

Pacific Blue Carbon Initiative Closes in Fiji After Major Successes

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A vital regional initiative aimed at conserving and sustainably managing coastal “blue carbon” ecosystems across the Pacific has successfully concluded, with partners meeting in Suva on October 23rd to mark the project’s achievements.

The **MACBLUE** project, which spanned Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, was implemented by a consortium of partners: the **Ministry of Environment and Climate Change** (Fiji), the **Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)**, the **Pacific Community (SPC)**, and the **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)**. Since its inception in 2022, the initiative has significantly advanced the conservation and management of critical coastal areas, particularly **mangroves and seagrasses**.

Digital Technology Drives Mapping and Data Collection

A key component of the MACBLUE Project was the large-scale updated mapping and monitoring of seagrass and mangrove ecosystems across all four partner countries. This was made possible by leveraging the **Digital Earth Pacific (DE Pacific)** platform, a free, open, public technology infrastructure developed by SPC that provides governments, researchers, and communities with access to decades of satellite data.

Beyond mapping, the project delivered several critical technical outputs:

- **Rapid biodiversity and threat assessments.**
 - **Standardised carbon stock measurements.**
 - **National training** on GIS mapping and carbon assessment.
 - **Reviews of relevant legal frameworks** and support for partner countries in international environmental negotiations.
 - **Production of valuable knowledge products and awareness materials.**
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Focus on Policy, Accountability, and Climate Resilience

Speaking at the closing event, **Dr. Sivendra Michael, Permanent Secretary for Environment and Climate Change (Fiji)**, highlighted the necessity of integrating legal considerations into national policies.

“The completion of the MACBLUE Project marks a significant milestone in Fiji’s environmental conservation efforts,” he stated. **“This initiative not only supports our national objectives to enhance climate resilience and promote sustainable management of our blue carbon ecosystems, but it also brings attention to the importance of embedding legal and policy frameworks that ensure long-term accountability and enforcement.”**

Mr. Amena Yauvoli, Director of Biodiversity Conservation at SPREP, emphasised the project’s role in empowering local communities.

“This collaborative effort exemplifies our commitment to safeguarding biodiversity and enhancing climate resilience in the Pacific region, as well as addressing a long standing gap in blue carbon data,” he said. **“The blue carbon and carbon stock assessments carried out through this project give us a clearer picture of how much carbon is stored in our coastal ecosystems, like mangroves and seagrasses. This information is crucial for shaping national climate policies and helping communities benefit from conservation efforts in the long run. It also calls for a collective regional action to continue the momentum on blue carbon projects to strengthen our knowledge and capacity in blue carbon ecosystems.”**

Blue Carbon Data to Guide National Planning

Ms. Rhonda Robinson, Director of the Geoscience, Energy and Maritime Division at SPC, underscored the practical application of the new data.

“The work on mapping seagrass and mangrove habitats has been especially important; it not only helps us understand where these vital ecosystems are located but also supports efforts to measure blue carbon and guide national planning for coastal protection and climate action,” said Ms. Robinson.

Mr Raphael Linzatti, Project Director at GIZ, praised the collaborative model that underpinned the project’s success.

“As a committed international cooperation partner, GIZ is proud to support Pacific Island countries in strengthening climate resilience and sustainable resource management. One of the key strengths of this project has been its emphasis on regional collaboration, bringing together countries, institutions, and communities to share knowledge, harmonise methodologies, and build collective capacity,” said Mr. Linzatti.

Through capacity-building workshops, MACBLUE trained over 100 participants from Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Fiji in areas including **blue carbon assessment, carbon stock assessment, and seagrass and mangrove mapping**, effectively strengthening partnerships and improving coastal ecosystem management across the region.