Terminal Evaluation Review form, GEF Independent Evaluation Office, APR 2016

1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		2633	
GEF Agency project ID		PIMS: 3254	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-3	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		UNDP	
Project name		Mainstreaming and Sustaining Biodiversity Conservation in three Productive Sectors of the Sabana Camaguey Ecosystem (SCE)	
Country/Countries		Cuba	
Region		Latin America and the Caribbean	
Focal area		Biodiversity	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		OP2: Coastal, Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems BD-2: Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Production Landscapes and Sectors	
Executing agencies involved		Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA), supported by other line ministries	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		Through consultations	
Private sector involvement		NA	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval date (MSP)		January 2008	
Effectiveness date / project start		January 2008	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		February 2014	
Actual date of project completion		September 2015	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US $M)	**At Completion (US $M)***
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	0.2	0.2
	Co-financing	0.30	0.20
GEF Project Grant		4.12	NA
Co-financing	IA own	0.58	0.58
	Government	22.03	54.23
	Other multi- /bi-laterals	0	0
	Private sector	0	0
	NGOs/CSOs	0.74	0.74
Total GEF funding		4.32	4.05
Total Co-financing		23.66	55.55
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		27.98	59.60
Terminal evaluation/review information			
TE completion date		May 2015	
Author of TE		Alexandra Fischer, Roberto de Andrade, Aida Ramirez	
TER completion date		November 27, 2016	
TER prepared by		Caroline Laroche	
TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)		Molly Watts	

* The budget figures presented in the TE had some mistakes. Amongst other things, GEF funding was confused with UNDP funding. The author of this TER tried to report the figures that make the most sense.

2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review	GEF IEO Review
Project Outcomes	HS	S	--	S
Sustainability of Outcomes		L	--	L
M&E Design		S	--	S
M&E Implementation		S	--	S
Quality of Implementation		HS	--	HS
Quality of Execution		HS	--	S
Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report		--	--	S

3. Project Objectives

3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

The overall project goal is "to protect the marine and coastal biodiversity of global significance in the productive landscapes and seascapes of the Sabana-Camagüey Ecosystem of Cuba (SCE), while contributing to the country's social and economic development" (PD p.28).

3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

The development objective as stated in the Project Document is "to promote operational changes within three key productive sectors to enable biodiversity conservation in the SCE and to support these changes through improvements to the enabling environment" (PD p.28).

Project objectives will be achieved through the following four main outcomes:

1. A strengthened enabling environment will exist for the financial, institutional, environmental and social sustainability of biodiversity conservation in the tourism, fisheries and agriculture-livestock sectors in the Sabana-Camagüey Ecosystem (SCE).

2. The tourism sector develops in accordance with the conservation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems within the SCE

3. Sustainable fisheries are practiced within the SCE so that fish populations and marine ecosystem functions are maintained and/or restored

4. The declining sugar cane industry transitions into sustainable land use practices, with greatly reduced negative impacts on the coastal region of the SCE.

(PD p.28)

3.3 Were there any changes in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or other activities during implementation?

There were no changes in objectives or planned activities during project implementation.

4. GEF IEO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability

Please refer to the GEF Terminal Evaluation Review Guidelines for detail on the criteria for ratings.

Relevance can receive either a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory rating. For Effectiveness and Cost efficiency, a six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess. Sustainability ratings are assessed on a four-point scale: Likely=no or negligible risk; Moderately Likely=low risk; Moderately Unlikely=substantial risks; Unlikely=high risk. In assessing a Sustainability rating please note if, and to what degree, sustainability of project outcomes is threatened by financial, sociopolitical, institutional/governance, or environmental factors.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

4.1 **Relevance**	Rating: **Satisfactory**

The TE rates the project as relevant. Similarly, this TER rates relevance as satisfactory due to its good alignment with Cuba's biodiversity conservation efforts as well as with the GEF-4 biodiversity strategy.

This project was the last of three GEF projects on this topic in Cuba. The phase 1 project "identified problems and opportunities, completed bio-geophysical, economic and social characterization of the SCE and developed a Strategic Plan. Phase 2 secured the conservation of particularly sensitive or high biodiversity value areas in a network of protected areas that covers 20% of the SCE, and made impressive progress in promoting an ecosystem-based approach within a traditionally centralized and sector-driven development-planning framework" (PD p.1) Phase three builds upon the accomplishments of the first two phases of the project, and focuses on protecting biodiversity in the key productive sectors of the economy.

Cuba was already active in the field of biodiversity conservation prior to this project. In 1975, the new Constitution of the Republic of Cuba recognized the need to protect the environment and, in 1977 the National Commission for the Protection of Environment and Natural Resources (COMARNA) was created (PD p.52). Nowadays, the National Environmental Strategy and the Law of the Environment constitute the most fundamental laws regimenting biodiversity in Cuba. (PD p.17)

The project is directly aligned with the strategic priority "Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Production Landscapes and Sectors". Indeed, the project aims to strengthen the environment for biodiversity conservation in three of Cuba's most important production sectors.

4.2 **Effectiveness**	Rating: **Satisfactory**

The TE rates effectiveness as satisfactory. This TER also rates effectiveness as satisfactory as the project developed numerous initiatives that are already having an impact on biodiversity in Cuba, and because the project met most of its targets.

Outcome 1: A strengthened enabling environment will exist for the financial, institutional, environmental and social sustainability of biodiversity conservation in the tourism, fisheries and agriculture-livestock sectors in the Sabana-Camagüey Ecosystem (SCE).

The project successfully strengthened the enabling environment for biodiversity conservation in the SCE, largely through its contribution to the development and implementation of Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) programs. Indeed, as part of the project, "an ICM methodology was adapted to the Cuban context and is now being used as a tool for environmental management" (TE p.9). Several measures were implemented as part of ICM, including "nature tourism, reforestation, protection of fisheries resources, and controlled livestock husbandry, among others" (TE p.9). 20 capacity building Centres were established within the SCE, and a proposal for the development of an Advisory Board for ICM has been developed but is still pending formal approval (TE p.9). Targets under this outcome appear to have largely been met, with sector budgets for actions related to environmental conservation in the SCE having significantly increased during the project (TE p.51).

Outcome 2: The tourism sector develops in accordance with the conservation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems within the SCE

The project developed several initiatives under this output. Training workshops were held for various tourism stakeholders, and a "fully equipped Centre for Sustainable Tourism Development was established" (TE p.9). Funding was allocated to help maintain the Coral Reef Early Warning Voluntary Monitoring Network, and many pilot projects were established with the National Centre for Protected Areas (TE p.9). New policies and guidelines, as well as a manual of best practices in the hotel industry were developed (TE p.10). All targets were achieved, except for one regarding the reinvestment of revenues from taxes and fees on tourism activities within the SCE.

Outcome 3: Sustainable fisheries are practiced within the SCE so that fish populations and marine ecosystem functions are maintained and/or restored

Under this outcome too, achievements were numerous. "Substantial biophysical information was collected to better understand the state of the fisheries, which supported the approval of key policies to ensure the sustainability of the fisheries, such as the national ban on bottom trawling in 2012. Training, technical assistance and exchanges for fishermen, inspectors and decision makers were carried out. Pilot projects to promote sustainable fishing alternatives were also put in place focusing on sponge cultivation, oyster cultivation and oceanic fisheries (demersal fisheries). These have provided tangible socio-economic benefits and some replication is already occurring." (TE p.10) Most targets were met or exceeded, with the exception of the number of mangrove oyster fishermen now following sustainable fishing practices. Overall, clear improvements in this area have taken place as a result of the project.

Outcome 4: The declining sugar cane industry transitions into sustainable land use practices, with greatly reduced negative impacts on the coastal region of the SCE.

Based on the logical framework data provided in the TE (pp.57-64), this was the least successful project area. Several targets were not reached, in particular those related to the number of people benefiting

from the conversion of sugar cane land, and those related to the number hectares within the SCE formerly dedicated to sugar cane production now under biodiversity friendly agriculture, livestock and/or forestry management in pilot projects. Nonetheless, significant initiatives still took place under this outcome. For instance, the project tested sustainable and diversified agricultural production models and worked on "the development of a draft national standard on the sustainable management of confined buffalo in coastal ecosystems, which is in the process of formal approval" (TE p.10). The project also supported the introduction of native tree species and trays with cells at nurseries, which helped increase forest coverage in the region.

4.3 **Efficiency**	Rating: **Satisfactory**

The TE rates efficiency as highly satisfactory as the project's financial management ran very smoothly and the project was rendered more efficient through partnerships. For the same reasons, this TER rates efficiency as satisfactory.

According to the TE, the project's financial management was very effective. However, budgetary execution fluctuated widely throughout the project, ranging from a low 43% in 2009 to a high 112% in 2013. According to the TE, this fluctuation was due to procurement issues, which are common in Cuba due to "the limited availability of suppliers to Cuba, the shipping distances, and time lags related to government checks and balances of imported goods" (TE p.26). This "led to delays in different activities such as fisheries research and monitoring of ecological indicators and affected budgetary execution" (TE p.26).

The project successfully increased its efficiency by partnering with other institutions to create synergies "to jointly carry out various project activities and to maximize impacts. For example, the training of tour operators on nature tourism was carried out in conjunction with the UNDP/GEF Southern Archipelagos project to share costs. The project also liaised with the UNDP/GEF Small Grants Program, resulting in support for an additional sponge farm. Another example of efficiency since 2010 is the fact that annual meetings of the Project Management Unit, including national coordinators, provincial coordinators and sectoral coordinators, were held in conjunction with meetings of the experts associated with the Capacity Building Centres/ ICM." (TE p.65)

4.4 **Sustainability**	Rating: **Likely**

The TE rates all aspects of sustainability as satisfactory. This TER rates sustainability as likely due to the project's accomplishments in terms of institutional strengthening, education and awareness raising in local communities, and increases in incomes due to sustainable production practices.

Financial Risks – Sustainability Moderately Likely

As a result of the project, key sectors (tourism, fisheries, agriculture) now invest more resources into biodiversity conservation, and are generating more revenues. The TE reports that "Incomes have also increased from implementation of the sustainable productive activities introduced through the pilot projects. For example, strengthened buffalo management has substantially increased revenues for agricultural cooperatives through sales of milk and meat (as well as providing food for the workers' consumption); both the high sea fishing and the sponge cultivation have been successfully marketing the products; and forestry workers received additional bonuses as a result of high plant survival rates. These positive economic impacts mean that stakeholders have a vested interest to continue to implement the practices." (TE P.69)

The project included research on sustainable financing to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of various models of sustainable production. As part of this, "a proposal was developed for the Ministry of Tourism, which would involve charges to tour operators that would be reinvested in biodiversity conservation in productive sectors. This proposal is still being discussed and requires substantial follow-up in the future as this could represent an important financial mechanism for sustainability." (TE p.9) However, further political support will be necessary to further the issue of financial sustainability of biodiversity (TE p.66). That being said, recent changes in Cuba's economic policies are giving municipalities more freedom to manage part of their budget, which could enable more funding for local conservation initiatives. "On the other hand, it must be mentioned that financial resources are limited for activities such as promotion of sustainable productive activities, national workshops, fisheries research, surveillance and biodiversity monitoring (especially in marine areas where the costs of vessels and fuel are higher). As a result, it is likely that there will be somewhat of a reduction in the scale of activities carried out with the project, although the evaluators consider that all of the main activities initiated by the project will continue to be carried out after the project. " (TE p.70)

Given that financial sustainability has not yet been fully ensured, this TER rates financial sustainability as moderately likely.

Socio-political Risks – Sustainability Likely

According to the TE, there are no significant socio-political risks to the project. Indeed, the government has recently implemented legislation (for example, the 2012 law prohibiting bottom trawling throughout the country), clearly demonstrating its commitment to biodiversity conservation. The government's important sums provided as co-financing are another proof of this commitment.

Education and awareness activities also took place with local communities, thereby increasing popular support for biodiversity conservation and increasing the likelihood that communities will continue supporting project activities, from which they now also benefit (see financial sustainability section above for more details on how local communities are financially benefiting from the project).

Institutional Risks – Sustainability Likely

The project successfully strengthened the enabling environment for biodiversity conservation in the SCE, largely through its contribution to the development and implementation of the Integrated Coastal

Management (ICM) programs in Cuba. Indeed, as part of the project, "an ICM methodology was adapted to the Cuban context and is now being used as a tool for environmental management" (TE p.9). Importantly, "extensive capacity building was carried out throughout the project (as well as in the first two projects implemented in the ecosystem), leading to greater abilities among key institutions and sectors to implement sustainable productive practices and to manage impacts. It is important to mention that 20 Capacity Building Centers were established and equipped through the project, and two others were established outside of the SCE. Based on interviews with stakeholders, these will continue to be used as venues for capacity building in the future." (TE P.68) Overall, the project appears to have truly strengthened Cuba's institutional capacity to protect biodiversity.

Environmental Risks – Sustainability Likely

Climate change and its impacts, including rises in sea level and coral bleaching, are expected to get worse in Cuba in the near future. This is an important risk to biodiversity, but one that is mitigated by the project's activities. For example, the Integrated Coastal Management Programs for the 16 municipalities in the Sabana-Camagüey Ecosystem incorporate actions to adapt to climate change. Environmental risks therefore do not pose a threat to the accomplishments of the project. (TE p.70)

5. Processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes

5.1 Co-financing. To what extent was the reported co-financing essential to the achievement of GEF objectives? If there was a difference in the level of expected co-financing and actual co-financing, then what were the reasons for it? Did the extent of materialization of co-financing affect project's outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

The total project co-financing obtained was more than double the amount promised at project inception. This is largely due to the additional support provided by the Government of Cuba ($54,229,980 instead of $22,032,000), and more specifically "from the Ministries of Science, Technology and Environment; Fisheries;, AZCUBA; Agriculture; and Forestry and Tourism, and from local governments, which provided funding for activities such as the development of proposals for biological corridors, preparation of nurseries, and the establishment of two additional sponge farms**"** (TE p.30).

According to the TE, "the substantial amount of co-financing provided for this project supported achievement of the project's objectives and is a demonstration of the high levels of commitment and ownership from the government of Cuba" (TE p.30).

5.2 Project extensions and/or delays. If there were delays in project implementation and completion, then what were the reasons for it? Did the delay affect the project's outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

The project received a no-cost extension from March 2014 to March 2015 "to allow this (…) project to systematize lessons learnt from many years of operations in the field as well as to give

it additional time to consolidate its exit strategy in line with key recommendations from the mid-term review" (PIR 2015, p.42).

5.3 Country ownership. Assess the extent to which country ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability? Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability, highlighting the causal links:

The project appears to have benefitted from very strong ownership from the Government of Cuba. The TE reports "the project Outcomes related to tourism, fisheries and agriculture were the responsibility of the Ministries representing these key sectors, which served to enhance their involvement in the initiative and dissemination of the results. Generally, there were very high levels of participation of stakeholders at national, provincial and local levels and from various institutes, which signaled substantial support for the project's objectives. As described in detail in the co-financing section, government co-financing exceeded original projections significantly." (TE p.65)

Another key indicator of country ownership is the fact that numerous laws and policies have been enacted as a result of the project. Examples include the following:

- Resolution on the declaration of Zones Under Integrated Coastal Management (ZBRMICs)
- Approval of seven Zones under Regime of Integrated Coastal Management (ZBRMICs) in the Sabana-Camagüey Ecosystem;
- Approval of nine environmental planning exercises in municipalities;
- Development of proposed Cuban norm on sustainable management of confined buffalo in coastal zones, which is in an advanced stage of discussion within the parliamentary system;
- Drafting of proposed norm on the sustainable construction of roadways in fragile ecosystems (small cays), also pending approval; and
- Proposed resolution modifying existing Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) resolution to integrate an ICM Advisory Board, taking into consideration the increasing number of ZBRMICs in important ecosystems of the country

(TE p.65)

6. Assessment of project's Monitoring and Evaluation system

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory=no shortcomings in this M&E component; Satisfactory=minor shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Satisfactory=moderate shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Unsatisfactory=significant shortcomings in this M&E component; Unsatisfactory=major shortcomings in this M&E component; Highly Unsatisfactory=there were no project M&E systems.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

6.1 **M&E Design at entry**	Rating: **Satisfactory**

The TE rates M&E design at entry as satisfactory due to the comprehensiveness of the M&E plan formulated, and to the strength of the logical framework developed. This TER also rates M&E design as satisfactory.

All M&E components required for a UNDP/GEF project were present. The PD clearly presents plans for an inception workshop, project monitoring, reporting, as well as mid-term and terminal independent evaluations (PD p.195). The PD also presents a detailed workplan and an associated budget for all project M&E activities. The logical framework presented in the PD (p.72) relies on good, verifiable indicators that meet the SMART criteria (TE p.20). It also presents baseline values, targets, sources of verification as well as risks and assumptions for each indicator. Some of those indicators rely on technical and scientific monitoring protocols, which strengthens the logical framework's ability to capture actual environmental change.

The TE criticizes some of the logical framework's indicators for being too ambitious. For example, "it proved difficult to measure the expected changes in some of these indicators after the seven-year project, especially because some depended on assumptions such as the ban on bottom trawling being in place by project start-up (which did not occur until 2012)." In addition, "a few of the indicators at the Outcome level also proved rather ambitious such as the "increase in revenues from taxes and fees on tourism activities invested in biodiversity conservation within the SCE", particularly because such financial mechanisms had never before been implemented in the Cuban context." (TE p.22) This seems to be a minor issue, and M&E design at entry is therefore still rated as satisfactory.

6.2 **M&E Implementation**	Rating: **Satisfactory**

The TE rates M&E implementation for the project as satisfactory as the project implemented all activities as planned. This TER also rates M&E implementation as satisfactory.

According to the TE, "The EA implemented its M&E functions diligently" (TE p.23) and project reporting was of good quality. Indeed, all planned monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities appear to have been implemented as planned. The TE reports that the midterm evaluation recommendations were taken seriously, and that most of them were addressed by the Project Management Unit, showing good adaptive management (TE p.23).

The TE reports some inconsistencies in the way indicators were measured, making it more difficult to track progress over time (TE p.24). The project also reportedly struggled to monitor some of the ecological indicators established in the inception phase, "due to various factors such as unavailability of vessels, high costs of renting those that were available, difficulties obtaining permits to rent vessels for scientific use from tourism authorities, and the time lags in observing ecological changes" (TE p.8).

However as this was outside the control of the project, and M&E implementation is rated as satisfactory.

7. Assessment of project implementation and execution

Quality of Implementation includes the quality of project design, as well as the quality of supervision and assistance provided by implementing agency(s) to execution agencies throughout project implementation. Quality of Execution covers the effectiveness of the executing agency(s) in performing its roles and responsibilities. In both instances, the focus is upon factors that are largely within the control of the respective implementing and executing agency(s). A six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

7.1 **Quality of Project Implementation**	Rating: **Highly Satisfactory**

The implementing agency for this project was the UNDP. In the TE, the UNDP's quality of implementation is rated as highly satisfactory. This TER also rates it as highly satisfactory due to the UNDP having gone above and beyond its role as implementing agency in order to facilitate this project.

The TE describes the UNDP as having been very heavily involved in the project and as having provided useful and effective support:

> "As Implementing Agency for this project, UNDP effectively carried out its functions, including financial oversight and technical support, to support the achievement of project results. There was frequent communication between the PMU and the UNDP. UNDP monitored budgetary execution on an ongoing basis, participated in meetings to follow up on procurement issues, and processed payment requests efficiently. UNDP supported the preparation of the annual Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) and regularly visited provincial sites. It should also be noted that UNDP CO reviewed project publications before they went to print and advocated for an emphasis on communication and information dissemination. Moreover, the UNDP Regional Service Centre supported knowledge management by funding the publication of two documents to highlight project experiences. " (TE p.8)

UNDP appears to have effectively fulfilled all the responsibilities of Implementing Agency, "as well as additional tasks to support achievement of project results" (TE p.24). For example, the UNDP helped resolve procurement issues when the project experienced delays and obstacles in importing goods needed for the project. Overall, the UNDP appears to have done a highly satisfactory job as this project's implementing agency.

7.2 **Quality of Project Execution**	Rating: **Satisfactory**

The executing agency for this project was the Environment Agency (AMA), located within the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment (CITMA). In the TE, AMA-CITMA's quality of execution for this project is rated as highly satisfactory. This TER instead rates it as satisfactory.

CITMA was chosen as executing agency for the project due to its technical capacity to support Integrated Coastal Management activities, and because it already chaired and coordinated the National Watershed Council, putting it in an advantageous position to execute the project (PD pp.53-54).

According to the TE, "the Environment Agency managed this project efficiently and conscientiously. High levels of communication and coordination among the EA and key stakeholders played an important role in the effectiveness of the project. Project planning was carried out in a participatory manner. Moreover, the EA employed adaptive management successfully on various occasions to deal with changes in the national context in terms of socio-economic policies, extreme weather events and other factors. " (TE p.8) The PMU is described as having well very organized, consultative of stakeholders, and very responsive (TE pp.25-26).

The Environment Agency demonstrated very good adaptive management throughout the project. First, the PMU took the recommendations from the midterm recommendation very seriously, and implemented most of them. Second, the PMU was agile in responding to changes in the project context. For example, "One key government change was the decision to allocate idle lands to private individuals in usufruct for agricultural production. The EA and project Steering Committee felt that this represented a new project risk that could increase pressure on natural resources and biodiversity in productive landscapes. As a result, the project decided to begin exploring the concept of biological corridors for each province of the SCE to create greater interconnections among protected areas, biodiversity patches, forests and productive land in which sustainable practices are being carried out. This element was not originally conceived in the project design. By project end, a proposal for a biological corridor was developed" (TE p.32). In addition, the project incorporate the topic of climate change, which was not emphasized in the Project Document, and introduced measures to reduce its impact as part of the project.

8. Assessment of Project Impacts

Note - In instances where information on any impact related topic is not provided in the terminal evaluations, the reviewer should indicate in the relevant sections below that this is indeed the case and identify the information gaps. When providing information on topics related to impact, please cite the page number of the terminal evaluation from where the information is sourced.

8.1 Environmental Change. Describe the changes in environmental stress and environmental status that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

There is no doubt that the project contributed to institutional strengthening that will support to biodiversity conservation going forward. For instance, “fisheries data gathered through the project supported the introduction of a government policy to prohibit bottom trawling nationwide in 2012, which will have huge benefits for seagrass beds and the sustainability of the fish populations at an ecosystem scale” (TE p.71).

Already, some indicators of environmental health are showing a direct impact for the project. Among others, the area of mangroves in the Sabana-Camagüey Ecosystem increased by 280 km^2. Coral reef damage in key diving sites was maintained at less than 10%, and 882 hectares of land were reforested.

8.2 Socioeconomic change. Describe any changes in human well-being (income, education, health, community relationships, etc.) that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

Incomes from sustainable production have increased, meaning local communities are financially better off and have an interest in maintaining project benefits: “Incomes have also increased from implementation of the sustainable productive activities introduced through the pilot projects. For example, strengthened buffalo management has substantially increased revenues for agricultural cooperatives through sales of milk and meat (as well providing food for the workers' consumption); both the high sea fishing and the sponge cultivation have been successfully marketing the products; and forestry workers received additional bonuses as a result of high plant survival rates. These positive economic impacts mean that stakeholders have a vested interest to continue to implement the practices.” (TE P.69)

8.3 Capacity and governance changes. Describe notable changes in capacities and governance that can lead to large-scale action (both mass and legislative) bringing about positive environmental change. “Capacities” include awareness, knowledge, skills, infrastructure, and environmental monitoring systems, among others. “Governance” refers to decision-making processes, structures and systems, including access to and use of information, and thus would include laws, administrative bodies, trust-building and conflict resolution processes, information-sharing systems, etc. Indicate how project activities contributed to/ hindered these changes, as well as how contextual factors have influenced these changes.

a) Capacities

The project aimed at increasing the institutional capacity of the government of Cuba to put in place and manage biodiversity conservation measures. The project successfully raised that capacity, and “led to greater awareness among key sectors on how to integrate biodiversity conservation into their productive activities; it contributed to increased sectorial investments in BD mainstreaming; and it produced tools such as best practice manuals that are expected to increase adoption of sustainable productive practices. “ (TE p.71)

b) Governance

A system of governance was put in place to oversee the implementation of Integrated Coastal Management programs in the Sabana-Camagüey Ecosystem.

8.4 Unintended impacts. Describe any impacts not targeted by the project, whether positive or negative, affecting either ecological or social aspects. Indicate the factors that contributed to these unintended impacts occurring.

The TE reports that the development of a proposal for biological corridors was unexpected; this came about when the EA and the Steering Committee tried to find an appropriate response to new project risks related to a new government policy. (TE p.10, 32)

8.5 Adoption of GEF initiatives at scale. Identify any initiatives (e.g. technologies, approaches, financing instruments, implementing bodies, legal frameworks, information systems) that have been mainstreamed, replicated and/or scaled up by government and other stakeholders by project end. Include the extent to which this broader adoption has taken place, e.g. if plans and resources have been established but no actual adoption has taken place, or if market change and large-scale environmental benefits have begun to occur. Indicate how project activities and other contextual factors contributed to these taking place. If broader adoption has not taken place as expected, indicate which factors (both project-related and contextual) have hindered this from happening.

This project could be replicated within the five Cuban provinces involved in the project as they also have coastlines, as well as to other Cuban provinces and to other countries in the Caribbean. So far, no replication has taken place.

9. Lessons and recommendations

9.1 Briefly describe the key lessons, good practices, or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report that could have application for other GEF projects.

The report presents the following lessons learned: (shortened by the author of this TER):

1. High level of training and participation of local governments in project activities, such as Capacity Building Centres and ICM Programs

The results of the pilots projects, such as on nature tourism, were highly valued by local governments due to their significant social and economic impacts on the communities. The ongoing interaction with municipal governments and channeling of information to them served to enhance local ownership and will strengthen sustainability, particularly given that follow up on the implementation of ICM Programs is their responsibility. In addition, this approach is consistent with the Cuban government's policy shift toward greater decentralization.

2. Pilot projects addressed productive sector interests as well as Ministerial objectives and helped address community problems

Stakeholders interviewed indicated that the pilot projects responded to specific sectoral and Ministerial interests and provided tangible benefits to stakeholders. This contributed to high levels of uptake and replication. For example, within the fishing sector, the need to reduce pressures on the traditional coastal fisheries was recognized and the three alternatives promoted were all feasible alternatives that captured the interests of stakeholders. The buffalo pilot projects were another example, as these helped producers address the problem of wild buffalo populations and low productivity.

3. Emphasis on education and environmental training at all levels, including the community level

The project's strong emphasis on training, education and awareness raising led to a significantly higher level of awareness within the communities on the natural values of the Sabana Camagüey ecosystem and on sustainable productive activities.

4. Synergy with other projects can maximize efficiencies

The PMU coordinated various project actions with other projects to reduce costs and to facilitate stakeholder interaction. For example, the itinerant training of tour operators was carried out together with the UNDP/GEF Southern Archipelagos project to enable them to see the different nature products on offer in person and to learn of their environmental values. Cooperation took place with the UNDP/GEF Invasive Alien Species (IAS) project in terms of management of buffalo and identification of IAS in the Sabana-Camagüey Ecosystem.

5. Development of regulatory norms and best practice manuals based on project results in order to increase sustainability of project impact

The project led to the development of two draft governmental norms awaiting formal approval as well as best practice manuals related to biodiversity mainstreaming in productive sectors. Examples include the draft norm on sustainable management of buffalo, draft norm on road construction in sensitive ecosystems and the best practice manual for the hotel industry. Such tools contributed substantially to project sustainability.

6. ICM Programs were developed in a participatory manner and the associated ICM Boards incorporate all key stakeholders

The participatory process employed to develop the ICM Programs increased ownership and levels of participation in relevant activities among locals. In addition, the local ICM Boards that were established to ensure implementation of the Programs include all key stakeholders and are chaired by the municipal governments.

7. Pilot projects were designed during project preparation phase

While this should be standard design practice, it is not always the case that the pilot projects are fully designed and agreed upon during the project preparation phase. In this project, they were and this enabled their implementation to begin more quickly and facilitated their replication, despite the fact that some modifications needed to be made during implementation.

8. Productive sectors managed activities to integrate biodiversity conservation directly

Sectoral coordinators were designated for each of Outcomes 2-4 to take responsibility for the project outputs and achievement of objectives. FORMATUR, MINAL, AZCUBA and MINAGRI carried out planning and supervision of activities. The institutions also requested project funds from the national Project Director in line with the Annual Operational Plans that they developed jointly with relevant stakeholders. This increased ownership of project results among key sectors that affect biodiversity.

9. Continuity of UNDP/GEF support for the Sabana Camagüey ecosystem over three phases increased impact

The Cuban government perceived the intervention as a three-phase process from the outset and was able to obtain support from GEF for three consecutive projects. As a result of this support, stakeholders indicated that greater impact could be achieved. Each project built on the achievements of the former project in a logical manner but went a step further.

9.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

The report makes the following recommendations (shortened by the author of this TER):

Recommendations related to project design

☐Carefully select environmental impact indicators to ensure that they are realistic and that changes can be observed in time span of project

Some of the environmental impact indicators selected proved to be problematic because short-term changes are not typically evident and because recovery times for these ecosystems are long (such as for seagrass beds). It is therefore important to carefully analyze the indicators to be included in any project's Strategic Results Framework and ensure that they are not dependent on assumptions outside of the control of the project.

☐Cleary explain the methods used to establish the baseline values for all indicators in the ProDoc

With this project, in the case of the baseline measurements of contaminant loads, the specific climatological conditions under which the values were obtained were not sufficiently explained in the ProDoc. As a result, when subsequent measurements were taken during project implementation, the conditions were not necessarily the same such that reliable data comparisons could not be made to measure changes over time. For this reason, additional detail on the calculation of baselines should be included in Project Documents.

☐Dedicate sufficient resources in M&E Plan budget to monitor ecological indicators, including at project end

There were unforeseen increases during project implementation in the cost of renting vessels for coastal/ marine environmental monitoring, which increased the cost of planned expeditions. In order to avoid this problem in future projects, a cushion of additional funds needs to be included in the M&E budget, to ensure that the full final monitoring of environmental impact can be undertaken, in line with UNDP/GEF project requirements.

☐Negotiate agreements during PPG phase for the use of vessels in coastal/marine monitoring

One of the issues experienced when it came time to monitor coastal/marine impact indicators was the difficulty accessing the required vessels. Tourism boats were often unavailable as were boats belonging to other institutions and this made monitoring more difficult and also affected the periodicity and timing of monitoring. For this reason, agreements should be negotiated during the PPG phase to use specific vessels at specific times for project monitoring.

Recommendations to guide project execution

☐Report on indicators with quantitative data if the baselines do so and employ the same methods of measurement to facilitate comparison

This is critical to enable the level of progress against the baseline to be assessed. This was not always done with this project.

☐Measure all indicators at project closure to determine final project impact

It is recommended that all indicators be measured at project end, even if changes are not expected or the target is not expected to be met. If human or financial resources are limited, end-of-project monitoring is even more important than monitoring the indicators at midpoint, as it enables the final project impact to be determined.

☐Obtain the commitment of relevant institutions to track both co-financing and leveraged resources

In the case of this project, the national-level project coordinators had trouble obtaining reliable information on leveraged resources from institutions and so were not able to determine the final amount of leveraged resources. At project outset, a commitment from relevant institutions to track these figures should be sought.

☐Ensure that all necessary materials for productive technological innovations are purchased

For a few of the plant nurseries, MINAGRI purchased the planting trays with built-in cells (tubetes) without the associated irrigation system or tables, with the result that these trays are not currently being used. It is important that purchase orders be prepared carefully for any new technology to ensure their full utility.

☐Carry out final workshop before final evaluation

In order for the feedback from stakeholders to inform the final project evaluations, it is recommended that the concluding workshop be carried out beforehand. This was not done in this case because of the desire to ensure that the final evaluation was carried out within the established time frames.

Recommendations for financial sustainability:

☐Continue to develop financial mechanisms to support the implementation of sustainable productive activities in key sectors that affect biodiversity

The issue of payments for environmental services and reinvestment of a portion of incomes from sectors in conservation activities (and in protected areas management) is a novel one for Cuba and one that still requires substantial work and follow-up for it to be consolidated into concrete financial mechanisms. The further

development of incentives needs to be prioritized as this issue is absolutely vital for the financial sustainability of sustainable production in the tourism, fisheries and agricultural sectors.

☐Promote institutional coordination at the central level to achieve an integrated vision on ICM and secure agreement on relevant financial mechanisms

This includes institutions such as Cuba's Central Bank, MINAG, CITMA, and the Ministry of Finance and Prices. This will be key to effective inter-institutional collaboration and to the adoption of policies to increase the financial sustainability of sustainable productive practices.

Recommendations to maximize impacts of pilot sustainable productive sector activities and promote further replication/upscaling

☐Publish succinct pamphlets on the pilot projects to promote replication

In order to promote further replication of the pilot projects across the country, it would be useful to prepare simple pamphlets on each pilot project experience, summarizing the main elements, materials needed, results of economic evaluation studies and contact information to find out more.

☐It is recommended that CNAP follow-up on the nature tourism products developed with the project through the National Commission on Sustainable Tourism to ensure that there is sufficient support for their management and promotion

This is particularly important for the tourism products that have not yet been completely established, those for which management problems have arisen, or where further promotion is required to increase visitation levels.

☐Continue promotion of nature tourism products

The project supported the development, and in many cases, implementation of attractive nature tourism products. As a result, new nature products entered the market and participation in nature activities has increased. However, there still remains much potential to further promote these products and to promote many other nature products across the country.

☐Translate nature tourism material into English, including at Visitor Centres

Given the large numbers of tourists visiting Cuba who speak English and the expected increases in the future, it is important to ensure that all promotional and educational material be bilingual and to verify the quality of the translations. Future pilot projects to promote nature tourism should therefore include sufficient budget for translations in order to attract international tourists.

☐Ensure that the relevant pilot project experiences under the direction of AZCUBA are shared with MINAG

It is recommended that the experience gained by AZUBA be fully shared with MINAG to promote further replication of the sustainable production models, such as sustainable buffalo management (based on the requirements of the national standard, which is in the process of formal approval).

To maximize environmental impact:

☐Follow-up with IPF and tourism developers to ensure that BD considerations are incorporated in the construction and operation of new tourism developments, including in the cays of the province of Camagüey

Since last year (2014), new pressures have surfaced in terms of proposed large hotel developments in the cays of the province of Camagüey. These ongoing developments will need to be monitored carefully to promote consistency with the environmental land use planning for these areas and adherence to the best practices manual for hotels.

☐Develop biological corridors to consolidate BD conservation in the landscape, including protected and productive areas

Biological corridors for each province in the SCE were proposed to provide linkages between protected areas, forests, and areas under sustainable production. It is recommended that these corridors be consolidated and formally approved to build on the initial steps taken by the project.

☐Follow up on system of environmental indicators for productive sectors and on sustainable tourism indicators to ensure their formal approval

The proposed environmental indicators and sustainable tourism indicators require final approval and formal adoption. For the environmental indicators, this approval should come from CITMA as part the national system of environmental indicators.

☐Promote use of native species in reforestation

It is recommended that MINAG gain further experience on different native species and ensure that tree nurseries provide the appropriate conditions for their growth, with a view to further increasing the use of native tree species in forestry and in reforestation for conservation purposes.

☐Continue to provide training and environmental education in the long-term

Relevant stakeholders will need to continue to provide opportunities for training and environmental education after the project in order to maintain the progress achieved and to continue to promote sustainable practices in the coastal and marine areas of the ecosystem.

Recommendations for further information dissemination and knowledge management:

☐Increase accessibility of the information in the repository

It is recommended that the Institute of Tropical Geography enter additional metadata to facilitate access to the information repository (using search engines) and make the link between the project website and information repository more evident. In addition, linkages to the websites of those provinces that created their own local project website or included project information on their intranet should be established (such as Matanzas and Villa Clara).

☐Earmark funds to continue to print out key project outputs and disseminate project results and experiences within Cuba and internationally

Further dissemination of project results within Cuba and to other countries of the region would be very useful. The planned final publication should be widely shared and uploaded to the internet-based information repository for access by other countries.

☐UNDP Cuba to ensure that lessons learned from this BD-2 project and key documents that systematize the project experience are shared within the UNDP system and with GEF

It is recommended that the UNDP Cuba widely share available materials and promote the production of succinct documents that summarize the experience.

10. Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report

A six point rating scale is used for each sub-criteria and overall rating of the terminal evaluation report (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory)

Criteria	GEF IEO comments	Rating
To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?	All outcomes, outputs and achievements are described in great detail. Project achievements against logframe targets are clearly presented and thoroughly discussed.	**HS**
To what extent is the report internally consistent, the evidence presented complete and convincing, and ratings well substantiated?	The report is consistent, the evidence presented is complete and well organized, and all ratings are well justified.	**S**
To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and/or project exit strategy?	Project sustainability is presented in great detail, and all relevant risks are described and assessed. The project exit strategy is assessed.	**S**
To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?	Lessons and recommendations provided are very comprehensive, very detailed and are consistent with the evidence provided in the rest of the project. They are also very well justified.	**HS**
Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?	Actual total and per activity project costs are presented, as well as actual co-financing used. However, there were some errors in the co-financing figures provided.	**MU**
Assess the quality of the report's evaluation of project M&E systems:	The TE adequately reported on M&E implementation, and presented a thorough assessment of the M&E design and logical framework.	**S**
Overall TE Rating		**S**

11. Note any additional sources of information used in the preparation of the terminal evaluation report (excluding PIRs, TEs, and PADs).

No additional sources of information were used in the preparation of this TER.