

# Terminal Evaluation Validation form, GEF Independent Evaluation Office

## 1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		4774	
GEF Agency project ID		615424	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-5	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		FAO	
Project name		Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, forests, soil and water to achieve Good Living/Sumac Kawsay in the Napo Province (FSP)	
Country/Countries		Ecuador	
Region		Latin America & Caribbean	
Focal area		Multifocal Area	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		BD-2, LD-1, LD-3, SFM/REDD+-1	
Stand alone or under a programmatic framework		Standalone	
If applicable, parent program name and GEF ID		N/A	
Executing agencies involved		Decentralised Autonomous Government of the Napo Province (NPDAG), Ministry of Environment (MAE)	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		Rainforest Alliance: partner; Maquita Cuchunchi, Ecuadorian Cooperation Fund for Development: consultation; Delegation of Napo Indigenous Organizations: beneficiary, consultation	
Private sector involvement (including micro, small and medium enterprises) <sup>1</sup>		Associations of producers, individual owners: beneficiaries Several private companies: beneficiaries	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval (MSP) date		7/18/2014	
Effectiveness date / project start date		4/9/2015	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		12/31/2019	
Actual date of project completion		10/31/2020	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M) <sup>2</sup>
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	0.054 <sup>3</sup>	0.054
	Co-financing		
GEF Project Grant		2.628	2.628
Co-financing	IA own	0.42	0.8
	Government	10.651 <sup>4</sup>	6.75
	Other multi- /bi-laterals	0.75 <sup>5</sup>	0.43 <sup>6</sup>
	Private sector		

<sup>1</sup> Defined as all micro, small, and medium-scale profit-oriented entities, including individuals and informal entities, that earn income through the sale of goods and services rather than a salary. ([GEF IEO 2022](#))

<sup>2</sup> Co-financing materialized at 30 June 2020 (Final PIR 2020, p. 54).

<sup>3</sup> PIR 2017, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Co-financing from the Coca-Sinclair hydropower plant was originally pledged at USD 1 million in the Project Document (p. 2) and USD 2 million in the TE (p. 30).

<sup>5</sup> The breakdown is as follows: German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ): USD 700,000; USAID: USD 50,000 (Project Document, pp. 1-2).

<sup>6</sup> The breakdown is as follows: GIZ: USD 380,000; USAID: USD 50,000 (Final PIR 2020, p. 55).

	NGOs/CBOs	0.5	0.51 <sup>7</sup>
	Other		0.08 <sup>8</sup>
<b>Total GEF funding</b>		2.682	2.682
<b>Total Co-financing</b>		12.321	8.567 <sup>9</sup>
<b>Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)</b>		15.003	11.198
<b>Terminal evaluation validation information</b>			
<b>TE completion date</b>		6/30/2020	
<b>Author of TE</b>		Robert Hofstede and Karen Hildahl	
<b>TER completion date</b>		6/1/2020	
<b>TER prepared by</b>		Emanuele Bigagli	
<b>TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)</b>		Ritu Kanotra	

Access the form to summarize key project features here: <https://www.research.net/r/APR2023>.

<sup>7</sup> This amount includes USD 10,000 of in-kind co-financing from the NGO Maquita Cuchunchi, not originally included in the Project Document (Final PIR, p. 55).

<sup>8</sup> This amount includes in-kind co-financing of the Amazon State University (UEA) and the Regional Amazon University (IKIAM), not originally included in the project Document (Final PIR 2020, p. 55).

<sup>9</sup> Final PIR 2020, p. 55.

## 2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review <sup>10</sup>	GEF IEO Review
Project Outcomes	S	S/HS <sup>11</sup>	S/HS	S
Sustainability of Outcomes		ML	ML	ML
M&E Design		S <sup>12</sup>	S	S
M&E Implementation		S	S	S
Quality of Implementation				S
Quality of Execution				MS
Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report				S

## 3. Project Objectives and theory of change

### 3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

The global environmental objective of the project is to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, stop and reverse soil deterioration and deforestation, and improve the management of forests in the Napo Province.

### 3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

The development objective of the project is to increase and improve the provision of goods and services from agriculture, livestock farming and forestry production in a sustainable manner, through the strategic investment of public resources, participatory environmental governance, the implementation of mechanisms and incentives and bio-trade, in the Napo Province.

### 3.3 Were there any **changes** in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or project activities during implementation? What are the reasons given for the change(s)?

The following changes were reported in the PIR 2018 (pp. 44ss): goal for Product 1.1.1 (Development and Land Management Plans with environmental criteria incorporated, implemented and monitored); measurement methodology and goals for indicator of Outcome 2.2 (tons of avoided CO<sub>2</sub> emissions); goal of product 2.2.3 (Restoration/rehabilitation of degraded forests); and goal of product 2.2.4 (wood traceability implemented and monitored).

### 3.4 Briefly summarize project's theory of change – describe the inputs and causal relationships through which the project will achieve its long-term impacts, key links, and key assumptions.

<sup>10</sup> The terminal evaluation was commissioned by the Office of Evaluation of FAO. Therefore, the ratings given in the terminal evaluation are repeated.

<sup>11</sup> The TE did not explicitly rate Outcomes; it rated Relevance as “highly satisfactory”, Effectiveness and Impact as “satisfactory”, and Efficiency as “satisfactory” (TE, pp. vii-viii).

<sup>12</sup> The TE assessed overall Monitoring & Evaluation and provided one ranking covering both M&E design and M&E implementation.

- **Problem:** unsustainable agricultural, livestock and forestry practices and forest harvesting, due to poverty, exert pressures on natural resources in the province of Napo and the buffer zone of the Sumaco Biosphere Reserve, leading to degradation of soils and water, deforestation, and biodiversity loss.
- **Objective:** promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, stop and reverse soil deterioration and deforestation, and improve the management of forests in the Napo Province.
- **Strategy:** Component 1: Institutional strengthening to mainstream conservation strategies and sustainable use of renewable natural resources (RNR) in participatory land-use planning, based on an ecosystem approach; Component 2: Design and promotion of landscape and silvo-pastoral agroforestry production systems that include the sustainable management of water, soil, and forests, while improving local population livelihoods in the Napo Province.; Component 3: Promotion of bio-trade and community-based ecotourism as strategies for biodiversity conservation, sustainable management of natural resources, and improvement of livelihoods for local communities.
- **Outcomes:** improved conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and livelihoods, through: (i) improved participatory environmental governance; and (ii) reduced pressure on forests of the Sumaco Biosphere Reserve.

#### 4. GEF IEO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability

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

The outcome ratings (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and overall outcome rating) are on a six-point scale: Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory. The sustainability rating is on a four-point scale: Likely to Unlikely.

Please justify the ratings in the space below each box.

4.1 Relevance and Coherence	S
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The TE evaluates relevance as Highly Satisfactory, and this evaluation revised the rating to Satisfactory. The project is strongly aligned with GEF, FAO, and national and local objectives, plans, and priorities; the design was appropriate and fulfilled the demands of indigenous and local communities, although the most marginalized communities were not included.

The project is aligned with FAO priorities (strategic objective 2<sup>13</sup>; the 2018-2021 Ecuador Country Programming Framework-Priority Area 4: Natural Resources Management and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation (CPF-4); and the FAO Priorities Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean) and those

<sup>13</sup> FAO Strategic Objective 2: "Increase the provision of goods and services from agriculture, livestock farming, forestry production and fisheries in a sustainable manner".

of the GEF (BD-2<sup>14</sup>, LD-1<sup>15</sup> and LD-3<sup>16</sup>, and objective 1 of the Sustainable Forest Management/REDD+<sup>17</sup> (TE, p. 13). It is also aligned to existing national and local policy priorities and needs in relation to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use and improvement of livelihoods, set in several acts, strategies, policies, and plans, such as the Constitution, the Organic Environmental Code, the National Development Plan, the National Sustainable Development Strategy, and the National Biodiversity Strategy, among others (TE, p. 11).

The strategy designed was appropriate, effective and efficient to deliver the desired outcomes. However, its wide geographical scope entailed the risk of a certain dispersion of actions and lack of completion of outputs, while its focus on initiatives that already had the support of other projects implied that the most marginalized communities were not included (TE, p. 24).

4.2 Effectiveness	s
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The TE assesses effectiveness as Satisfactory, and this evaluation concurs. Almost all ex-ante targets were met, and the project made the expected contribution to environmental benefits towards the achievement of the long-term objectives.

The TE (p. 16) notes that the project managed to deliver the majority of the outputs with a good quality. More details for each Outcome are presented below:

**Outcome 1.** Environmental governance was improved in the province with regard to strengthening capacities and increasing tools availability (TE, p. 47). The personnel and technical capacity in public institutions related to the inclusion of conservation and sustainable use of renewable natural resources into participatory planning were improved. However, the tools developed to this purpose were not internalized or implemented. The effectiveness of existing environmental incentives improved, and substantial progress was marked in establishing a new incentive for local sustainable development (FODESNA; TE, p. 17). A negative aspect is the insufficient support to the sustainable management of natural resources because of a lack of coordination between agencies and a lack of continuity of policies (TE, p. 23).

**Outcome 2.** Outcome 2.1: Good natural resources practices were incorporated into cocoa, naranjilla and milk production, with the expected improvements in the value chain of the first two. The first target in relation to the spatial coverage of integrated natural resources management practices was even exceeded (1,953 ha against the targeted 1,370 ha), while the second was almost met (1,500 ha of productive systems with high vegetation coverage against the targeted 1,764 ha). Outcome 2.2: the target for reduction of

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<sup>14</sup> GEF Objective BD-2: “integrate the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the productive sectors and landscapes, whether terrestrial or marine”.

<sup>15</sup> LD-1: “To maintain or improve the flow of agro-ecosystem services to sustain the livelihoods of local communities”.

<sup>16</sup> LD-3: “To reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape”.

<sup>17</sup> SFM/REDD+ Objective 1: “Reduce pressures on forest resources and generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services”.

deforestation was achieved. However, while the passive restoration model worked as expected, the active restoration did not as well, due to high cost and mortality of introduced species (TE, p. 20).

**Outcome 3.** The achievement of the indicator for this outcome was not reported due to lack of data at the moment of the TE (TE, p. 21). Anyway, the TE notes that the project achieved the set targets for sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity through biotrade activities. Also, the project supported the expected community-based tourism initiatives, although with little connection with value chains (TE, p. 22).

4.3 <b>Efficiency</b>	S
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The TE evaluates efficiency as Satisfactory, and this evaluation concurs. The project was cost-effective, although the activities were implemented with a certain delay, especially before the MTR.

The project had a good level of cost-efficiency, i.e., a positive balance between costs and benefits. The outcomes were achieved in a satisfactory way with a modest budget in comparison with other large-scale projects, thanks to good project management (TE, p. 25), characterized by high professional standards, effective collaboration among personnel and with other entities, and good support from FAO (TE, p. 48). As of October 2019, 86.7% of the budget was executed (TE, p. 27). Adjustments were made to the budget, with a reallocation of about USD 420,000 in total among the various components, due to the higher investments required for Component 1 (support to the Sustainable Development Fund for the Napo Province – FODESNA – and to the inter-institutional management model), that the TE considers justified and claimed (TE, p. 27).

Several delays in the execution were recorded before the MTR; they were partly mitigated with the hiring of experienced personnel, but at the end the project was granted an extension until December 2019 (TE, p. 27). Also, some outputs were delivered with delay, due to difficulties in planning, the prioritization of field activities, and changes in the way some outputs were generated (TE, p. 25).

4.4 <b>Outcome</b>	S
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Summarize key outcomes related to environment, human well-being, and enabling conditions (Policy, Legal & Institutional Development; Individual & Institutional Capacity-Building; Knowledge Exchange & Learning; Multistakeholder Interactions), as applicable. Include any unintended outcomes (not originally targeted by the project), whether positive or negative, affecting either ecological or social aspects.

Where applicable, note how both intended and unintended outcomes have positively and/or negatively affected marginalized populations (e.g., women, indigenous groups, youth, persons with disabilities), and where some stakeholder groups have benefited more/ less than others.

The TE does not assess explicitly outcomes as separated from “effectiveness and impact”, which was rated as Satisfactory. This evaluation rates outcomes as Satisfactory. The project was highly relevant and the majority of targets were met in an efficient way, although with some delays.

The key outcomes and impacts are summarized as follows:

**Environmental impacts.** The deforestation rate was reduced (Outcome 2.2), with an estimated amount of 817 096 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> eq emissions avoided in the four years of the project in the Napo Province (TE, p. 20). and the short-term vegetation coverage increased by almost 7,000 hectares (TE, p. 47). Also, the project had a specific contribution to the conservation of forests and soil and the restoration of several thousand hectares in the province of Napo (TE, p. 42).

**Socioeconomic impacts.** The project raised the income of producers working in community-based tourism and sustainable biotrade, especially for vanilla. Also, there are clear indications that cocoa and naranjilla production and chains have improved (TE, p. 43). Sustainable water, soil, and forest management practices were introduced in cocoa, naranjilla, and livestock production systems (TE, p. 47). There are also other individual examples of positive social impacts of the project, related to the increased possibilities for young people to become tour guides and for women to be artisans, although none of these may be considered as transformational changes. The contribution of community-based tourism initiatives to improving livelihoods was limited because it was dispersed and did not add value (TE, p. 47).

**Enabling conditions.** The TE does not report any impact on enabling conditions.

**Unintended impacts.** The TE does not report any unintended impacts of the project.

4.5 Sustainability	ML
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Note any progress made to sustain or expand environmental benefits beyond project closure, using stakeholder (rather than project) resources, e.g. through replication, mainstreaming or scaling-up of GEF-supported initiatives. Examples would be farmers adopting practices using own funds, follow-on replication projects, development of plans for scaling, inclusion in local or national legislation, and allocation of government budgets or private sector investments for institutional adoption.

The TE assesses sustainability as Moderately Likely, and this evaluation concurs. There are some risks to sustainability, which may have an important impact if they materialize; however, the probability is low and net benefits are more likely to continue than to abate.

In general, there is good appropriation by local participants and commitment by institutions to continue to promote project strategies. Some initiatives are self-sustainable and there is a high likelihood that other initiatives will become stronger (TE, p. 48).

**Financial.** The TE draws a mixed picture in relation to financial sustainability. On the one side, local communities and individual producers depend on external financial assistance, generally delivered through international cooperation funds, as the Decentralized Autonomous Governments and the state have limited and decreasing resources (TE, p. 41). On the other hand, the short-term sustainability of the outcomes will rely on a new generation of projects with new funds, which are either already underway or have been planned (TE, p. 42).

**Sociopolitical.** The TE (p. 40) notes the commitment of the main governmental agencies participating in the project to making the outcomes sustainable, while at the level of cantons and parishes the appropriation is less evident, although informal commitments were reported to support producers

directly and promote tourist destinations. Also, there was an active and interested participation by beneficiaries throughout the project, which is key to continue and maintain the project outcomes, and is also driven by the beneficiaries' expectations about other future projects underway (TE, p. 41).

**Institutional framework and governance.** The large associations of producers, resulting for the sustainable management of natural resources, have the technical capacity and connections to ensure the sustainability of the practices promoted by the project, thanks also to the fact that they receive support from other initiatives (TE, p. 40). However, the outcomes for other productive practices, value chains, and biotrade initiatives are less sustainable; tourism practices have not managed to connect with the market, partly because of the lack of institutional coordination and strategies at provincial level. Also, bio-undertakings (excluding vanilla and guayusa) are still emerging and without the necessary autonomy (TE, p. 40). In parallel, local governmental agencies are committed but lack the required capacity to make outcomes sustainable, due to the dispersion of internal capacities, the need for investments, development and technical assistance for the tools transferred to the Decentralized Autonomous Government of the Napo Province (TE, p. 41). At local level, the interest, basic capacities, and organization of the communities/associations and individual owners will be key for the continuation of the outcomes in the future (TE, p. 41).

**Environmental.** The TE does not report on the environmental sustainability of outcomes.

## 5. Processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes

Before describing the factors, you may choose to summarize reported outcomes and sustainability here: <https://www.research.net/r/APR2023>.

**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, 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 co-financing mobilized was lower than expected, i.e., USD 8.4 million over USD 12.4 million confirmed. The TE (p. 29) reports that this was due to the lower availability of public funds from the MAE since 2015 and the lack of contribution of a public company, Coca-Sinclair, which contributed only USD 20,000 of the USD 2 million pledged because of internal management problems, and of the project's decision to not arrange co-management activities in the Cascada protected forest (TE, p. 29). However, the TE does not explain if, and how, this impacted the achievement of the project targets and outcomes. The PIR 2020 (p. 56) notes two main factors that have limited reaching the total initial co-financing of the project: (1) the changes of authorities of the Decentralized Autonomous Governments, and (2) the economic crisis of the country since 2016, which entailed the reduction and/or suspension of the incentive programs at national level and the adjustments of the Decentralized Autonomous Governments. To this respect, appropriate mitigation actions have been implemented following the project's risk matrix, such that the achievement of approximately 70% of the proposed budget constituted an important advance. These actions include the permanent socialization of the activities, processes and results of the project with the new authorities; the active participation of counterpart technicians and decision makers in the project works and spaces;



the generation of new letters of commitment and alliances to promote the results generated; and the establishment of policies, plans and regulatory frameworks to ensure the linking and continuity of actions from the management of local partners.

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?

PIR 2019 (p. 41) reported that the project team would request a no-cost project extension until March 2020 to ensure the development of the physical and financial execution, allowing specific achievement of the goals and products established in the Project Document, and to ensure administrative closure. This extension was stretched to October 2020 to ensure completion of the constitution and management of the Napo public funding mechanism (FODESNA), given also the changes in authorities and policy lines of the Napo Provincial Government in 2019 that entailed a process of socialization, negotiation, and alignment of processes, instruments and management frameworks of the project with the new work plan (PIR, p. 41).

5.3 Stakeholder ownership. Assess the extent to which stakeholder ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability. Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability, highlighting the causal links.

The TE assessed the involvement of stakeholders as moderately satisfactory (TE, p. 33). The involvement of local beneficiaries in project design and implementation ensured a good level of interest, participation and adoption of outputs (TE, p. 35). Some of the local participants had a high level of appropriation thanks to the good process of socialization and prior consultation (TE, p. 48). Indigenous communities, men, women, young and old people actively participated, with a positive effect on the facilitation of communication and connections between the communities and the project (TE, p. 36). The demands of the local communities were generally fulfilled thanks to active and continuous collaboration of local stakeholders in project activities (TE, p. 25). However, the TE (p. 37) notes a lower appropriation by the public entities, which may be caused by the fact that the project implementation structure was centered on FAO and Decentralized Autonomous Government of the Napo Province, with the MAE playing a limited role in project execution (TE, p. 30).

5.4 Other factors: In case the terminal evaluation discusses other key factors that affected project outcomes, discuss those factors and outline how they affected outcomes, whether positively or negatively. Include factors that may have led to unintended outcomes.

The changes in the institutional and political context of the country, due to the economic recession from 2015, entailed a reduction of public investment in the existing environmental incentives at the beginning of project implementation, to which the project adapted by improving the correct use of funds, design restoration plans so as not to depend on public incentives, and increase in public investment centered on the Sustainable Development Fund rather than on existing incentives (TE, p. 15). Also, the introduction of a new framework law for environmental matters in 2019 created a legal void on timber traceability system

at local level; the project decided to change the scope of this activity and focus on the national level instead (TE, p. 15).

## 6. Assessment of project's Monitoring and Evaluation system

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

6.1 M&E Design at entry	S
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The TE assesses M&E design at project start as Satisfactory, and this evaluation concurs. The M&E system was adequate; it had a dedicated budget, and included detailed and appropriate indicators for the objective and for each output, including GEF focal area indicators (TE, p. 32), with baseline and target values including progress per year, the use of tracking tools, the definition of clear roles and responsibilities and of a complete and detailed reporting schedule (Project Document, pp. 90ss). The outputs were formulated as indicators, which made it possible to plan and monitor their progress (TE, p. 32).

6.2 M&E Implementation	S
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The TE assesses M&E implementation as Moderately Satisfactory, and this evaluation rates it as Satisfactory. The implementation of the M&E plan met the expectations, the data collected supported the indicators, and the delays faced at the beginning were made up for in the second half of implementation.

The implementation of the M&E system was not good at the start of the project, as the detailed monitoring plan was not prepared or validated (TE, p. 32). This created difficulties for performing the MTR, which rated M&E implementation as moderately unsatisfactory. In response to this, several actions were put in place to improve implementation, including finalization of the M&E plan and decision to use an online tool (Open Foris), which improved effectiveness and detail of implementation (TE, p. 32). This included the good execution of all reporting requirements (e.g., half-yearly reports, annual reports) which were completed on time and with good quality (TE, p. 33). Tracking tools-related data were not reported at the moment of finalizing the TE (TE, p. 33).

## 7. Assessment of project implementation and execution

Quality of Implementation rating is based on the assessment of the performance of GEF Agency(s). Quality of Execution rating is based on performance of the executing agency(s). 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>	<b>S</b>
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The TE does not assess quality of project implementation, and the present evaluation rates it as Satisfactory.

FAO ensured an orderly and transparent financial administration of the project (TE, p. 27), as well as good administrative and technical support, with frequent meetings of managers and expert technicians with FAO personnel (TE, p. 28). FAO implemented the project through the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM), whereby FAO managed the funds, made the expenditures including hiring the project team and consultants, and made other acquisitions (TE, p. 30). This model ensured the efficient implementation of the project. However, the project governance was not very inclusive, as the Management Committee did not operate as a space for the management of the execution of the project and stopped operating in the second half of the project (TE, p. 29).

<b>7.2 Quality of Project Execution</b>	<b>MS</b>
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The TE does not assess quality of project execution, and the present evaluation rates it as Moderately Satisfactory. The execution of the project met the expectations, despite some delays in the first half, and some problems in communication between the executing agency and the project team.

The project was executed by the Decentralized Autonomous Government of the Napo Province (NPDAG) and the Ministry of Environment (MAE). However, in practice the role of MAE was limited to its participation in the Steering and Management Committees and to direct collaboration with some activities such as preparation of co-management plans, forestry traceability and the development of the inter-institutional management model (TE, p. 30). The Steering Committee met once per year; it focused on reviewing the project progress and approving the Annual Operating Plan, and agreed on some adjustments in the execution of the project. as reported by the members, the meetings were friendly, effective, and the decisions were made unanimously (TE, p. 29).

An important role for project execution was assigned by the project document to the project management committee, composed of the Environment, Planning and Socioeconomic Development Departments of the NPDAG, the Head of Natural Heritage of the MAE of the Provincial Department of Napo, the head of the forestry area of the MAE Provincial Department of Napo and the National Director of the project from the NPDAG. Its tasks were to lead the project, be responsible for the outcomes, use of funds, planning of activities and supervise the actions of the project team, and be responsible for the daily management of risks, with meetings to be held every two months. However, in practice, this committee had low participation by its institutional members and held less frequent meetings mainly aiming to review plans and socialize outputs; as such, it did not fulfil the objective of directing the project (TE, p. 29) and stopped operating in the second half of the project (TE, p. ix).

As a matter of fact, the daily decisions for project execution were made by the director and the project technical chief. The TE notes that collaboration between this project team, responsible for direct management, and NPDAG was not optimal, because of problems in communication due to changes in location of the project office, and the lack of involvement of the prefect in project implementation (TE, p. 31). Also, as the NPDAG did not manage funds, it gradually lost interest in collaborating with the project

and lost its space in the decision-making process (TE, p. 31). As a result, the appropriation of objectives and strategies was partial during most of project execution (TE, p. 48).

## 8. Lessons and recommendations

8.1 Briefly describe the key lessons, good practices, or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report, including how they could have application for other GEF projects. Lessons must be based on project experience.

The TE (p. 45) includes the following lessons:

**Lesson 1:** Given that the project was designed at a time when the political and economic situation was good, it accepted substantial financial and institutional commitments from the national and local government and from public companies. However, in an economically vulnerable country such as Ecuador, this situation could change and the commitment may not be fulfilled, resulting in a possible decrease in co-funding and in collaboration. This can be mitigated with a thorough risk management plan, relevant and transparent adaptive management as well as close accompaniment of the change process that values the capacity created in the institution during the prior administration.

**Lesson 2:** The approach of working with participants who already have experience collaborating with other initiatives or organisations, ensured greater effectiveness and sustainability but all of a sudden, the communities that required the most support were neglected.

**Lesson 3:** In this project, collaboration with local universities was an important added value to the project because it gave a professional dimension to the certifications of training and studies on forest management or biotrade. In addition, due to having found a mutual strategic interest, it was possible to do so without additional cost to the project or to the universities.

**Lesson 4:** Of the practices applied in the field, the project generated several lessons about their effectiveness. For example, passive restoration (spontaneous regeneration) was a more effective strategy (more surface area, less costly, more successful in terms of performance and easier to monitor) than active restoration. Also, the application of protocols for practices, validated in other areas, do not necessarily work in all cases. These "recipes" (for example, for fertilisers or species for restoration) must be validated and enriched with the experience of the owners. Another example relates to the personnel from the area, who additionally share the culture and the language of the participants gave local credibility to the project and helped with the appropriation of good practices by the producers.

**Lesson 5:** Prioritising a group of actions during the implementation of a project, at the cost of another group, leads challenges in the generation of outputs and negatively affects the achievement or consolidation of the outcomes (example: outcomes 1.1 and 1.2 of this project).

**Lesson 6:** A change in authorities is not a risk for a project: these changes are normal in democratic companies and must be considered as opportunities. For example, the current project had the excellent opportunity of developing planning tools with an administration and of being able to assist the new

administration in implementing them. However, it saw it as a risk that it had to mitigate instead of an opportunity to make the most of.

**Lesson 7:** For local actions, close to the mission of local authorities, these authorities should be included in the development and implementation of these actions. This possibly causes the action to be less efficient but achieves greater appropriation and greater opportunity for continuity and co-funding. In addition, there will be a lower risk of the installed capacity dispersing with the change in civil servants.

## 8.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

The TE proposes the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 1.** To FAO Representation in Ecuador (FAO-EC). In order to have a realistic period of time to consolidate several outputs and therefore generate more solid outcomes, it is recommended that FAO consider extending the project by 6 months. Suggestions: Based on the proposed 2020 annual operating plan (AOP), the PT must develop a detailed plan of work for this 6-month period, ensuring not only the activities foreseen to generate the outputs before the finalisation, but also its form of funding and the personnel necessary.

**Recommendation 2.** To the NPDAG. Considering that the project does not have a future sustainability plan, it is recommended that the period of extension is also used to seek ongoing support for promising initiatives, and to continue with, replicate and scale up relevant activities for the sustainable development of the province.

**Recommendation 3.** To the project team. To achieve the most visibility at the end of the project and to make the project outputs, tools and lessons available for future users, it is recommended that the PT publish all of the reports, systematizations and protocols in a visible, easy-access and permanent location.

**Recommendation 4.** To ensure a more effective and efficient performance of a project financed by the GEF, it is suggested that FAO and other GEF implementation and execution agencies implementing similar projects in comparable contexts, always include a gender, participation and Free Prior and Informed Content (FPIC) (where relevant) analysis and strategy at the start of the design. Similarly, any project must have its own communication, knowledge management, monitoring and supervision as well as sustainability plan in the first year.

## 9. Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report

Before rating the quality of the terminal evaluation, click here to summarize your observations on the sub-criteria: <https://www.research.net/r/APR2023>.

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/indicators of terminal evaluation quality	GEF IEO COMMENTS	Rating
1. Timeliness: terminal evaluation report was carried out and submitted on time?	The TE was conducted 4 months before project termination and submitted to the GEF portal within 12 months of project completion	HS
2. General information: Provides general information on the project and evaluation as per the requirement?	The TE provides the general information on the project (GEF ID, list of evaluators, executing agencies, key project milestones, and GEF environmental objectives)	HS
3. Stakeholder involvement: the report was prepared in consultation with – and with feedback from - key stakeholders?	The TE identified the key stakeholders, and their feedback on the draft report was sought and incorporated for finalization; no information available on whether the OFP was included	S
4. Theory of change: provides solid account of the project's theory of change?	The TE reports the project's theory of change and discusses the causal links and mechanisms to achieve the intended impact, but does not include the key assumptions or whether the key assumptions remain valid	MS
5. Methodology: Provides an informative and transparent account of the methodology?	The TE discusses the information sources, refers to the list of people interviewed, provides information on project sites and activities, describes the tools and methods used and the limitations of evaluation	HS
6. Outcome: Provides a clear and candid account of the achievement of project outcomes?	The TE provides a complete account of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the project, including timeliness, performance of all outcomes, relevance to GEF and country priorities, and of project design	HS

7. Sustainability: Presents realistic assessment of sustainability?	The TE provides a complete assessment of sustainability of the project, including risks, their likelihood and effects, and overall likelihood of sustainability	HS
8. M&E: Presents sound assessment of the quality of the M&E system?	The TE analyzes quality of M&E design and implementation and discusses the use of information from M&E for project implementation	HS
9. Finance: Reports on utilization of GEF funding and materialization of co-financing?	The TE reports on utilization of GEF resources and discusses reasons for changes in co-financing and contribution to project results, but does not include data on sources and types of materialized co-financing	S
10. Implementation: Presents a candid account of project implementation and Agency performance?	The TE provides an account of the performance of the implementing agency and executing agencies, discusses factors that affected implementation and execution and how challenges were addressed, but does not rate project implementation nor project execution	MS
11. Safeguards: Provides information on application of environmental and social safeguards, and conduct and use of gender analysis?	The TE reports on the conduct and use of gender analysis, but not on social and environmental safeguards	MS
12. Lessons and recommendations are supported by the project experience and are relevant to future programming?	The TE presents lessons based on project experience and their applicability; recommendations are presented and specify the action taker and the content of action	HS
13. Ratings: Ratings are well-substantiated by evidence, realistic and convincing?	Ratings are supported with sufficient and credible evidence	HS
14. Report presentation: The report was well-written, logically organized, and consistent?	The TE is in English; it is well written, well-organized, consistent and easy to read, although a chart misses the legend and is unclear	HS
<b>Overall quality of the report</b>		S

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



## ANNEX 1. GEF IEO THEORY OF CHANGE FRAMEWORK

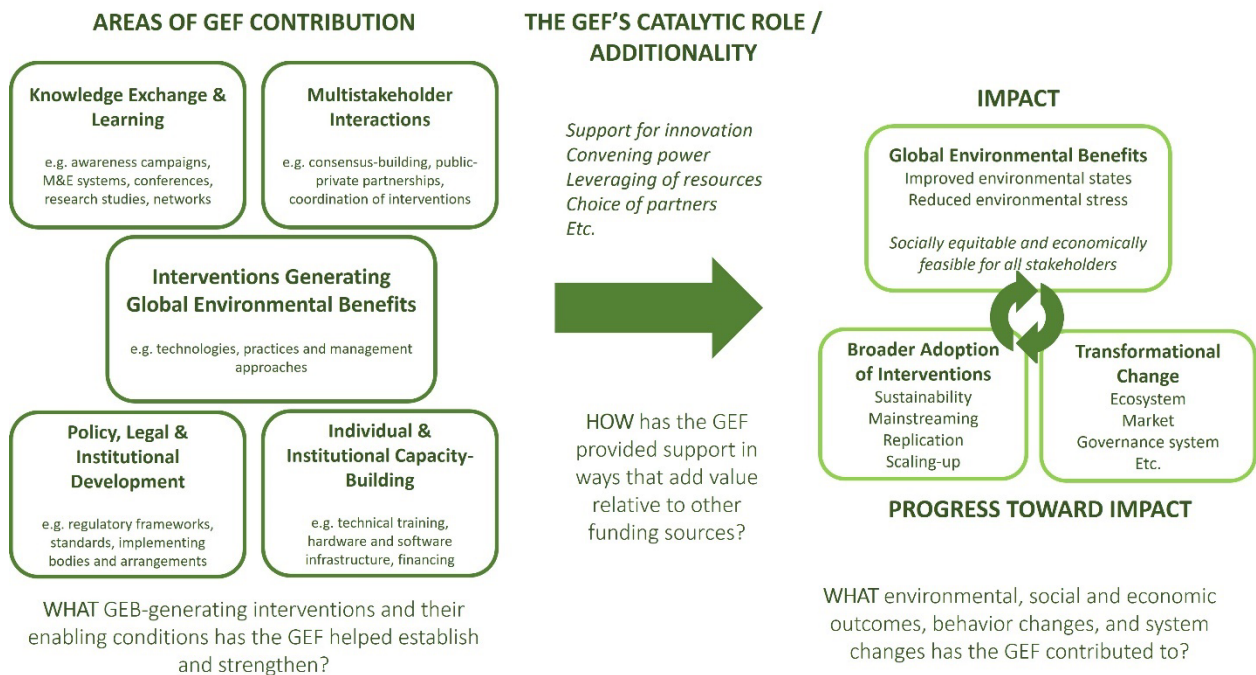


Figure 1. The GEF IEO's updated Theory of Change Framework on how the GEF achieves impact

The general framework for the GEF's theory of change (figure 1) draws on the large amount of evaluative evidence on outcomes and impact gathered over the years by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office. The framework diagram has been updated to reflect the IEO's learning since OPSS5 (GEF IEO 2014, p. 47-50) about how the GEF achieves impact, as well as the evolution of the GEF's programming toward more integrated systems-focused and scaled-up initiatives.

The framework outlines the three main areas that the IEO assesses in its evaluations: a) the GEF's contributions in establishing and strengthening both the interventions that directly generate global environmental benefits, and the enabling conditions that allow these interventions to be implemented and adopted by stakeholders, b) the GEF's catalytic role or additionality in the way that the GEF provides support within the context of other funding sources and partners, and c) the environmental, social and economic outcomes that the GEF has contributed to, and the behavior and system changes that generate these outcomes during and beyond the period of GEF support.

The circular arrow between impact and progress toward impact, as before, indicates how bringing about positive environmental change is an iterative process that involves behavior change (in the form of a broader group of stakeholders adopting interventions) and/or systems change (which is a key characteristic of transformational change). These three areas of change can take place in any sequence or simultaneously in a positively reinforcing cycle, and are therefore assessed by the GEF IEO as indicators of impact.

Assessing the GEF's progress toward achieving impact allows the IEO to determine the extent to which GEF support contributes to a trajectory of large-scale, systemic change, especially in areas where changes in the environment can only be measured over longer time horizons. The updated diagram in particular expands the assessment of progress towards impact to include transformational change, which specifically takes place at the system level, and not necessarily over a long time period.

The updated diagram also more explicitly identifies the link between the GEF's mandate of generating global environmental benefits, and the GEF's safeguards to ensure that positive environmental outcomes also enhance or at the very least do not take away from the social and economic well-being of the people who depend on the environment. Thus the IEO assesses impact not only in terms of environmental outcomes, but also in terms of the synergies and trade-offs with the social and economic contexts in which these outcomes are achieved.

## ANNEX 2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

<b>Intervention</b>	Any programmatic approach, full-sized project, medium-sized project, or enabling activity financed from any GEF-managed trust fund, as well as regional and national outreach activities. In the context of post-completion evaluation, an intervention may consist of a single project, or multiple projects (i.e. phased or parallel) with explicitly linked objectives contributing to the same specific impacts within the same specific geographical area and sector. <a href="https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019">https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019</a>
<b>Activity (of an intervention)</b>	An action undertaken over the duration of an intervention that contributes to the achievement of the intervention's objectives, i.e. an intervention is implemented through a set of activities. E.g. training, (support to) policy development, (implementation of) management approach.
<b>Outcome</b>	An intended or achieved short- or medium-term effect of a project or program's outputs. <a href="https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019">https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019</a>
<b>Impact</b>	The positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a project or program, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. <a href="https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019">https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019</a>
<b>Environmental outcomes</b>	Changes in environmental indicators that could take the following forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stress reduction: reduction or prevention of threats to the environment, especially those caused by human behavior (local communities, societies, economies)</li> <li>• Environmental state: biological, physical changes in the state of the environment</li> </ul> <a href="http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf">http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf</a>
<b>Social and economic outcomes</b>	Changes in indicators affecting human well-being at the individual or higher scales, e.g. income or access to capital, food security, health, safety, education, cooperation/ conflict resolution, and equity in distribution/ access to benefits, especially among marginalized groups.
<b>Synergies</b>	Multiple benefits achieved in more than one focal area as a result of a <i>single intervention</i> , or benefits achieved from the interaction of outcomes from at least two separate interventions in addition to those achieved, had the interventions been done independently.

	<a href="http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-multiple-benefits-gef-support-through-its-multifocal-area-portfolio-map-2016">http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-multiple-benefits-gef-support-through-its-multifocal-area-portfolio-map-2016</a>
<b>Trade-offs</b>	A reduction in one benefit in the process of maximizing or increasing another benefit. <a href="http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-multiple-benefits-gef-support-through-its-multifocal-area-portfolio-map-2016">http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-multiple-benefits-gef-support-through-its-multifocal-area-portfolio-map-2016</a>
<b>Broader adoption</b>	The adoption of GEF-supported interventions by governments and other stakeholders beyond the original scope and funding of a GEF-supported intervention. This may take place through sustaining, replication, mainstreaming, and scaling-up of an intervention and/or its enabling conditions (see definitions below). <a href="http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf">http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf</a>
<b>Sustainability</b>	The continuation/ likely continuation of positive effects from the intervention after it has come to an end, and its potential for scale-up and/or replication; interventions need to be environmentally as well as institutionally, financially, politically, culturally and socially sustainable. <a href="https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019">https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019</a>
<b>Replication</b>	When a GEF intervention is reproduced at a comparable administrative or ecological scale, often in different geographical areas or regions. <a href="http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf">http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf</a>
<b>Mainstreaming</b>	When information, lessons, or specific aspects of a GEF initiative are incorporated into a broader stakeholder initiative. This may occur not only through governments but also in development organizations and other sectors. <a href="http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf">http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf</a>
<b>Scaling-up</b>	Increasing the magnitude of global environment benefits (GEBs), and/or expanding the geographical and sectoral areas where they are generated to cover a defined ecological, economic, or governance unit. May occur through replication, mainstreaming, and linking. <a href="http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-gef-support-scaling-impact-2019">http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-gef-support-scaling-impact-2019</a>
<b>Transformational change</b>	Deep, systemic, and sustainable change with large-scale impact in an area of major environmental concern. Defined by four criteria: relevance, depth of change, scale of change, and sustainability. <a href="http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-gef-support-transformational-change-2017">http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-gef-support-transformational-change-2017</a>
<b>Additionality</b>	a) Changes in the attainment of direct project outcomes at project completion that can be attributed to GEF's interventions; these can be reflected in an acceleration of the adoption of reforms, the enhancement of outcomes, or the reduction of risks and greater viability of project interventions. b) Spill-over effects beyond project outcomes that may result from systemic reforms, capacity development, and socio-economic changes. c) Clearly articulated pathways to achieve broadening of the impact beyond project completion that can be associated with GEF interventions. <a href="https://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/council-documents/files/c-55-me-inf-01.pdf">https://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/council-documents/files/c-55-me-inf-01.pdf</a>