NIUE PROJECT FACTSHEET
Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation and for the Enhancement of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage in Niue

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND

Niue is an upraised coral atoll island lying 480 km east of Tonga, 550 km southeast of Samoa and 2,500 km north of New Zealand. At 259 km² in area—the largest island of its type—it consists of a former lagoon surrounded by the remains of a reef rising to about 68 m above sea level, surrounded by an outer terrace at approximately 28 m above sea level. The outer terrace ends in steep cliffs which descend on to a narrow fringing reef.

Niue is dependent on its natural environment and ecosystem services for its quality of life and its economic viability. The natural environment, in all its forms, is a valuable economic asset as it provides the attraction for visitors and tourists which are the mainstay of the Niuean economy. The environment also provides food to sustain a subsistence lifestyle and has cultural significance. 70% of the country retains a cover of forest and 23% of it is in conservation areas, primarily the Hvalu Conservation Area.

The Fifth National Report to the CBD2 states that biodiversity is very important to the economy of Niue with about a fifth of its GDP coming from the agriculture, fishery, forestry and hunting sectors. It is also the basis for subsistence lifestyles and has cultural significance.

PROJECT SUMMARY

This project will enhance Niue’s capacity to effectively create and manage protected areas for biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, and safeguarding of ecosystem services. It focuses on the expansion of its protected estate on land and on its marine areas through a combination of community conservation areas and government led protected areas.

The project will build upon and complement the efforts of the Niue Government to conserve and sustain the island’s biodiversity and ecosystem services through integrated land-water-coastal management, while contributing to the implementation of the Pacific Island Multi-focal Area R2R approaches.

The project objective is to strengthen conservation and sustainable use of land, water and marine areas and their biodiversity by building on their cultural heritage values through integrated national and community actions.

A distinguishing feature of this intervention is combination of community conservation areas and government-led PAs, as well as the full and equal participation with the Government of Village Councils and communities in recognition that tenure over most land areas in Niue is vested in local communities.

The expected project outcomes are:
1. New community conservation and national protected areas established at different levels, thus reducing threats and improving biodiversity status of conservation areas (USD 6,204,006 from the baseline (co-financing) and USD 2,503,562 from GEF, making a total of USD 8,707,568).

2. Strengthened community and cross-sectoral involvement of relevant national government departments to promote effective Ridge to Reef management by mainstreaming biodiversity and environmental concerns into plans and actions (USD 4,157,594 (co-financing) and USD 1,482,000 from GEF, making a total of USD 5,639,594)

**Linkages with Related Initiatives, Policies, and Frameworks**

The project is consistent with Niue’s National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, whose vision is “Niue is an Environmentally Friendly Nation in which conservation and the sustainable management of biological resources support all the living community”. The project values gender equality and in line with the Niue National Policy for Gender Equality and Plan of Action for 2014 to 2018. The project is consistent with the Water Act and the draft Environment Bill which highlight the importance of effective waste management for the protection and enhancement of water resources, particularly the freshwater lens. The project contributes directly to the GEF 5 Biodiversity Focal Area and International Waters Focal Area, and aligned with GEF/UNDP’s Programme Framework Document for the regional programme “Pacific Islands Ridge-to-Reef National Priorities – Integrated Water, Land, Forest and Coastal Management to Preserve Ecosystem Services, Store Carbon, Improve Climate Resilience and Sustain Livelihoods”.

**Internal and External Collaboration**

UNDP is the GEF Implementing Agency (IA) for the project which will be implemented over a period of five years and will have the Ministry of Natural Resources as the Executing Agency /Implementing Partner. The project is in harmony with the goals and objectives of Tāoga Niue which is a key stakeholder of the project focused on the protection of traditional knowledge in conservation of natural resources. The Director General of the Ministry of Natural Resources (DG-MNR) has oversight over all projects and activities carried out under DAFF, DOE and MET and this captures all GEF, FAO, FFA, SPC, and similar projects and donor inputs. The DG-MNR is also the GEF Operational Focal Point. Results from the project will be disseminated within and beyond the project intervention zone through existing information sharing networks and forums, in particular the R2R Regional Programme.

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**EXPECTED RESULTS**

- Review of past surveys and additional surveys to identify natural resources that merit protection.
- New protected areas and conservation areas on land, established through the use of various protection mechanisms.
- Marine Protected Area at Beveridge Reef established.
- Contiguous conservation areas in the coastal reef environment established.
- Management Plans developed for the extended protected areas.
- Implementation of various interventions at Village and National level, identified as priorities in the management plans.
- Environmental monitoring system established.
- Environmental information management system to handle, archive, analyse and make available the processed data for use in management of the protected estate.

- Institutional strengthening, capacity building and other foundational elements at the Village Council and community level.
- Institutional strengthening and capacity building among key central government entities.
- Policy and regulatory reforms at central level but also through by-laws at Village level.
- Capacities enhanced through the provision of expertise and know-how for land use planning and management, protected area management (including for eco-tourism), species protection and management, sustainability.
- Information sharing, awareness raising, learning and outreach.