



STRENGTHENING BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND REDUCING FOREST AND LAND DEGRADATION IN FIJI, SAMOA, VANUATU AND NIUE

The four Pacific Island Countries of Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Niue account for about 70 percent of the land area of the Polynesia-Micronesia biodiversity hotspot, where species endemism is particularly high and one-third to one-half of species are currently threatened with extinction.

Conservation - whether in formally protected areas (PAs) or the wider production landscape - is extremely weak. The project was developed to reverse the situation and improve biodiversity conservation in the four countries. Its development objective was to enhance the sustainable livelihoods of local communities living in and around PAs, while its global environmental objective was to strengthen biodiversity conservation and reduce forest and land degradation. The project was designed with six technical components to overcome identified weaknesses and barriers. Principally, the focus of the project was to conserve, protect and manage Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) identified by the respective governments concerned.



WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

Overall, the project greatly increased awareness and understanding of the importance and role of established and managed PA networks, and the conservation of biodiversity. The principal focus of conserving, protecting and managing the identified KBAs involved the formalization of three existing PAs and the creation of seven new ones in the four countries, as well as the development and implementation of PA management plans and priority activities. In all four countries, technical capacity focusing on the development and management of PAs was enhanced, as a result of the numerous training activities organized.

The project supported, reviewed and developed a number of policies, legislation and strategies in all four countries, including the development and validation of the National Environment Policy and its Implementation Plan in Vanuatu, which was launched in March 2017.

The planning and management of PAs and different land uses was improved through the introduction of updated and appropriate technologies. For example, participatory 3D planning models were produced in cooperation with communities in Samoa; while in Niue, the Department of Justice, Lands and Survey was supported with updated geographic information systems (GIS) equipment, as well as with training in the application of GIS Quantum open software for the mapping and management of *tapu* sites (restricted or sacred areas), PAs, and different land uses. Noteworthy events included the Wakatu Fiji campaign for awareness creation and the development of the Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management training programme at the Forest Training Centre in Fiji.

KEY FACTS

Contribution

USD 6 283 751

Duration

July 2011 – June 2019

Resource Partner

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Partners

Fiji: Ministry of Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment and Ministry of Forestry. *Niue*: Department of Environment. *Samoa*: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. *Vanuatu*: Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources

Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries at global and national levels, as well as local communities living around the ten protected areas on ten project sites in the four countries, including local landowners and communities and government and Non-governmental Organization (NGO) technical staff, such as agricultural extension officers, farmers and local entrepreneurs

IMPACT

The project interventions contributed to reversing the loss of critical forest ecosystems and improving biodiversity conservation in the four island countries. The introduction of sustainable land and forest practices enhanced the sustainable livelihoods of local communities living in and around protected areas, as well as meeting the project's global and local environmental objectives. The alternative livelihood and income-generating activities supported by the project will contribute to improving the local economy and financial status, and to addressing and reducing poverty. In addition, gender equality was increased as a result of the support provided to women in business. Food sources were improved and secured through the adoption of sustainable land management and sustainable forest management techniques. The conservation of biodiversity and protected area systems will contribute to ensuring clean water and sanitation, sustainable communities and climate action, as well as supporting life below water and on land.

ACTIVITIES

- The review and development of policies, legislation and strategies included, among others: i) in Vanuatu, the Forest Act 2001 was reviewed, and the National Environment Policy and its Implementation Plan (2016-2030) was developed and validated; ii) in Fiji, a review of policy, legal and institutional arrangements relevant to PAs was carried out by Fiji Environmental Law Association (FELA); iii) in Samoa, the project contributed to the development of the Protected Area Strategy, with the lessons learned from the successful establishment of three Community Conservation Areas.
- The protected area network in the four countries was increased from 30 000 ha to 71 559 ha.
- Updated and appropriate technologies were introduced in the four countries, including: i) in Fiji, 3D elevated models with high-resolution satellite images were developed for the Greater Tomaniivi and Delaikoro project sites, to assist in planning and monitoring of the PAs by remote sensing; ii) in Vanuatu, the project supported the survey and mapping of new PA areas; and a website for the Department of Forests was developed, including training of staff for its updating.
- To scale up and sustain organic farming, in Samoa, the project contracted Women in Business Development, a local NGO, to lead and train farmers in organic farming. A total of 237 farmers were trained in organic farming in eight villages on the three project sites.
- The numerous technical reports and studies produced included the following, among others: i) in Vanuatu, a feasibility study on potential for ecotourism development in the Bay Homo PA; ii) in Niue, a similar market study to identify visitor preference for tourism products and their willingness to pay for conservation.

Project Code

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GEF ID: 3819

Project Title

Forestry and protected area management in Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Niue (GEFPAS-FPAM)

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