





Global Fund for Coral Reefs MPTF OFFICE GENERIC FINALPROGRAMME¹ NARRATIVE REPORT REPORTING PERIOD: FROM 01,2021 TO 12,2024

Programme Title & Project Number

- Programme Title: Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy for the Global Fund for Coral Reefs
- Programme Number (*if applicable*)
- MPTF Office Project Reference Number: 3 00126260

Participating Organization(s)

 Organizations that have received direct funding from the MPTF Office under this programme

Programme/Project Cost (US\$)

Total approved budget as per project document:

MPTF /JP Contribution⁴:

\$20
\$38

\$200,000 (2021), \$388,404 (2022-2024) Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results²

(if applicable) Country/Region

Global

Priority area/ strategic results

- Assess feasibility of data collection for the results indicators defined in the Fund's Terms of Reference for each project
- Coordinate with the Global Team to recommend alternatives to indicators that are difficult to measure
- Robust scientific methodologies for monitoring each indicator - Baseline assessments of indicators for all project sites
- Annual reports on progress made against indicators for each project, and recommendations for improvements in project activities
- Mid-term review report for each project, with strategic advice on activities and interventions
- Terminal evaluation report for each project, with assessments of final progress made against indicators and any successes, challenges, failures, or unintended consequences. The Terminal Evaluation will be an independent function from the monitoring, and will be carried out by an independent evaluation office in consultation with the UNEP consultant.
- A report on lessons learned and best practices from the projects, with recommendations for replication and upscaling

Implementing Partners

- National counterparts (government, private, NGOs & others) and other International Organizations
 - Wildlife Conservancy Society

Programme Duration

Overall Duration (46 months)Start Date⁵ (08.03.2021)

¹ The term "programme" is used for programmes, joint programmes and projects.

² Strategic Results, as formulated in the Strategic UN Planning Framework (e.g. UNDAF) or project document;

³ The MPTF Office Project Reference Number is the same number as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as "Project ID" on the project's factsheet page on the MPTF Office GATEWAY.

⁴ The MPTF/JP Contribution is the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations – see MPTF Office GATEWAY

⁵ The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent. Transfer date is available on the MPTF Office GATEWAY

• by Agency (if applicable)		
Agency Contribution • by Agency (if applicable)	Original End Date ⁶ (31.12.2024)	
Government Contribution (if applicable)	Actual End date ⁷ (dd.mm.yyyy) Have agency(ies) operationally closed the Yes No Programme in its(their) system?	
Other Contributions (donors) (if applicable) TOTAL:	Expected Financial Closure date ⁸ :	
IOTAL:		
Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.	Report Submitted By	
Evaluation Completed ☐ Yes ■ No Date: dd.mm.yyyy Evaluation Report - Attached ☐ Yes ■ No Date: dd.mm.yyyy	 Name: Gabriel Grimsditch Title: Programme Management Officer Participating Organization (Lead): UNEP Email address: gabriel.grimsditch@un.org 	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has made substantial progress in developing and operationalizing a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR). This framework is a cornerstone for measuring the effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of GFCR-funded programmes. Key milestones include the establishment of a Science and Technical Advisory Group (STAG), the development and approval of a comprehensive M&E Framework, and the rollout of supporting tools and systems.

In 2021, UNEP laid the groundwork for the M&E system by engaging two expert consultants—Dr. Simon Harding and Dr. Margaux Hein—to draft the initial strategy and coordinate the STAG. This early phase focused on designing a participatory, results-based, and adaptive approach. The draft strategy included a multi-tiered indicator system encompassing fund-level, outcome-level, sector-specific, programme-level, and investor-level indicators. These indicators were designed to align with the GFCR's Theory of Change and global biodiversity and climate goals.

By 2022, UNEP transitioned from a strategic planning phase to the development of a full-fledged M&E Framework. This shift involved drafting core indicators, methodologies, and a practical toolkit to guide implementation. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) was brought on board to finalize the framework and conduct a peer review. The resulting structure included two main categories of indicators: Fund Indicators, which are mandatory across all programmes, and Project Indicators, which are tailored to local contexts and specific interventions. UNEP also conducted baseline and capacity assessments across several programmes to evaluate readiness and identify support needs.

In 2023, the GFCR M&E Framework was formally approved by the GFCR Executive Board. It now includes 10 Fund Indicators and 36 sub-indicators, covering ecological, socio-economic, and financial dimensions. UNEP and WCS jointly developed and published the GFCR Monitoring & Evaluation Toolkit, a comprehensive guide to support implementation. Capacity-building efforts were scaled up, with technical

⁶ As per approval of the original project document by the relevant decision-making body/Steering Committee.

⁷ If there has been an extension, then the revised, approved end date should be reflected here. If there has been no extension approved, then the current end date is the same as the original end date. The end date is the same as the operational closure date which is when all activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MPTF / JP have been completed. As per the MOU, agencies are to notify the MPTF Office when a programme completes its operational activities. Please see MPTF Office Closure Guidelines.

⁸ Financial Closure requires the return of unspent balances and submission of the <u>Certified Final Financial Statement and Report.</u>

assistance provided to 12 GFCR programmes. UNEP also signed a legal agreement to adapt the MERMAID platform—a digital tool for ecological data management—for GFCR-wide reporting. This platform will be integrated into the REEF+ system, enhancing data consistency and accessibility.

In 2024, UNEP continued to build on this momentum. The MERMAID platform was finalized and tested with convening agents, with full rollout expected in 2025. The M&E Toolkit was updated to reflect feedback and evolving needs. UNEP also organized multiple capacity-building workshops and webinars to strengthen programme-level M&E systems. These efforts were complemented by increased media engagement and strategic communications to raise awareness and visibility of GFCR's impact.

Together, these achievements represent a robust and scalable M&E system that supports learning, accountability, and strategic decision-making across the GFCR portfolio. UNEP's leadership and collaborative approach have positioned the M&E Framework as a model for adaptive, data-driven environmental programming.

I. Purpose

UNEP is responsible for developing and implementing the overall M&E Framework for the GFCR. The main objective is to monitor the impacts of funded GFCR interventions on the environment and the livelihoods of coral reef communities. The M&E Framework aims to provide learning and feedback to improve future activities.

Key expected outputs

- Assess feasibility of data collection for the results indicators defined in the Fund's Terms of Reference for each project
- Coordinate with the Global Team to recommend alternatives to indicators that are difficult to measure
- Robust scientific methodologies for monitoring each indicator
- Baseline assessments of indicators for all project sites
- Annual reports on progress made against indicators for each project, and recommendations for improvements in project activities
- Mid-term review report for each project, with strategic advice on activities and interventions
- Terminal evaluation report for each project, with assessments of final progress made against indicators and any successes, challenges, failures, or unintended consequences. The Terminal Evaluation will be an independent function from the monitoring, and will be carried out by an independent evaluation office in consultation with the UNEP consultant.
- A report on lessons learned and best practices from the projects, with recommendations for replication and upscaling

II. Assessment of Programme Results

i) Narrative reporting on results:

Between 2021 and 2024, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) led a transformative journey in designing and implementing a robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR). The process began in 2021 with the recruitment of expert consultants, Dr. Simon Harding and Dr. Margaux Hein, who were tasked with drafting the initial M&E strategy and coordinating the newly formed Science and Technical Advisory Group (STAG). Comprising 31 diverse experts, the STAG played a pivotal role in shaping the framework. During this foundational phase, UNEP developed a comprehensive indicator system and conducted extensive consultations with partners such as the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), NOAA, and the University of Queensland. These efforts culminated in a draft strategy that included fund-level, outcome-level, sector-specific, programme-level, and investor-level indicators. Baseline and capacity assessments were also conducted across five programmes, revealing a spectrum of readiness and alignment with the GFCR's strategic goals.

From 2022 to 2024, UNEP transitioned from strategy development to full-scale implementation. The M&E Framework was refined through iterative consultations and peer reviews, resulting in the approval of 10 Fund Indicators and 36 sub-indicators. In 2023, the framework was officially endorsed at the 10th Executive Board meeting, marking a major milestone. UNEP and WCS jointly developed and published the M&E Toolkit, a practical guide to support implementation across the GFCR portfolio. Capacity-building efforts were scaled up, with technical support extended to 12 programmes, including a mission to Fiji. A legal agreement was signed to adapt the MERMAID platform for GFCR-wide reporting, integrating it into the REEF+ system. Looking ahead, UNEP coordinated with the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) to plan regional workshops for 2024, ensuring continued support and knowledge exchange among partners.

Outcomes:

- Strengthened capacity to monitor and evaluate coral reef conservation efforts across GFCR programmes.
- Enhanced alignment of programme-level M&E systems with global biodiversity and climate goals.
- Improved ability to track ecological, socio-economic, and financial impacts of GFCR interventions.

Outputs:

- Development and approval of the GFCR M&E Framework (2023).
- Establishment of the STAG with 31 experts (2021).
- Publication of the M&E Toolkit (October 2023).
- Launch of the MERMAID platform adaptation for GFCR-wide reporting.
- Capacity-building support provided to 12 programmes, including field missions and technical assistance.

Qualitative Assessment: The M&E Framework was developed through a participatory and iterative process involving diverse stakeholders. The STAG's expert input, combined with consultations with global partners, ensured scientific rigor and contextual relevance. The framework is adaptive, allowing for customization at the programme level while maintaining consistency in fund-level reporting. UNEP's leadership in capacity-building and tool development has been instrumental in fostering ownership and readiness among convening agents, laying a strong foundation for long-term impact monitoring.

ii) Indicator Based Performance Assessment:

Using the **Programme Results Framework from the Project Document / AWPs** - provide details of the achievement of indicators at both the output and outcome level in the table below. Where it has not been possible to collect data on indicators, clear explanation should be given explaining why.

	Achieved Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target	Source of Verification
Output: Assess feasibility of data collection for the results indicators defined in the Fund's Terms of Reference for each project Indicator: Feasibility and baseline study on capacity costs for selected programme's M&E Baseline: No information on M&E costs for GFCR programmes Planned Target: One finalized assessment for M&E	Achieved in 2022 Q2 UNEP's consultant developed a "Capacity Costs Baseline" questionnaire for selected programmes that sought to collect information on programme capacity for M&E as well as for baseline data and the costs of monitoring the proposed core GFCR indicators.	(if any) No variance	Annex D
Output: Coordinate with the Global Team to recommend alternatives to indicators that are difficult to measure Indicator: List of indicators that recommended for monitoring Baseline: No comprehensive list for monitoring Planned Target: Toolkit with a list of indicators for monitoring and evaluation	Achieved in 2025 Q1 GFCR updated the GFCR M&E Toolkit after consultations with convening agents, board members, and the UNGT. The updated M&E toolkit launched in February 2025	No variance	Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit February 2025
Output: Robust scientific methodologies for monitoring each indicator Indicator: Methodologies for each indicator Baseline: No methodologies determine Planned Target: Toolkit with suggested methodologies for each indicator	Achieved in 2022 Q4 Various consultations by UNEP's consultant with the STAG. M&E toolkit provides methodologies for monitoring each fund indicator and sub-indicator	No variance	Annex E Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit February 2025
Output: Baseline assessments of capacity for monitoring at all project sites Indicator: Five assessments on capacity for M&E Baseline: No assessments Planned Target: Five assessments with capacity and costs for M&E	Achieved in 2022 Q4 In 2022 Q4, UNEP's consultant carried out an assessment on 5 GFCR Programmes. This work will be ongoing as the GFCR portfolio expands.	No variance	Annex F

	T		
	The UNEP consultant carried out		
	assessment of baselines and socio-		
	ecological conditions on five GFCR		
	programmes (Impact Funding for		
	BahamaReefs, Miamba Yetu: Sustainable		
	Reef Investments, Investing in Coral Reefs		
	and the Blue Economy, Mumuhunan sa		
	mga MPAs, and MAR+Invest		
	(Mesoamerican Reef)). This process helped		
	to identify limitations and gaps across		
	indicators and identifies a range of		
	suggestions and recommendations on ways		
	that the GFCR can help to address the key		
	socio-ecological issues highlighted by		
	programmes through this assessment.		
Output: Annual reports on progress made against	Upcoming	This will be achieved in the next project	
indicators for each project, and recommendations	- r · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	document	
for improvements in project activities	UNEP M&E Specialist was onboarded		
Tot improvements in project activities	shortly after the M&E Framework was		
Indicators Approal separate per year with measures			
Indicator: Annual report per year with progress	finalized. At this point, comprehensive data		
recommendations and improvements	can begin to be collected to track progress.		
Baseline: No annual reporting			
Planned Target: One report per programme per			
year			
Output: Mid-term review report for each project,	Upcoming	This will be achieved in the next project	
with strategic advice on activities and		document	
interventions			
Indicator: Mid-term review report for each			
programme			
Baseline: No mid term reviews			
Planned Target: One report per programme			
Tamilea Tai get. One report per programme			
Output: Terminal evaluation report for each	Upcoming	This will be achieved in the next project	
project, with assessments of final progress made	opcoming	document	
	LINED will deliver this service according to	document	
against indicators and any successes, challenges,	UNEP will deliver this service according to		
failures, or unintended consequences. The	the date of closure of each project through		
Terminal Evaluation will be an independent	independent evaluation expert.		
function from the monitoring and will be carried			
out by an independent evaluation office in			
consultation with the UNEP consultant			
			1
Indicator: Terminal evaluation report for each			

Baseline: No terminal evaluation reports Planned Target: One evaluation per programme			
Output: A report on lessons learned and best practices from the projects, with recommendations for replication and upscaling	Upcoming	This will be achieved in the next project document	
Indicator: A report on lessons learned, best practices, recommendations for replication and upscaling Baseline: No report on lesson learned Planned Target: End of programme report on lessons learned, best practices and recommendations			

iii) Evaluation, Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Throughout the implementation of the GFCR Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework, UNEP encountered several challenges that shaped its approach to evaluation and continuous improvement. One of the primary difficulties was the existence of pre-established M&E systems within many programmes prior to the finalization of the GFCR framework. This misalignment required UNEP to lead a comprehensive retrofitting process to harmonize existing systems with the new framework. Additionally, the complexity of capturing and reporting on the newly introduced indicators led to delays in programme implementation, highlighting the need for clearer guidance and more streamlined tools.

In response to these challenges, UNEP adopted a proactive and adaptive approach. A key lesson learned was the importance of early engagement with convening agents to assess their M&E readiness and provide tailored support. UNEP conducted capacity and baseline assessments, which revealed significant gaps in programme-level preparedness. These insights directly informed the refinement of proposal review processes and the development of the GFCR M&E Toolkit. The toolkit was designed to be a practical, user-friendly resource that guides partners through indicator selection, data collection, and reporting, ensuring consistency while allowing for contextual flexibility.

The best practices that emerged from this process include the value of continuous communication, stakeholder involvement, and iterative feedback loops. UNEP emphasized the need for flexible tools that can adapt to diverse programme contexts and evolving data needs. The participatory development of the M&E Framework, involving partners such as WCS, NOAA, and the University of Queensland, ensured scientific rigor and broad ownership. Ultimately, the experience underscored that successful M&E integration depends not only on technical design but also on building trust, fostering collaboration, and maintaining a responsive support system for implementing partners.

VI. Programme Governance & Management

From 2021 onward, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has played a central role in the governance and management of the GFCR Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework. The initiative began with the recruitment of expert consultants and the formation of the Science and Technical Advisory Group (STAG), a diverse body of 31 experts tasked with guiding the technical development of the framework. UNEP coordinated closely with partners such as the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the GFCR Secretariat to draft the foundational elements of the M&E system. In 2022, leadership transitioned, marking a new phase of implementation and team expansion. The M&E team grew with strategic oversight provided by the UNEP Marine and Freshwater Branch Head. This strengthened team structure enabled UNEP to finalize the framework and begin capacity-building efforts across the GFCR portfolio.

By 2023 and into 2024, UNEP's role in GFCR governance deepened further. The M&E lead became fully integrated into the GFCR UN Global Team, working in close collaboration with the GFCR Secretariat, UNDP, WCS, and UNCDF. This integration ensured alignment between fund-level strategy and programme-level implementation. UNEP also assumed leadership of the Indian Ocean portfolio, reflecting its growing influence in regional programme coordination. The team's collaborative approach, grounded in technical expertise and stakeholder engagement, has been instrumental in ensuring the successful rollout of the M&E Framework. Through regular coordination meetings, joint missions, and shared tool development, UNEP has established itself as a key driver of quality assurance, learning, and adaptive management within the GFCR governance structure.

V. Resource Mobilisation

From the outset of its engagement with the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR), UNEP has played a critical role in resource mobilization, primarily through in-kind contributions and strategic partnerships. In 2022 alone, UNEP contributed over \$96,000 in staff time, with key personnel dedicating significant effort to the development and implementation of the GFCR Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework. These contributions were instrumental in advancing the technical and operational aspects of the framework. Beyond direct staffing, UNEP's investment in communications and visibility also served as a catalyst for attracting additional support and engagement from stakeholders and donors.

In 2023 and 2024, UNEP expanded its resource mobilization efforts by leveraging its convening power at major international forums. Strategic communications played a central role in this approach, with UNEP promoting the GFCR at high-profile events such as the Our Ocean Conference and COP28. These platforms provided opportunities to showcase the Fund's impact and attract interest from potential partners and funders. In 2024, UNEP's active participation in global environmental dialogues further elevated the GFCR's profile, helping to secure broader institutional support and reinforcing the Fund's position within the global climate and biodiversity finance landscape.

VI. Communications and Visibility

Since 2021, UNEP has played a pivotal role in promoting the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR) through a dynamic and multi-channel communications strategy. Leveraging press releases, web stories, social media, and strategic media partnerships, UNEP has consistently highlighted the Fund's mission, achievements, and funding needs. High-profile endorsements by UNEP Goodwill Ambassadors have significantly amplified visibility. For instance, at the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC) in 2022, actor Jason Momoa was designated as Advocate for Life Below Water, drawing global attention to the GFCR. Similarly, at COP27, singer Ellie Goulding championed the Fund through advocacy and media campaigns. These efforts were complemented by widespread media exposure, including features in Elle Magazine, New Scientist, and UNEP's own digital platforms.

In 2023 and 2024, UNEP expanded its communications reach by aligning GFCR messaging with major global events such as the Our Ocean Conference, World Ocean Day, the Africa Climate Summit, and COP28. Influencers like Ellie Goulding and Jason Momoa continued to support the Fund through video messages and public endorsements, helping to humanize and personalize the GFCR's mission. UNEP also hired a strategic communications consultant to develop visual assets and manage outreach, ensuring consistent and compelling messaging. In 2024, the Fund's visibility reached new heights with additional features in Elle Magazine, New Scientist, and Xinhua, and through UNEP's participation in high-level forums such as UNEA-6, the UN General Assembly, and COP16. These efforts not only raised awareness but also contributed to resource mobilization and stakeholder engagement across the GFCR portfolio.

VII. Risk Management and Mitigation

UNEP has proactively identified and addressed a range of risks associated with the implementation of the GFCR Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework. From the outset in 2021, one of the most pressing challenges was the varying capacity levels among convening agents, particularly in terms of M&E readiness. To mitigate this, UNEP implemented targeted training sessions, developed a comprehensive M&E Toolkit, and fostered partnerships with technical organizations to provide ongoing support. Operational risks, such as the geographic spread and differing maturity levels of GFCR programmes, were managed through tailored assistance and regular engagement with programme teams. Strategic risks were addressed through strong coordination with GFCR partners, ensuring alignment across governance structures and technical processes.

As the M&E Framework evolved, UNEP also tackled more complex risks related to data quality and attribution. Data collection challenges were mitigated by encouraging partnerships with NGOs and academic

institutions, which helped strengthen monitoring systems and ensure methodological rigor. To address the difficulty of attributing ecological outcomes directly to GFCR interventions, UNEP promoted the use of control sites, driver monitoring, and ecological thresholds. Climate-related risks, such as coral bleaching and ecosystem degradation, were integrated into the M&E Framework through indicators that track resilience and recovery. In 2024, UNEP implemented adaptive strategies to refine indicators and improve data quality, demonstrating a commitment to continuous learning and responsive management.

VIII. Adaptive Management

UNEP has demonstrated a strong commitment to adaptive management throughout the development and implementation of the GFCR Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework. In early 2022, the programme faced a significant challenge due to staff turnover, which resulted in a temporary loss of institutional memory. In response, UNEP swiftly restructured its team, initiated a strategic partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and appointed staff to oversee programme delivery. These changes not only stabilized the team but also brought renewed focus and expertise to the M&E process. The M&E Framework and Toolkit were refined during this period, incorporating lessons learned and feedback from partners to ensure they remained practical and responsive to programme needs.

As the M&E Framework was rolled out in 2023, UNEP encountered the challenge of aligning existing programme-level M&E systems with the newly approved framework. This required a retrofitting process, which UNEP led through adaptive management practices, including regular communication with convening agents and the development of practical tools. The M&E Toolkit and the MERMAID platform became central to this effort, providing standardized yet flexible resources for data collection and reporting. In 2024, UNEP continued to adapt by revising indicators and updating both the Toolkit and MERMAID platform based on user feedback. These iterative improvements reflect UNEP's ongoing commitment to learning, responsiveness, and the successful integration of M&E across the GFCR portfolio.

IX. Annexes

- Annex A: Expenditure Breakdown
- Annex B: Monitoring & Evaluation Toolkit
- Annex C: MERMAID software platform
- **Annex D:** Feasibility study for each indicator
- Annex E: Scientific and Technical Advisory Group for Monitoring and Evaluation Terms of Reference and Selection Process Overview
- Annex F: GFCR Programme Assessment on Capacity and Cost Baseline
 - Fiji GFCR Programme Assessment
 - Miambu Yetu GFCR Programme Assessment
 - Bahamas GFCR Programme Assessment
 - MAR Fund GFCR Programme Assessment
 - Philippines GFCR Programme Assessment

Annex A: Expenditure Breakdown

Annex A: Expenditure Breakdown					
Activity	Recipient Organization	Approved Budget	2021 Annual Expenditure	2022 Annual Expenditure	2023 Annual Commitment
PROGRAMME OUTC	OME COSTS				
OUTCOME: Monitorin	ng and Evaluatio	n			
Activity 1.1.1: Staff & Other Personnel	UNEP	\$425,495	\$28,533	\$125,915	\$232,139.50
Activity 1.1.2: Equipment, Vehicles, and Furniture (including Depreciation)	UNEP	\$3,500	\$-	\$-	\$-
Activity 1.1.3: Travel	UNEP	\$60,916	\$-	\$-	\$12,082
Activity 1.1.4: Transfers & Grants to Counterparts	UNEP	\$60,000	\$-	\$-	\$70,000
Total Outcome Costs		\$549,911	\$28,533	\$125,915	\$314,221