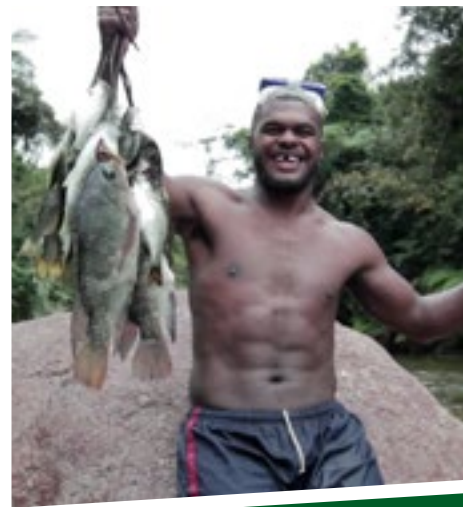




Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



Global Environment Facility - Pacific Alliance for Sustainability (GEF-PAS)

Lessons learned from five years of nature conservation
and development in South Pacific Islands





FPAM Workshop Participants at Waitangi Bay of Islands, Pahia, New Zealand (November 28th – December 2nd, 2016) courtesy FPAM project.

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Tuivavalagi

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Global Environment Facility - Pacific Alliance for Sustainability (GEF-PAS)

Lessons learned from five years of nature conservation
and development in South Pacific Islands

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Sub-Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Apia, 2018

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By Rudolf Hahn, FPAM Chief Technical Adviser



Acronyms

ACEO Assistant Chief Executive Officer

CI Conservation International

CTA Chief Technical Advisor

FAO Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations

FPAM Forest and Protected Area Management

GEF Global Environment Facility

NPC National Project Coordinator

NPD National Project Director

LTO Lead Technical Officer

PAS Pacific Alliance for Sustainability

SAP Sub Regional Office Asia Pacific for FAO

SPC Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Photo captions

- Page 11: Shoreline of Lake Letas on Gaua island, Vanuatu: ©FAO/Rick Malao
- Page 2: Coastline of Bay Homo CCA, James Cook inscription and propeller of crashed fighter aircraft during Pacific War on Pentecost island, Vanuatu: ©FAO/Rudolf Hahn
- Page 3: Conservation from Ridge to Reef; Taveuni Forest and Ravilevu Nature Reserves towards Lavena village and reef on Taveuni Island, Fiji: ©FAO/Rudolf Hahn
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- Page 16: Nature Tour guide Misa explaining traditional way of fire making, Niue: ©FAO/Rudolf Hahn
- Page 17: Support to Organic Farming in Savaii, Samoa: ©FAO/Rudolf Hahn
- Page 19: Establishment of biodiversity monitoring plots in Huvalu Forest Conservation Area, Niue: ©FAO/Logo Seumani
- Page 21: Pacific Kauri (*Agathis macrophylla*), Kauri Reserve on Erromango Island, Vanuatu: ©FAO/Rudolf Hahn
- Page 23: Siri Waterfall, Lake Letas Community Conservation Area, Gaua Island, Vanuatu: ©FAO/Rick Malao
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- Page 65: Transport of the garden harvest where there is no road: ©FAO/Rudolf Hahn
- Page 65: Traditional cultural dance in communities of Bay Homo CCA: ©FAO/Rudolf Hahn
- Page 66: Waterfall of Nabalasere village, Greater Tomaniivi, Fiji Islands: ©FAO/Rudolf Hahn

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and purpose

The GEF-PAS Forest and Protected Area Management in Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Niue has been a five-year project implemented by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. The project's environmental objective is to strengthen biodiversity conservation and reduce forest and land degradation. Its developmental objective is to enhance the sustainable livelihoods of local communities living in and around existing or potential protected areas. The project has worked at the interface of these two objectives in the four countries above with a range of activities structured within six technical components: 1) policy and legal reform; 2) extension and consolidation of the protected area network; 3) strengthening capacity for protected area and community-based conservation management; 4) developing mechanisms for sustainable protected areas financing; 5) sustainable use of biodiversity; and 6) sustainable land management in forest margins. The project has been designed with the objective to assist the countries achieving the Aichi targets of the Convention of Biodiversity and in particular to contribute to the Aichi target to protect at least 17 % of each countries' terrestrial area.

The Forest and Protected Area Management (FPAM) project is a GEF 4 project and has been the first GEF funded project to be implemented in the Pacific region with tangible results to be achieved on the ground. Meanwhile the implementation of GEF 5 projects has started while projects of the GEF 6 and 7 types are in the planning phase.

In preparation for the projects' phasing out in June 2017 a process was implemented project-wide to: a) extrapolate, share and discuss lessons learned; and b) plan for, articulate and share exit strategies. This report contains the lessons learned and a companion report contains the exit strategies, the latter produced for the Governments, FAO and internal regional and national project teams' planning and operational purposes.

1.2 Methodology

The process to prepare materials for, extrapolate, share, critically analyse, compile and revise lessons learned spanned the period from September 2016 until April 2017. There were a number of steps into this process as below:

1. Initial meeting to discuss the objectives of this process and logistics to hold a regional workshop (September 2016);
2. Preparation of communication content and liaison with national coordinators to start preparing/compiling national level information in advance of the workshop – see Annex 1. (September 2016);
3. Review of relevant project documentation for facilitation of the workshop (September - November 2016);
4. National coordinators through an array of processes that involved consulting with partners, compiling information within the project team, and/or discussing lessons learned as part of national steering committees compiled information on lessons learned (October 2016);
5. Review of information send by national coordinators and preparation of draft agenda (November 2016);
6. Logistical arrangements for travel and workshop venue (September-November 2016); (Project Assistant – Operations)
7. Further preparation of communication and liaison with workshop participants to prepare presentations and materials for the workshop (November 2016); see Annex 2.
8. Regional workshop (November-December 2016); see Annex 3 for agenda and Annex 4 for list of participants;
9. Compilation of information from the workshop (December 2016-January 2017);
10. Draft Report writing (January 2017);
11. Review of draft report by workshop participants and National Project Directors (February – March 2017);
12. Final Report preparation (March - April 2017);
13. Publication and distribution (April 2017).



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In summary, the multi-step methodology involved: planning at the regional level; provision of overall guidance to national coordinators to prepare materials in-country; preparation of materials within each national context through suitable processes; using this latter information to consider workshop agenda and processes; sharing and discussion of information compiled at national level amongst the regional group within a workshop context that provided a conducive environment for critical analytical thinking through a facilitated process of discussion (see appendix 5 for workshop ground rules); national group work during the workshop to compile preliminary lessons learned reports and address questions and issues generated through the discussions within the regional team at the workshop; compilation of workshop information immediately after the workshop took place; further refinement of information by national coordinators

during the period soon after workshop completion; draft report writing; comments on draft report by workshop participants; and report completion.

During this process methodology of upmost importance was the empowerment of project staff and partners through the exchanges themselves, which aimed at strengthening learning project-wide. Noting also again that this compilation captures the experiences of the Project Team during their engagement with their respective governments and various organizations over the 5 years of project implementation. Thus, the process itself was considered as important as the product, the final report. Glimpses of some participant's reflections from the final workshop evaluation are provided for in Box 1. They reflect the larger group sentiment.

Box 1: Some reflections of workshop participants

“ The idea to come to the workshop to learn as much from the experiences and challenges faced and the strategies that each countries' program adopted to ensure successful implementation is being achieved for my participation.”

“ I must admit my admiration on the level of discussion and knowledge sharing gained. The discussion was very rich and I am confident that it is building up a better platform into the future.”

“ The content was really good and even better we discussed more issues than expected, and were also good and useful for future projects.”

“Exchange of ideas amongst participants were good lessons learnt and the discussions very interesting”.



2. Framework for presentation of lessons learned

Lessons learned is the learning gained from the process of implementing a project. Following the methodological process as outlined above, national teams compiled information on lessons learned to present during the workshop. Afterwards they were refined within structured thematic areas, as shown in Box 2, by the country teams during and after the workshop. Other lenses for refining lessons learned related to addressing: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of project activities (lenses often used in project evaluations). The thematic framework for compilation of lessons learned below emerged after analysis of the information presented and discussions that took place in the first part of the workshop and importantly, they reflect all stages of a project cycle. Thus the methodology allowed for each national context and regional context to compile lessons learned before the workshop through their own perspectives and their own ways of expressing those. The framework below aimed at encapsulating the broader themes that surfaced during presentations and discussions and provided congruence of reporting project-wide.

The synthesis in the next section, compiled by the workshop facilitator, encapsulates all lessons learned, across the whole project. The synthesis reflect the experience gained during the 5 years of implementation of this project (which started in July 2012) by the project's Chief Technical Advisor, the National Project Coordinators and the members and partners who are part of the national project's teams and/or steering committee. Individual reports were prepared at two levels: a) regional by the project's Chief Technical Advisor; and b) national by each National Project Coordinator and the members and partners who are part of the national project's team and/or steering committee. Those reports are presented literally as compiled by them in the following annexes: Regional (Annex 6); Fiji (Annex 7); Samoa (Annex 8); and Vanuatu (Annex 9).¹

Box 2: Thematic framework for compilation of lessons learned

1. Project Design, Planning and Reviewing
2. Governance and Management arrangements for implementation
3. Partnerships and Participation, horizontally and vertically
4. Capacity development and awareness raising
5. Links between environmental management, sustainable development, SDG's and livelihoods within the project context
6. Project Implementation at the Community Level
7. Project impact assessment`
8. Approaches for sustainability and legacy into the future

1 It was not possible to get a lessons learned report for Niue.

3. Synthesis of lessons learned project-wide

The synthesis below is presented for the eight topics of the reporting framework in Box 2:

- 1) Project Design, Planning and Reviewing;
- 2) Governance and Management arrangements for implementation;
- 3) Partnerships and Participation, horizontally and vertically;
- 4.) Capacity development and awareness raising;
- 5) Links between environmental management, sustainable development, SDG's and livelihoods within the project context;
- 6) Project Implementation at the Community Level;
- 7) Project Impact assessment` ; and
- 8) Approaches for sustainability and legacy into the future.

For each one of those major headings there are sub-headings under which lessons-learned have been captured.

"If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward." Quoted from Martin Luther King Jr. from his famous "I Have a Dream Speech" on August 28, 1963.

(This is the most illustrative way of describing the projects' start which was rather in crawling mode and it took considerable time until it gathered enough speed to fly.)

3.1 Project design, planning and reviewing

This is a critical phase of the project that oftentimes is underestimated in terms of resources and time allocation needed. The development of solid foundations and a platform, from which to implement a project is extremely important. The overall lesson learned here is: "take the time necessary to make sure all the essential foundations are in place and to fully understand what those should be". In the case of this project

those foundations related to: 1) assessment of realistic timeframe; 2) planning that aligns original design with circumstances at the start of project implementation; re-consider outputs and activities for all project components; address selection of project sites; discuss and plan for contingency to natural disasters; and discuss, make it clear amongst all relevant parties, procedural alignments across implementing institutions; 3) Involvement of all relevant players at the very outset; 4) Linkages and considerations that need to be factored in from the outset of planning and implementation (such as to livelihoods). Specific lessons learned related to project design, planning and reviewing, no doubt relevant to other similar projects in the Pacific region, are spelled out below.

Realistic project timeframe

- The first year is necessary as orientation phase until the project can be implemented efficiently. It needs final preparations including staff recruitment, procurement of equipment, office space, identification of consultants and service providers, review of planning documents, establishing of a peer network etc.
- Therefore, the project timeframe for complex projects with community involvement should be designed for at least 6 years. An additional project year could be granted in the Pacific Region for the compensation of delays in project implementation caused by natural disasters.

Implications re. gap between design and implementation

- The gap between development of a GEF project concept and design and the project's start of implementation is quite considerable (in the case of this project in some countries this was up to 6 years); thus re-evaluation of project activities and re-alignment with current national realities at all levels once project



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starts is critical with all relevant stakeholders (including communities); this should be planned and budgeted for as part of the inception phase. There should be the flexibility in the project design for adaptation to the reality, including the development of a logical framework that provides a good foundation for monitoring progress.

- It was common across countries that it took about 12 to 18 months to fully ground the project into the national realities and get pertinent contacts for implementation of activities started, make an assessment of capacities nationally (with reflections that much more effort needs to go into that), to achieve some project visibility and to establish functional national steering committees.

Limited number of project components and project lifespan

- Projects with a lifespan of 4 to five years should not have more than 3 components plus the M&E component with realistically achievable outputs in order for the implementers to remain focused and concentrated on the core activities.

Planning time

- Once project design has been realigned to current situation the project team and partners need sufficient time for robust planning for actual implementation (this could be a substantial amount of time in some cases).
- Delay in planning and design and/or start of implementation could mean that stakeholders,

including local communities, can withdraw from their interest to participate – need to better understand how to keep enthusiasm afloat amidst this reality.

Selection of project sites

- Selection of sites for project activities should have clearly identified criteria, discussed and understood amongst stakeholders for a transparent and accountable process that takes all the needed factors into account.
- The selection of project sites with traditional and community landownership has to be bottom up and in cooperation with the communities already during the project document development. The communities have to be involved in the planning process in order to develop maximum ownership, buy-in and participation in the project. Any shortcuts in the planning and project preparation result in uncertainties, delays in implementation, mistaken investments of project funds, misunderstandings and lack of ownership during the project's implementation phase.

Contingency to natural disasters

- Natural catastrophes with negative impact on project implementation in terms of delays and direct negative impact on project sites are most likely to occur in the Pacific.
- Contingency planning for natural disasters is imperative in the Pacific context and this should range from allocation of resources in the budget, adopting approaches to planning and management that can be flexible and

adaptable for implementation of activities, and providing necessary training if required; with careful thinking during planning on the kinds of support for affected areas and communities of the project sites – i.e. a concerted planning beforehand for an eventual disaster response.

- Related to the above improving readiness and resilience of communities for natural disasters should be embedded in project activities.

Procedural alignments for project implementation at inception phase

- The inception phase should pay particular attention to the identification and application of administrative, financial and procedural alignments between the implementing agency and the hosting government departments; and national projects teams need to be specifically oriented on such arrangements.

Involvement of stakeholders

- Important is the very early involvement of all relevant stakeholders (even at the initial scoping phase); and particularly important for the ones that have jurisdictional roles over the project sites and other direct stakeholders.
- For the above to take place a stakeholder analyses is necessary to identify and understand all relevant stakeholders with direct and/or indirect impact on implementation; the analyses outlines roles, responsibilities, interest and rights across all stakeholders.) It needs to be planned and budgeted as a separate activity at the beginning of the project implementation.

Livelihoods and commercial activities

- A project time span of 4 years is insufficient to identify and implement livelihoods activities with a long-term sustainability effectively. Careful assessment of what community 'needs' rather than 'want' is critical along with appropriate planning and budgeting for implementation of such activities; this resourcing should cover the entire cycle of establishment and capacity building, marketing and business management (micro-financing), monitoring and evaluation.

Continuous lessons learned opportunities

- Regional project-wide meetings are a good opportunity to reflect on lessons learned thus

far– i.e. a robust discussion across the team to address challenges and opportunities; this is also particularly so after evaluation periods (e.g. mid-term evaluation).

3.2 Governance and management arrangements for project implementation

Governance is about processes for decision-making, who decides (or not), who has influence (or not) and how decision-makers are held accountable. It is then also about power, relationships, responsibility and accountability and most importantly the mechanisms and structures that make it possible for processes of decision-making that are empowering of all actors whose views are necessary to achieve certain goals and objectives within a project.

Establishing good governance within a project means addressing a number of aspects related to transparency, participation, accountability, coordination, and capacity. Governance is different than management as the latter involves developing specific objectives to reach a goal/ vision, implementing actions/activities to achieve those, allocating resources (human, financial), creating the right conditions for implementation (appropriate working environment, available tools, adequate understanding and capacity, etc.) and monitoring performance and achievement.

Oftentimes establishing good governance and management arrangements are the most challenging and overlooked aspect of project implementation; yet it is of primary importance for the successful achievement of outcomes. From lessons learned in this project establishing good governance, and monitoring how this tracks along the project life, would involve: 1) understanding suitable governance and participation arrangements that can be put in place at all levels and their monitoring; 2) addressing and communicating the roles, responsibilities and rights of all involved; 3) developing, adapting and communicating the frameworks for reporting and monitoring; 4) addressing, establishing, and communicating the financial dispersal and accounting procedures; and 5) ensuring that relevant players have the capacity to effectively participate in and comply with governance and management arrangements. Specific lessons learned are spelled out below.



Understanding of governance arrangements

- Although the project document has been signed by the countries the project governance and arrangements are sometimes not clear to all stakeholders. And with the long gap between endorsement of the project document and the start of the implementation personnel might have changed or the arrangements are not well understood as every organization has its own implementation modalities; therefore, arrangements have to be occasionally recalled and processes explained and/or fine-tuned to fit the prevailing circumstances.

Multi-country project approach

- The major challenge for the multi country approach has been the first year until the team building process has been finalized and the project has been operational; the same time span applies to the development of synergies from sharing of experiences and approaches which has started to eventuate in the second year of implementation.
- The solidarity between Pacific Island Countries supports the multi country approach as resources and information are easily shared.

National steering committee

- It is imperative for the success of the project and effective implementation that there is a functional National Steering Committee (NSC) with a well-thought balance of skills and representation (including key government ministries) that can lead, mentor, monitor and evaluate the project implementation with the National Project Coordinator acting as its Secretariat; a clear distinction should be

made between 'partners' awarded contract for implementation and members of the NSC with all arrangements done for recruiting staff and implementation partners made clear among the executing agency and implementing agency.

- Those NSC are very Important for the project success in a multi country approach and suitable staff with the capacity to work to greater part independently (the same applies to consultants and service providers).

Governmental departments involvement

- It is critical to continuously foster government departments' leadership roles in the project implementation and approaches need to be continuously considered in each national context (e.g. the alignment of the project's activities and timelines to meet and support government's annual work plan and priorities, meeting some demands (compatible with project goals), and fostering a range of leadership roles for implementation of project activities).

Role of Project Coordinator, accountability and induction

- The role of the national coordinators (in such a multi-country project) can be ambiguous and/or interpret differently in the national contexts so it is critical that a proper induction process by the implementation agency takes place across all national coordinators; no doubt some of this overall role guidance will then be best tailored to each national context in light also of National Steering Committees' expectations.

- Capacity development needs of PCs need also to be continuously assessed as well as supported as project implementation unfolds.
- Accountability of the PC's need to be clearly defined and if it lies with the implementing agency then careful steps need to be in place to ensure that the executing agency (within the government) is fully aware of all reports' content and project's progress; lack of accountability can cause disconnect and misunderstandings and break the natural line of answerability of staff within the Government Department, responsible for project implementation.
- Project personnel should undergo an organization's induction training course in order to get an orientation and information about the organization, financing tools, rules and processes right from the beginning of the project.

Local communities' perspective and empowerment

- It is important to consider structural arrangements at the community level so that communities are empowered and well organized to implement activities and their perspectives are part of the governance of the project overall; appointment of project staff at the community level with a direct link to the PC can be a good strategy.
- Governance arrangements at the community level and with links to the private sector commercial enterprises (if this would be the case) is critical for effective and sustainable implementation of any project activity; special attention needs to go into facilitating processes to achieve them.

Project's presence on-the-ground

- Later when communities have decided to establish a protected area and/or to apply SLM technologies on their land they need the assistance of a professional for continuous coaching. For the project to have ears and boots on the ground project site managers need to be recruited, either from Government or project, to assist the communities with the development of their site and provide for feedback to Government and project management.

National reporting framework

- Projects in environmental management and conservation should encourage the development of a national framework, hub and clearing house (if this does not exist) for reporting achievements and as a depository of information generated anywhere by any means; this is critical for national obligations vis a vis reporting on international agreements and to make sure that information gained through project activities can be properly assessed and made widely available as well as stored into the future.

Financial dispersal and achieving projects' objectives

- Timely financial dispersal from the part of the implementing agency is critical as well as understanding how those will be processed through the government system; delays and lack of such an understanding can hinder project implementation considerably with potentially significant implication for adjusting planning, continuous commitment of stakeholders and achieving projects objectives.
- Project implementation through Government institutions with finance agreement is limited due to incompatible accounting and reporting systems, lengthy processes in procurement and recruitment of services, and timely unavailability of required staff; regional and Non-Government Organizations proved to have a higher flexibility and assisted with the timely implementation of project activities.

Project monitoring, evaluation, review and flexibility

- Project needs constant monitoring and evaluation of activities and progress and review of work plans and impact.
- A certain degree of flexibility is necessary to react to events impacting on the project and to take advantage of opportunities.
- In particular, national steering committees are at task to make timely decisions and propose change of work plans.

Lack of capacity

- Although the project's preference has been the recruitment of local expertise, experienced national consultants and experts required for the specific project activities have been very limited, in terms of availability and specifically required experience. The lack of capacity has been identified as a major impediment to the progress of the project.

3.3 Partnerships and participation horizontally and vertically for project implementation

Partnerships are agreements and actions by consenting individuals, groups or organizations that involve working together (i.e. forging an informal or formal on-going relationship), often sharing resources (be it financial, human, or knowledge and information) to accomplish common goals and objectives. Collaboration, through partnerships, is a process through which best approaches to achieve such goals and objectives are discussed and implemented; and where innovation, creativity and ownership could be fostered. Effective participation of a range of relevant people, groups and organizations (i.e. a social process that takes place within a particular context aiming at promoting active involvement and empowerment) is the foundation to foster partnerships and collaboration. Engendering participation, partnerships and collaboration within and across levels of implementation at the national context and regionally across countries have been no doubt complex and demanded time in the context of this project. Whilst this could have benefitted from additional expert input related to meeting facilitation and development of partnership agreements, etc.. this was considered to be part (and sometimes not explicitly so) of project implementation employees' tasks. Through such lenses and the ones of partners themselves the project can share the following lessons learned.

Hosting Government agency's role in 'opening doors'

- It is critical that there is a government department that acts as the backbone of the project at all levels; its role being to facilitate liaison inter-ministries and government agencies as well as opening the doors for regional and site-level partnership implementation (drawing on prior experiences on intra-government partnerships) can be a key to success).

Insertion into national and regional processes

- This kind of project needs to meaningfully insert itself into national and regional forums related to, for instance, the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan, national obligations with the Convention on Biological Diversity, climate change and biodiversity; by doing so it brings visibility to the project activities, forges new partnerships and strengthen existing ones,

and the project is better able to align activities to evolving national priorities and regional and international trends.

Implementing agency's role in promotion of project for wider partnerships

- The implementing agency has an important role in lifting the project activities and achievements into a wider context (beyond national and even regional) through promoting it by media (e.g. newsletters, videos, conference presentations); this forges new partnerships, promote capacity development through potential exposure to regional and international forums and bring influx of ideas and exchanges.

Work attracts work and interest

- Visibility of work at site levels can also attract other groups and organizations at all levels (national, regional and international) to do work in that location; be mindful of this potential benefit and leverage from that for the wider benefit of communities and natural resource management.

Community partnerships

- Community partnership and participation starting already from the initial scoping and planning phases (see above) is an integral aspect of projects like this ensuring success in the implementation and achievement of outputs, and sustaining the efforts into the future; a whole range of careful considerations are needed: fostering appropriate local governance systems; supporting equity of participation that includes more marginal voices (e.g. woman and youth); addressing equitable distribution of benefits from any potential venture and compensation for community members involved in project activities; and to ultimately making sure project is addressing some community needs and understands what it is important in terms of community pride.

Experts' contributions and secondments

- Leave some specific jobs to experts (most likely regional and international) to ensure that products are delivered on time and at quality standards (given limited capacity in-countries) and seek the option of secondments for short periods to alleviate high work demand on the limited skilled government personnel and speed implementation; it should also have additional benefits as outlined below.



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Eclectic partnerships

- Projects like this have an important role in developing and strengthening partnerships across sectors and levels of operation: i.e. partnerships and collaborations between and amongst NGOs, regional organisations, government and communities; ensure that appropriate space is created within project activities to foster those and to convene forum, if necessary, that bring such players together (as the benefit of those connections can go well beyond the life span of the project).

Roles, responsibilities and rights (the 3 Rs)

- It is important to clearly define the roles, responsibilities and rights of different stakeholders involved in partnerships within the project implementation; this could require the facilitation of specific meetings amongst stakeholders that have to work together or in a complementary manner to discuss those and it also helps to deal with changes of stakeholders or people involved.

Time investment

- Cultivating partnerships take time and also making sure that there are smooth interfaces between different partners, and regional and international experts with nationals involved in project implementation.

Benefits of partnerships

- Acknowledge the extra benefits that partnerships can bring (particularly when engaging experts, international, regional and non-government organizations) such

as: The experience, information, innovation and technical expertise through its network of partners that is brought to the project implementation; promotion through networks at various levels which widens the project's possibilities of other potential partnerships and service providers; reliability and accountability – the organizations have professionalism and business integrity, good administrative support and back-up services, allowing the quality and timely delivery of outputs and submission of reports, which reduces the load on the project team; delivery of higher standard products and services; and capacity building – through its partnership/engagement with local experts and communities in the implementation of the project activities, the organizations will transfer its knowledge and expertise through in-house and hands-on training and coaching.

3.4 Capacity Development and Awareness Raising

In the Pacific region “countries and territories and their organizations and people face obstacles (some more substantial than others) in building the required capacities, skill sets, and enabling conditions to effectively respond to evolving challenges that influence the conservation of protected and other conserved areas and in meeting their various multilateral environment agreement targets. Regional capacity needs assessment point to the fundamental need for strengthening capacity across the region, if the full potential is to be realised for protected and other conserved areas to contribute to sustainable livelihoods, biodiversity, ecosystem protection, and community resilience in the face

of global warming.”² Against this backdrop, the lessons learned from this project can contribute substantial insights with respect to capacity development and awareness raising. This is because there have been specific activity lines whereas unique products were developed as an enduring project legacy for capacity development and environmental awareness raising in the region.

Capacity development - critical in this field in the Pacific region

- Capacity development is critically important in the field of biodiversity conservation and protected area management at this point in time in Pacific countries whereas such capacity is still scarce; it needs to take place throughout all project cycles and continue to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances and it needs to target all levels of government, critical partners and community groups and members.
- Lack of capacity in the PICs is one of the major impediments for project implementation; a set of strategies is needed to mitigate this issue and could contribute to some improvements in order to make it easier for follow-up initiatives and programs.
- Training components should be added to all project activities and on all levels; this could include training of community members in identification and monitoring of species and threats to ecosystem or trail construction; training in application of GIS and GPS; training of forest officers in understanding the legislation and process of legislation review; training trainers etc.
- The types of training above would no doubt require the service of contracted consultants or organizations, who are as service provider responsible for the implementation of project activities.
- Local or regional experts can also be identified and recruited to carry out training in special skills (e.g. Red Cross for 1st aid training of villagers in eco-tourism venture).

- The twinning of international and/or local consultants or officers can be another strategy; this idea was born from the necessity to recruit international consultants when local capacity has not been available or found insufficient. Both were assigned to implement activities as a team and as such support and learn from each other. However, in such situations clear definition of roles and responsibilities (understood by all) and discussion of processes for accountability and transparency is of utmost importance for effective use of human resources and cementing enduring relationships.

Capacity development needs assessment

- Capacity development needs assessments are also critical and should be done already during project planning in order to translate them into work plans and resources; particular attention is required for bottom-up flow of information on such needs.

Tailored vocational training and expert assistance

- Development of specifically tailored vocational training programs, incorporating local and national contexts, that can be foremost taught by nationals from these countries should start strengthening such capacity; however, for that to take place development of well-thought tailored curriculums to reach a range of stakeholders and all levels of government is of increasing need and requires expert assistance.

Capable institutions for delivery of capacity development

- Capable institutions for capacity development that can provide the administrative and logistical support, and in an environment that is conducive to learning, acknowledges the unique nature of each individual, the diverse cultures and beliefs, whilst instilling discipline and building humane character in its students needs to be supported and strengthened; this is critical for building capacity that is tailored to the Pacific context.

2 Scherl, L.M., & O’Keeffe, A.J. (2016). Capacity Development for Protected and Other Conserved Areas in the Pacific Islands Region: Strategy and Action Framework 2015–2020. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. vi + 42pp.



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Capacity development tours and peer-to-peer exchanges

- Capacity development tours particularly in neighbouring countries like Australia and New Zealand, whereas management of natural resources and biodiversity conservation is more entrenched, should be factored into projects; such tours if specifically linked with project activities can be of tremendous benefit in terms of knowledge acquired, widening a network of professional across the Oceania region and canvassing opportunities for further studies and internships for nationals of Pacific island countries.
- Likewise, peer-to-peer exchange of community representatives to success stories in other similar countries is a powerful tool particularly if done mid-project so that insights gained can be utilised.

Benefits of Awareness raising campaigns

- Awareness raising campaigns are of tremendous benefit to lift the profile of the need for environmental care and management, they instil empowerment and responsibility more widely for this, as well and widen and strengthen partnerships for environmental work.
- However, awareness creation activities are work intensive and can consume large budgets and they are most effective when packaged as a full-fledged campaign with clear objectives, focus and an identified target audience; they are less effective and less impact for the project results is to be expected from more general support to celebrations like environmental week, international forest day etc.

- A campaign can include large elements of training for the target audience and implementing stakeholders.
- The design and implementation of a full campaign should be contracted to specialists.
- Awareness creation should start already in the primary schools for children and young people to strengthen the understanding and appreciation of biodiversity and the meaning of conservation for their environment.

Expert knowledge for designing and implementing awareness raising

- Awareness raising campaigns require expert knowledge and input that should consider at least: the content of the message, audiences to be reached, how to tailor content and delivery to such audiences, how it can be branded, the timing of delivery, how to strengthen the use of local champions so that it supports on-ground project activities, and monitoring of impacts at all levels.
- Different media need to be considered such as posters, banners, radio and TV broadcasting, newspaper and other written media outlets, factsheets, website, participation in National Days and village days; among these, it is important to assess the ones that were most successful for a particular context and purpose.

Awareness training at the community level

- Of particular importance is awareness training at the community (and its surrounding) level where project activities will take place; as communities need to be more aware of what they have, what they should be protecting, and what is special about what they have to willingly and meaningfully get involved or be supportive of project interventions.

Baseline and monitoring for level of awareness

- Future project's should consider the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) survey, where a baseline survey (of environment awareness and information knowledge) needs to be undertaken with targeted communities at the beginning of project implementation and final survey towards end of the project; this approach will help to measure the impact of the awareness on changes of communities' attitudes towards environment protection or importance, and to see types of practices they are doing towards biodiversity conservation, protection and sustainable management of resources.

Development and monitoring of information center, hubs and websites

- The development of information centers and hubs, and web sites and the use of technologies is a critical component to ensure the storage of materials generated by project activities, the accessibility of those by various stakeholder groups and others; this allows the legacy of the project to continue to influence environmental management into the future but it needs to be properly resourced for its continuous maintenance not only during project implementation but sustainably afterwards.
- Importantly it is to monitor the use of the above information centers, hubs and websites and collect statistics of visits to those, comparative interest, origin of visitors, etc. so that there is a way of measuring the impact and effectiveness of this medium.
- Dissemination of information through those information centers and hubs can be very powerful and tailored different audiences from children to adults.

Information technology and phone applications

- Information technology and phone applications are also a very powerful tools for planning and implementation of activities, like 3-dimensional physical models and GIS in the context of planning processes, phone apps, as a medium to disseminate information, and effectively communicate across different parts of a project.

3.5 Links between environmental management, Sustainable Development, SDGs and Livelihoods within the project context

“In a broad sense, the inter-dependence of human welfare and the conservation of natural resources is now internationally recognized and enshrined in policy instruments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity”.³ Potential contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals issuing from management of natural resources are: - reduction in poverty; - contribution to health and wellbeing; - clean drinking water; - opportunities and potential for alternative work; - fostering connectivity between terrestrial and marine environments (ridge to reef approach) and; - establishment of governance systems (legal and policy frameworks). The project has contributed to supporting directly SDG goal 6 (Clean water), Goal 2 (food security), Goal 15 (life on land) Goal 14 (life below water), Goal 5 (gender equality), and Goal 13 (climate action).

More recently, it has been argued that Aichi Targets under the Convention of Biological Diversity are all linked to the targets of the SDGs.⁴ Thus this project's direct and specific contribution to the achievement of Aichi targets 11 (protected areas and other effective area-based measures) and 12 (Preventing extinction and improving species conservation status) under the Convention of Biological Diversity has also helped to make the connection between natural environmental management and livelihoods in the Pacific context with the concrete initiatives on-the-ground in all countries. However, demonstrating such linkages with hard-evidence is always challenging and lessons learned below can support further evidence building into the future.

3 Scherl L.M. et al. (2004). Can Protected Areas Contribute to Poverty Reduction? Opportunities and Limitations. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK. viii + 60pp.



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Supporting the SDGs and linkages to livelihoods

- The project contributed to a substantial increment of the protected area network in all four countries and making the connection that these protected areas are essential for sustainable development and therefore are a fundamental mechanism to help meet many of the SDGs has been critical in the context of the project and to position it within the broader development context regionally and nationally; more continuous and systematic effort is always needed to continually compile and document information that addresses this links throughout the life of a project.
- The objectives of the project itself inter-links environmental management and sustainable development; this has been important to create the overall mantra of project implementation to address such linkages.
- However, Links between environmental management, Sustainable Development, SDGs and Livelihoods within the project context need to be continuously reinforced throughout project implementation at all levels; more concerted attention and effort is needed to demonstrate this rather than just assuming that it is automatically going to be perceived as such by a range of stakeholders.

Contributing to NBSAP

- Particularly important has been the efforts to insert the project into national processes that will continue to contribute to the updating of the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP), which is a key document and information source for the CBD secretariat;
- Project planning and activities on-ground have contributed to the implementation of NBSAPs; it is important to emphasize this.

Contribution to Aichi targets

- All 20 Aichi Targets have links to the targets of the SDGs and by contributing directly and specifically to the achievement of Aichi targets 11 and 12 the project is helping to make such connection in the Pacific context (as mentioned above already); concerted efforts to progressively discuss and document how this is the case is very important within national and regional forums and at the community levels.

Contribution to corporate plans, policies and legislation

- The importance of aligning project activities with corporate plans and getting the buy in from the hosting institution is crucial; this ensure that project contributions are part of the broader national context for forest management and policy development and this inevitably links with sustainable development.

4 <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-13/official/cop-13-10-add1-en.pdf>



- Establishment of CCAs/PAs has been in accordance to national legislation and fulfilling requirements to achieve legal registration. (e.g. development of management plan and boundary); such an activity has contributed to implement and strengthen legislation, reflect on its effectiveness as it provides opportunity for analysis re. further refinement of legal instruments from bottom-up experiences.

Financing to strengthen the links between environmental management and livelihoods

- Projects should dedicate resources to investigate the potential financing modalities for biodiversity conservation and mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in each national context; this is an important step that attempts to address the issue of protected area financing and alternative income generation to reduce reliance on government, whilst empowering local communities.

3.6 Project Implementation at the Community Level

It is at the on-ground level where achieving natural resource management within a broader social and cultural context confronts any project like this. Environmental, social and cultural aspects are all intertwined in the livelihoods of local communities. Addressing community's social, developmental and cultural needs, respecting traditions, understanding local governance systems and indeed the social fabric within a given community, observing traditional protocols, communicating appropriately should be an integral part of project implementation at the community level. Pursuing

with communities, through appropriate processes, suitable livelihoods activities, commercial ventures and financial mechanisms that support and encourage biodiversity conservation is of paramount importance for any demonstrable project success on-the-ground. From the concrete implementation of project activities at the community level on all four countries the following lessons have been extrapolated.

Community ownership and commitment

- Communities' ownership and commitment can be enhanced through their involvement and participation at the project's early planning stage of the project and It would be desirable if landowners and communities would have a voice and be represented in the national project steering committees.
- Women and youth groups play an important role in planning, translation and knowledge transfer and particular care should be taken in involving them and gender balance (also in the case where involvement of man can be scarce) should be something to strive towards.
- Right selection of community members to participate in meetings is very important and need to be carefully considered from the outset.

Profiling communities

- It is important to thoroughly profile communities (socioeconomic baseline) to gain a better understanding of the needs, capabilities and capacity;



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Community awareness and training

- Awareness creation activities have to be tailored to and implemented with the communities and community members should be involved as much as possible in the implementation of conservation activities with the accompanying skill training; this increases their ownership and commitment towards conservation.
- Whilst tangible returns for communities related to forest management and conservation are powerful incentives it is also important to persevere in creating awareness of the impact of such activities in their lives more broadly; community support can be achieved if the latter is well understood even in the absence of foreseeable tangible returns.

Dealing with the “tragedy of the commons”

- “The tragedy of the commons” whereas collective communal resources can be depleted by continuous bad individual practices is likely to be encountered by projects and particularly whereas traditional rules and systems of authority and decision-making have been eroded; a concerted understanding of best approaches to deal with this in any particular context is important.

Protocols for engagement and customary systems

- The importance of observing protocol before village engagements and contacts are critical; need to know the processes, community structures and who to engage with beforehand.

- It is imperative for the implementation of any project activity that there is a clear understanding of the governance structures of the customary land tenure system, the relevant laws that regulate their usage and the customs and traditions.

Community-based forums

- Do not create new community-based forums if there are forums in existence that are operating effectively; these existing forums should/can be supported and strengthened.

Governance arrangements for community protected areas

- Governance arrangement for community protected areas are in many cases relatively new and will have to be monitored and adjusted; they need a consolidation phase with mentoring and a project timeframe of 4 years is too short for the establishment of new protected areas and a consolidation phase.

Livelihoods activities, business ventures, financing mechanisms

- Project activities for livelihood improvements are door openers to communities as they contribute to the building of trust and confidence between the project and communities and should start at an early stage of the project; it takes time to identify, develop and implement the right activity, product and a market; regular site visits and continuous support is needed.

- It should be taken in consideration that business ventures will not be automatically successful when they are communally managed; such communal businesses need a tight set of governance and management rules and it might be better to leave business in private and individual hands and support the development of small and medium enterprises.
- Partnerships between the private sector and communities are important for the sustainability of business ventures and thus the income for community members; they should be fostered as they contribute to sustainability in particular after the phasing out of a project.
- It has to be accepted that for some protected areas on small islands sustainable financing mechanisms e.g. payment for eco-systems services, trust-fund, eco-tourism etc. are often not more than a wishful thinking; sustainable land and forest management and improved farming methods might be the appropriate strategy to prevent the destruction of valuable ecosystems and their services. Improved and appropriate farming methods contribute to the communities' livelihoods and food security.

Sharing information with communities

- Sharing information with communities is important for their continuous support and ownership (e.g. biological assessments); sometimes this require compiling and presenting information in another format as well that is user-friendly at the community level.

Protocols for biodiversity monitoring

- It is Important to establish consistent protocols for any periodic and continuous biodiversity assessment at the community level and ensure that community members themselves are trained to assist with those as this will widen understanding of environmental issues as well and strengthen community support.

3.7 Project Impact Assessment

A project's impact assessment is a means of understanding and/or measuring the effectiveness of its activities and judging the significance of changes brought about by those activities. The thorough process of extrapolating lessons learned (spelled out in the content of this report) is in itself a means for analysis and understanding of a project's impacts (this however does not

often take place in project implementation). The observations below from project staff and partners give a glimpse of the complexity to properly articulate what impacts are, understand how to assess those, and the considerations to be taken into account whilst doing so.

Time-span of impacts and baseline assessments

- In some instances, the impact of project activities could be measured through qualitative and quantitative surveys, however most of the project's activities were directed towards medium and long-term objectives and beyond the project's lifespan; so In order to measure their impact many baseline studies were carried out including: socio-economic baselines studies in the communities and biodiversity baseline assessments in the new established protected areas including satellite images and 3 D models of the project sites.
- However, in other instances where no baseline survey was done on the community condition before the project implementation, social impact has been difficult to assess; thus it is important to consider such baseline assessments in order to measure impact.
- The impact of the project will not be realized within the project life, but there are baselines set; government must, therefore, pick up from where the project ended and maintain the momentum of efforts and initiatives made.

Financing

- Financing will still remain the key driver for change and until and unless a sustainable financing mechanism is provided to support the establishment and management of the protected areas and its communities, the reliance will fall back on Government and given the diverse obligations of Government, financing through national budgets will not be sufficient to meet all related costs; projects should assess the financing options for PAs and modalities for this to take place like trusts.
- It is important to capitalize into the future on the fact that some governments during the project have been convinced of the value to tourism of the intact forests and have given them protection under legislation; whilst this was the best way of ensuring a legacy into the future alternative livelihoods activities that benefit the communities should be pursued in those areas.



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Policy, Legal and Institutional Framework

- Policy, Legal and Institutional Framework – ministries and institutions (having an impact on conservation and SLM) have statements and legal instruments within their respective Laws and Policies related to CBD and SLM; projects should make recommendations of a Framework (protocols, processes and systems) to effectively manage PA and curtail biodiversity loss; which could be in the form of a specific policy.

Awareness Raising

- Awareness raising has been successful in enlisting communities to agree to manage their forests for conservation in some countries; it is important to keep up such campaigns in the national context always assessing, improving and tailoring the medium of communication that communities would like to use so: a) they receive the message clearly; and b) money isn't wasted on unproductive media.

New practices and Pilot testing

- New farming and NRM practices have been adopted by communities through in some instances demonstration with pilot-testing which promoted the adoption of new technologies and techniques, resulting in increase in income, and in some instances relocation of farmers out of reserves has also been achieved; however, the worry is the longevity of the change in attitude, which cannot be measured within the life of the project.


Commercial ventures

- Projects should provide options of potential ventures for non-timber forest products and alternative livelihoods such as ecotourism; it should also include the marketing aspect or at least a plan put in place to ensure that either government or private enterprise supports this.
- Commercial and alternative livelihoods ventures are difficult to achieve within a 4 years span project life.

3.8 Approaches for Sustainability and Legacy into the Future

What is left behind? How can it be sustained? Those are inevitable questions that everyone asks at the end of a project. Recalling that this has been the first GEF project implementation in the Pacific this is a legacy in itself. The processes of bringing stakeholders and partners to work together at all levels with the common goal of strengthening natural resource management in the region are no doubt an enduring legacy. The multi-country program steering committee and the progressive familiarity that has unfolded across countries' agencies and institutions through those years can't be underestimated as an enduring network in the region. [The very fact that this lessons learned process has brought to the surface so much analysis and insights about the project is a testimony of this network.] Careful attention was also paid to provide the opportunity for each national team to consider exit strategies and in that how to continue with some activities into the future.⁵

5 Recalling here that a separate internal project document was compiled on Exit Strategies (and a supportive space to articulate an exit strategy plan at national and regional levels was part of the workshop in New Zealand).



So in terms of a group process at the program steering committee level concerted effort took place to address sustainability. Reflection for the national and community levels of implementation brought a richness of insights on this project's legacy and on how to sustain, add value and grow in a number of directions from the working platforms created here as articulated below.

Bringing other stakeholders

- The continuous involvement of other stakeholders like tourism and agriculture and from other sectors will be critically important; the legacy from the project of creating more eclectic partnerships in some countries need to be capitalized and nourish into the future; this should be either by other projects or through leadership of some stakeholders that will continue to seek out such partnership arrangements.

Work within Governments

- Legal frameworks reviews have been critical, that culminated with recommendations for a more effective management framework for protected areas in some countries and in others by detecting conflicts across some clauses within different acts, proposing new clauses, and fostering further reviews and amendments.
- Convincing government of the value to tourism of the intact forests and giving them protection under legislation and in the minds of communities was the best way of ensuring a legacy into the future in some countries.

Governance

- The review of policies, legislations and regulations pertaining to environment and biodiversity conservation which have been with involvement of key stakeholders have been critical to provide national frameworks that can encourage activities for biodiversity conservation and forest management into the future.
- In some countries, structuring the management plans as a co-management document gives it status both in government and in the communities as communities recognise these plans as "their plan", not one imposed by government, and governments need to take on responsibilities as well.

Capacity development

- The fact that hundreds of people have been trained on various levels using different approaches and many people participated in project activities is in itself an incredible legacy into the future – importantly is documentation of the impact of capacity development (something often overlooked).
- Supporting existing institutions, like in the case of the Forestry Training Center in Fiji, to expand curriculum to incorporate biodiversity conservation and protected area management is a good model to ensure long-term sustainability of capacity development into the future; of particular importance in the Pacific region is to complement accredited tertiary courses with tailored-made training programs that will service current and future practitioners whilst on-the-job.

Methodologies and information re. baseline data

- Socio-ecological baseline data for the project sites and methodology used can be replicated/applied nationally and with people that have acquired skills to do so.

New technologies and software

- New technologies and software accompanied by the necessary training like GIS/GPS equipment and GIS/GPS training on Quantum open software was effectively introduced in various offices - the way in which those changes capacity to plan and monitor for protected areas is considerable and also provides a greater sense of empowerment to personnel using those.

Educational and training materials

- Educational materials, in particular those involving the youth (e.g. conservation toolkit for primary schools) and training programs will endure well beyond the project and progressively bring greater awareness and skills into national contexts related to forest management and biodiversity conservation.



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Data and information

- Significant data resources and written documents were collected during the project, some of which are already available on websites; however, the obligation remains to secure these archives of information and to maintain the website and planning for and mechanisms to ensure this should have taken place during the project.

Impact on communities from sustainable land forest management

- Impact on communities and individual farmer families need to be more broadly known and lessons widespread across the country; whilst this has started in some places much more will be needed into the future.
- The potential that project activities and results can lead to additional project and activities to implement SLFM on large scale on some project sites is quite high (as indeed has been the case in this current project).

- Tourism studies and visitor surveys provide for new ideas for sustainable tourism management and product development - this is important to support motivation and commitment from communities and other stakeholders towards biodiversity conservation and protected area management.

Trust funds

- Developing and piloting a Trust Fund scheme during the project time and investigations into legal ways of extending such trust fund system to additional protected areas in any national context should provide for new impetus, insight, ideas and models in sustainable financing of protected areas.

Other GEF projects in the Pacific

- Experiences and lessons learned during the FPAM GEF 4 project implementation are of greatest value for the planning and implementation of GEF (or similar type) of follow-up projects in the Pacific.

4. Conclusions

This process and documentation of Lessons Learned here has been participatory, empowering and created the right conditions for critical analysis to take place.⁶ Such a process, if effectively construed, is no doubt very important as it should allow everyone to lift above the 'hustle and bustles' of implementation to reflect more holistically on accomplishments, challenges, what could have been done instead with foresight from what we learned now, how could things have been done better, what resources should have been anticipated that were not, etc...; and ultimately if this project were to start again today what would we have done differently? All of those reflections, and more, have been part of the analysis encapsulated in this report. "Dissecting" the project in different dimensions of planning and implementation through the major topics of lessons learned above created lenses that allowed the project team and partners to look beyond the log frame structure and activity lines. Foremost, the nurturing environment created of setting aside time, providing a conducive neutral physical space, and with the necessary logistical, facilitation and process guidance support was invaluable. Outcomes are only as good as the processes carried through the activities towards achieving those because it is ultimately the accumulated experiences along the way that is the largest legacy of any such projects.

Whilst this lessons learned process offered the opportunity for analysis and reflection and for rejoicing on achievements and commiserating on mistakes by the project team and partners it also leaves a product that will hopefully serve a number of purposes:

- Guidance for the design and implementation of other projects in the Pacific region and particularly the next generation of GEF projects and alike projects that link environmental management with sustainable development. To this effect lessons learned compiled at the national levels have already been shared. For instance, in Fiji that took place with a lessons learned presentation from this current project at the larger inception meeting for the GEF 5 project and those lessons learned have also been distributed to staff of other project planning and implementation processes currently underway. The GEF 5 project in Samoa has already gained so much knowledge and insight as the current national project manager was part of the workshop and the Government team there. As an immediate effect the GEF 5 project in Samoa will support and built on the GEF 4 project after its phasing out. For the GEF 5 project in Vanuatu the National Steering Committee members will continue from the current membership of the GEF 4 project, so then many of the lessons learned can be applied, and also the implementation of exit strategies in form on continuing activities.
- Guidance for the project team and partners for the final project evaluation as the process itself here already aimed at preparing the team for such an evaluation.
- Provision of valuable specific information for the final project evaluation as with the latter in mind, (and already mentioned above) the five internationally accepted evaluation criteria (used in the mid-term evaluation of this project) also provided lenses for the analysis here: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability; thus hopefully this report in itself would be seen as a great asset to support the evaluation team on its deliberations.

6 This was the sentiment coming from participants' confidential evaluation; a report on the latter has been compiled and could be available on request.

- Guidance and encouragement for the conduct of similar lessons learned processes (and more continuously so during the life of a project) tailored for other project implementation contexts; as this 'activity' is often overlooked and with no or inappropriate resources allocated for it.

Still and at the hands of all, be the implementation agencies, partners, individuals, direct project staff and the evaluation team the learning acquired here can only support better projects into the future if they take initiative and responsibility to share such learning through whatever processes or means found more suitable in different contexts.



Annex 1

Initial Preparation of Participants to the Workshop

29th September 2016

**Dear colleagues,
Dear PSC members,**

as we agreed during the PSC meeting in Niue the project's regional workshop on "Lessons learned and exit strategy" will take place from the 28th November to 5th of December 2016 in Auckland.

First of all I would like to introduce:

**Dr Lea Scherl,
Associate Professor (Adjunct and casual teaching)
James Cook University of North Queensland
E-mail: lea.scherl@bigpond.com**

Dr. Scherl is currently assisting the Fiji Forest Training Centre with the development of the new training course "Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management"; one of the many FPAM project activities.

She will help us with the preparation, moderation and documentation of the planned workshop in Auckland. She is copied in this mail and please feel free to contact her.

Salamasina Tinai, FAO SAP, will help us with the logistics, finances as well as with the documentation during this workshop.

In order to achieve the most with this workshop we will have to start with some preparations which involve the four National Steering Committees

Let us recall and summarize the aim of the planned workshop (as summarized below by Dr. Scherl): The GEF-PAS 4 Forest and Protected Area Management project is nearing its conclusion (30th of June 2017). In 2017 there will be a final project evaluation. The intention beforehand is to prepare the regional project team to the closure of this project and the final evaluation.

Thus the aim of this preparation is threefold:

- a) to extrapolate lessons learned in a variety of areas;
- b) from those lessons learned, and analyses of gaps, to propose future activities that can capitalize on project outcomes not only in the form of exit strategies but also with concrete recommendations for future project activities in those countries;
- c) to promote a culture of reflection, exchange and analysis across the four countries (this project has been operating) with reciprocal learning and further strengthening of on-going cooperation in the future., in a safe environment.

To be able to achieve the objectives above there is a need for each National Steering Committee to start preparations for the regional workshop above. In the attachment you will find a number of questions compiled by Dr. Scherl, which need to be discussed and addressed.

I would like the FAO NPCs of each country to request for and convene National Steering Committee meetings until October 25th in order to discuss, reflect and address the questions. The NPCs will compile the information in a country report and send them to me and in copy to Dr Scherl latest by October 31st.

Thank you for your cooperation
Best regards

**Rudolf Hahn
FAO Chief Technical Adviser (CTA)**

Attachment to the e-mail message above sent to participants

Preparation by the National Steering Committees for the lessons learned workshop

(to take place in November/December 2016 in the context of the GEF-PAS 4 Forest and PA Management project)

Introduction

The GEF-PAS 4 Forest and Protected Area Management project is nearing its conclusion. In 2017 there will be a final project evaluation. The intention beforehand is to prepare the regional project team to the closure of this project and the final evaluation. The aim of this preparation is threefold:

- a) to extrapolate lessons learned in a variety of areas;
- b) from those lessons learned, and analyses of gaps, to propose future activities that can capitalize on project outcomes not only in the form of exit strategies but also with concrete recommendations for future project activities in those countries;
- c) to promote a culture of reflection, exchange and analysis across the four countries (this project has been operating) with reciprocal learning and further strengthening of on-going cooperation in the future., in a safe environment.

To be able to achieve the objectives above there is a need for each National Steering Committee to start preparing themselves for the regional workshop above.

Please convene meetings at the National level until October 25th and as a group compile the information for the following questions. **[Country-report addressing this information to be sent to the CTA by October 31st.]**

1. Describe as a group what you think this project has contributed to in your country?

[Please make a group summary that represents overall consensus on project contributions; but first allow time for each participant to reflect on

this individually. Think also about unexpected contributions and perhaps more informal ones like: certain groups of people that normally don't engage with each other were brought together because of the project; some informal learning in a range of areas have taken place; environmental issues became more prominent with certain groups and organizations, etc]

2. Describe as a group what you think has been the major challenges, if any, to implement this project.

[Please make a group summary that represents overall consensus on project contributions; but first allow time for each participant to reflect on this individually.]

2.a What were the reasons, if any, for those challenges?

3. What are the main topics that you think is important to capture lessons learned from the implementation of the project in your country? Please list at least 6 topics and as many as you think relevant; those topics can be broad or specific.

[As examples, topics could be more general and related to the national governance of the project, disbursement of funds, engaging appropriately skilled staff, the implementation processes at site-levels, a specific activity at site level (e.g. micro-financing options; alternative livelihoods ventures; biodiversity monitoring; planning for the PAs with stakeholder groups) or/and a specific activity at national level (e.g national awareness campaign, legislation development, getting the right organizations to contribute, management of the project)].

4. For each one of the topics you listed above – why is it important to capture lessons learned? Please prepare a table as below.

[Reasons can vary and may include: because there has been particular challenges, and/or it is always going to be an important topic in project implementation, there was specific learning derived in an area of work, it was a successful example of an activity, it was an activity or an area of the project that did not go well].

Topics to capture lessons learned	Reasons to address this topic	Priority (rate between 1-10 with 1 low and 10 high)
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Annex 2

Instructions to Participants

Dear All,

Please find attached documents of the above-mentioned workshop in details for your information.

Thanks and Cheers,

Salamasina Tinai (Ms.)
Operations Associate (GEFPAS-FPAM)

Dear Workshop participants,

First thank you very much for the national teams that sent us the information requested in October in preparation for this workshop. We are still waiting to receive the remainder in the next few days before the workshop. Attached is the **overall draft agenda** for the “Lessons Learned and Exit Strategies” workshop in New Zealand. Attached is also some **overall logistical information**.

Please note the importance of understanding the philosophy of this workshop as one whereas each one of you will be an active part of making this a productive event for the project overall. Sharing information, reflection and discussions and then recording information into regional and national level synthesis reports will all take place during our time together.

The workshop has three components: 1) Lessons Learned; 2) Exit Strategies; and 3) Overall Work plan for the next 6 months. For those three blocks of the agenda the National Coordinators will please **need to prepare with the following**:

1. **A power point presentation** (not more than 10 slides, not longer than 12 mins presentation) related to Lessons Learned from your national level project implementation (you can draw from the materials you have already compiled, add photos and other context to make it as interesting as possible).
2. **A power point presentation on** thoughts about **Exit Strategies** for the project in your country (again not more than 10 slides, not longer than 12 mins presentation made as interesting as possible).
3. A tentative list of outputs and activities with prioritization for the planning for the last 6 months of the project (in preparation of the Annual Work-plan and Budget 2017 which will have to be submitted until end of January)

Although we shall have one more regional Project Steering Committee meeting this will be most probably the last time before the start of the final project evaluation that we can meet as a whole group. We need to make the most of it in support of each other for the final work ahead.

Please feel welcomed to ask any questions.

Kind Regards

Annex 3

Revised Agenda

Lessons Learned and Exit Strategies Workshop

GEF-PAS Forestry Conservation and Protected Area Management in Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Niue
November 26th -December 3rd 2016 (New Zealand)

Objectives

The GEF-PAS 4 Forest and Protected Area Management project is nearing its conclusion (30th of June 2017). In 2017 there will be a final project evaluation. The intention beforehand is to prepare the regional project team to the closure of this project and the final evaluation. Thus, the aim of this workshop is threefold:

- a) to extrapolate lessons learned in a variety of areas;
- b) from those lessons learned, and analyses of gaps, to propose future activities that can capitalize on project outcomes not only in the form of exit strategies but also with concrete recommendations for future project activities in those countries;
- c) to promote a culture of reflection, exchange and analysis across the four countries (this project has been operating) with reciprocal learning and further strengthening of on-going cooperation in the future., in a safe environment.



Draft Overall Agenda

Day/Time	Agenda Topics	Activities
Monday November 28th		
Morning 8:30 – 13:00 hs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome, etc.. Objectives of the Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation regional level and questions and answers
Tea break/group photo 10:30 – 11:00 hs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting the Context (overall -regional) Lessons Learned - Block 1: Introduction and objectives; Reflections from each country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations national level and group discussion
Afternoon 14:00 - 17:00 hs	Lessons learned – Block 1 (cont.) National Level Reflections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Presentations and group discussion (cont.) General group reflection across presentations
Tuesday November 29th		
Morning 8:30 – 13:00 hs	Lessons Learned – Block 2 Regional Level Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap previous day Regional presentation and group discussion
Afternoon 14:00 - 17:00 hs	Consolidating and recording for national and regional levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compilation of summary regional and national reports on Lessons Learned in small groups
Tuesday November 29th		
Morning 8:30 – 13:00 hs	Lessons Learned – Block 2 Regional Level Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap previous day Regional presentation and group discussion
Tea break: 10:15-10:35 hs	Consolidating and recording for national and regional levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compilation of summary regional and national reports on Lessons Learned in small groups
Afternoon 14:00 - 16:00 hs	Lessons Learned – Block 2 (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cont. Compilation of summary regional and national reports on Lessons Learned in small groups Submit the report compiled (until 16:00 hs)
16:15 hs – depart hotel for group activity/small excursion	Consolidating and recording for national and regional levels	
Wednesday November 30th		
Morning 8:30 – 13:00 hs	Exit Strategies – Block 1	<i>Recap previous day</i>
Tea break: 10:00 – 10:20 hs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting the context National Level reflections and proposals Regional level reflections and proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting the context for Exit Strategies National presentations and discussion on Exit strategies General group reflection across national presentations on Exit Strategies Regional presentation on Exit Strategies and group discussion

Day/Time	Agenda Topics	Activities
Afternoon 14:00 17:00 hs	Exit Strategies - Block 2	Consolidating and recording for national and regional levels
Tea break: 15:30 – 15:50 hs	Consolidating and recording for national and regional levels	
Thursday December 1st		
Morning 8:30 – 13:00 hs	Exit Strategies Block 2 (cont.) – Consolidating and recording for national and regional levels	Recap previous day
Tea break: 10:00 – 10:20 hs	Next Steps Draft work plan towards project closure introduction (what is needed overall,? Where are we at? What is our timeline? Etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cont. Compilation of summary regional and national reports on Exit Strategies in small groups • Submit reports compiled on Exit Strategies (until 10:00 am) • Presentation: regional activities and opportunities and concerns in the next 6 months and group discussion
Afternoon 14:00 17:00 hs	Next Steps (cont.) Draft work plan towards project closure (regional and national levels) - Actions, timelines, etc..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documenting and sharing broad national activities and opportunities and concerns in the next 6 months and group discussion
Tea break: 15:30 – 15:50hs		
Friday December 2nd		
Morning 8:30 – 13:00 hs	Next Steps (Cont.) Draft work plan towards project closure (regional and national levels) - Actions, timelines, etc..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap from previous day • Sharing and documenting broad national activities and concerns in the next 6 months and discussion (cont.)(until 10:30hs)
tea: 10:00 – 10:20 hs	Final observations, workshop closure and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation: final observation and closure • - Workshop evaluation

Workshop Approach:

This is a workshop and a working time that the group will be engaged with – sharing information, reflection and discussions and then recording into regional and national level synthesis reports – so please bring what you may need to share, help with reflections and compilation of synthesis national and regional reports on: 1) Lessons Learned; and b) Exit Strategies during the workshop. The workshop context will provide a supportive environment across a peer group to reflect upon and compile such information. The workshop also aims to develop an overall project wrapping-up workplan for the next 6 months that is shared, understood and owned by all. Everyone of you will be expected to be an active member of the teamwork during the week.

All the sharing, reflections and compilation of material will then support final project evaluation and report writing.

Annex 4

List of Participants

Participants for the FPAM project Lesson Learned and Exit Strategy Workshop
Cophthorne Hotel Bay of Islands – Paihia, New Zealand, 28 Nov – 2 Dec 2016

Fiji

Eliki Senivasa

Position: Conservator of Forests
FPAM Project Position: NPD
Government Implementation Partner
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Maria Elder

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Niue

Peter Newsome

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FPAM Project Position: Implementation Partner and Service Provider in Fiji and Niue
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Samoa

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Salamasina Tinai

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Aru Mathias

Position: SAP Forest Officer
FPAM Project Position: LTO
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Lea Scherl

Position: International Consultant
FPAM Project Position: Facilitator-Consultant
Email: lea.scherl@bigpond.com

Annex 5

Ground Rules

Punctuality

- Flexibility
- turn off cellphones
- Computer screen down during discussions
- speak loudly and clear
- Ice breaker after every session (end of day 3 people)
- volunteer to do recap everyday
- Team work
- Nothing personal
- shelves your defences
- be creative
- A lot of laughing



Annex 6: Regional Project-wide Report

Prepared by: Chief Technical Advisor

1) Project Design, Planning and Reviewing

"The project's development objective is to enhance the sustainable livelihoods of local communities living in and around protected areas. Its global environmental objective is to strengthen biodiversity conservation and reduce forest and land degradation. Global benefits from the project will include: increased representation of important ecosystems in the protected area networks in these countries; enhanced biodiversity conservation in production landscapes (through mainstreaming and marketing of biodiversity goods and services); increased financial sustainability for protected area management; and reductions in the barriers to sustainable forest and land management.

The project has been structured into six technical components: (i) policy and legal reform; (ii) extension and consolidation of the protected area network; (iii) strengthening capacity for community-based conservation management; (iv) developing mechanisms for sustainable protected area financing; (v) sustainable use of biodiversity; and (vi) sustainable land management in forest margins. Project outcomes will include: improved policy, legal and institutional arrangements; more effective and sustainable in situ biodiversity conservation; improved capacity of stakeholders for biodiversity conservation and sustainable land and forest management; sustainable financing of protected areas; improved livelihoods of local communities from marketing of biodiversity goods and services; and reductions in poor land-use practices and forest degradation".

The project has been designed to support the implementation of the Convention of Biodiversity and in particular to contribute to the Aichi targets e.g. to protect at least 17 % of each countries' terrestrial area.

Limited number of project components and project lifespan

Whereas the objectives and outcomes have been rationally selected the multitude of 6 different large components/ outcomes with an additional M& E component and with more than 150 outputs to be completed in four countries within four years has been overwhelming ambitious.

Some of the components like the policy and legal review or support to capacity building could be projects on their own right. Whereas the establishment of new protected areas is a lengthy process which does in general involve and rely on the land owning communities and needs more than 4 years to build trust, awareness, capacity building and enough time in order to consolidate achieved results.


Key lesson:

Projects with a lifespan of 4 to five years should not have more than 3 components plus the M& E component with realistically achievable objectives in order for the implementers to remain focused and concentrated on the core activities.

The need for a realistic project timeframe and disaster contingency plans

The FPAM project is a complex project with components of time demanding political processes and community involvement and yet the project has been planned with a timeframe of four years only (New GEF projects are at nowadays already designed for 5 years). In general projects need already 6 to 12 months for start-up and orientation phase for staff recruitment, procurement of equipment and office establishment, establishment of networks and partnerships with multi-sectoral approach, identification of suitable consultants and service providers, orientation and training of staff in implementation agency's procedures and rules, review of project document and the inception workshop of the project.

The Pacific Region is known for natural disaster (cyclone, earthquake, tsunami, landslides, floods) with countries being affected with increasing frequency. Since the inception of the project four years ago in 2012 four major tropical cyclones with devastating effect in three project countries resulted in the delay of project activities. Additional working time had to be spend for disaster warnings including earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones and floods with the observation of the current situation and the adaptation of plans for project activity implementation. An additional project year should be granted for compensation of disaster related project delays.



Furthermore, the project experienced severe natural catastrophes with devastating impact on the project sites and project partners. The project assisted as far as activities are congruent and according to the project objectives however the project has experienced major delays and uncertainties because no contingency plans have been made.

Key Lessons:

“If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.” Quoted from Martin Luther King Jr. from his famous “I Have a Dream Speech” on August 28, 1963.

- The project started in crawling mode and it took considerable time until it gathered enough speed to fly. The first year has been necessary as orientation phase until the project could be implemented efficiently. It needs final preparations including staff recruitment, procurement of equipment, office space, identification of consultant and service providers, review of planning documents, establishing of a peer network etc.
- Therefore, the project timeframe for complex projects with community involvement should be designed for at least 6 years. An additional project year could be granted in the Pacific Region for the compensation of delays in project implementation caused by natural disasters.
- Natural catastrophes with negative impact on project implementation in terms of delays and direct negative impact on project sites are most likely to occur in the Pacific. For the mitigation of their impact and as immediate response to assist the affected population the projects should have contingency plans in place.

Discrepancies between project planning, project document and implementation reality

Between the planning, endorsement of the project document and start of the project three years have passed. This long time discrepancy has led ultimately to a large discrepancy between the project document and the reality. Some project components had been already implemented and some activities were no longer required because priorities had changed, co-financing partners had already phased out their activities or project etc. The project started with an inception workshop however a situation analysis has not been carried out nor have the project documents been adjusted. This process had to be carried later



when activities were planned for implementation and management realized the discrepancy between documents and reality.

Key lesson:

Discrepancies between project document and reality have to be investigated during the first months of the project, hence the project document has to be reviewed and adjusted during the inception workshop with relevant stakeholders.

Project Site Selection during Planning

Some project sites for the establishment of new terrestrial areas have been selected at the desk without community consultations. Particularly in the Pacific region most land is in traditional and community landownership. This top down approach in planning for project sites for the establishment of new protected areas without creating awareness about conservation and consulting the land owning communities led to unnecessary uncertainties, lack of ownership and delays in implementation as all necessary activities which should have been accomplished during the project preparation had to be undertaken during the project implementation.

Key Lesson:

The selection of project sites with traditional and community landownership has to be bottom up and in cooperation with the communities already during the project document development. The communities have to be involved in the planning process in order to develop maximum ownership, buy-in and participation in the project. Any shortcuts in the planning and project preparation result in uncertainties, delays in implementation, mistaken investments of project funds, misunderstandings and lack of ownership during the project's implementation phase.

2) Governance and Management Arrangements for project implementation

FAO has its own arrangements for the implementation of GEF funded projects which follows GEF and FAO rules. The implementation and management arrangements, project management structure, inputs and responsibilities of partners, oversight and monitoring through national and regional steering committees and FAO are described in detail in the project document, which has been endorsed by all participating countries.

The implementation of project activities is coordinated by the National Project Coordinators (employed by FAO) and being carried out through supported Government personnel, contracting of national and international experts, finance agreements with Government Institutions and Non-Government Organizations and Private Sector Consulting Firms. In this arrangement FAO's main role and responsibility are the administration, financial disbursement and financial monitoring (including QPIR); preparation of results budget revisions and financial reporting.

The project implementation follows annual work-plans and budgets endorsed by the national and regional steering committees, who are also responsible for the project oversight in terms of reviewing activities, outputs and outcomes to ensure that project activities are in accordance with the project document.

Since the situation has been different in all four countries no blue print for the implementation of project activities could be used. Arrangements had to be flexible and varied from an integrated approach through existing Government structures, national and international consultants, local and International NGOs, Regional Organizations, National and International Service Providers. The project followed the principles of

- a) *provide priority for local expertise and,*
- b) *the timely and economically delivery of qualitative good results*
- c) *sustainability of outputs and outcomes*
- d) *lean and efficient management with minimum of own staff.*

Key lessons:

- Although the project document has been signed by the countries the project governance and arrangements are sometimes not clear to all stakeholders. Between the endorsement of the project document and the start of the project has been a long time gap. Signatories and personnel might have changed or the arrangements are not understood as every organization has its own implementation modalities. Therefore, arrangements have to be occasionally recalled and processes explained and/or fine-tuned to fit the prevailing circumstances.

- Project personnel should undergo an organization's induction training course in order to get an orientation and information about the organization, financing tools, rules and processes right from the beginning of the project.
- The project implementation progress depends on the commitment of the Government's lead institution. Of particular importance for the project's progress are the national and regional project steering committees, their leadership, composition and commitment.
- Project implementation through Government institutions with finance agreement is limited due to incompatible accounting and reporting systems, lengthy processes in procurement and recruitment of services, and timely unavailability of required staff. Regional and Non-Government Organizations proved to have a higher flexibility and assisted with the timely implementation of project activities.
- Although the project's preference has been the recruitment of local expertise experienced national consultants and experts required for the specific project activities have been very limited, in terms of availability and specifically required experience. The lack of capacity has been identified as major impediment to the progress of the project. It was noted that the smaller the island population the more immanent is the problem of lack in capacity. For example, in Niue the implementation of entire project outcomes had to be outsourced to New Zealand based institutions. In the other countries increasingly international consultants had to be recruited. More to capacity building in the next chapter.
- Latest after communities have decided to establish a protected area and/or to apply SLM technologies on their land they need the assistance of a professional for continuous coaching and assistance. For the project to have ears and boots on the ground project site managers need to be recruited, either from Government or project, to assist the communities with the development of their site and provide for feedback to Government and project management.

Multi country project approach

The FPAM project has been designed for 4 countries with 2 countries in the Polynesian and two countries in the Melanesian eco-region; the project is managed by a team of project coordinators with one coordinator in each country, in Samoa an additional National Technical Adviser) and the CTA being based in Suva, Fiji. The administration and finance management has been with FAO's sub-regional office in Apia, Samoa. This arrangement had its pros and cons.

The logistics and organization for procurement of equipment and implementation of activities on sometimes remote small islands with different administrative systems and national languages, currencies and over four time zones has been a challenge. The fact that the CTA has been based in Suva, Fiji, was the right decision as 60 % of the budget and work-plan had been allocated to Fiji. Furthermore, Fiji is as hub well connected to the other PICS by air and is the home to most international and regional organizations. With the current communication and IT systems it has been possible to manage this project.

At the start of the project the challenge to apply a multi country approach is largest because the team building process of staff and stakeholders in the countries, between the countries and with FAO office needs some time. This would be faster and easier in a one or maximum two-country approach. The latter would provide the CTA t with more time to increase and intensify technical advice.

After the first project year it turned out that the implementation of project activities in Vanuatu was more expansive than estimated and that the project was underfunded to accomplish all outputs and achieve all outcomes. Thus, the number of project sites were reduced by deleting the most expansive project site. The number of other activities had to be reduced as well to remain within the budget. In order to allow the Vanuatu project implementation during the entire extension phase until June 2017 the Project Steering Committee, with Fiji's consent, agreed to the utilization of a part of Fiji's project budget. Although Vanuatu's budget has not been sufficient to implement all planned activities the core outputs have been so far achieved. More important Vanuatu gained

with this initial project so much more experience which has been already used for the design of a follow-up GEF 5 project with a 8 times larger budget and a good foundation to build on during implementation. This advantage applies to all four countries, as they will continue with individual projects with much larger budgets.

The multi-country approach has the positive effect of sharing experiences and approaches between the countries, however this eventuates earliest in the second year when first results are available. Very helpful is the solidarity between the Pacific Island Countries. Resources can be shared if necessary and technical assistance rendered to each other. Information and experiences are also easily shared.

Key lessons:

- The major challenge for the multi country approach has been the first year until the team building process has been finalized and the project has been operational. The same time span applies to the development of synergies from sharing of experiences and approaches which has started to eventuate in the second year of implementation.
- Important for the project success using a multi country approach are active national steering committees and suitable qualified staff with the capacity to work to greater part independently. The same applies to consultants and service providers.
- Countries can use the experience gained during the FPAM project implementation for the planning and implementation of country individual follow -up GEF projects. See also under legacy. The solidarity between Pacific Island Countries supports the multi country approach as resources and information are easily shared.

Project monitoring, evaluation, review and flexibility

The project had to follow its own monitoring and evaluation plan with monthly and semi-annual and annual reports as well as technical reports and evaluation of activities and the midterm evaluation of the project. Although the monitoring system is time consuming and some reporting could have been reduced it has been necessary to constantly monitor the project and review its

outputs, activities and budget. It was in particular useful to react with a certain flexibility to events like natural disasters, political disagreements e.g. communities to engage in protected areas, change of project sites etc. and take the opportunity for implementation when available e.g. establishment of new partnerships with cooperation and co-financing opportunities. The national steering committees are very much at task to make the decisions and propose changes of the plans.

Key lessons:

- Project needs constant monitoring and evaluation of activities and progress and review of work plans and impact.
- A certain degree of flexibility is necessary to react to events impacting on the project and to take advantage of opportunities.
- In particular, national steering committees are at task to make timely decisions and propose change of work plans.

3) Partnerships and Participation horizontally and vertically for project implementation

The project had to enter into many partnerships on horizontal and vertical levels within the countries, on regional and international level. Many partnerships resulted in additional assistance, co-funding of activities and the development of new projects.

Key lessons:

- The project applied a multi cross-sectoral approach to partner with various Government and Non-Government Institutions and Organizations on country, regional and international level.
- The project's national and regional steering committees have to be instrumental in facilitating the cross sectoral approach and identifying and a coordinating partners and stakeholders to achieve project success. Thus the project receives appropriate buy-in and support partnerships with public or private institutions in terms of coordinating projects to achieve synergies have been important for co- financing of project activities or providing mutual support during implementation.
- Activity and positive project results and attitude attract and build easily new partnership with additional assistance or funding.

- Partnerships can be also relevant for the project's exit strategy as strategic activities can be supported if necessary. In particular, the private sector can be an engine for development in this regards as it can provide for sustainable income generating activities, e.g. partnership between communities and private sector in tourism business.

4) Capacity Development and awareness raising

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them (A. Einstein)

Lack of awareness at all levels about issues and possible solutions the project has been designed for and in particular the lack of capacity on different levels in terms of available experts with the necessary knowledge and skills required for the implementation of project activities (available Government officers, local consultants, community members) has been identified as biggest impediment to project implementation.

Awareness creation activities

The project supported awareness creation activities in all four countries on several levels of target groups and at different intensity. They ranged from the production and showing of local documentaries and slide shows in the villages at the project site, cinemas and national TV stations and U-tube. Furthermore, consultation and awareness creation sessions were held in the communities and in the public. Radio talk-back shows, celebration of environmental days, biodiversity day, International day of the Forests were supported. A tailored awareness campaign, Wakatu Fiji, has been launched in Fiji with the help of a NGO specialized on communication and campaigns. Awareness creation went as far as developing a teaching framework and lesson plans for education of primary-aged students (years 5-6; ages 9-10) with the aim of strengthening understanding and appreciation of biodiversity and protected forest areas. This has been introduced in Niue and is currently in development for Fiji on request of the Ministry for Education.

Key lessons:

- Awareness creation is very important in order to make people understand the issues at stake and gain support for change. In particular, the campaigns carried out in villages resulted in large support for the establishment of community owned protected areas and the introduction and acceptance of sustainable land management.
- Awareness campaigns contribute as well to capacity building and the difference is often fluid. Awareness creation should be one of the first activities to be implemented in order to prepare the stakeholders and get their support for the project's objectives.
- Awareness creation activities are work intensive and can consume large budgets. They are most effective when packaged as a full-fledged campaign with clear objectives, focus and an identified target audience. Less effective and less impact for the project results is to be expected from more general support to celebrations like environmental week, day forest etc. A campaign can include large elements of training for the target audience and implementing stakeholders. The design and implementation of a full campaign should be contracted to specialists. Communication specialists should be contracted in order to reduce staff time for time consuming awareness creation activities.
- Awareness creation should start already in the primary schools for children and young people to strengthen the understanding and appreciation of biodiversity and the meaning of conservation for their environment.

Capacity development

Capacity building has been a large component of the project however it has been a challenge to carry out the planned and suggested training when training courses, institutions and trainers are not available. The project would have definitely made more progress if the required capacities would have been available from the start. To overcome and mitigate the problem several strategies were introduced. They are mentioned in the lessons learned. The largest impact on the improvement of capacity in the Pacific will have the new training course for biodiversity conservation and



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protected area management designed at the Fiji Forest Training Centre. This course is composed of 24 modules on six different levels. Already new biodiversity conservation modules have been integrated into the Forest Technician training courses. The FTC will offer the training courses in Fiji and for other PICs.

Key lessons:

- Lack of capacity in the PICs is one of the major impediments for project implementation. With a set of strategies, the project has been able to mitigate this issue and could contribute to some improvements in order to make it easier for follow-up initiatives and programs. Below are a number of recommendations and experiences.
- Training components have been added to all project activities and on all levels. This included training of community members in identification and monitoring of species and threats to ecosystem or trail construction; training in application of GIS and GPS, training of forest officers in understanding the legislation and process of legislation review etc. The training had to be carried out by contracted consultants or organization, who are as service provider responsible for the implementation of project activities.
- Local or regional experts have been identified and recruited to carry out training in special skills (e.g. Red Cross for 1st aid training of villagers in eco-tourism venture)
- Another strategy has been the twinning of international and/or local consultants or officers. This idea was born from the necessity to recruit international consultants when local capacity has not available. Both were assigned to implement activities as a team and as such support and learn from each other.
- Institutions and experts from Australia/New Zealand, were contracted to carry out special training courses in the PICs in order to review and assist with the development of curriculum and training programs, and train the trainers e.g. training in law enforcement.
- The participation in well managed study tours in country and abroad (FTC to North Australia) and in workshops and conferences contribute to the exchange of knowledge and thus enhance capacity of middle and senior management. Furthermore, they contribute to the building of new partnerships.
- Capacity building activities are not only necessary for communities, government officers and other project stakeholders. They are also necessary for updating and training of the project staff.

- It was noted that the smaller the island population the more imminent is the problem of lack in capacity. For example, a country like Niue with an estimated population of 1600 people does simply not have the capacity to implement special activities. Thus, the implementation of entire project outcomes had to be outsourced to New Zealand based institutions.

5) Links between environmental management, sustainable development, SDGs and livelihoods within the project context

“Biodiversity conservation is considered central to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030. The strategic plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets therefore reinforce and complement the 2030 Agenda. A recent review of the links between the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [149] shows that all 20 Targets have links to the targets of the SDGs. At least 35 of the SDG agreed indicators across all but one goal have a direct relationship with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and 77% of these are considered to have a moderate to strong relationship with the SDGs.”

Source: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org> and UNEP (2015) [149]

The project's objectives support biodiversity conservation and the SDGs. Some of the impact and lessons are captured below:

Key lessons:

The project contributed to a substantial increment of the protected area network in all four countries. These protected areas are essential for sustainable development and therefore are a fundamental mechanism to help meet many of the SDGs.

- a) Reduction in poverty:
According to the socio-economic baseline studies most of the island communities depend on intact forest eco-systems for their livelihood,
- b) Contribution to Health and wellbeing
According to the socio-economic baseline studies most of the island communities depend on intact forest eco-systems for the collection of medicinal plants


- c) Clean drinking water
The newly established protected areas are mostly located in the mountains and protect water-catchments areas as well. Often land owning communities asked for protected area establishment since they realized the issue of springs falling dry after the removal of forests for farming
- d) Decent work and economic growth
Eco-tourism is increasing in the PICS and tourism is increasing on some project sites already with some decent income for the communities. However, more focussed input will be necessary to make full use of the tourism potentials, their sustainable use and management and the sharing of benefits from tourism. More assistance is required to achieve the UNESCO World Heritage status, which is strong marketing label.
- e) Positive impact of marine life
Most local communities of the project sites have meanwhile understood that the establishment of terrestrial protected area has as a positive impact on the marine life as well. Meanwhile communities agree to corridors connecting mountain-protected areas with the coastal forests in a “ridge to reef approach”.
- f) Protected area governance
Supportive legal and policy frameworks increasingly recognize and include areas conserved by local communities and indigenous people. In two countries Community Conservation Areas are already legally recognized. In two countries the project supports the political process. However, for the management of the protected areas by communities more input through training and coaching will be necessary.

6) Project Implementation at the community level

Before defining the lessons learned it is important to recall the project's objectives:

The project's development objective has been to enhance the sustainable livelihoods of local communities living in and around protected areas, and

The global environmental objective has been to strengthen biodiversity conservation and reduce forest and land degradation. The FPAM project has been working with numerous communities on 12 project sites in four countries. In general



the project sites have been determined by the fact that certain areas have been identified for the establishment of a new protected area or that existing protected areas have been in need of management improvements. For explanation: In the Pacific the land of almost all protected areas is in the ownership of local communities. The resistance of local communities towards development and particularly the establishment of protected areas has been described as one of the risks towards project success. The project has gained a number of experiences which can be converted into learned lessons useful for similar initiatives.

Key lessons:

- Communities ownership and commitment can be enhanced through their involvement and participation at the project's early planning stage of the project. E.g. in Vanuatu meetings were held with communities and landowners for the selection of project sites and development of protected areas. Vanuatu has been the only country with landowners participating in the project's inception workshop. It would be desirable if landowners and communities would have a voice and be represented in the national project steering committees.
- Awareness creation activities have to be tailored to and implemented with the communities. Furthermore, community members should be involved as much as possible in the implementation of conservation activities and trainings in skills during the implementation of activities and during specifically tailored training courses. This will increase their ownership and commitment towards conservation.
- Some communities asked for immediate and tangible return with the standard question of "what is in for us when we conserve our forest"? Others have been sceptical regarding the issue of what will happen to their land. However, the experience has been made that after awareness creation with explaining the environmental issues and impacts landowning communities have been in general very receptive and positive towards the idea of protected areas establishment and conservation. Protected areas is not a new concept as traditionally "taboo areas" have been already established in the past.
- "The tragedy of the commons" is an economic theory of a situation within a shared-resource system where individual users acting independently according to their own self-interest and behave contrary to the common good of all users by depleting that resource through their collective action. This phenomenon has been observed where neither clear management rules and nor their enforcement exists – in particular in communities with weak leadership or where the authority of the former chief system and traditional rules have been eroded e.g. fishing in rivers with poison, overharvesting of reef fish and terrestrial natural resources, depletion of vines for increased land diving activities stimulated by tourism.
- Communities are not all the same. Often literature and those not being directly involved in work with communities relate to communities as if they are all same and that one blueprint in communal work leads to the required success. Communities can differ from each other in terms of leadership, education, wealth, socio-economic activities and income, religion, exposure, land ownership etc. The approach to deal with the different communities has to take the differences into account to be successful.
- Governance arrangement for community protected areas are in many cases relatively new and will have to be monitored and adjusted. They need a consolidation phase with mentoring. A project timeframe of 4 years is too short for the establishment of new protected areas and a consolidation phase.
- Project activities for livelihood improvements are door openers to communities as they contribute to the building of trust and confidence between the project and communities and should start at an early stage of the project.
- The development of alternative livelihood activities for communities bordering PAs should start early as it takes time to identify, develop and implement the right activity, product and a market.
- It should be taken in consideration that business ventures will not be automatically successful when they are communally managed. Communal businesses need a tight set of governance and management rules. It might be better to leave business in private and individual hands and support the development of small and medium enterprises.



- Partnerships between the private sector and communities are important for the sustainability of business ventures and thus the income for community members. They should be fostered as they contribute to sustainability in particular after the phasing out of a project.
- It has to be accepted that for some protected areas on small islands sustainable financing mechanisms e.g. payment for eco-systems services, trust-fund, eco-tourism etc. are not more than a wishful thinking. However, sustainable land and forest management and improved farming methods might be the appropriate strategy to prevent the destruction of valuable ecosystems and their services. Appropriate farming methods contribute to the communities' livelihoods and food security.

7) Project impact assessment

The project has been designed to make an impact on a number of objectives in quality and/or quantity. However, although some impact could be measured on short term objectives e.g. income generation through vegetable farming on project sites in Savaii, most objectives can only be reached on long-term e.g. impact of newly protected area on biodiversity and clean drinking water.

Key lessons:

In some instances, the impact of project activities could be measured through qualitative and quantitative surveys, e.g. the introduction of new farming methods and vegetable varieties on the

market and income on the farmers of Savaii, Samoa. However most of the project's activities were directed towards medium and long-term objectives and beyond the project's lifespan. In order to measure their impact many baseline studies were carried out. They included socio-economic baselines studies in the communities and biodiversity baseline assessments in the new established protected areas including satellite images and 3 D models of the project sites.

8) Approaches for sustainability and legacy into the future

Given the fact that this project has been pioneering on the expansion of the terrestrial protected area network parallel with the testing and introduction of sustainable land and forest management on communal and clan owned land in four PICs a number of lessons were learned regarding its approaches to sustainability and legacy, all impacting on the future.

Key lessons:

- With the project's assistance policies, legislations and regulations pertaining to environment and biodiversity conservation have been reviewed and amended and processes for their review and involvement of communities in protected area establishment and SLFM initiated with a major future impact on the conservation landscape – this has been critical to provide national frameworks that can encourage activities for biodiversity conservation and forest management into the future.

- The network of terrestrial protected areas on communal land has been tremendously increased in all four countries while initiating the ridge to reef approach and establishing corridors to increase the connectivity – broader landscape and corridor approaches adopted by the project have been they key to justify some of those expansion in protected areas.
- BioRap Assessments have been conducted as baseline studies for the establishment of new protected areas. They revealed a wealth of information about Fauna and Flora species with some not known to Science.- they provided much needed information for justifying expansion of the protected area systems at the national levels.
- The first GEO Park in the Pacific has been established in Vanuatu and the GeoPark initiative has been started in Samoa – this kind of initiatives and their visibility do much for conveying the message that this is possible within national contexts and create models that can be considered for replication in other areas.
- The introduction of teaching material about biodiversity conservation in primary schools of two countries, the production of documentaries about the various projects sites and activities, and a strategically planned and implemented awareness creation campaign, the Wakatu Fiji campaign, are the highlights of a sustainable approach in awareness creation – they will be used well beyond the project life.
- Hundreds of people have been trained on various levels using different approaches and many people participated in project activities like land use planning through the participatory construction of 3 D landscape models in Samoa. The models are still regularly visited by school classes to learn about the history and landscape of the home villages and are consulted at village planning discussions – capacity development is critical and understanding how it has had an impact is very important and often overlooked.
- GIS/GPS equipment and GIS/GPS training on Quantum open software (financial sustainable as free available) have been introduced to various offices and electronic 3 D elevated models of project sites with satellite images have been locally designed as state of the art technology to monitor via satellite changes of eco-systems and protected areas – this has been an incredible addition to capacity to plan and monitor for protected areas and well received government offices.
- In its endeavour to raise the capacity for biodiversity conservation, Sustainable land and forest management and protected area management the project's largest legacy is the investment into a new training programme and the training of the instructors at the Fiji Forest Training Centre. The main course is about biodiversity conservation and protected area management and is composed of 24 modules on 6 different levels. Modules have cross accreditation with other academic institutions. Some modules are already incorporated in the forest technician training and others are in high demand by the timber industry. Training will be offered to Fiji and other PICs, thus the project's new training course will have an impact on capacity building and conservation in the Pacific at large.
- The evaluation of the Sovi Basin Trust Fund scheme and investigations into legal ways of extending the trust fund system to additional protected areas will provide for new insight, ideas and models in sustainable financing of protected areas in Fiji and other PICs.
- Tourism studies and visitor surveys provided for new ideas for sustainable tourism management and product development - this is important to support motivation and commitment from communities and other stakeholders towards biodiversity conservation and protected area management.
- Sustainable land management methods, ecosystem restorations, organic farming and agro-forestry have been field tested, promoted on demo farms and implemented on larger scale. Farmers benefited from healthy food for their own consumption and cash income – and the tourism industry from supply of fresh and reasonably priced vegetables. The project activities and results led to additional project and activities to implement SLFM on large scale on some project sites.
- Experiences and lessons learned during the FPAM GEF 4 project implementation are of greatest value for the planning and implementation of GEF follow-up projects in the Pacific.



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Annex 7: Fiji report

Prepared by: National Project coordinator and project team

1) Project design, planning and reviewing

A number of inter-related aspects of project design, planning and reviewing that has been important to this project in Fiji are discussed below, and for each one of those key lessons have been extrapolated.

Engagement of representatives from the project Landowner communities, the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (through the relevant provincial offices), iTaukei Land Trust Board, and other iTaukei-related institutions in all aspects of the project implementation.

The project's development objective is "to enhance the sustainable livelihoods of local communities living in and around the protected areas". This one statement clearly emphasizes the focus of engagement/empowerment and development of local landowning communities.

The project sites are on communally owned land. All communally owned land is administered by the iTaukei Land Trust Board (TLTB), and are responsible for the issuance and monitoring of leases and tenant agreements. All community developmental proposal concerning the indigenous iTaukei are vetted by the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs through the respective provincial offices. Based on these protocols, the success of protected area regimes on communal land depends on how closely they incorporate the governance structures of the tenure system, the relevant laws that regulate usage and the customs and traditions of the iTaukei community.

The two administrative offices have taken steps towards natural resources management:

- a) Under the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, each of the 14 provinces have: (i) or are beginning to develop their respective "Natural Resource (iYau Bula) Management Plan", covering the marine and land scapes. The provincial NRM plan is a product of the consolidated district and village plans. (ii) employed a conservation officer, who are responsible for updating and

reporting against the NRM plans.

- b) The TLTB office have started work on developing the Land Use Master Plan for the Greater Suva area. The office are now proposing to lead and support the Fiji project's efforts on Taveuni, with the aim of developing the "Taveuni Land Use Master Plan". The plan will map all existing development leases and land uses, incorporate information on all past surveys and assessments. All information will be stored in the organization's database.

These offices will be key contact points for information regarding community development. In addition, the offices play a key facilitative role during community and village meetings. Their presence elevates the importance of the meetings, and are responsible for mediating and arbitrating during conflicts, governance issues and the installation of traditional leadership positions.

Key Lessons:

The landowning communities and the iTaukei administrations are integral partners in the project and the success in its implementation.

- a) The iTaukei administrations offices to be considered as an executing partner and are engaged as early as in the scoping and designing of the project, and to continue in a prominent role through the implementation cycle;
- a) Site Level forums are formed and budgeted in the project design to: (i) address community issues and requests; (ii) co-manage and assist in the implementation of activities; (iii) represent landowning communities at the National Steering Committee

Contingency for natural disasters (and recovery plan)

One of the underlying causes of forest degradation and biodiversity loss is natural disaster and/or cyclones; it is being reported that "natural disasters will be more frequent and severe". Pacific island countries have become prone to natural disasters. Since the commencement

of the project in 2012, Fiji has encountered, on an average, one natural disaster per year, the most devastating was Tropical Cyclone Winston (Category 5), which landed on 21st February 2016 and greatly affected two of the project's sites and the villages of the landowning communities.

The project has made no provisions in the event that a cyclone should strike and its impact on the implementation of the project: the time loss during and after the cyclone, even during the warning period when activities are suspended and rescheduled, is considerable and the cost of rehabilitation of damages to the forest vegetation and infrastructure is significant.

On the 22nd of February 2016, the Fiji Government imposed on the country a "State of Emergency" that lasted 6-months. Government's efforts and focus were on rebuilding, and calling on the support of partner organizations and projects. The Fiji project's aid efforts in this regard were minimal, distributing food items, tarpaulins, and medical supplies and restricted to the Tomaniivi villages on Viti Levu. Due to budgetary constraints, the project's efforts for Taveuni were limited to reconnaissance and survey.

Key Lessons:

Fiji is prone to natural disasters; it is expected that at least one form of natural disaster (cyclone and/or flooding) will occur each year. The project, therefore, must incorporate provisions of time and funding as part of its work plan and budget. The following are also suggested:

- a) assess the level of readiness of the project's communities (risk assessment) and identification and prioritizing of needs;
- b) address the needs of the project's communities' immediately after and to include: (i) the engagement of social workers and healers, (ii) food and medical supplies, (iii) planting material for agricultural and tree crops;
- c) improve the resilience of the project's communities to natural disasters and to include: (i) establishing and securing food and clean water sources; (ii) assessing energy needs (fuel wood) and developing plans for future needs; and (iii) support and strengthen evacuation plans;

Inception Workshop: Proper Orientation and Re-evaluation of the country status

The concept note (Project Identification Framework) of the Fiji project began in 2007, with the final project document submitted to the GEF Council in 2009 and approved for funding in 2010. The Fiji project's inception meeting-workshop was held on May 10th 2012.

The Fiji project took at least 18 months to fully "ground" and establish its position, nationally. A great amount of this time was devoted to deciphering the project document, reconciling project expectations to changes in and current status of the natural landscape and to understanding the administrative systems, process and protocols for mobilizing project funds and resources. The first two contracts were signed in June of 2013, which were later cancelled and replaced by new contracts with new Service Providers – these contracts were developed on the advice and information provided, which did not reflect the current situation; without proper orientation the project is prone to err in judgement and the consequence is the loss in time during implementation.

Key Lessons:

It is recommended that the national project teams are better orientated as a preamble to the Inception Workshop-Meeting. This introductory phase is important should be made mandatory to save time, and should be focused on:

- a) FAO/National Government systems and protocols for efficient resource mobilization – contractual agreements, financial systems, etc.
- b) Assessment and availability of in-country capacity available within government and partner organizations;
- c) National Steering Committee and Reporting Lines – ideal mix and numbers, partnerships and synergies

Livelihood programs for local communities

The main driver of deforestation and subsequent loss of biodiversity, as mentioned in the project document, is through the conversion of natural forested land for agricultural activities. This is rife on Taveuni, where local farmers have encroached and established farms within the government-declared reserves. These are commercial farms



that supply the export market, and the lucrative nature of this venture has attracted farmers from other parts of the country into Taveuni. There are evident signs of severe degradation of forest and land in and around the margins of the reserves, sustained from continued tillage, fertilization and farming. Similar trends of in-discriminant forest clearing and burning are noted in and around the Tomaniivi and Delaikoro sites.

The usual reasons for local communities engaging in natural forest harvesting and land conversion to farming are: (i) to generate income to support family welfare and community development needs; (ii) to ensure high crop yields and higher returns; (iii) an activity that the communities are competent with, and extensively supported by Government. These reasons will prevail until and unless an alternative, which equals or betters the current status quo, is provided and one which the communities can sustain into the future.

The Fiji project has allocated only 11% of its total budget, 7% under Component 5: to investigate and begin developing the potential livelihood ventures at each site, and an additional 4% under Component 6: to address forest and land degradation within the forest margins of the protected areas. The funding provisions are inadequate and the timelines are too short to ensure its success and sustainability.

The success of alternative livelihood programs depends on its impact to (a) satisfy the welfare needs of the local communities, and (b) break the cycle of bad practices, and maintaining this momentum until there is complete change in attitude and mind-set, "leaving nothing to chance".

Key Lessons:

It is recommended that a greater portion of the project budget are devoted towards alternative livelihood ventures/programs for local and resource owning communities. The activities must focus its efforts at two-levels:

a) Firstly, assessing what the communities "need" rather than "want" – focus on establishing secured sources of the major food-types, nutrition and diets, energy needs and usage (e.g. fuel-wood lots) along with securing clean water sources and improved sanitation; these are needs that should be fundamental and in existence in all communities before commercially orientated ventures are considered;

b) Appropriate resourcing for commercial orientated ventures (that are environmentally acceptable) - resourcing should cover the entire cycle of establishment and capacity building, marketing and business management (micro-financing), monitoring and evaluation.

2) Governance and management arrangements for implementation

The importance of an effective National Steering Committee (NSC) with the right mix and number of members that will lead, mentor, monitor and evaluate the project implementation.

This point has been highlighted earlier but its importance cannot be over emphasized. At the commencement of the project in 2012, the National Steering Committee (NSC) was placed under the national Protected Area Committee (PAC) and the roles of Chair and the secretariat. The PAC was established under the Environment Management Act as an advisory body on technical matters pertaining to terrestrial and marine scapes. It is a forum dominated by non-government organizations, and with government represented through the Departments of Environment and Forests.

The idea to steer the project under the guidance of the PAC emanated from its members. The justifications were those the PAC and/or its member organizations: (a) had participated and contributed to the project development, and (b) were co-financiers of the project. During this term, the FPAM project activities were discussed and dealt with as an agenda item under PAC meeting structure.

The ineffectiveness of the PAC as the project's NSC surfaced as the implementation of the project began to meander, and the committee's inability to address and resolve critical issues, e.g. (a) the transparency in the award of contracts under the project and (b) the effective monitoring and evaluation of contracts, and the accountability of organizations. Organizations were supporting their partners in the award of contracts, even when the contract deliverables were beyond the capacity of the nominated party.

In 2014, the NSC was reinstated and placed under the chairmanship of the Conservator of Forests. The present membership is dominated



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by government representatives that include: Director of Environment, Deputy General Manager Ops (TLTB), the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Ministry of Lands, and the Chairperson of PAC, with the National Project Coordinator as the secretariat. Under the present NSC, clear decisions are being made, and the accountability on the part of organizations contracted as service providers is being quickly addressed, e.g. NSC's unequivocal decision to cancel the PA Legal Review contract initially awarded to the National Trust of Fiji, based on the organization's inability to meet the timeline, and subsequently, the award of a new contract to the IUCN Oceania Regional Office to complete the work.

Key Lessons:

- a) The distinction between the role of the partner organizations as service providers (NGO) and the responsibility of Government in the governance and leadership within the project structure should be clear at the outset.;
- b) It is important to have the right composition of members within the NSC, to include key government ministries and agencies; "ownership through leadership" as an Exit Strategy;
- c) The role of the National Project Coordinator as the NSC Secretariat is imperative – (i) the preparation and presentation of the Meeting's Minutes, as a true reflection of the deliberations is important, (ii) the secretariat's role in manoeuvring the discussions to reach positive decisions and meet the project's objectives.

National reporting framework – protocols and systems of reporting

The development of a National Reporting Framework is a key output programed under Component 3. The framework will support the Department of Environment in its role as the national focal point for CBD, and its reporting obligations to the various national, regional and international conventions. The idea to develop the framework was initiated in 2012, with the commencement of the project, but faltered due to the administrative difficulties that the Department of Environment was facing at the time.

The importance of a national reporting framework resurfaced at the CBD Secretariat's Regional Workshop held in Nadi in 2016: the secretariat's report on Fiji's progress towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity 2020 Targets 11 and 12 were questionably high and did not reflect the actual work on the ground. The report presented were sourced from information that were published without the knowledge of the Department of Environment, the designated national focal point.

Secondly, Taveuni cloud forest is the first forest reserve that was declared under Forest Laws in 1914 and is one of the "Hot Spots" for biological diversity in the region. Over the years, numerous studies and surveys have been conducted in and around the reserve but there is a lack of published reports available or stored due to the absence of an information database and repository or instituted systems and protocols for reporting. A literature

review/search was commissioned in 2016 and the report indicated the lack of available information and consequently the need to conduct a baseline assessment.

Key Lessons:

- a) The development of a Clearing House Mechanism is important as a repository and a tool for filtering and dissemination of information, and for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the progress towards the achievement of the requirements under the various conventions, e.g. the Aichi 2020 Biodiversity Targets 11 & 12;
- b) The institutionalization of systems and protocols for reporting – all information and reports emanating out of surveys and studies of the natural resources should be submitted to Government, for endorsement, before publishing.
- c) It is important to cultivate good report writing among project implementers so that the information disseminated is effective and catalytic to positive change.

Government's role, plans and priorities

The FPAM project is a government project that requires the active participation and leadership of the Department of Environment (as the national focal point) and Department of Forests (as the partner executing agency) throughout the implementation of the project. Other government ministries and agencies that have important roles in the project are the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, through the respective provincial offices, the iTaukei Land Trust Board, the custodians of communally owned land, and the Ministry of Lands.

The challenge has been the engagement of these government ministries and agencies, particularly the senior officials in leadership and decision-making position, to chair and attend meetings; their presence during the meeting is important, when a decision on critical issues is required.

Key Lessons:

To ensure that Government is actively engaged in the project implementation:

- a) Strategically align the project's activities and timelines to meet and support government's (Department of Forests) annual work plan and priorities;

- b) Government's dominant role as the Chair and membership in the National Steering Committee – this is a powerful medium for encouraging ownership through leadership, reporting of progress and achievements to display relevance, and formidable platform as an "Exit Strategy";
- c) Supporting key requests/ immediate needs of Government and partners as potential "buy-ins"- the project: (i) funded the participation of five (5) senior environment officials to the CBD regional workshop, during which a number of reporting deficiencies were highlighted (e.g. Clearing House Mechanism) that the project will support its development; (ii) encouraged and solicited the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (Permanent Secretary) lead role in the launching of the "WAKATU" campaign
- d) The use/engagement of the Department of Environment's Conference room for the National Steering Committee meetings – this was suggested by the Conservator of Forests as a strategy to encourage the attendance of the environment officers at the meeting.

3) Partnerships and participation, horizontally and vertically

The project focal areas are "strengthening terrestrial protected area networks and fostering the sustainable use of biodiversity goods and services, whilst strengthening frameworks for mainstreaming biodiversity". The project's development objective is to "enhance the sustainable livelihoods of the local communities living in and around the protected areas", whilst the global environmental objective is to: "strengthen biodiversity conservation and reduce forest and land degradation".

Key Lessons:

The focal areas, development and environmental objectives dictate the different sectors that should be engaged in the project implementation. There are, however, certain services and products that require specific technical expertise and skill sets. The project's partners include:

- a) Government, through the Department of Forests and Environment, playing the lead role in aligning the project's activities and objectives to central government's manifesto and policies on sustainable development of the terrestrial resources and environment protection; other supporting offices are the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, TLTB and Ministry of Lands, which are members of the NSC;



The Department of Forest has been the backbone of the project, providing administrative support at its head office and logistical support through its divisional offices and station outposts. The Department has been the “key” to opening “doors” of other government ministries and agencies, and promoting the project’s objectives and forging partnerships.

Special mention is the partnership between the Ministry of Forests, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the project for the national launching of the WAKATU campaign.

- a) National – the project is linked nationally through (i) its membership of the Protected Area Committee, under the National Environment Council, and (ii) its contribution to the review and updating of the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP). The members of the two forums include non-government (conservation) organizations and other government ministries and agencies.
- b) Regional – as a regional based project, the Fiji project shares information, and technical expertise with its partner countries, which include the Institute of Applied Science (University of the South Pacific), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. The project has:
 - (1) participated at the FAO-SPC sponsored “Natural Disasters and Trees” workshop, and
 - (2) supported the CBD national focal point (Department of Environment) at the: (i) CBD Secretariat’s Regional Workshop and (ii) the Pacific Islands Round Table, Working Group and Regional Meetings.

Through these national and regional engagements, the project is able to promote its objectives, better align its activities and identify synergies and potential partnerships.

- a) International – the project’s achievements are being promoted through the FAO monthly newsletter. Through this exposure, the project was invited to the IUCN World Conservation Congress held in Hawaii.

- b) Community partnership and participation is an integral aspect in the project ensuring success in the implementation and achievement of outputs, and sustaining the efforts in the future. The approach has been to: (i) involve the respective provincial offices in all community and village consultations; (ii) establish Site Support Groups at the project sites with representatives from the landowning communities, as a mediating forum that are involved in the planning and monitoring of site-based activities; (iii) identification and use of local champions, including church pastors, sports personalities, farmers and influential members of the community in the promotion and awareness (WAKATU) campaigns.
- c) Women and Youth groups – these are effective partnerships for change within the communities. Mothers are the backbone (support service) of a family unit, whilst the youths are future leaders.
- d) Experts have been engaged for their specific skill sets and capacity. There is a lack of capacity in-country and for this reason, regional and international experts are engaged to deliver quality service and/or product. Experts engaged were: (i) SeaWeb (cChange), a Communication Specialist; (ii) Australian Centre for Environmental Compliance to conduct Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Skills training; and (iii) The New Zealand Land Care that assisted in the development of the Soils Map and Interpretative Manual, developing an Education Kit on CBD for Primary Schools.

These experts/organizations have greater capacity to deliver the expected outputs within acceptable time-limits, which has (i) assisted in the implementation of other spin-off activities; (ii) gained recognition and demand for its replication/ repetition.

The key lessons are (a) “leaving the job to experts” to ensure that products are delivered on time and at quality standards, (b) good and reliable partnerships “do not happen overnight” and is developed through experience; (c) engaging partners that will ensure that the efforts and initiatives of the project are sustained and further developed.



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4) Capacity development and awareness raising

The Fiji project has allocated 23% of its total budget for Capacity Building and Awareness Raising, and engaging various service organizations and experts to deliver/produce a range of products and services.

Key Lessons:

Training Program on Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management

The project is developing a training program on CBD and Protected Area Management that will be delivered at the Forestry Training Centre. The program will be delivered at 6 different levels that begins at the grass-root and ends at the diploma level. The training program:

- a) is all inclusive, as it is mindful that building of capacity must target all levels of community and forest users in order to be penetrative, and overcome the barriers and address the confronting issues of loss in biodiversity and unsustainable forest and land practices;
- b) can be delivered as units for specific, targeted groups, e.g. plans to incorporate and contribute towards the basic orientation and training of newly recruited government workers;
- c) will build competence, skills and knowledge – the sequencing must show a definite flow that allows the trainee to develop and the change to be consolidated and meaningful;
- d) will attain high standards in its delivery, meeting the national requirements, regionally recognized and ensure it is marketable;
- e) will be reviewed and evolve to continue to meet and address the prevailing issues and challenges;

- f) will be delivered by professionals and through an institution that is capable of providing the administrative and logistical support, and in an environment that is conducive to learning, acknowledges the unique nature of each individual, the diverse cultures and beliefs, whilst instilling discipline and building humane character in its students.

Capacity Building Tour of Queensland, Australia
The project supported the FTC instructors on a capacity building tour of Queensland, Australia. The tour was effective in:

- a) building the knowledge base over a short period of time; exposure to technologies, systems and processes that work in relation to the in-country situation;
- b) providing an insight into the working relationships, partnerships and cooperation between the state (government), communities, non-government and private organizations towards a common goal that is bigger than their individual goals;
- c) establishing networks for future support, funding assistance and exchange through short-term internship;
- d) understanding of the different “scales of economy” and better/wider perspective of similar in-country situations.

Similar tours are encouraged/recommended for landowning communities, middle and senior management of government for the reasons mentioned. Landowning communities will benefit greatly through their engagement and exchange with counterparts, and having a different perspective to their roles and responsibilities as resource owners and their contribution to the national goals.



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The national WAKATU Campaign for awareness raising

The project developed and launched the WAKATU campaign to promote its awareness on CBD, SFM and SLM. The campaign and its theme were developed out of a Communication Strategy. The campaign and the work building up to the launch highlighted the following:

- a) the Campaign adopted the “rising tide” approach with a theme that supported and elevated other campaigns and organizations; this is supported with the use of outreach tools that are self-explanatory and usable. The approach and provision of tools has encouraged organizations to adopt the campaign;
- b) the launch date of the Campaign was televised and screened in cinemas for a week prior to its launch, with a snippet of the campaign as a teaser; this was to inform, remind and arouse the curiosity of the viewers;
- c) there are specific jobs that require specific skill sets – “leave the job to the expert”; this is extremely important for communication and awareness raising;
- d) the campaign must be “branded”, identifiable and unique – so that it is not confused with other campaigns within the same realm;
- e) the message and words used as “punch-lines” were simple and meaningful, and did not overwhelm the audience with information that were mind boggling and at times difficult to decipher;

- f) the use of local champions to promote the campaign. This has been mentioned in an earlier section, but the point cannot be over emphasized. Local communities are more convinced if the message and/or life changing lesson is delivered by one of their own and/or an influential personality;
- g) the timing of the delivery is important and the momentum must be maintained.

Information Centre and Technology:

- a) information centre – is a powerful medium for disseminating information, which can be employed as an enjoyable means of teaching children, with the use of technology to enhance the visual effects and sounds;
- b) 3-dimensional physical models, which can be used (i) to teach communities during the planning process, (ii) as a centre piece (e.g. in the Fiji Museum) to promote Fiji’s land and marine scape, forest-types, land uses, and a conduit for tourist destinations and attractions (ecotourism);
- c) 3-dimensional digital models: the project has developed models for Tomaniivi and Delaikoro, which will be used for planning and monitoring change in forest cover;
- d) the use of phone applications as a medium for disseminating information on WAKATU, CBD, SFM and SLM campaign. Almost all citizens own or have access to mobile phones. The phones company can later market as their “green foot-print” contribution.

5) Links between environmental management, sustainable development, SDG's and livelihoods within the project context

The project focal areas are “strengthening terrestrial protected area networks and fostering the sustainable use of biodiversity goods and services, whilst strengthening frameworks for mainstreaming biodiversity”. The project’s development objective is to “enhance the sustainable livelihoods of the local communities living in and around the protected areas”, whilst the global environmental objective is to: “strengthen biodiversity conservation and reduce forest and land degradation”. These objectives are linked to sustainable development and environmental management.

Key Lessons:

As stated in earlier sections of this report, the basic building block, which leads to achieving the higher national goals of sustainable development, is to address the livelihood and welfare of the local communities. This is particularly important in the case of Fiji, as over 80% of all land is communally owned.

The FPAM is under the United Nations’ Convention on Biodiversity and as such, will contribute to Fiji achieving the Aichi 2020 Biodiversity Target 11 and 12. Under Target 11, the total protected area coverage must equate to 17% of the total landmass. To achieve this, the project:

- a) will contribute to the Ministry of Forest’s Annual Corporate Plan and Report, and align to the Forest Policy and Programs;
- b) will contribute to the updating of the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP), which is a key document and information source for the CBD secretariat;
- c) will extend/consolidate and protect new conservation sites under protected area regimes, with the possibility for future connectivity of habitat corridors;
- d) has and/or will produce training programs (FTC Training Program and Education Kit for Primary Schools) to improve the knowledge base in Fiji
- e) will investigate the potential financing modalities for Fiji; this is an important step that attempts to address the issue of forest financing and alternative income generation to reduce reliance on government, whilst empowering local communities;

- f) has and/or will provide baseline data for the project sites, which can be replicated/applied nationally; the baseline data includes biological, socioeconomic, tourism and livelihood.

6) Project Implementation at the community level

Over 80% of all land in Fiji are communally owned, and the project sites fall within this category. It is only logical that the landowning communities play a central role in the project implementation, and more importantly in the design and planning phase.

Key Lessons: -

The importance of the involvement and engagement at the community level has been explained in detail in the previous sections of this report. However, a number of lessons can be revisited in this section, which include:

- a) The importance of observing protocol and visiting the provincial and TLTB offices before village engagements and contacts are made.
- b) Understanding the governance structures of the customary land tenure system, the relevant laws that regulate their usage and the customs and traditions – this is the message encapsulated in the WAKATU campaign and the reason for its effectiveness and success.
- c) Do not create new community-based forums if there are forums in existence that are operating effectively; these existing forums should/can be supported.
- d) It is important to thoroughly profile communities (socioeconomic baseline) to gain a better understanding of the needs, capabilities and capacity.
- e) In dealing with alternative livelihood issues, although the participatory approach is necessary, the coaching approach is also encouraged.
- f) Women and Youth groups play an important role in planning, translation and knowledge transfer.
- g) Regular visits and continued presence – site support group model is encouraged.

7) Project impact assessment

The project document has listed certain indicators of “change” to measure the impact of the project.

Key Lessons:

The impact of the project will not be realized within the project life, but there are baselines set. Government must, therefore, pick up from where the project ended and maintain the momentum of efforts and initiatives made: -

- a) Financing remains the key driver for change. Until and unless a sustainable financing mechanism is provided to support the establishment and management of the protected areas and its communities, the reliance will fall back on Government. Given the diverse obligations of Government, financing through the national budget will not be sufficient to meet all related costs. The project will assess the financing options for PA in Fiji. The key is the establishment of a national trust fund, with investments from Government, TLTB, private firms and other sources.
- b) Policy, Legal and Institutional Framework – ministries and institutions (having an impact on conservation and SLM) have statements and legal instruments within their respective Laws and Policy related to CBD and SLM. However, there is a continued loss in biodiversity as result of deforestation and land conversion. The project will make recommendations of a Framework (protocols, processes and systems) to effectively manage PA in Fiji. There is a desire from the Protected Area Committee to produce a Policy for Protected Area in Fiji.
- c) Campaign and Awareness Raising – the WAKATU campaign has been successful (e.g. local communities have led the campaign in Delaikoro and the results are that within a month of campaigning, 3 out of the 38 villages have agreed to protect their forests for conservation) The project will support the line ministries in institutionalizing the campaign within their organizations. The campaign has also developed a Facebook page with a counter to record the number of visits to the page.

- d) Demonstration through pilot-testing – this mode of training has been successful to some extent. Local farmers and extension officers have commended (training assessment report) the usefulness and relevance of the training. Local farmers have adopted the new technologies and techniques, with a reported increase in income. A number of farmer have also relocated their farms out of the reserve. The worry is the longevity of the change in attitude, which cannot be measured within the life of the project.
- e) Non-timber Forest and Ecotourism ventures – the project will provide options of potential ventures and will establish pilot-tests. However, the marketing aspect will not be covered within the project life and will need Government and/ or support of other development projects.

8) Approaches for sustainability and legacy into the future

The following achievements include:

- a) Protected Area Legal Review completed in 2015; the reform will culminate with recommendations for an effective management framework for protected areas in Fiji.
- b) Conservation Area - At present, 2,700 Ha has been secured for protection. An additional 25,000 Ha is being pursued; the establishment of Site Support Groups at two sites.
- c) Literature Review of Studies and Surveys of Taveuni.
- d) Baseline Assessment (Biological and Socioeconomic) of the Delaikoro Forests.
- e) Guidelines of Processes and Protocols for Establishing Long-term Monitoring Plots for PA
- f) WAKATU campaign that is being used, which other organizations are willing to adopt.
- g) Forestry Training Centre's new training program on CBD and PA Management (with its Training and Financing Plans) that will be offered in 2017.
- h) Education Kit on CBD for primary school level.
- i) Assessment Report on Financing Options for PA in Fiji, and an Evaluation Report of the Operational Effectiveness of the Sovi Basin Conservation Endowment Trust Fund.
- j) Assessment Report on the NTF options in the 3 project sites.
- k) Biophysical Survey, Land Use Mapping and Soil Survey Reports of the 3 project sites, and the Training Reports.
- l) Demonstration plots in the 3 project sites.

Annex 8: Samoa report

Prepared by: national project coordinator and project team

1) Project design, planning and reviewing

For the Samoa project, the design was already starting way back in 2005 when the Forestry Division was still under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, Fisheries and Meteorology (MAFFM). The project name at that time was “Medium Term Upland Forest” project. However, it got shelved for some unknown reasons since then until 2010 when a group of consultants was given the task to review the design and come up with a new design and probably a new name that would better reflect the situation on hand at the time. This was then submitted by the national government as a proposal for funding to the GEF in which FAO was selected by GEF as implementing agency. FAO then assigned another team of consultants to look at the project design, planning and review of the proposal by Samoan government. After the FAO review, the project then was re-designed and re-named as “Forestry and Protected Area Management” project. So we can now see that it took up to six years just to finalize the final project design which was then used to develop the final project document that was actually implemented starting in 2012 until now under a new name “Forestry and Protected Area Management “ (FPAM) project.

Key lessons:

With all these series of designing and planning by different people throughout a considerable length of time, the following key lessons had been learned:

- a) Some villages identified in the first design in 2005 as included in the project sites, had withdrew when the project actually started in 2012 due to long wait, a period of eight (8) years. Some people can endure long waits, but some can't. So when villages withdrew, there was urgency to find new villages to replace them, and this leads to another lesson.
- b) Political influence in selecting sites for project can be both good and bad. It's good because it's faster but it's bad in the long run as village people will not fully support and thus not participating in the implementation of project activities which resulted in more delays.

- c) All relevant key stakeholders should be involved in designing and planning of the project including communities and identified key technical staff/personnel.
- d) Selection of sites for project should be based on nature of project and should meet a set of criteria for selecting sites.
- e) At least give a year to allow for Project Management Unit (PMU) to plan activities and ensuring that realistic activities and target/ focus as well as the right people to implement the project before implementation.
- f) Ensure baseline information are analysed and validated before implementation of project activities to avoid unrealistic targets and results which then leads to project failure at the end.
- g) The nature of these biodiversity conservation projects require much more than five years to implement and monitor results in order to be effective especially when dealing with communities and that the community people are involved in implementation of much of the project activities.
- h) Adequate logical framework matrix is critical for effective project design and implementation in inventory and monitoring projects like FPAM.

2) Governance and management arrangements for implementation

It may stem from the way the project was designed and planned that lessons regarding governance and management arrangements for project implementation were being observed throughout the project life. When the project started in July 2012, the project manager (ACEO-Forestry, MNRE) at the time decided to have only one National Steering Committee (NSC) for the four forestry projects (ICCRIFS, SAFTP, JICS, & FPAM). This was seen as quite a hassle in organising and conducting such big meetings with diverse issues to be discussed. The new ACEO-Forestry (Project Manager) came on board in 2014 and he changed the previous arrangement and gave each project its own NSC. Likewise the recruitment of project staff was quite unique in that MNRE advertised and interviewed the applicants while the details



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of the position and other logistics like salary rates and etc were with FAO, they were not disclosed during the interviews. Furthermore, FAO had its own protocol and systems of doing things which were completely different from the local government systems. So it could be well said that the project staff were selected by MNRE and then worked and responsible to a different institution altogether, the FAO. Another interesting point to note was the fact that both project staffs (the NPC & NTA) were supposed to be based in Apia while the three project sites were all in the island of Savaii.

Key Lessons:

All pre-arrangements and recruitment procedures as alluded to above, could well lead to the following key lessons:

- a) There are no project staff on site; they commute to the sites only when there's work to be done, but they are both based at the MNRE office in Apia. This was seen as creating problems with communities not seeing the project team very often and might resulted in losing interest and trust by the communities.
- b) Arrangements for recruiting staff is not clear among both the executing and implementing agency and this leads to the project staff being left with uncertainty and insecurity.
- c) Project activities should also meet Ministry objectives and targets in terms of working together to implement project activities that are linked to Ministry/FD's targets.
- d) Require thorough review in the use of permanent government staff for effective implementation of project activities and sustainability.

- e) Logical Strategic Framework of the project to be well developed and to provide realistic baseline data to determine reliable targets.
- f) Each project like FPAM should have its own NSC rather than having one NSC for many projects.
- g) NSC should be well represented with people from national government ministries involved in the project, as well as the partners and service providers.

3) Partnerships and participation, horizontally and vertically

Partnerships and participations horizontally and vertically for project implementation was quite effectively organised and coordinated in the Samoan project. Government ministries and organisations as partners, as well as non-government organisations as service providers were closely working together in the implementation of project activities and to ensure that the project outputs and outcomes are delivered with good standards and according to time schedules. There was also linkage to other similar ongoing projects within the government as well as those projects implemented by regional organisations like SPREP, SPC and CI. Government ministries working in partnerships with FPAM include Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE), Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD), Ministry of Finance (MOF), while Non Government Organisations (NGOs) providing services for the project include Women In Business Development Incorporated



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(WIBDI), Samoa Farmers Association (SFA) and Samoa Conservation Society (SCS). The FPAM project was also working in close partnerships with the eight communities within the three sites especially in the implementation of project activities..

Key Lessons:

- a) Vertically, the project should be aligned with government strategic planning e.g. Samoa Development Strategies (SDS) to ensure that the project outcomes contribute to the achievement of the SDS.
- b) Horizontally, funding disbursement should be aligned with government financing system to ensure good financial records are kept for final project evaluation and that to maintain accountability.
- c) Maintaining good relationships between different stakeholders through working together and consulting each other as partners will lead to clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- d) .Participation of both men and women in project implementation was 50/50, meaning the gender balance issue was not a problem.
- e) People participation on community level was triggered by the need to learn and to get something out of their effort, but sometimes this was triggered by just expectation for a monetary reward or gift from the project. People seem to prefer working on their own property than to participate in communal developments which they doubt very much the equal benefit sharing at harvesting time.

- f) Good partnership and participation of project partners also encourage a multi cross-sectoral approach in not only the implementation of project activities, but also the acceptance of the project concept by other sectors.

4) Capacity development and awareness raising

Capacity development and awareness raising are so vital in project implementation whereas the partners and communities involved should have the know-how and the technical skills to carry out the required outputs with good standards within timeframes. Raising the awareness of the public about any new project is so vital in the sense that people will only adopt new ideas and practices if they are aware and understand about them. Working in partnerships with other national ministries and NGOs is a good way of sharing expertise and at the same time building capacities of the people. Making good use of national and international events celebrations to raise awareness on the project is another good way of capacity development and awareness raising. Some means of awareness raising used by the project include development of some documentaries, video clips, TV advertisements, signage/posters, P3DModels, and project participation in national and international events celebrations like the National Environment Week, International Day of Forests, Biodiversity Day, Wetlands Day and etc.



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Key Lessons:

With the project having its capacity development and awareness raising well planned and organized during implementation, the following lessons have been learned:

- a) There was continuous capacity building and awareness raising all throughout the project targeting all levels including communities at the local level and relevant stakeholders at the national level.
- b) Communities have participated in national activities promoting biodiversity conservation and this may inspire them to continue supporting and promoting the importance of biodiversity conservation.
- c) Service Providers like SFA and WIBDI have been working together with communities and train them to build their capacities on sustainable agricultural practices and organic agricultural production respectively.
- d) This can be an output which was effectively achieved in itself. The training of communities and stakeholders staff on areas like sustainable agriculture practices and organic production was beneficial to all those who helped and involved in the project (national ministries, NGOs and communities).
- e) Need continuous capacity building and awareness all throughout the project life span targeting all levels not only communities but relevant stakeholders at the national level.
- f) Communities should participate in national activities promoting biodiversity conservation.

- g) Service Providers like SFA and WIBDI should work with communities and train them to build their capacities on sustainable agricultural practices and organic agriculture production respectively.

5) Links between environmental management, sustainable development, SDG's and livelihoods within the project context

Biodiversity conservation and sustainable development are both addressed under certain components of the project and this has strengthened attempts to supporting project objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Some of the impacts and lessons learned under this thematic area are captured below:

Key Lessons:

The establishment of new and additional protected areas under this project has contributed to a substantial increment of the protected area network in all the four project countries and therefore giving support to the achievement of the SDCs. Lessons learned include:

- a) There was direct linkage of the Aichi Targets to forest conservation (Protected Areas) targets.
- b) Project targets on conservation are in line with the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) as identified under the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP).

- c) The MEAs (CBD, UNCCD, etc) obligations also link to project targets - SDG 15 linking to forestry activities.
- d) It is important to maintain and even strengthen these links with local organisations and government agencies, regional and international organisations.
- e) Livelihood of people and communities living in and around the protected areas have been somehow improved by engaging and actually involved in implementing project activities on sustainable agricultural practices, organic agriculture production, and eco-cultural tourism industry.

6) Project implementation at the community level

Communal lands in the Samoa Land Tenure system are all under the Traditional land category which comprises 80% of the total land area. The three project sites in Savaii are all communal land and owned by the communities. This has some impacts on implementation of the project.

Key Lessons:

Since the project aims at creating changes on how the community people see the importance of conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development, the following lessons were learned:

- a) Often times during project implementation we see more women than men, but this does not mean that there is no gender balance. Villages have their own way of organising work between men and women. Usually, men are allotted to do more of the tough work like land preparation and installing infrastructure while women to do the easy work like sowing, planting and weeding.
- b) We tend to think that communities send a wrong selection of participants to training workshops organised by the project, but we should also consider the situation at the community level where the majority didn't even attend any schools before and thus their level of understanding is very limited. The project's role is to train and teach anyone who attend these training workshops using hands-on practical exercises on the field for capacity building.
- c) Community members have other commitments in their daily routines and that's why they don't turn up for project work. There should be a well planned work program for the communities taking into accounts their commitments to avoid delays in achieving work targets.

- d) There was generally a very good support and acceptance by the communities of the project activities and any other related tasks that were required from time to time.
- e) The project team has developed a very close working relationship with the communities especially the village council of chiefs, the women's committees, and the youth groups, throughout the project life.

7) Project impact assessment

Quite a number of impacts were noted throughout and towards the end of the project in terms of village people's perception of forestry and biodiversity conservation, as well as their potential importance in the sustainable development of the country.

Key Lessons:

The following lessons were learned:

- a) Communities learning new and appropriate practices and techniques to improve their agricultural production for livelihood is a positive impact.
- b) Communities engaging in biodiversity conservation activities as a result of good awareness and capacity building.
- c) Communities still honoured their commitment to conserve their upland forests as per MOU signed between the communities and the MNRE in the first year of the project.
- d) Some more impact assessment is necessary at the end of the project to see whether communities continue with project activities as planned.

8) Approaches for sustainability and legacy into the future

The following lessons include:

- a) Government agencies (MNRE) should continue to work with communities in continuing project work with assistance from other government stakeholders when the project finishes.
- b) Village committees should ensure that the activities in the Management Plans are carried out and this requires the initiative of the committee with encouragement from the village chiefs.
- c) GEF 5 projects which are on-going already within MNRE should pick up some of the unfinished outputs and activities as outlined in the Exit Strategies.

Annex 9: Vanuatu Report

Prepared by: National project coordinator and project team



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1) Project design, planning and reviewing

- Top-down design (not bottom up). Therefore, missed opportunity to seal early engagement with targeted communities.
- Terrestrial area chosen according to GEF 4 biodiversity strategy and with focussed on the significant sites identified in the Vanuatu NBSAP. Communities agreed to the project idea of having their forest protected however it has limited their daily uses of the forest.
- When developing the proposal not all relevant national stakeholders including the communities were not involved. If relevant communities of the three islands of Gaua, Pentecost and Eromanga were engaged early then implementation would have started more smoothly and quickly.
- There was a “big time span” from the time of the project proposal development and implementation therefore the planned project activities have changed and should have been critically reviewed during the national inception workshop. This is the opportunity to amend the design e.g. review of the forest policy was planned for GEF 4, but during the time FPAM was in planning, this work was done.
- Not having the opportunity to review also didn't give the opportunity to add elements that would have been useful.
- Also this review would be an opportunity for the communities present at the inception workshop to comment on the project activities of their areas, make adjustments and also to confirm their support to work with the project.
- After the project mid-term evaluation report is received, a lessons learned workshop should have taken place to help implementing countries to implement the evaluation findings/recommendations were necessary.
- The annual regional steering committee meetings should also be an opportunity to make an analysis of project activities over the 12 months period.



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2) Governance and management arrangements for implementation

- Project Coordinator's role was unclear at first mixing coordination as well as actual on-ground implementation (i.e. too much responsibility was assumed by the PC for about a year, until this was corrected); Implementation agency should have organised a meeting of all national PC's specifically for induction training to understand their roles prior project commencement and at their appointments.
- PC also has some capacity-building needs that were not addressed as the project progressed.
- Financing through FAO system is lengthy and protracted. There were delays in important payments that impeded work. Vanuatu Government has a financing system that is capable of managing finances disbursed in blocks in accordance to approved quarterly or bi-annual work plan in advance by FAO.
- Accountability of PC's and reporting was primarily to FAO. This resulted in the executing agency (Dept Forestry and Department of Environment and Protection) being unaware of report content and progress of project implementation that went out until feedback was received. This disconnect caused confusion and misunderstanding. It also broke the natural line of answerability of staff in the Department, therefore caused to question the role of the project director in Vanuatu.
- National steering committee comprised 3, (Forestry, Environment and PC). This role would now be assumed by the newly-formed National Biodiversity Advisory Council (taken from Forestry, Environment, Fisheries, Agriculture, and Cultural Centre in accordance with the Environment Protection Act). The

nature of projects managed will determine other members invited onto the committee for those projects. This new committee will also be the steering committee for other biodiversity and conservation related projects in country.

- PC's need an ear into the communities. This is one role for the community committees.
- For effective implementation of project activities project at community level and to capture community opinions to the project, a local, paid, community representative should be appointed.

3) Partnerships and participation, horizontally and vertically

- Horizontal partnership between Department of Forest, Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, Department of Tourism, Department of Geology, Mines and Water Resources, Provincial governments and Water Resources, worked well. This has evolved from experience in several prior projects, and may not otherwise have worked so well.
- We could usefully have involved local NGOs (CSO's & CBO's) where they have the capacity to implement project activities.
- Women participated in workshops, meetings, consultations, surveys and were on the management committee. The management plan once it comes into effect will also focus activities on women.
- Our work has attracted other agencies to locate work at our sites.
- Similarly, we have attracted multi-lateral conventions to work at our site, e.g. RAMSAR, Convention on Biodiversity and World Heritage activities are active on Lake Letes on Gaua Island.

- Skilled staff in government are distracted by multiple demands on their time. This delayed and otherwise affected delivery of project activities. A model that might be considered might be paid secondments to the project for short periods to deliver specified products.

4) Capacity development and awareness raising

- There was a knowledge flow from communities to the Executing Agency to develop the capacity to create the management plan. Once the plan is in place this will identify training needs of the community to undertake their responsibilities under the plan.
- The community needs to be more aware of what they have, what we are protecting, and what is special about what they have. This need for awareness of the forest's importance extends beyond the immediate community to those in the surrounding areas.
- We should analyse the success of the awareness programme once it has been delivered, either in the final days of this project or in its continuation under GEF-5. Future project's should consider the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) survey, where a baseline survey (of environment awareness and information knowledge) needs to be undertaken with targeted communities at the beginning of project implementation and final survey towards end of the project. This approach will help to measure the impact of the awareness on changes of communities' attitudes towards environment protection or importance, and to see types of practices they are doing towards biodiversity conservation, protection and sustainable management of resources.
- We need to do more awareness-raising with the provincial governments so this initiative can be replicated in other provinces
- Peer-to-peer exchange of community representatives to success stories in other similar countries. This should have been done mid-project so that insights gained can be utilised.
- Basic training was given to communities to help with biodiversity assessment, but this was not fully developed because of lack of funds from the project. No hand-outs were given, the curriculum was not fully developed, etc.

- Website shares information of Forestry Dept work programmes and allows people from outside about these activities and rules and regulations around forests. We will try and collect statistics of number of website visits, comparative interest in the different pages, origin of website visitors, etc. so that we have a measure of the impact and effectiveness of this medium.
- We will consider the budget and resources available for website maintenance. Under a low-budget regime, we will try and ensure that website content is written so that it doesn't look stale after being there for a number of years. Under a sufficient-budget regime, we will continually add new material and update old material and re-shape material into different (more attractive and imaginative forms).
- Several media were used to engender public awareness and to inform communities of the project – posters, banners, radio, factsheets, website, participation in National Days and village days. Among these, we felt that spoken and visual media (radio, banners, posters, website, etc.) were the most successful.

5) Links between environmental management, sustainable development, SDG's and livelihoods within the project context

- Establishment of CCAs/PAs is in accordance with the Environmental Protection and Conservation (EPC) Act. The development of management plan and boundary mapping as activities undertaken through the project are the requirements for legal registration.
- Activities that have been undertaken in developing the management plan, the PA boundary map (and legal registration) contributed directly to the NBSAP because they are nationally significant biodiversity sites.
- Also contributed to the NBSAP which has a goal by 2030 10 protected areas gazetted.
- Contributes to the target-setting of the Aichi 'targets 11' goal of 17% of terrestrial areas and inland waters protected'.
- Strengthens the National Forestry Policy and its underpinning legislation.
- Supports SDG goal 6 (Clean water), Goal 2 (food security), Goal 15 (life on land) Goal 14 (life below water), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 13 (climate action).
- Saw an income-generating opportunity and constructed two tourist bungalows for the community to operate.



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6) Project Implementation at the community level

- Our engagement firstly with chiefs and thence through existing community structures was successful.
- Women, youth and other community leaders (eg. Church pastor, teachers) too part in meetings and workshops.
- Our engagement with communities is incomplete to date and requires continuing with training and ongoing mentoring.
- Once the PAs are legally gazetted, the management committee members will be trained on their roles and responsibilities to implement their PAs management plans as well as providing the annual monitoring reports.
- The project probably gives insufficient weight to addressing community needs (alternative incomes for example). Once this is achieved, there is less pressure on the forest and conservation goals are enhanced.
- Communities are receptive to the biodiversity conservation message but their livelihoods are currently dependant on utilisation of the forest.
- The biodiversity assessment that the community assisted in was delivered to FAO and some results e.g. the eco-tourism study for Pentecost, has been distributed in form of hardcopies to all communities involved. Other results have been shared in form of presentations as well as all the documentaries have been screened at the project sites. Thus, considering appropriate modalities for sharing results at all levels is critical if those are to reach a number of audiences at different levels and honour the contribution of different groups, organizations and people.

- Biodiversity monitoring was not fully achieved and remains to be fully delivered under the Management plan where we have a plan to involve community representatives in further field work. A protocol needs to be established for the establishment of permanent sample plots in the PAs to assess biodiversity state and trend.

7) Project impact assessment

- Socio economic baseline assessments were conducted on all three-project sites but properly comparing end-of-project situation with those baseline assessments will demand further resources.
- We should assess the communication media that communities would like used so a) they receive the message clearly and b) money isn't wasted on unproductive media.
- Currently the sustainable financing measures put in place cannot be assessed until they have run for a while under the management plan.
- Consultation with communities stressed the holistic benefits of forest conservation ("the forest is your pharmacy", "a free supermarket"). This informed a feeling already present in their minds with enough knowledge to convince them of the services, values and functions of the forest to their livelihoods, if it is left standing, not cleared for agriculture or other development.
- Establishing alternative livelihoods (that are not dependant on destructive utilisation of the forest) is difficult to achieve during a (less than) 4 year project span.



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8) Approaches for sustainability and legacy into the future

- The involvement of other stakeholders (Tourism and Agriculture) encouraged adoption of the eco-conservation ethos in their activities. Tourism, for example, recognised that second only to the hospitality of locals, tourists value the greenery and forests of Vanuatu.
- Convincing government of the value to tourism of the intact forests and giving them protection under legislation and in the minds of communities, was the best way of ensuring a legacy into the future.
- We can do all this good work, but it was not supported by the legal framework. So the registration clauses in the Forestry Act were removed to avoid conflict with similar clauses in the Environment Protection and Conservation Act.
- Structuring the management plans as a co-management document gives it status both in government and in the communities. Communities recognise these plans as "their plan", not one imposed by government.
- The project impacted families and tribes replicating PAs in their areas eg. Balesi community on Pentecost Island.
- Significant data resources and written documents were collected, during the project, some of which were replicated on the website. We now have an obligation (for which we haven't planned) to secure these archives of information and to maintain the website.









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