



Building Resilience & Ending Vulnerabilities in SIDS

Joint Programme 2022 Annual Progress Report

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Cover Page

UNCT/MCO: Samoa

Reporting Period: 1 January - 31 December 2022

JP title: Building forward better by safeguarding natural capital and ecosystem services

Stakeholder partner: National Government; Civil Society Organizations;

Thematic SDG Areas: Climate action & energy transformation; SDG localization;

PUNOs: UNESCO, UNESCAP

Total estimated expenditures: US\$ 247,077.0

Total estimated commitments (including expenditures): US\$ 247,077.0

Gender Marker: Gender-sensitive (for example, the JP acknowledged and aimed to address gender to enhance the policy/programme, such as undertaking gender analysis to ensure policies/programmes do no harm)

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Executive Summary

The 3 major results that have been achieved in the past year include:

- Identification of the type of environmental data that is pertinent to the national scope of the State of Environment and identification of local sources of the environmental data;
- Identification of pathways and areas for potential collaboration among institutions with environmental, development and statistics mandates; and
- Strengthening of the enabling environment for the application of drone technology in leveraging Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing (RS) techniques to collect, analyze and manage map-based data for environmental decision-making and monitoring.

These results are critical and key in setting the ground for the collection and collation of the type of data that will help the natural resource and environment sector to make a case for enhancing the coverage and protection of terrestrial and marine areas and ensuring resilient investment, thereby contributing directly towards the achievement of both Indicator 1.5 of Outcome 1 of the UN Cooperation Framework/UN Pacific Strategy and the country's priorities and strategies for economic growth as envisioned in the Samoa 2040 growth path. The results as well provide a platform for pursuing Target 1 and 2 of Strategic Goal A and the achievement of Strategic Goal E of the country's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), which aim to stimulate and promote mainstreaming of biodiversity and biodiversity values across the country's development and poverty reduction strategies and to empower people in Samoa to participate in natural resources and environmental planning and knowledge management, by creating awareness among the people of Samoa of the values of biodiversity, the threats its faces, and the steps the Government and the people can take to conserve, protect and use it sustainably.

The results also set the stage for strengthening the ability of institutions with environmental, development and statistics mandates

to cooperate in developing an institutionalized mechanism for ecosystem data and monitoring frameworks, which is critical for achieving improved capacity for evidence-based policymaking, response and action planning, and monitoring of terrestrial and marine ecosystem management and restoration processes and activities. This contributes towards effort to create an enabling environment for the country to meet the data requirements for Indicator 1.5 of the United Nations Pacific Strategy (UNPS) 2018-22, which is directly relevant to Target 14.2 of SDG 14 and Target 15.5 and 15.9 of SDG 15.

Annual Progress

Overall JP self-assessment of 2022 progress:

Not satisfactory (majority of expected annual results not achieved; over 3 months delay in implementation)

Overall progress against 3 key results

In 2022, the Joint Programme on Ecosystem Services was expected to deliver the following 3 key results:

i) Establishment of the scope of the interventions required to support the country in strengthening policies and plans for ensuring the protection and sustainable use of ecosystem services.

This involved facilitating the identification and scoping of the terrestrial and marine ecosystems and species that need to be protected and restored and the actions required to enhance their protection and restoration. Activities undertaken led to the a) development of a draft 4th State of Environment Report (SOER) and Environment Outlook to provide a basis for the development of a pertinent evidence-based National Environment Sector Plan (NESP) for the period up to 2026; b) scoping, planning and initiation of research to identify terrestrial and marine plant species of medicinal value and development of a policy toolkit on bio-ethics, as means to enhance efficacy of government and its partners to generate knowledge on and govern the sustainable and equitable use of plant species – with sampling and laboratory processing of 56 plant species having been done by December 2022; and c) scoping, planning and initiation of gender-sensitive and responsive activities to facilitate the development of capacity for environmental data collection, and ecosystem valuation and natural capital accounting - with delivery of 1 training workshop on the application of Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing (RS) techniques to drone-based collection and analyze of map data for environmental decision-making and monitoring having been accomplished by the end of 2022.

By way of contribution towards the improvement of UNCT collaboration and coherence, these activities have resulted in the identification of ways in which the contribution of the PUNOs and other UN entities to context and trend analysis of environmental and ecosystem issues in Samoa will be leveraged to improve the extent and accessibility of environmental information and hence enhance evidence-informed environmental decision-making in the country, thereby allowing the Samoa UNCT and government to contribute towards CF goal to ensure that people, communities and institutions are more empowered and resilient to face diverse shocks and disasters, especially related to climate change, and ecosystems and biodiversity are better protected, managed and restored.

ii) Establishment of the scope of platforms and interventions for promoting the analysis and use of environmental data, statistics and information for the development of evidence-based policies and plans for advancing the green, blue and circular economies of the country.

This involved facilitating the participatory and inclusive scoping, planning and preparation for collaborative ecosystem data collection and for the development of open access-based environmental Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems for the environmental data and information. Activities undertaken led to the: a) identification of ICT system development needs and design of a plan for the development of a Samoa Environmental Data Portal that will contain an interactive version of the State of Environment Report and will be easy for all stakeholders, including marginalized groups, to access and use; and b) identification and scoping of the ecosystem and socio-economic data requirements and mapping of existing data and data sources for a set of ocean accounts to be developed for targeted ecosystems including mangroves and other coastal ecosystems in and around the Vaiusu Bay.

These activities resulted in the stage being set for the JP's PUNOs to engage and collaborate with other UN and government agencies that collect, hold and use environmental and climate data to support and provide input to the creation of rationalized data portal which will allow the agencies to jointly leverage and build on the existing data and data collection activities

SDG Acceleration progress towards the SDGs, focusing on the main SDG targets

As designed to, the JP activities undertaken in 2022 contributed to accelerating progress towards the SDG 14 (Target 14.2) and SDG 15 (Target 15.1, 15.4, 15.5, 15.8, 15.9, 15a) by:

- Facilitating the development of the 4th State of Environment Report (SOER), hence the generation of environmental information that enables stakeholders to see the changes in biodiversity, ecosystems and other environmental aspects that have occurred over time;
- Using the SOER development, water quality monitoring scoping and ocean account scoping processes to facilitate the identification and delineation of the priority pressing issues that require government action to address livelihood and resource security that will promote human-nature harmony;
- Facilitating the identification of existing data and data sources on terrestrial and marine plant species of medicinal value and promoting collaboration among key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, which creates an enabling environment for exploring efficient holistic and inclusive community-based measures and actions to enhance the safeguarding of the species and their habitats from extinction
- facilitating the scoping of training activities that will yield improved national capacity for ensuring that environmental data is produced and managed in a way that it is comparable, consistent, readily available and easily accessible to support monitoring and inform mainstreaming of ecosystem considerations into other sectoral policies and plans.
- facilitating the identification of capacity and support needs and scoping of activities for enhancing the capacity of government agencies with environmental and statistics mandate to set up and manage ocean accounts that will help decision makers in the private and public sectors understand the long-term implications of their decisions on structure of the ocean economy and the condition of the marine environment.
- Facilitating multi-stakeholder engagement to accelerate SDG14, among others, through Ministries of Environments' participation in the 5th Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean and the 7th Committee of Environment and Development hosted by ESCAP.

These interventions laid the foundation for the collection and spreading of useable knowledge and information and verifiable facts that will provide a supporting evidence base that can enable policymakers to demonstrate the need for sustainable policy and investment in ecosystem restoration; enable stakeholders to manage and evaluate policy options to help identify and redress interdependent needs of the social and ecological systems, and to identify approaches and measures to improve policies; and enable and the society in Samoa to make better informed decisions in way that will addressed and interlinkages that must be attended for accelerated progress towards SDG 14 and 15.

Constraints that were encountered and any adjustments that were made to strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of the JP and the coherence and coordination of UN system support.

The constraints that were encountered in 2022 included:

- COVID-19 pandemic-related lockdown and restrictions which caused a delay in the launch and onset of implementation of the JP. This was because the limitation on physical engagement coupled with the significant digital connectivity challenges that exist in Samoa posed a barrier to stakeholder engagements that were required to achieve on-time kickoff of JP implementation. The resultant lag caused a delay in the development of the 4th State of Environment Report (SOER), which created a knock-on effect as the logical sequencing of JP most activities had been designed to follow on from the development of the SOER, as a way to leverage and build on its output by using it as a source of data and as a basis for identifying the ecosystems and environmental issues that would need to be analysed and for which response measures would need to identified and structured with respect to national, SDG and other response, monitoring and reporting obligations.
- Delay in procurement of equipment required for the water quality monitoring activities of the JP, arising from prolonged discussions between SROS and Ministry of Finance (MOF) on how to undertake an efficient procurement process amidst the relatively new government procurement policies that put custody of government procurement processes under MOF.
- Delay in execution of an implementation agreement between ESCAP and MNRE which resulted from consultation process to ensure the coherence and convergence with ESCAP's ongoing activity with MNRE on ocean accounting. Since ESCAP does not have physical presence in Samoa, delayed arrival of a joint Programme Coordinator may have further hindered timely follow-up communication between ESCAP and MNRE. Despite the delay, both MNRE and ESCAP made progress in the implementation of some activities with the support of external/additional sources of funding.

The main adjustments that were made consisted of alignment and rationalization of activities under Output 2 of Outcome 2 with activities under Outcome 3. This caused a shift of Output 2 activities to be implemented with Outcome 3 activities in 2023, since these sets of activities were deemed to be related, would involve the same stakeholders and would allow for efficient leveraging of resources and outputs.

The key lesson learned emanated from the observation that activity implementation started more quickly where JP parties leveraged existing agreements or relationships based on past collaboration, while delayed negotiation and execution of agreements can pose drawbacks for whole JPs. This poses a suggestion that the SDG Joint Fund could in future consider allocating a period of 3-6 months for negotiation and execution of the necessary agreements between PUNOS and implementing partners and understandings with other stakeholders, prior to the commencement of the 2-year implementation period.

Next steps, scaling and sustainability [up to half a page]

Looking forward, in 2023, the UNJP on Ecosystem services aims to attain accelerated implementation of activities under all of its three Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 of the UNJP, with the view to achieving all of its overall intended results by the end of the third quarter of the year, that include finalization of the 4th State of Environment Report and Environment Outlook, development of the National Environment Sector Plan (NESP); training of relevant government agencies and stakeholders on open access ICTs for environmental data management; creation of a rationalized environmental data portal; completion of bio-medicinal research to identify terrestrial and marine plant species of medicinal value and measures to ensure their enhanced protection and conservation; collection of water quality data for the prioritized river ecosystems on Savaii Island; development of a policy toolkit on bio-ethics based on bio-pharma model; collection of data on priority ocean ecosystems and climate change impacts on ocean ecosystem-dependent livelihoods; and development of ocean accounts for the priority ocean ecosystems.

The JP's Technical Committee plans to complete the overall JP through parallel implementation of activities and through gender-sensitive and responsive, inclusive, collaborative and capacity-building and multi-stakeholder dialogue-fostering approaches which will empower agencies and stakeholders with environmental, development and statistics mandates with skills and equipment that will allow them to continue with build on the activities, outputs and outcomes; and with linkages to initiatives and programmes such as the World Bank-led activities that will help in promoting mainstreaming of ecosystem considerations in infrastructure and other development processes, and in raising awareness among the financial sector organizations and engaging with the financial sector to support a better integration of risks and opportunities associated with natural capital into investment decisions and reporting. The Technical Committee will also take an approach to implementation that will help in identifying pathways and opportunities to use the outputs, outcomes and lessons from the JP and to expand and replicate good practices, and in identifying clear themes, opportunities and entry points and concrete interventions for resource mobilization to enable the onward expansion and replication of the UNJP's efforts after completion of its implementation. The UNJP will also develop communication products and undertake visibility and monitoring activities with the aim of raising the quality and profile of the JP and thereby potentially create a platform for the government to attract partnerships, support and resources that will help to enable the scaling up of JP's outcomes.

Programmatic Survey

Total number of people benefited from the JP in 2022: 170

Percentage (%) of women benefited among the total number: 56.5

Percentage (%) of children & youth (0-24 years of age) benefited among the total number:

Percentage (%) of older persons (age 60 and above) benefited among the total number:

Percentage (%) of persons with disabilities benefited among the total number:

Explain how people benefited from the joint programme.

The stakeholders that benefited from the JP in 2022 benefited directly from the JP through direct participation and involvement in implementation activities, including activities such as scoping meetings and field visits, participation in consultative groups and technical working groups which provided opportunities for the stakeholders to air out concerns and solutions; influence and make input to discourse and action on the topical ecosystem matters that JP activity implementation activities addressed; and gain capacity for engaging with issues and stakeholders related to environmental context and trend analysis, ecosystem management, conservation of high value genetic and species biodiversity and ecosystem service valuation and accounting.

Priority Cross-cutting Issues

Cross-cutting results/issues

In 2022, the JP on Ecosystem Services:

- invested in the participation of both men and women in project implementation and governance and sought to incorporate gender equality and equity in all possible areas including activities that involved training and meetings. Effort was made to include gender specific indicators in the design of activities that will involve setting up of surveys for collection, and compilation, documenting and management of data on the use of ecosystems and ecosystems services.
- Made effort to ensure equitable and meaningful participation and input of both women and men in activities undertaken to scope and plan for bio-medicinal research and training and to scope and plan for the water quality monitoring work of the UNJP; consultative workshops and Technical Working Group organized to collect stakeholder input and to undertake comprehensive technical review of the draft 4th State of Environment Report; training workshop on drone-based GIS and Remote Sensing techniques for map-based environmental data collection and monitoring and in the inception and joint planning workshop that was organized to scope and plan for the ecosystem data collection and subsequent development of ocean accounts for priority ocean ecosystems. Overall, the activities undertaken in 2022 directly involved and benefitted 96 women and 74 men.
- Worked to identify pathways, mechanisms and tools for providing an opportunity and platform for youth to participate and learn actively and meaningfully from UNJP implementation. The JP sought to: develop and pilot an internship/volunteer programme for young scientists at SROS; establish rapport and partnership with the Peace Gardens initiative of the National University of Samoa; leverage the youth engagement programme and mechanism of UNEP’s Plastic Tide Turners Pacific Project; and identify local volunteers and through the village youth committees to foster greater participation of young people in programme activities.
- scoped the environmental data portal and ocean accounts development activities in a way that will ensure that the utility of both the Samoa Data Portal and the ocean accounts will be comprehensive in assuring the availability and accessibility of data for evidence-informed decision-making and reporting on SDGs 11-15.

How did the JP apply the Gender Marker

The JP is Gender-sensitive (for example, the JP acknowledged and aimed to address gender to enhance the policy/programme, such as undertaking gender analysis to ensure policies/programmes do no harm). N/A;

JP address the below cross-cutting issues and principles of leaving no one behind

Human Rights	Persons with disabilities	Youth	Environmental and social standards
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Key meetings and events organized in 2022

JP steering committee/ programme board meeting	Strategic partners/ donors event	Kick-off meeting
Yes, in 2022	Yes, in 2022	Yes, in 2022

Explanation if you have not held any key meeting/events.

Contribution to enhancing SDG Financing

Drafted a bill, strategy, Produced financing, and/or approved a law costing, diagnostic and increasing the fiscal feasibility analyses as a	Improved efficiency (cost savings) in the management of	Improved effectiveness (value for money; i.e. value for money)	Drafted policies/regulatory frameworks or	Structured new financial instruments (public,
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space for the policy in focus	basis to invest or increase spending on the SDGs	programmes/schemes	social impact of \$1 spent) of spending	developed tools to incentivize private sector investment on the SDGs	private or blended) to leverage additional funding
No	No	No	No	No	No

How JP contributed to enhancing SDG financing