressing in parallel would prove counter-productive and lead to other residual safeguards risks in the future. The SES advisor therefore recommends - Finalization of activity-specific ESMPs for mangrove restoration, coral/seagrass

	rehabilitation, ecotourism infrastructure, and waste management interventions. - Design and operationalization of the project-level GRM, with clear communication to communities. - Completion of targeted assessments (e.g. mangrove biodiversity/use, waste flow mapping, livelihood vulnerability) and integration of findings into ESMPs. - Continued strengthening of the CMCs and Technical Committees to embed safeguards into governance processes. - Establishment of baseline environmental and socio-economic data sets to address gaps from Phase I and inform monitoring. Communications-related activities to be accelerated: While the project has got off to a solid start in terms of visibility in Tonga, a systematic approach to communications will strengthen stakeholder engagement, safeguards delivery and mainstreaming efforts. Development of the project's communication strategy, conceptualization and implementation of the KAP survey and producing the knowledge products that would support adaptive learning, knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing amongst SIDS should be prioritized in the next reporting year. Improved monitoring and evaluation: The PMU to consider securing dedicated M&E capacity to support the establishment of baselines, ensure more effective gender mainstreaming and inclusion by reporting on impacts and lessons, recording changes to RF indicators/ targets and data sources if required by next PIR or by MTR. It is also necessary to track cofinance so that the project can report back on leveraged cofinance from next PIR. Risk management: While current level of risk management and IP engagement in risk mitigation actions is deemed satisfactory, the PMU and UNDP MCO are requested to update the risk register quarterly and engage the Project Board in discussions on residual risks that are beyond the PMU's ability to manage. RTA and MCO to discuss risk management on a bi-annual basis. Finally, it is important to remark the involvement, interest and support of the government of Tonga, the leadership of the MEIDDC and the proactiveness of the PMU. The project demonstrates national ownership and engagement, reflects Pacific SIDS priorities in community-centric conservation and highlights how biodiversity projects can influence the role of women in positions of leadership and decision-making over resource allocation, livelihood priorities and in determining conservation priorities for their communities --- The project's implementation progress is rated moderately unsatisfactory due to the low level of financial progress. This is largely due to a late start, lack of PMU recruitment, and capacity issues in the government structures in this nationally implemented (NIM) project. In that light, the government IP MEIDECC has requested UNDP country office to provide some targeted execution support to the project in 2025 onwards to deliver the AWP in a timely manner. This request is

	currently under review and will be subject to GEFSEC approval. Despite the late start, the project is now positioned well to deliver both development results and financial progress in the intervening year with an acceleration plan that has been endorsed by the Project Board. The UNDP CO and RTA has included recommendations that will support the expedited implementation of the project in year 2 onwards.
UNDP Country Office Programme Officer	The project is well-positioned to accelerate progress and achieve its planned results, with both the PMU and UNDP taking proactive, coordinated measures to address existing implementation challenges. While procurement processes under Government of Tonga systems remains a consideration, joint planning between the PMU and CO, coupled with early prioritization during multi-year and annual work planning, is expected to reduce potential delays. Plus, the emerging government support for an expanded UNDP role CO Supported NIM modality, will further enhance efficiency and timeliness. Targeted interventions, such as the development of a detailed delivery acceleration plan and weekly performance review meetings, are already driving more structured and responsive project management. The upcoming onboarding of an interim Chief Technical Advisor will add valuable strategic, technical, and quality assurance capacity, while fostering stronger stakeholder coordination. In parallel, MEIDECC's request for UNDP's assistance to recruit a dedicated finance officer reflects a shared commitment to bolstering the PMU's financial management capacity and ensuring more streamlined implementation. With these measures underway, the project is entering a new phase of strengthened collaboration, capacity, and delivery focus. This concerted effort by both the PMU and UNDP provides a strong foundation for overcoming current constraints and achieving the project's objectives within the approved timeframe. ----
Project Manager/Coordinator	The project is progressing satisfactorily, with strengthened collaboration between the PMU, MEIDECC, and UNDP driving more efficient and coordinated delivery. Weekly progress reviews, joint procurement planning, and early prioritization of activities are mitigating risks and ensuring momentum. Government support for an expanded UNDP role under the CO-supported NIM modality, alongside the planned onboarding of an interim Chief Technical Advisor and recruitment of a dedicated finance officer, is further enhancing technical, financial, and strategic capacity. With these measures in place, the Ridge to Reef project is on track to achieve its objectives within the approved timeframe, while shaping a Whole-of-Nation model that advances Tonga's commitments under the Global Biodiversity Framework and the UNDP Nature Pledge. ----
GEF Operational Focal point	----

Project Implementing Partner	----
Other Partners	----

I. Minor Amendments

Minor amendments are changes to the project design or implementation that do not have significant impact on the project objectives or scope, or an increase of the GEF project financing up to 5% as described in Annex 9 of the GEF Project and Program Cycle Policy Guidelines.

CO Programme Officer: Please mark each category for which a minor amendment occurred during this reporting period (1 July 2024- 30 June 2025).

For each category that is marked, please provide a brief description of the change that occurred in the associated text box. You may attach supporting documentation, as appropriate.

The purpose of this section is to capture adaptive management and measure project proactiveness, an indicator outlined in paragraph 70 of the GEF-8 Policy Directions available here.

A) Results Framework
No
Provide a description of the change(s) to the 'Results framework'
(not set or not applicable)
B) Components and cost
No
Provide a description of the change(s) to 'Components and cost'
(not set or not applicable)
C) Institutional and implementation arrangements
No
Provide a description of the change(s) to 'Institutional and implementation arrangements'
(not set or not applicable)
D) Financial management
No
Provide a description of the change(s) to 'Financial Management'
(not set or not applicable)
E) Implementation schedule
No
Provide a description of the change(s) to 'Implementation schedule'
(not set or not applicable)
F) Executing Entity

No
Provide a description of the change(s) to 'Executing Entity'
(not set or not applicable)
G) Executing Entity Category
No
Provide a description of the change(s) to 'Executing Entity Category'
(not set or not applicable)
H) Minor project objective change
No
Provide a description of the change(s) to 'minor project objective change'
(not set or not applicable)
I) Safeguards
No
Provide a description of the change(s) to 'Safeguards'
(not set or not applicable)
J) Risk Analysis
No
Provide a description of the change(s) to 'Risk Analysis'
(not set or not applicable)
K) Increase of GEF project financing up to 5%
No
Provide a description of the change to GEF project financing up to 5%
(not set or not applicable)
L) Co-financing
No
Provide a description of the change(s) to 'Co-financing'
(not set or not applicable)
M) Location of project activity
No

Provide a description of the change(s) to project location activity
(not set or not applicable)
Please provide a description of other types of minor amendments that do not fall under any of the above categories. For example, minor changes to the project's Gender Action Plan and/or gender activities can be captured here.
In response to current capacity gaps, MEIDECC has requested UNDP’s assistance in recruiting a dedicated finance officer to support budget planning, expenditure reporting, procurement, and other finance-related tasks as additional member to the PMU. The Project Manager has acknowledged that the current PMU structure lacks the necessary financial management capacity, and this new role will directly contribute to more efficient implementation and reporting. The PMU and CO Programme Team will undertake a thorough budget review to determine how to include this role, without reducing financial resources allocated to project implementation.

J. Gender

Progress in Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

1) Please review the project's Gender Analysis and Action Plan. If the document is not attached or an updated Gender Analysis and/or Gender Action Plan is available please upload the document below or send to the Regional Programme Associate to upload in PIMS+. Please note that all projects approved since 1 July 2014 are required to carry out a gender analysis and all projects approved since 1 July 2018 are required to have a gender analysis and action plan.
Annex 10 GESI Analysis and Action Plan.docx
Quantum Gender Marker Rating
GEN2: Gender equality as significant objective
2) Please indicate in which results areas the project is contributing to gender equality (you may select more than one results area, or select not applicable):
Contributing to closing gender gaps in access to and control over resources: Yes
Improving the participation and decision-making of women in natural resource governance: Yes
Targeting socio-economic benefits and services for women: No
Not applicable: No
3) Please specify results achieved this reporting period that focus on increasing gender equality and the empowerment of women. **Please explain how the results reported addressed the different needs of men or women, changed norms, values, and power structures, and/or contributed to transforming or challenging gender inequalities and discrimination.**
• Community Management Committees (CMCs) were established with deliberate efforts to ensure women's representation, and at least 40% of early CMC participants were women. • Livelihood profiling and consultations were conducted in 26 villages, with gender-disaggregated data collected to inform sustainable livelihood initiatives. • Preliminary guidelines for community-led mangrove stewardship include GESI-responsive provisions for resource access, enforcement roles, and benefit sharing. • Awareness activities included messaging on women’s leadership in environmental stewardship, contributing to shifting norms around women’s roles in decision-making. These efforts are helping to rebalance power structures at the community level, where traditional leadership has typically excluded women. Women's inclusion in natural resource governance is becoming normalized in several participating communities.

4) Please describe how work to advance gender equality and women's empowerment enhanced the project's environmental and/or resilience outcomes.

- Women’s active involvement in mangrove mapping and use rule development has led to the identification of locally relevant and enforceable sustainable use practices, increasing community buy-in and likelihood of compliance.
- Empowering women in livelihood planning (e.g., mangrove product value addition, permaculture, and eco-tourism) is diversifying household income streams and reducing pressure on wetland ecosystems.
- GESI mainstreaming in CMCs has enhanced inclusive stewardship, with women helping to monitor mangrove health and lead coastal clean-up initiatives—strengthening ecosystem resilience.

K. Risk Management

A) Overall Risk Management

BPPS RTA: Please discuss the risks flagged in the Quantum project Risk Register and the VF Risk Dashboard in PIMS+ with the CO and then provide an assessment of project risk management undertaken during the reporting period. Document actions, agreed with the CO, to address all project risks in the coming year.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Evidence of proactive risk management and adaptive strategies is apparent in the first year of the project's implementation. Risks were discussed at Board Meetings, and measures have been taken to mitigate delays caused by lack of streamlined procedure for financing flows between UNDP and the IP. Risk mitigation measures included fast-tracking of recruitment of technical and operations staff in early 2025, ensuring high level political engagement via the Crown Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala, at the project launch and inception and ongoing coordination with Tonga Treasury and Ministry of Finance to expedite procurement and disbursement processes to generate high-level national and community engagement. The project has developed an acceleration plan and hopes to expedite certain 'big ticket' procurements and community-based activities to ensure that grant disbursement level to reach 10% of the total GEF grant by end-2025. Targeted acceleration of high-value, high-impact activities is expected to convert the remaining 2025 budget into measurable biodiversity, climate, and livelihood gains, while embedding the R2R model into Tonga's national development framework.

It is noted that the project is proactively applying risk treatments including by establishing a Risk Mitigation Task Team within the PMU to monitor and flag risks proactively, strengthening procurement planning and implementing a 3-month advance work and cash flow plan and enhanced collaboration with MEIDECC's Corporate Services and National Treasury to expedite processing of procurement and financial requests. Risk treatment evidence is also provided in the form of note on proactive steps to address implementation bottlenecks in 2025-2026.

The ESMF developed during PPG project is still in early-stage implementation. Some initial activities were conducted during the reporting period- such as recruitment of a consultant for the SESP, preparatory environmental and social impact scoping for activities planned in Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel and ecological surveys in Vaipua Channel and supported water quality assessments in Fanga'uta Lagoon. The project notes several challenges in implementing the SES plans, including capacity gaps in the PMU, inadequate environmental quality data available for initial assessment and delays in procuring new equipment for water quality monitoring etc.

With information generated through the ongoing assessments in the two sites, social and environmental (SES) risks should be incorporated into the implementation plans for each output. The UNDP RTA and Regional SES Advisor are prepared to assist the project in adopting a more proactive stance in managing the social and environmental risks outlined in the project document and risk register. A half-day SES orientation session for the PMU and MCO is recommended to enhance understanding of the requirements for safeguard implementation and supervision.

B) SES Implementation

2b) Provide an update on progress, challenges and outcomes related to stakeholder engagement based on the description in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval.

During the reporting period (July 2024 – June 2025), the project made substantial progress in stakeholder engagement aligned with the approved Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Engagement efforts focused on three levels:

- National and Subnational Engagement: MEIDECC leadership was mobilized through the National Launch and Leadership Forum held in Tongatapu and Vava'u, respectively. This included government ministries, departments, civil society organizations, NGOs, private sector, and development partners.

- Community-Level Engagement: Community Management Committees (CMCs) were initiated in priority villages surrounding Fanga'uta Lagoon and Vaipua Channel. Participatory mapping, community profiling, and awareness sessions on mangrove conservation, climate resilience, and biodiversity protection were undertaken. Traditional leaders and estate holders were also consulted and briefed.

- Technical Working Group & Board Oversight: The project convened the Technical Working Group and Project Steering Committee, formalizing their roles and ensuring multi-stakeholder input into project decisions and priorities.

Challenges:

- Delays in onboarding the full Project Management Unit (PMU) affected the early rollout of the stakeholder engagement plan.

- Limited accessibility of some communities due to weather conditions.

- Competing community priorities and event fatigue in some areas.

Outcomes:

- Stakeholder buy-in was strengthened through visible project milestones (e.g., Vava'u Launch by HRH Crown Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala).

- There is growing community interest in participating in alternative livelihoods, mangrove stewardship, and climate action.

L. Knowledge Management & Communications

The **Project Manager** must complete the three questions below.

1) Please provide progress on the implementation of the project's Knowledge Management approach approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval. If there is no KM approach/strategy, please comment on how the project is capturing and disseminating best practices and lessons learned.
While a formal Knowledge Management (KM) strategy was not included in the initial CEO Endorsement documentation, the project has made strong progress in implementing knowledge capture and dissemination aligned with its objectives. Key achievements during the reporting period (July 2024 – June 2025) include: • Official Launch of the R2R Phase II Project: The project was formally launched in Vava'u on 10 June 2025 by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala, who also serves as Tonga's Minister of Foreign Affairs. This high-level launch garnered national and regional attention and reinforced the project's importance for Tonga's resilience and biodiversity agenda. • Documentation and Communication of Best Practices: Lessons learned from Phase I and the new integrated stewardship model piloted in Vava'u and Fangauta Lagoon were captured and disseminated via multimedia storytelling, press releases, and technical briefs. • Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Island Knowledge Sharing: The project supported the MEIDECC Leaders Strategic Forum, bringing together key sectors, government agencies, and traditional leaders to align national priorities with biodiversity conservation and climate resilience. • Development of Visual and Digital Knowledge Products: Communication assets developed during the period include event videos, high-quality photography, infographics, and a brochure outlining the R2R model. • Digital Tools in Progress: The Resilient Tonga App and CEO's Dashboard Monitoring System are being developed to serve as real-time knowledge-sharing platforms, accessible by MEIDECC divisions and partners. A formal Communications and KM Strategy is under preparation to guide future efforts, and the project will also explore aligning with GEF's global knowledge-sharing platforms.
2) Please provide URLs specific to this project in the relevant field below. Please categorize the URLs appropriately (for example: project websites, social media sites, media coverage, etc.)
Project website: https://www.undp.org/pacific/stories/vavau-leads-way-tongas-bold-step-toward-sustainable-future Social media sites.

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1267859794828305&set=pcb.1267860648161553

Media coverage.

https://www.youtube.com/live/B5Imko2I3j4

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10162038532954794&set=pcb.10162038540374794

https://www.facebook.com/reel/697377439718239

https://www.facebook.com/lonijovi04/videos/721507257491159

https://www.youtube.com/live/4Phk-O6H3Bs?si=V3r6x4TMsUdeaAU6

https://www.youtube.com/live/DAEAvPhxn7I?si=5QLR4sK_mRLgV4lr

https://www.youtube.com/live/B5Imko2I3j4?si=RKl4fJPAvSSv5i53

https://www.youtube.com/live/5Ps79n3jwtw

UNDP https://www.undp.org/pacific/stories/vavau-leads-way-tongas-bold-step-toward-sustainable-future

Social Media:

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1048551377365340&set=pcb.1048551530698658

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1046258087594669&set=pcb.1046258217594656

https://www.facebook.com/UNDP.Pacific/videos/1061720652041117

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1028586719361806&set=pcb.1028586772695134

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1028511052702706&set=pcb.1028511139369364

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1027846636102481&set=pcb.1027846716102473

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1027138906173254&set=pcb.1027139016173243

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1027013009519177&set=pcb.1027013126185832

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1026929719527506&set=pcb.1026929939527484

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1022177676669377&set=pcb.1022177803336031

https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1012353697651775&set=pcb.1012353880985090

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1010982597788885&set=pcb.1010982911122187

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1010895744464237&set=pcb.1010895924464219

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=122184382844287326&set=a.122102759558287326

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=122177163080287326&set=pcb.122177163944287326

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=122154511640287326&set=pcb.122154511754287326

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=122137159544287326&set=pcb.122137160426287326

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=122161032686482151&set=pcb.122161032938482151

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=122155718444482151&set=pcb.122155720694482151

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10233394364334662&set=pcb.1045734120848273

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=122138731550753738&set=pcb.122138732012753738

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=122155244690482151&set=pcb.122155246922482151

https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=122154981968482151&set=pcb.122154984374482151

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=122154618758482151&set=pcb.122154621254482151

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https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=122113040126482151&set=pcb.122112346964482151

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=122161032542482151&set=pb.61564464547361.-2207520000

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10162038512399794&set=pcb.10162038524284794

https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:ugcPost:7348544021343981568

https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:ugcPost:7348544021343981568

- Author Ashna Kumar from UNDP, Minister of MEIDECC Tonga, Department of Environment.

3) In the PIR platform, please upload any supporting files, including the project's Communications Strategy, photos, videos, stories and other communication/knowledge materials.

(not set or not applicable)

M. Annex - Ratings Definitions

Development Objective Progress Ratings Definitions

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

(S) Satisfactory: Project is on track to achieve its end-of-project targets by project closure and any minor challenges are being addressed through an adaptive management plan. The project can be presented as 'good practice'.

(MS) Moderately Satisfactory: Project is on track to achieve its end-of-project targets by project closure and minor challenges can be addressed if an adaptive management plan is promptly put in place.

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

(U) Unsatisfactory: Project is off track and is expected to only partially achieve its end-of-project targets by project closure. Project results might be partially achieved by project closure if major adaptive management is undertaken immediately.

(HU) Highly Unsatisfactory: Project is off track and is not expected to achieve its end-of-project targets by project closure and adaptive management is not expected to materialize.

Implementation Progress Ratings Definitions

(HS) Highly Satisfactory: Implementation is exceeding expectations. Implementation of all outputs/activities is fully on track, proceeding as planned, The implementation of the project can be presented as 'outstanding practice'.

(S) Satisfactory: Implementation is proceeding as planned with minor challenges that are being addressed. Implementation of all outputs/activities is on track with minor deviations The implementation of the project can be presented as 'good practice'.

(MS) Moderately Satisfactory: Implementation is proceeding as planned with minor challenges that have not yet been addressed. Implementation of most outputs/activities is on track with minor deviations.

(MU) Moderately Unsatisfactory: Implementation is not proceeding as planned and faces implementation challenges. Implementation of many outputs/activities is off track Implementation progress could be improved if adaptive management is undertaken immediately.

(U) Unsatisfactory: Implementation is not proceeding as planned and faces major implementation challenges. Implementation of most outputs/activities is off track.

(HU) Highly Unsatisfactory: Implementation is seriously under-performing. Implementation of all outputs/activities is severely off track.