

Cook Islands GEF 7 Project ENUA

2nd Quarter Progress Report 2024

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Project Number/Code:	10780
PIMS #:	6565
Executing Agency:	Cook Islands National Environment Service
Full Project Title:	Enhancing biodiversity considerations and effective protected area management, to safeguard the cook islands integrated eco-systems and species

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SECTION 1: SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND HIGHLIGHTS

1.1 Rarotonga Passages Environmental Management Plan

This quarter, local consultants Te Puna Vai Marama and Te Ipukarea Society, as well as technical consultant Steve Lindsay, have commenced consultations to develop an area-based environmental management plan particularly focused on sea turtle conservation for key areas of concern within Rarotonga, namely the southern passages of Avaavaroa, Rutaki and Papua.



Deliverables and anticipated timelines for this work are as follows:

#	Output Deliverable	Target due date
1	Contract signing, development & acceptance of work plan & lodging of invoice	1 st May 2024
2	Completion of initial stakeholder mapping & consultations	15 th May 2024
3	Completion of desktop assessments and briefing note/summary report	31 st May 2024
4	Completion of draft management plan	15 th June 2024
5	Completion of final plan and recommendations	30 th June 2024
6	Completion of activities, exit debrief, sign off and contract close	30 th July 2024

The consultant team has already delivered on stages 1 - 4 of the work, with a community consultation meeting held in May where approximately 80 participants attended, as well as a survey conducted with 12 of the 18 turtle tour operators to gather their views. A zero draft of the plan has been submitted at the end of this quarter, which will be reviewed and refined in the upcoming quarter prior to being released for public review and comment as per Environment Act s.37.3.

1.2 Project ENUA Banner

A pull-up banner was successfully designed and produced for Project ENUA, intended to be prominently displayed at all related workshops and events. The banner was conceptualized and crafted in-house by the National Environment Service (NES) team, ensuring that it aligns closely with the project's vision. It features unique motifs designed by Raniera Ellison, which represent the rich biodiversity of the Cook Islands, a core theme of Project ENUA. The final production was handled by local company Cook Islands Printing Services (CIPS), delivering a high-quality banner that effectively communicates the project's goals to the public and enhances awareness and recognition of Project ENUA.

1.3 Project Meetings with UNDP

The team engages with UNDP during PSC meetings to address any project updates, implementation, monitoring and evaluation goals. We use these meetings to address any thoughts, questions, concerns, and ideas related to our project goals and objectives. When we need clarification on the steps for completing project documents for report, we reach out to

Anne. Additionally, the team actively interacts with key stakeholders to provide updates on project progress, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation plans.

1.4 Environment Day

The GEF 7 team successfully organized an Environment Day in the Takuvaine catchment, bringing together government agencies, aronga mana, and NGO environment groups for a day of replanting and environmental education. The event offered participants a hands-on opportunity to contribute to local ecosystem restoration while learning about environmental conservation. Collaboration with the Muri Environment Care group was a key aspect of the event, leading to the planting of vetiver and various other plant species to enhance biodiversity and improve soil stability in the catchment area. This initiative effectively fostered community engagement and strengthened partnerships dedicated to environmental protection.



To learn more about World Environment Day, review the following attached [eDM](#).

1.5 Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)

The team is continuing work on the animation video to explain the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM). Project officer Fred Nicholas has been leading this effort, focusing on both the English version of the video and the voiceovers. He used the application Doodly to create the animation and developed the script in English. In addition, Fred collaborated with Raemaki Karati from Te Papa Turanga Manawa Maori/National Cultural Identity to translate the script into Māori.

After the initial team review, it was identified that the video was too long and required revisions. The team has now carefully incorporated the feedback received and is refining the video. Once the revisions are complete, an updated version will be shared with the team for further review.

1.6 Cook Islands Biosecurity Video

At the GEF 7 project steering committee meeting in April, it was noted that Cook Islands Tourism has been actively working on producing the new 'Love Our Little Paradise' video, aimed at promoting regenerative tourism, along with the complementary Biosecurity video. The Biosecurity video, a collaborative effort between tourism, agriculture, and environment sectors supported by Project ENUA, focuses on raising awareness about protecting the Cook Islands' ecosystems. Efforts are underway to incorporate more environmental aspects of Mana Tiaki into the biosecurity video, which remains in draft form with feedback being sought. It is proposed to screen the video in the departure and arrivals halls at Rarotonga airport, on incoming Air New

Zealand flights, and potentially on Jetstar flights. This initiative is expected to reach a wide audience and enhance awareness and understanding of the country's biosecurity requirements.



1.7 University of Newcastle (UON) interns support to KAP Surveys

During the second quarter, the University of Newcastle was planning their visit to Rarotonga to support the GEF 7 Project ENUA team in developing and implementing the Knowledge, Attitudes,

and Practices (KAP) survey, designed to assess community perceptions and behaviors related to environmental conservation and project goals. An initial KAP survey was conducted during this period, but low participation and weak linkages between the questions and the project’s objectives highlighted the need for a stronger baseline. The revised KAP survey will provide an updated baseline to guide targeted communication efforts, aimed at increasing awareness in key project output areas.

It requires noting that project indicator #14 and associated midterm and end of project targets will require revision based on the updated KAP survey.

This initiative is part of the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the National Environment Service (NES) and the University of Newcastle (UoN), which outlines general provisions of support and partnership between the organisations throughout the course of the GEF 7 Project ENUA. The project team looks forward to welcoming UON to Rarotonga next quarter to undertake these KAP surveys.

1.8 Project Implementation Report (PIR) 2024

As outlined in the project implementation report, several key activities and milestones have been successfully achieved. Despite an initial delay in receiving project funds, which temporarily impacted timelines, the issue has been resolved, and the project is now on track with both its timeline and budget. Highlights of progress include the development and refinement of the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey to establish a strong baseline for targeted communications and successful community engagement initiatives such as the Environment Day in the Takuvaine catchment. The team is currently focused on completing remaining deliverables, addressing ongoing challenges, and laying the groundwork for the project's long-term impact.

SECTION 2: OUTPUT RESULTS DESCRIPTION & TRACKING

The activities presented above contributed towards the following project outputs:

<i>Output</i>	<i>Activity</i>
Component 1: Mainstreaming safeguards to conserve biodiversity and maintain ecosystem services across key development sectors.	
Outcome 1: Biodiversity and ecosystems services safeguards embedded in national and island governance frameworks, and policies, and institutional capacities strengthen across key development sectors (i.e., agriculture, infrastructure, tourism)	

<p>Output 1.1: National Legislation, policies, strategies and plans amended or created to include gender issues and safeguard KBAs and ecosystem services from unsustainable land use activities of key development sectors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rarotonga Southern Passages Management Plan consultancy position ● Biosecurity Video - Cook Islands Tourism and Ministry of Agriculture ● University of Newcastle (UON) to support GEF 7 Project ENUA in the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey ● Communications Specialist Strategy TOR ● Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) TOR
<p>Output 1.2: National Environment Information System (NEIS) developed and institutionalized to support intersectoral coordination, monitoring and integration of biodiversity and ecosystem safeguards in land use planning development processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rarotonga Southern Passages Management Plan consultancy position ● Communications Specialist Strategy TOR
<p>Output 1.3: Execution and communication of the catchment audits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rarotonga Southern Passages Management Plan consultancy position ● Communications Specialist Strategy TOR
<p>Outcome 2: Ecosystems services restored, maintained and enhanced, and globally significant biodiversity safeguarded in priority catchments and managed areas</p>	
<p>Output 2.1: Audits completed for priority catchments, with key pollutant sources (including nutrients) and responsible parties identified and interventions prescribed (linked to output 1.1).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● University of Newcastle (UON) to support GEF 7 Project ENUA in the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey ● Gender Safeguards TOR ● Communications Specialist Strategy TOR
<p>Output 2.2: Intersectoral catchment management plans and a management plan for the Manuae Managed Area developed and implemented in partnership with key stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● University of Newcastle (UON) to support GEF 7 Project ENUA in the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey ● Gender Safeguards TOR ● Communications Specialist Strategy TOR
<p>Output 2.3: Improved gender sensitive natural resource management in priority catchments and the Manuae Managed Area achieved through adoption of innovative practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● University of Newcastle (UON) to support GEF 7 Project ENUA in the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey ● Communications Specialist Strategy TOR
<p>Component 2: Improving the management framework to effectively conserve a national protected areas system representative of Cook Islands biodiversity.</p>	

Outcome 3: Globally significant biodiversity protected across Cook Islands through effective selection, design, management, monitoring and enforcement of its PAs systems

<p>Output 3.1: Management plans updated / developed and operational in target PAs, with legitimate governance structures in place that are inclusive of traditional management systems (i.e. House of Ariki), gender mainstreaming objectives, and collaborative arrangements with landowners and local communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gender Safeguards TOR ● Communications Specialist Strategy TOR
<p>Output 3.2: Management capacities in target Pas strengthened through application of PAC, PAMP, and tools (e.g., NEIS), and training and systems on biodiversity conservation, surveillance and monitoring.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review for the TOR for technical Consultant ● Gender Safeguards TOR ● Communications Specialist Strategy TOR
<p>Output 3.3: Effective community conserved area demonstrated through a newly established Rarotonga Cloud Forest PA with collaborative agreements involving government, traditional leaders and communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communications Specialist Strategy TOR

Component 3: Raising awareness, managing knowledge, mainstreaming gender and monitoring, evaluating and disseminating project results.

Outcome 4: Greater understanding of values of conserving Cook Islands biodiversity and ecosystem services; adaptive management informed by M&E results; and dissemination of knowledge gained, and lessons learned.

<p>Output 4.1: Gender-responsive Knowledge Management and Communications Strategy developed and implemented, including annual action plans with targeted public awareness programmes to promote the values of biodiversity and ecosystem services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project ENUA banner ● Project Meetings with UNDP ● Gender Safeguards TOR ● Communications Specialist Strategy TOR
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<p>Output 4.2: Gender-sensitive knowledge and information products on processes, best practices, innovations, lessons learned, and project findings developed and disseminated to stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project Meetings with UNDP ● Environment Day ● Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) ● Gender Safeguards TOR ● Communications Specialist Strategy TOR
<p>Output 4.3: Participatory monitoring and evaluation, including gender mainstreaming, informs project implementation, decision-making and lessons learned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project Meetings with UNDP ● Communications Specialist Strategy TOR

SECTION 3: INDICATOR RESULTS DESCRIPTION & TRACKING

73% (11/15) of project indicators.

Indicator #	Indicator Description	Progress
Indicator 1	<p>Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cloud Forest - Suwarrow - Takutea - Takitumu Conservation Area 	<p>No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.</p>

Indicator 2	<p>Marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suwarrow - Takutea - Manuae 	No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.
Indicator 3	<p>Area of landscapes under improved practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avana - Turangi - Avatiu - Takuvaine 	The University of Newcastle team visited Rarotonga for two weeks to help conduct a survey in Avana, Turangi, Avatiu, and Takuvaine. The survey focused on understanding local knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to the environment and sustainable resource use.
Indicator 4	<p>Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (hectares; excluding protected areas)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avana - Turangi - Avatiu - Takuvaine 	No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.
Indicator 5	Greenhouse emissions mitigated.	No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.
Indicator 6	<p>Number of direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as a co-benefit of GEF investment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tracking how many people are benefitting from the project. 	The KAP survey conducted by the University of Newcastle (UON) and GEF 7 team collected data on the number of men and women surveyed, providing valuable insights into community engagement. Additionally, the tea has been tracking attendance at meeting and events by creating attendance sheets, helping

		to understand which local stakeholders and community members are being consulted regarding the project.
Indicator 7	Legislation, policies and safeguard measures adopted and under implementation.	The GEF 7 team is seeking a consultant to assist us with the development of a turtle management plan.
Indicator 8	Regulations developed or updated to reflect strengthened biodiversity and ecosystem safeguards.	No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.
Indicator 9	Improved capacities of key development sectors, as measured by improvements in capacity development scorecard assessments of (a) NES, (b) CIT, (c) MOA, (D) ICI	Consultations have been held with the Ministry of Agriculture to gain a better understanding of how GEF 7 can support and collaborate with the ministry.
Indicator 10	Priority actions in the intersectoral catchment management plans reflected in the work programmes / budgets of NES, MOA, ICI, and CIT by the end of the project	A TOR has been drafted and finalised with the UoN to seek out a Chief Technical Advisor to assist us with the catchment audits.
Indicator 11	Increased adoption of sustainable natural resource management, as measured by (a) number of innovative practices piloted in the priority catchments; (b) reduction in the use of glyphosate, paraquat, and imidacloprid, and (c) number of tourism operators certified under the Mana Tiaki Eco-Certification Scheme.	The team has been collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture to create factsheets aimed at raising awareness among local farmers and the community. These resources will be aimed at encouraging the adoption of organic and natural farming methods as alternatives to chemical-based practices. The goal is to promote more sustainable farming

		practices that are better for the environment and health.
Indicator 12	Improved science-based protected area management, as measured by information on biodiversity resource inventories and vegetative area/cover systematically compiled.	The team held an Environment Day event at Takuvaine catchment with local groups and ministries, focused on replanting and environmental education. Working with the Muri Environment Care group, we planted vetiver grass and other plant species to boost biodiversity and soil stability.
Indicator 13	Biodiversity threats reduced, as measured by the number of sites reporting absence of invasive rats after eradication interventions.	No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.
Indicator 14	Level of agreement to the following statement: Conservation areas/Ra'ui have improved the status of ecological systems in the Cook Islands.	No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.
Indicator 15	Increase in flow of knowledge and in information on best practices, as measured by (a) the cumulative number of visits to the NES website and social media platforms, and (b) the number of knowledge products generated and disseminated (case studies, fact sheets, short videos, guidance documents, etc.)	

SECTION 4: FINANCIAL SUMMARY AND PROGRESS

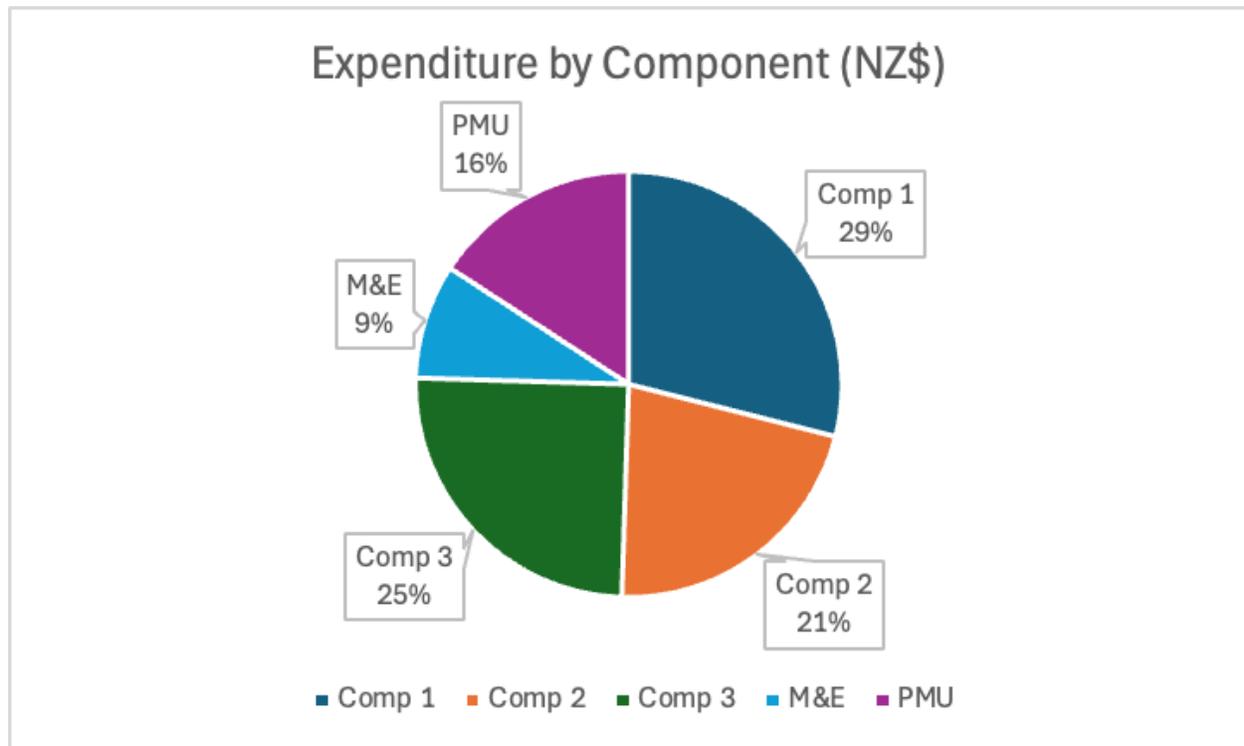
Q2 continued to progress expenditure of funds received in Q1 against the project's workplan. A summary of the quarter's expenditure is provided below with allocations across components and budget lines provided. Full financial details are provided in the project's financial reports to MFEM-DCD and UNDP.

In total, NZ\$45,814.97 was spent this quarter, equating to 21% of the in-country budget received.

<i>Narration</i>	<i>NZ\$ Amount</i>	<i>% budget</i>
Total amount received	\$214,254.63	100%
Q1 liquidation	\$42,055.51	20%
Remaining balance	\$172,199.12	80%
Q2 expenditure	\$45,814.97	21%
Remaining balance	\$126,384.15	59%

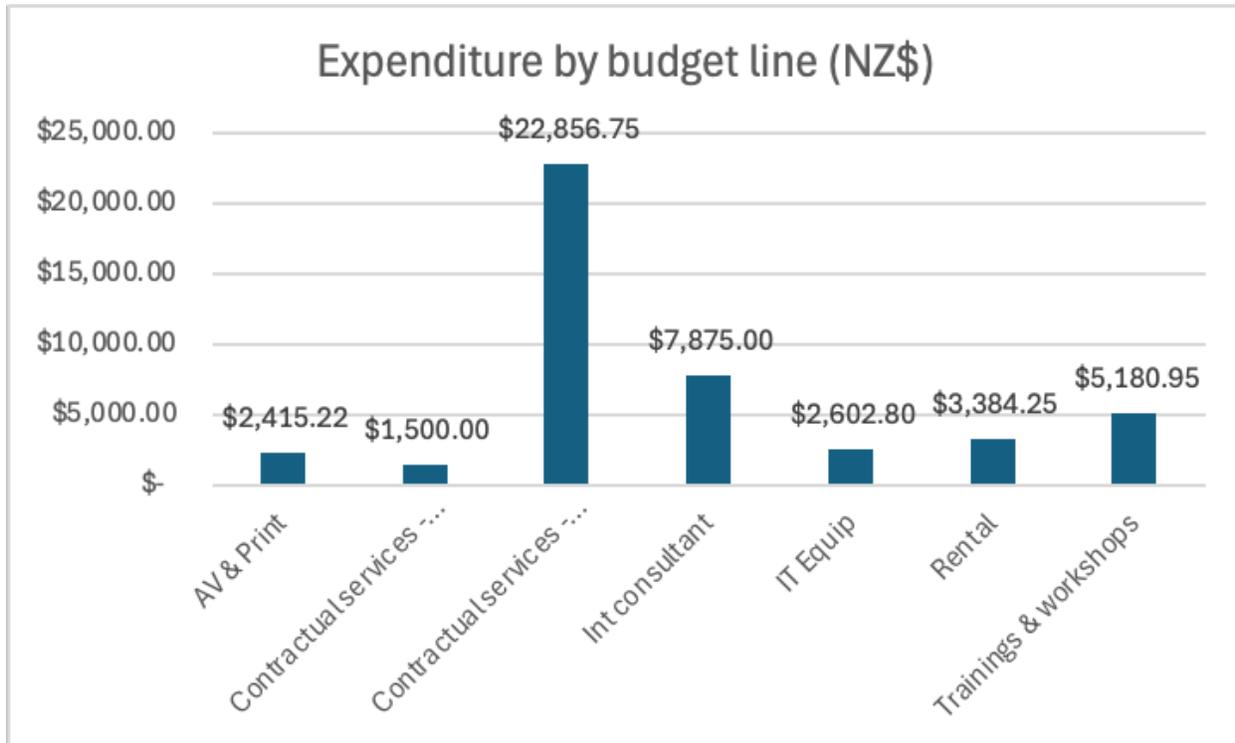
<i>Component</i>	<i>Expenditure (NZ\$)</i>	<i>%</i>
Component 1	13,261.08	29%
Component 2	\$9,883.08	22%
Component 3	\$11,433.51	25%
M&E	\$3,992.10	9%
PMU	\$7,245.20	16%

Total	\$	45,814.97	100%
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Budget line	Expenditure (NZ\$)	%
Audio Visual & Print Production	\$2,415.22	5%
Contractual services - company	\$1,500.00	3%
Contractual services - implementing partner	\$22,856.75	50%
International consultant	\$7,875.00	17%
IT Equipment	\$2,602.80	6%
Rental	\$3,384.25	7%

Trainings & workshops	\$5,180.95	11%
Total	\$45,814.97	100%



SECTION 5: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & GENDER

The meeting tracking sheet highlights the key events and progress for the GEF 7 project from April to June 2024, along with the attendance breakdown by gender. During the Project Steering Committee meeting, 13 attendees included 7 women and 6 men, with a ratio of 1.2 women for every man. In another meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture, 5 attendees included 3 women and 2 men, reflecting a ratio of 1.5 women for every man. The gender balance varied across meetings, with some sessions like the meeting with Naturally Neem having more women (3 women and 1 man, ratio of 3:1), while others like the meeting on the Project Implementation Report had more men (1 woman and 3 men, ratio of 0.33:1). Overall, the project made efforts to involve a diverse group of stakeholders, with the gender distribution reflecting the varied roles and participation in the project activities.

SECTION 6: PROJECT RISKS AND ISSUES

Delays in the procurement of the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) and Biodiversity Specialist (BD) are impacting the implementation of key project activities and the planned expenditure. These specialists are essential for guiding technical aspects and biodiversity management, and without them, activities such as biodiversity audits, ecosystem management plans, and technical training are being delayed or scaled back. This not only affects the project's timeline but also leads to unspent budget allocations, as the funding for these roles and associated activities cannot be utilized. Regular monitoring and communication with stakeholders will help ensure any delays are addressed promptly, and adjustments are made to keep the project on track.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: [Endorsed PSC meeting minutes](#)