

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

## 1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		2773	
GEF Agency project ID		3423	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-4	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		UNDP	
Project name		Overcoming Barriers to Sustainability of Costa Rica's Protected Areas System	
Country/Countries		Costa Rica	
Region		LAC	
Focal area		Biodiversity	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		OP 2: Coastal, Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems, &3 Forest Ecosystems	
Executing agencies involved		National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC)	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		The Nature Conservancy (TNC) as co-financiers	
Private sector involvement		Fundecodes as co-financiers	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval date (MSP)		September 26, 2008	
Effectiveness date / project start		September 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2010	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		November 2013	
Actual date of project completion		March 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2015	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	0.335	0.335
	Co-financing	0.2325	0.2325
GEF Project Grant		4.368	4.172
Co-financing	IA own		
	Government	4.335	2.844
	Other multi- /bi-laterals	14.578	7.476
	Private sector	0.285	2.131
	NGOs/CSOs	1.862	0.9
Total GEF funding		4.703	4.507
Total Co-financing		21.2925	13.5835
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		25.9955	18.0905
Terminal evaluation/review information			
TE completion date		March 2015	
Author of TE		Hernán Reyes, Ronny Muñoz	
TER completion date		1/14/2017	
TER prepared by		Molly Watts	
TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)		Mathias Einberger	

## 2. Summary of Project Ratings

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

## 3. Project Objectives

### 3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

The project's global environmental objective is "consolidating the National Protected Areas System (NPAS) as a key component of sustainable development in Costa Rica." (CEO Endorsement p. 20) The project aims to support Costa Rica's efforts to strengthen its Protected Area System, which is administered by the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC).

### 3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

The project's development objective is "to overcome the major systemic and institutional barriers to sustainability of the Costa Rican Protected Area System." To achieve this objective, the project worked towards five main outcomes:

- 1) Costa Rica's Legal and policy framework is reformed and enhanced to ensure effective management and long-term financial and ecological sustainability of the PA system
- 2) SINAC's institutional PA system framework and capacity is enhanced for eco-regional planning and optimal management effectiveness
- 3) SINAC has the financial sustainability to effectively attain its strategic objectives and provide resources for long-term PA System management needs.
- 4) SINAC tests new and innovative conservation approaches at the Conservation Area and PA levels.
- 5) Successful PA System management models are scaled-up and replicated at the systemic level through partnerships with key stakeholders.

(CEO Endorsement pp. 2-5)

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

There were no changes to the project design.

#### 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.

<b>4.1 Relevance</b>	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE rates relevance as relevant, and this TER rates relevance as Satisfactory. The project is consistent with the GEF Operational Strategy for Biodiversity, as it contributes to enhanced ecosystem functioning through the establishment and strengthening of systems of conservation areas. The project is relevant to GEF Strategic Priority 1: Catalyzing sustainability for protected area systems, and the sub-activity 'to improve opportunities for sustainable use, benefit sharing and broad stakeholder participation among communities-indigenous groups and the private sector', as it seeks to improve the bio-regional representation of Costa Rica's protected area system, addressing coverage gaps in areas of high global conservation significance.

The project is relevant to national goals. Costa Rica has made environmental issues and biodiversity conservation a national priority. It has signed and ratified international agreements in the field of biodiversity conservation, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and is also a contracting party to the Ramsar Convention. In February of 2006, Costa Rica passed a "Shared Management Policy for Protected Areas", with the aim to achieve concrete application of the policy's strategic lines in coming years. The terminal evaluation notes that the diagnosis of problems in Costa Rica's National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC) presented by the project was very relevant, although some important considerations were not addressed, and some assumptions were unrealistic.

<b>4.2 Effectiveness</b>	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE rates effectiveness as satisfactory, and this TER agrees with that rating. The project's development objective was to overcome the major systemic and institutional barriers to sustainability of the Costa Rican Protected Area System. The TE rated achievement of this objective as satisfactory. Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools ratings of the 25 sample protected areas in the county moved to higher categories of effectiveness as planned. Achievement of the project's outcomes is discussed below:

1) Costa Rica's Legal and policy framework is reformed and enhanced to ensure effective management and long-term financial and ecological sustainability of the PA system. Targets for this outcome were: the entry into force of the National PAS policy, both terrestrial and marine, legal reforms and reclassification of the PAs, the Strategic Plan and Strategic Action Plan for PA Systems (National Master

Plan) and of SINAC for its operation. These targets were achieved. A series of policies for “Protected Areas of the National System of Conservation Areas (PAS) were formalized, and CONAC made these public policy instruments official. (TE p.34) The Strategic Plan of the National Conservation Areas System SINAC 2010-2015 was institutionalized and at the time the TE was written, was working as a harmonizing instrument and institutional planning synchronizer of SINAC and the national planning system. Additionally, the Master Plan for Wild Protected Areas of SINAC was developed, and is the first to be developed in Costa Rica. Additionally, the monitoring and evaluation system designed as part of this master plan includes a proposal for Reclassification of the Protected Areas of Costa Rica based on international standards. This proposal was still under review by the Project Management Unit at the time the TE was written.

2) SINAC’s institutional PA system framework and capacity is enhanced for eco-regional planning and optimal management effectiveness. Planned achievements under this outcome were that roles and functions of SINAC personnel at the central and regional levels would be re-defined/re-aligned as per the new SINAC Strategic Plan and preliminary Short-term PA System Action Plan by year 3 of the project, that a knowledge management system would be established by year 2, and that by year 5, the knowledge management system would respond to the priorities and needs of the protected area system, based on a new eco-regional approach, which provided needed data for annual operational plans, budget formulation and management. By the end of the project, an institutional manual of positions with competency profiles of the National Conservation Areas System was created, and a proposal for a new organization structure was developed. As a result of these, a revision of roles is in process at SINAC. A performance evaluation system was proposed as well. A system of information on cooperation (SIC) was designed and is being executed. The system handles all information about cooperation that SINAC receives from agreements and cooperation projects. However, the TE notes that an Integrated Knowledge management system was not achieved.

3) SINAC has the financial sustainability to effectively attain its strategic objectives and provide resources for long-term PA system management needs One target for this outcome was that an optimal policy of visitor fees, including admission fees for vehicles to parks, with different fees for national and foreign visitors, would be drafted by year 1, and approved and implemented by year 2. The TE notes that several consultancies delivered important findings, allowing for progress in discarding options, and better diagnosing financial sustainability of SINAC. Decree number 38295 was passed and allows for the updating of the policy for visitor fees with different fees for each WPA, as well as different fees for national and foreign visitors, residents, children and students. Other targets related to improvements in financial scorecard measures by 50%, and 0.91\$ million/year of new income from the water cannon and at least 6.9\$million from visitor fees. The TE notes that the indicator relating to improvement in financial scorecard measures was not updated. Therefore it is not possible to evaluate improvement in the financial scorecard. The planned income received from visitor fees at project end was \$5,607,467 USD, lower than the target 6.9\$ million USD. Meanwhile transfers from central government increased by 40%.

4) SINAC tests new and innovative conservation approaches at the Conservation Area and PA levels. Targets for this outcome were that by year 3, 8 PAs of SINAC were legally registered and demarcated

and by year 5 this process would be replicated in at least 12 other PAs. Additionally, all land tenure conflicts were to have been resolved in 8 of the 12 protected areas, at least 30 works on tourism infrastructure and development were to have been improved, and agreements on public private concessions and collaborative management would be in place, as well as a legal framework for collaborative management. As a result of the project, 42 protected areas were demarcated. The goal of 10 collaborative agreements was reached. Information on the tourism infrastructure and development projects was not available.

5) Successful PA System management models are scaled-up and replicated at the systemic level through partnerships with key stakeholders. Targets under this outcome were that 11 regional councils would be reactivated or established, with at least 1 local council of pilot PA in each conservation area operating, and that the approach would have been replicated by project end. These targets were met, and at project end it was estimated that 24 local Councils were operating. Additional targets were that a model of public private concession agreements would have been generated and replicated, and that at least 4 public-private alliances would be signed. These targets were also met. (TE p.162)

<b>4.3 Efficiency</b>	Rating: Moderately Satisfactory
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The TE rates project efficiency as satisfactory, however due to delays and low levels of delivery in the first half of the project, this TER rates efficiency as Moderately Satisfactory. The TE notes that project outcomes in the first three years were very poor, with the level of execution and achievement of products increasing significantly in the last two years, and that the project worked “under the framework of a challenge that by far exceeded the capacity of a five-year project.” (TE p.67) The change in coordination in the project management unit following the project’s mid-term review improved efficiency greatly. Up to the mid-term review (3 years into the project), only 20.88% of the budget had been executed, while by the time of the TE two years later, 95.5% of the total budget had been spent. The % of project expenses dedicated to administration dropped as well in the second half of the project, from around 30% from 2009-2012, to around 9% from 2013-2015. Administrative expenses for the whole project were 15% of the budget, which is a reasonable level. (TE p. 32) 63% of co-financing commitments were reached, although the TE notes that this does not include the full amount of co-financing provided by SINAC, for which information was only available up to 2014.

<b>4.4 Sustainability</b>	Rating: Likely
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The TE rates overall sustainability levels as likely. Due to the strong institutional foundations created by the project, this TER also rates sustainability as Likely.

Financial and Socioeconomic sustainability- The TE does not discuss in depth socioeconomic risks to sustainability, however it notes that “issues of moderate economic growth and social stability could generate risks to the sustainability of outcomes to the extent that they are translated into budget cuts, and SINAC has not undertaken further actions for improvements in its funding.” (TE p.68)

Institutional- The TE reports a good level of ownership among SINAC managers regarding outcomes and benefits of the project. “SINAC managers are aware of the outcomes of the project; several of these

have been institutionalized through its incorporation in the structure, policies, and strategic processes.” P.69 The TE also notes a special interest in instruments related to ecoregional planning, local administration, non-essential services, volunteer services and infrastructure and governance of the protected area system. As the managers at SINAC remain in place, and as the technology knowledge, tools and methodologies introduced by the project were incorporated into the institutional context in SINAC, maintenance of outcomes at the institutional level is likely. It should be noted however, that an institutional risk to the sustainability of project benefits is noted in that official approval of the strategic, legal and regulatory framework has not yet occurred.

Environmental- There are no environmental threats to sustainability noted in the terminal evaluation.

## **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 TE reports that 64% of promised co-financing was realized, although contributions from SINAC are likely higher than what was reported, as reported levels were as of one year before project end. Co-financing came from a variety of sources, including the executing agency, SINAC, private sector contributions, contributions from the NGO the Nature Conservancy, and multilateral and bilateral donors. The shortfalls in co-financing came from The Nature Conservancy, which committed 48% of what was promised, and significantly from IDB/Tourism, which contributed \$1.9 million versus the \$13.3 million promised. The TE does not note any effect on project outcomes as a result of this shortfall.

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 TE notes that the project had many problems at project start, delaying start for a little over a year. (TE p.19) Project execution, which was originally scheduled for 60 months, ultimately was 66 months, if execution is considered to have begun with the hiring of the first coordinator. (TE p.17) The TE explains that although the project formally began in 2008, the first coordinator was hired in September 2009, and that the project effectively began in 2010, after the first meeting of the Steering Committee in 2010. The midterm review noted that as the project design was based on contracting external consultants, delays arose from developing terms of references, because of misunderstandings between staff of SINAC and the project management unit on roles and responsibilities. Additionally, after project start up, as the project design included products that were “chained”, meaning one product must be complete for work on the next product to begin, delays of important products delayed all other activities, such as the approved protected area policy (output 1.1) The midterm review recommended a project extension, which was granted, as the official closing date of November 2013 was extended until March 2015. The TE does not note that these delays impacted delivery of results, which occurred almost entirely in the last two years of the project.

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 TE rates national ownership as Highly Satisfactory. The project executing agency was the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC). Although the TE notes that “SINAC managers are aware of the outcomes of the project; several of these have been institutionalized through its incorporation in the structure, policies, and strategic processes,” (p.69) it also recognizes that ownership generation of cultural and institutional change will require activities in the future to give continuity to the process begun by this project. (TE p.26) Co-financing was also provided by SINAC to the project. Issues with project ownership arise mostly from the fact that many products were produced late in the project, leaving less time for it to create ownership of products within SINAC. (TE p.27)

## 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.

<b>6.1 M&amp;E Design at entry</b>	Rating: Moderately Unsatisfactory
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The TE provides no discussion of M&E design but rates it as unsatisfactory. Considering that the project documents prescribed a basic M&E system that had serious shortcomings, this TER rates M&E Design at entry as Moderately Unsatisfactory. The mid-term review noted that “The need for a monitoring system for the project was not properly defined in the PRODOC. There is no budget or responsible [parties] specifically assigned. The underdeveloped system makes it useless to contribute to decision-making regarding financing budgeting and adaptive management.” (MTE p.22) Yet the logical framework presented in the PRODOC does provide smart indicators at all levels, and states that relevant M&E activities, including the mid-term evaluation and terminal evaluation, should take place. Additionally, an indicative M&E work plan with corresponding budget is presented, though almost all the cost for measurement of indicators is to come from co-financing (29,000 of 31,000) and there is a lack of defined responsibilities for the collection of indicators.

<b>6.2 M&amp;E Implementation</b>	Rating: Moderately Satisfactory
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M&E Implementation is rated as satisfactory by the TE Since the level of monitoring was considered adequate for the required execution and key monitoring activities such as the mid-term and terminal evaluations and completion of project implementation reports took place, but also considering noted weaknesses and gaps in monitoring and reporting, this TER rates M&E implementation as Moderately Satisfactory. The brief discussion of monitoring and evaluation notes that “a more accurate formal monitoring system was not implemented, as recommended in the midterm review. Nevertheless, the

capacity of the PMU to monitor the activities was adequate for the required execution, given the delays that had to be taken care of.” (TE p.29) Although an M&E Specialist was hired, the mid-term evaluation notes that “The Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist dedicated a large part of time to promote within the focal points, performing actions conducive to activities achievement, such as Terms of Reference elaboration.” The midterm also noted that “the monitoring and measuring instruments look weak, and it is unclear that they allow decisions-making or to anticipate crisis in a fast way.” (MTE p. 22) It should be noted that the mid-term evaluation was carried out and used for adaptive management, as it helped reactivate the project, and that annual project implementation reports are available and report on most indicators. A few key indicators regarding changes in Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools scores were not reported on however.

## 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.

<b>7.1 Quality of Project Implementation</b>	Rating: Moderately Unsatisfactory
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The implementing agency for this project was UNDP. The TE rates quality of implementation as moderately satisfactory, however based on evidence in both the terminal evaluation and midterm evaluations of serious issues both in the project design and supervision, this TER rates quality of implementation as Moderately Unsatisfactory. The TE notes that the original UNDP program Officer for the project did not facilitate the process, and “helped to generate complex problems and hindrances in the implementation process.” (TE p.11) By the project’s mid-term evaluation however, the team supporting the project had changed, and the mid-term noted that “the UNDP office in the country is currently performing a very close support to the project” and that the team was giving adequate support to the project. (TE p.20) In terms of project design, both the Midterm evaluation and the Terminal evaluation note serious flaws which hampered implementation: “the inconsistency in the PRODOC regarding various aspects of the problems to be faced and how to solve them, [...] promoted the occurrence of problems in the implementation process, which added to the inefficiency of the early years by the coordination of the PMU, thus explaining an important part of the problems faced by the Project.” (TE p.24) The TE notes as well that the steering committee was not effective, as it “worked very little and did not provide any strategic guidance, and much less mediated between the existing problems.” (TE p.24) Finally the TE notes that in terms of the interagency problems this project experienced, “the vast responsibility comes from a higher UNDP monitoring level in the county, that not only should have been more careful, but also should have taken charge of strengthening and developing



ties and overcoming distrust, promoting the exchange of information so as to effectively assist the process of change expected by SINAC and by environmental institutions in Costa Rica.” (TE p.28)

<b>7.2 Quality of Project Execution</b>	Rating: Moderately Satisfactory
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The project’s executing agency was the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC). The TE rates quality of execution as moderately satisfactory, and this TER agrees. The TE notes a significant improvement in project execution following the midterm review, and the replacement of the project management unit. A new coordinator was hired in 2012 after which the level of project budget execution quickly improved. In the project’s first half, it is noted that there were “serious problems due to misunderstanding between the staff of SINAC and the Project Management Unit”, which was housed in SINAC. (MTE p.18) In the project’s second half, “there was a better budgetary execution which allowed envisaging an achievement close to 100% in March 2015.” (TE p.25) However, the TE notes that while budget execution and quality control on outcomes of contracted consulting services improved greatly, a rift remained between the project management unit and the focal points in SINAC. The TE notes that at this stage the PMU was focused on financial execution, and “drifting away from the function of informing and agreeing on decisions with SINAC representatives.” (TE p.25) The Terminal Evaluation concludes “in such a complex and important project, for various reasons the key stakeholders, practically for the entire duration, were not able to coordinate and work as a team, which resulted in long delays in work and products, frustration, lack of trust, accelerated realization of products, and a high percentage of products that were completed in the last 4 to 6 months of the project. (TE p.25) Recognizing the significant improvements achieved later in the project, which resulted from “the great commitment to work shown by officials and several of the consultants, despite their heavy workload”, but considering these serious issues, project execution is rated as Moderately Satisfactory. (TE p.27)

## **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.

Through the IDB Regularization of Cadastre and Register Programme 1284, a total of 731,655.7 hectares have been demarcated. (PIR 2014)

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.

The Terminal evaluation does not describe any socioeconomic changes as a result of the project.

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

By the end of the project, an institutional manual of positions with competency profiles of the National Conservation Areas System was created, and a proposal for a new organization structure was developed. As a result of these, a revision of roles is in process at SINAC. A performance evaluation system was proposed as well. A system of information on cooperation (SIC) was designed and is being executed. The system handles all information about cooperation that SINAC receives from agreements and cooperation projects.

b) Governance

The Strategic Plan of the National Conservation Areas System SINAC 2010-2015 was institutionalized and at the time the TE was written, was working as a harmonizing instrument and institutional planning synchronizer of SINAC and the national planning system. Additionally, the Master Plan for Wild Protected Areas of SINAC was developed, and is the first to be developed in Costa Rica. Additionally, the monitoring and evaluation system designed as part of this master plan includes a proposal for Reclassification of the Protected Areas of Costa Rica based on international standards. This proposal was still under review by the Project Management Unit at the time the TE was written.

The project produced collaborative agreements for co-management of protected areas in pilot sites to involve and work with local stakeholders in the pilot projects in Tempisque, Cordillera and Tortuguero, as well as in specific indigenous areas, namely, Salitre, Cabagra and Ujarrás (in the Pacific region) and in the Conservation Area La Amistad Caribe. (PIR 2014, p. 35) Additionally, the project produced 11 regional councils (CORAC), which at project end were installed and running, as well as 24 local protected area Councils, which were operational within the Conservation Area system. (PIR 2014)

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.

No unintended impacts were reported.

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.

The TE does not describe replication, but does note that “Several strategic products were institutionalized, guiding planning processes, budgeting and strategic planning in topics such as” PA management, control of illegal felling, biodiversity conservation, forest fire control, and forest production. Furthermore, as part of the process for strengthening SINAC, project products offer inputs that are used for decision making at the central level.” (TE p.29)

## **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.

### **Design:**

The logical framework model is a tool that can be changed, thus it is important to adapt the project if topics not included in the original design may be important to increase institutional capacities.

It is important to define as early as possible SMART indicators and goals.

An M&E plan will support allocation of staff to manage exclusively the system of M&E in order to ensure adequate monitoring and evaluation of the project.

A project exit strategy must be provided by project management early on.

The project’s experience using participatory methodologies and techniques and incorporating actors into the design of activities shows that this is possible and beneficial.

For projects on a complex scale such as this one, an administrator must balance attention on technical components, political components and the political component of articulation between the parties. It is important to invest in establishing good communication to avoid problems in the development of a project.

9.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

### **Design:**

In future projects, accuracy should be improved when presenting the way outcomes will be obtained.

Projects with objectives entailing deep institutional changes must consider whether the change can be achieved in the foreseen time.

### **Project Management:**

A plan is recommended to strengthen and develop interagency ties to overcome the distrust in this project by promoting exchange of information to help the process of change expected in SINA and the environmental institutions in Costa Rica. The technical assistance committee should have at least weekly monitoring of the closing of the project in order to support work of the PMU and improve the situation of internal distrust.

The PMU should submit a comprehensive report of the project containing analysis of the quality of products, showing that activities required by UNDP were completed, and confirming acceptance of the counterparts by UNDP, and other information relevant to project closure.

It is imperative that SINAC Direction constitutes an operational team for Change Management comprised of SINAC members who participated in the UCT and other relevant officers, who take advantage of the commitment that exists within SINAC staff with their institution to generate required changes.

The TE recommends an evaluation of SINAC's software development plan to make it more functional for SINAC's needs.

The TE recommends as well the implementation of a performance evaluation model to allow the institution to determine the evolution and personal development of officers in order to establish viable action plans given the officers' capabilities and corporate goals.

Knowledge management should be institutionalized and operationalized in the structure and management processes of the different SINAC levels, projecting beyond the outcomes of the project.

There must be concrete actions and budget for monitoring and evaluation of policies for Protected Areas (PAs). The reclassification of PAs must be socialized among stakeholders and institutionalized in SINAC. The legal framework must also be developed and implemented to strengthen PA management. SINAC should formalize the 6 PAs for which decree modification proposals were prepared.

### **Efficiency:**

It is necessary to incorporate more control from SINAC to projects executed under their institution. It was absolutely proven that the strategic and operational progress of the project cannot be left to coordinators and Project Management Units. With no proper control from SINAC, project management units may feel that they must respond mainly to UNDP because it is the authorizing part of disbursements.

### **Effectiveness:**

Project design should provide a clear alignment and harmonization of expected outcomes with identified barriers. Additionally, it is recommended that Executive Directors of beneficiary institutes act more proactively in ensuring institutional interests, and that at higher UNDP levels, sporadic direct consultations are conducted with the Executive Directors of beneficiary institutes.

**Sustainability:**

It is recommended to carry out a plan for dissemination of experiences with SINAC, disclosing in a pedagogical manner the management of experiences and lessons learned, and this effort be complemented with direct visits to officers or people from the Cas who are interested in learning from them. In a similar way, dissemination of experiences from public-private initiatives, environmental education, models for sustainable living in buffer zones, participation and local inclusion, and the indigenous agenda should also be retrieved.

UNDP should assume a policy of improvement of high-level relations with SINAC to overcome lack of trust.

It is recommended to hire an independent IT evaluation for the process and prospects of IT support services in SINAC.

## 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?	The report contains an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts, although data against targets and indicators is sometimes not available, or is unclear.	<b>S</b>
To what extent is the report internally consistent, the evidence presented complete and convincing, and ratings well substantiated?	The report is inconsistent in some cases in the ratings provided for outcomes, which can make it complicated to assess level of achievement.	<b>MS</b>
To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and/or project exit strategy?	The report discusses exit strategy and sustainability, but the discussion is somewhat superficial.	<b>MS</b>
To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?	Lessons learned and recommendations are supported and comprehensive.	<b>S</b>
Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?	The report includes actual project costs as actual co-financing used.	<b>S</b>
Assess the quality of the report's evaluation of project M&E systems:	The report provides only a brief description of monitoring and evaluation, and does not explain M&E Design and Implementation ratings.	<b>MU</b>
<b>Overall TE Rating</b>		<b>MS</b>

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