

## Terminal Evaluation Validation form, GEF Independent Evaluation Office

### 1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		4800	
GEF Agency project ID		GCP/CMR/033/GFF	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-5	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		FAO	
Project name		Sustainable Forest Management under the Authority of Cameroonian Councils	
Country/Countries		Cameroon	
Region		Africa	
Focal area		Multifocal Area	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		BD-1 Outcome 1.1: Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas BD-2 Outcome 2.1: Increase in sustainably managed landscapes and seascapes that integrate biodiversity conservation. CCM-5 Outcome 5.2: Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests and non-forest lands SFM/REDD-1 Outcome 1.2: Good management practices applied in existing forests	
Stand alone or under a programmatic framework		Standalone	
If applicable, parent program name and GEF ID		N/A	
Executing agencies involved		Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) of Cameroon Ministry of the Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) of Cameroon Cameroon Association of Council forests (ACFCAM)	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		Cameroon Association of Council forests (ACFCAM): executing agency CAM-ECO, IUCN: secondary executing agency ICRAF, GIZ, C2D-PSFE: consultancy	
Private sector involvement (including micro, small and medium enterprises) <sup>1</sup>		Forest councils: beneficiaries	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) / Approval (MSP) date		4/13/2015	
Effectiveness date / project start date		4/5/2016	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		3/1/2019	
Actual date of project completion		12/31/2022	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	0.063	0.053
	Co-financing		
GEF Project Grant		3.573	2.817 <sup>2</sup>
Co-financing	IA own	1.45	0.694 <sup>3</sup>
	Government	11	3.998 <sup>4</sup>

<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> TE (p. 50). The Final PIR 2022 (p. 2) reports an amount of USD 2.34 million as of June 30, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> The TE (p. 87) reports only the materialized co-financing at project mid-term.

<sup>4</sup> The TE (p. 87) reports only the materialized co-financing at project mid-term. The Final PIR 2022 (p. 43) reports a total amount of co-financing materialized from the government of USD 4,391,057.

	Other multi- /bi-laterals	1.9	
	Private sector		
	NGOs/CBOs	3.5	
	Other		
<b>Total GEF funding</b>		3.636	2.86
<b>Total Co-financing</b>		17.85	4.692 <sup>5</sup>
<b>Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)</b>		21,486	7,552
<b>Terminal evaluation validation information</b>			
<b>TE completion date</b>	12/31/2022 <sup>6</sup>		
<b>Author of TE</b>	Aurelian Mbzibain, Yaya Pouakone Sechoudi		
<b>TER completion date</b>	8/19/2023		
<b>TER prepared by</b>	Emanuele Bigagli		
<b>TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)</b>	Jeneen R. Garcia		

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

<sup>5</sup> The TE (p. 87) reports only the materialized co-financing at project mid-term. The Final PIR 2022 (p. 43) reports a total amount of co-financing materialized of USD 5,085,044.

<sup>6</sup> The TE does not specify a date of publication. Based on references to processes and activities held during the period June-December 2022, it is plausible to infer that it was finalized in December 2022.

## 2. Summary of Project Ratings

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

## 3. Project Objectives and theory of change

### 3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

The Global Environmental Objective of the project is to reduce deforestation and forest degradation in council forests to improve biodiversity conservation, reduce emissions and enhance carbon stocks (TE, p. 3).

### 3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

The Development Objective is to improve livelihoods of local communities by promoting sustainable income generating activities (TE, p. 3).

### 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)?

No changes in the project objectives or activities took place during project implementation.

### 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.

- **Problem:** deforestation and forest degradation; biodiversity and carbon loss; illegal logging, forest fires, rising demand for fuel food; habitat degradation and overexploitation; weak capacity of councils for sustainable forest management; lack of data on forest and biodiversity; lack of alternative livelihoods; limited participation of local people in forest management.
- **Strategy:** (1) Establishment of council forests for sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation; (2) Capacity building to strengthen biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of council forests; (3) Capacity building for forest carbon management; (4) Ecosystem restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in council forests.
- **Outcomes:** (i) increased forest area managed for sustainable use, biodiversity conservation and enhancement in unprotected ecological zones; (ii) strengthened capacity of selected councils to manage council forests and conservation sites; (iii) increased creation of local enterprises and income generating activities by local communities, Indigenous People and women.

- Impact: reduction of deforestation and forest degradation in council forest; improvement of biodiversity conservation; reduction of emissions and enhancement of carbon stocks; better livelihoods of local communities.

#### 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	S
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The TE rates relevance as Highly Satisfactory, and this review rates it as Satisfactory. The project was very relevant to GEF, FAO, and national policies and priorities; although it was overall well-designed, it had an unsatisfactory inclusion of considerations related to gender and indigenous communities.

The project goals and outcomes are fully aligned with several GEF outcomes related to Biodiversity Focal Area (Outcome 1.1: Management effectiveness of protected areas; Outcome 2.1: Sustainable Forest Management and biodiversity conservation), Climate Change focal area (Outcome 5.2: Management of restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in the forests and non-forest lands), and SFM/REDD (Outcome 1.2: Good management practices in existing forests). It was also aligned with the FAO Strategic Framework and its Objective SO-2 (Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner).

The project was fully aligned with national priorities and context, and especially to: the 1994 Forest Law; the mandate of MINEPDED; the strategic goal 1 (reduction of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation in the short and medium term and reversal of this trend in the long term) and strategic goal 3 (development and strengthening of capacity for planning, implementation and monitoring of biodiversity programs and projects) of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan; the national climate change objectives set out in the REDD+ Strategy and the 2021 Nationally Determined Contributions to UNFCCC; the strategic axes of the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan and 3 of its measures (Measure 4.2: Implementation of a forest fire monitoring, prevention, warning and management system; Measure 4.3: Monitoring of forest cover dynamics including climate risks; Measure 4.4: Implement the REDD+ strategy including adaptation measures); and the national Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (TE, p. 22-23).

The project was also relevant to the needs of different stakeholder groups, who were involved in a participatory process during project design (TE, p. 24). Project design foresaw the creation of different multistakeholder committees to enhance partnerships and stakeholder engagement, including the project steering committee, the project technical consultative mechanism, and stakeholder committees, the functional technical units and forest protection committees (TE, p. 60). However, project design had a moderately unsatisfactory inclusion of gender considerations, without provisions to collect gender

disaggregated data, nor to develop a gender analysis or strategy (TE, p. 26). Also, no specific guidelines or indicators were planned to be developed to measure specific actions of the project on indigenous people (TE, p. 62).

<b>4.2 Coherence</b>	MU
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The TE does not rate coherence, and this review rates it as Moderately Unsatisfactory. The project logic was clear and realistic; however, there were some key gaps, and synergies were not built with similar ongoing projects and processes.

The theory of change of the project is generally realistic; the intervention logic is sound; and the proposed risk management and assumptions have held. However, several key gaps were identified: (1) the link between the project outcomes and development objectives could be further strengthened by an outcome specifically focusing on increased creation of local enterprises and income generating activities by local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and women; (2) the assumption that trained local communities will improve local livelihoods did not materialize, despite the support to start-up of community enterprises; (3) no action was implemented to mitigate the endemic corruption in forest exploitation royalties, and the project failed to respond to a 2015 Decree allocating lower amounts of forest exploitation royalties to councils and communities (TE, p. 21).

Synergies were not built with the REDD+ process, nor the project was anchored to the Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade-Voluntary Partnership Agreements (FLEGT-VPAs) processes (TE, p. 47).

<b>4.3 Effectiveness</b>	MU
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The TE rates effectiveness as Moderately Satisfactory, and this review rates it as Moderately Unsatisfactory. The project achieved only some outcomes and targets, and failed to deliver the most significant outcomes.

The achievement of the project outcomes and objectives is mixed, with satisfactory progress for Outcomes 2 and 5, moderately unsatisfactory for Outcomes 1 and 3, and highly unsatisfactory for Outcome 4 (TE, p. 40). More details are as follows:

*Component 1: Establishment of council forests for sustainable management and biodiversity conservation.* Progress on this component was moderately unsatisfactory (TE, p. 29). Although the project developed the technical guidelines for sustainable management of council forests and adapted them for council forests, the database of criteria and indicators for designation of conservation sites and for monitoring biodiversity in councils was incomplete. This problem was partially mitigated through letters of agreement with local and international NGOs (Output 1.1.1). More importantly, the project did not successfully deliver the landmark revision and validation of forest management plans integrating sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, and carbon management, which was the most significant of all outputs of the project (TE, p. 27). The failure to deliver the updated forest management plans resulted from insufficient budget allocation, which led to the CTFC pulling out from their duties, and consequently

delays in implementation. While socio-economic studies were carried out for all the 17 council forests, forest gazetting was conducted in only 15 council forests, and the development of draft management plans carried out in only 9; however, the latter was neither finalized nor formally approved (TE, p. 29). As a consequence, Output 1.1.3 (formal designation and establishment of 56,200 ha of conservation sites) was not delivered, as it depended on the reception and validation of the revised council forest management plans.

*Component 2: Capacity Building to strengthen biodiversity conservation and Sustainable Forest Management in Council Forests.* Progress on this component was moderately satisfactory (TE, p. 32). The project delivered the technical guidelines and standards for sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation in conservation sites (TE, pp. 30-31), which were disseminated to 21 councils and to MINEPDED and MINFOF as project partners, and were effectively used for awareness raising in these communities (Output 2.1.1). Moreover, 72 forest protection committees were effectively restructured and trained in forest management and monitoring, against the set target of 45, and 88 council forest staff from 11 councils were trained in the development and implementation of forest management plans, although the project failed to provide further logistical and material support required to apply learning (Output 2.1.2). Furthermore, 100 stakeholders from 10 councils were trained in strengthening the livelihood options, against a set target of 90; however, stakeholders expressed disappointment that further logistical training did not follow up with the proposed support for enterprise creation, because the budget did not materialize in the end (Output 2.1.3).

*Component 3: Capacity building for the management of forest carbon.* Progress on this component was moderately unsatisfactory (TE, p. 34). The project effectively developed and tested the methodology and approach for carbon monitoring, reporting and verification, although with delays due to lack of organization. However, significant delays were experienced in soil sampling, which led to the fact that related activities could not be initiated, namely: integration of carbon sites into the carbon database, the application of the carbon accounting and monitoring system, and the measurement, monitoring and reporting of carbon in council forests (Output 3.1.1). Training activities were effectively implemented, with 85 participants from 10 forest councils trained on methods for carbon accounting and monitoring, conservation of forest carbon and forest surveillance and protection; however, long delays between the training and the actual implementation of the carbon monitoring system raised concerns over the ability of the trained people to effectively play their role. Also, the necessary equipment required for the management of an effective monitoring, reporting and verification system are yet to be provided to councils and the government ministry (Output 3.1.2).

*Component 4: Ecosystem restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in the council forests.* Progress in this component was highly unsatisfactory (TE, p. 35). The project failed to reach the target of 56,200 ha of reforestation and restoration, reporting only a value of 3,821 ha. No further reports were provided on reforestation and restoration activities by MINFOF, reportedly because of limited funding.

4.4 Efficiency	MU
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The TE rates efficiency as Moderately Unsatisfactory, and this review concurs. The project budget was unrealistic and was not fully spent; problems with management procedures, which were not properly addressed and which increased transaction costs, and with insufficient staff quantity and quality, led to four no-cost extensions.

The TE (p. 43) reports that the project spent about US\$ 2.8 million of the US\$ 3.573 million GEF grant, an amount that is not in line with that reported by the Final PIR 2022 (p. 3), of USD 2,340,487. The budget of the project was unrealistic, with funds underestimated for key activities (e.g., Outcome 1-revision of forest management plans, work on carbon), leading to significant delays. The procedures for budget management were found as unclear and complicated by partners, the majority of which did not have prior experience with GEF/FAO funding procedures; the project team did not address this issue properly, as it did not produce specific guidelines and procedures, and simply referred to FAO’s online handbooks (TE, p. 41). The project lacked a long-term procurement plan; consequently, the timing of procurements did not always align with resource needs on the ground. To increase project delivery, after the MTR, the strategy changed from working with institutional partners to working with national consultants; this helped drive project implementation (TE, p. 42). However, this increased the transaction costs due to the management of small and dispersed individual contracts, and resulted in the fact that the budget line for consultants was overspent, and the contracts budget line was largely underutilized, because most of the management plan revision activities were carried out by consultants and not by the partners through letters of agreement (TE, p. 42).

The project had insufficient staff quantity and quality. The staff turnover at the beginning of the project led to significant delays in the operationalization of the project. No M&E officer and socio-economist and gender specialist were recruited. This, together with power dynamics, led to longer time to review and validate partner outputs. This problem was partially addressed after the MTR, with the recruitment of two experts to the project management unit; however, pervasive collaboration challenges persisted, and external consultants were not utilized to their full potential (TE, p. 41).

As a result of such a poor performance and deliver, the project was granted four no-cost extensions (TE, p. 41).

4.5 Outcome	MU
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The TE rates progress towards outcomes as Moderately Satisfactory, and this review rates it as Moderately Unsatisfactory. Although the project was relevant and overall well-designed, there were key gaps in project’s logic; the project did not achieve the majority of targets, especially the key targets of the project, and was managed in a moderately inefficient way. Although the environmental and socio-economic impacts were not achieved as expected, the project had a positive, although lesser than expected, improvement in enabling conditions.

**Environmental impacts.** There is no evidence that the project had the expected environmental benefits. Although the project successfully delivered biodiversity inventories and mapping of potential carbon sites,

none of the information management systems on biodiversity monitoring and carbon monitoring/management were delivered. As such, there is no evidence that the project had a positive impact on biodiversity conservation nor on the reduction of carbon emissions (TE, p. 64).

**Socioeconomic impacts.** The project contributed to engaging communities in the processing and marketing of non-timber forest products, and away from artisanal forest exploitation. However, none of the business development plans designed through the project received any support or had been implemented, due to the long gap between training cycles, the absence of business incubation support and related demotivation of beneficiaries (especially of women; TE, p. 62), and the COVID-19 pandemic (TE, p. 65).

**Enabling conditions.** The project increased awareness and capacity, and had a positive impact in changing the behavior among final beneficiaries, especially in relation to the management of council forests, towards sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, and carbon management (TE, p. 63), as well as in supporting alternative livelihoods and sources of income (TE, p. 65). Trainings involved 556 women out of a total of 1,050 participants; however, they were the most negatively impacted by the failure of the project to provide financial and business start-up support. The project reached indigenous people communities, who benefited from training and participation in Council Forest Cells and Peasant Forest Committees; however, no targeted actions were implemented to address their needs, and their involvement was moderately unsatisfactory (TE, p. 62)..

**Unintended impacts.** The TE (p. 65) reports that an unintended positive effect was the strengthening of relationships between the Baka and Bantou communities over forest resources. On the contrary, an unintended negative effect of the project was that the FAO failed to live up to the standards and image that it holds, due to conflicts, unilateral and sometimes arbitrary decisions, non-respect of obligations and failed promises for communities. Also, the project failed to trigger FAO’s environmental and social safeguards on indigenous people (TE, p. 62).

4.6 Sustainability	MU
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The TE rates sustainability as Moderately Likely, and this review rates it as Moderately Unlikely. Although the project laid the ground for project sustainability through capacity building and the expected delivery of forest management plans, there are significant financial, social, institutional, and environmental risks that are likely to hamper project sustainability if they will not be addressed.

The success in capacity building and the expected approval of draft forest management plans will contribute to project sustainability; however, financial, institutional, and social risks exist which, if not mitigated, will hamper project sustainability (TE, p. 44). Moreover, disagreements exist within FAO and between partners on a possible follow-up project (TE, p. 45).

**Financial.** The new forest management plans were designed without including existing partners in forest use, with whom contracts are currently in place; this may put the implementation of the plans at risk. Also, the 2015 Circular of the Ministry of Finance reshaping forest royalties resulted in a loss of income to councils, which does not promote the financial sustainability of the project. Moreover, none of the



business development plans have been implemented, due to the lack of financial and material support from the project. While council officials, CFCs and PFCs were trained, the budget initially set aside to support the training needs of additional qualified staff in carbon management and biodiversity within councils did not materialize (TE, p. 45) due to delays and staff turnover issues (TE, p. 5). The lack of financial support hampered the effectiveness of implementation of biodiversity conservation and carbon monitoring. Finally, there was no exit strategy nor efforts to support councils to mobilize international finance, apart from the GIZ commitment to support financially 20% of the council forests (TE, p. 45).

**Sociopolitical.** Because of the internal conflicts and the inability of the FAO to address the issues raised, as well as the perceived arbitrariness and unilateral decision-making by FAO at different levels, partners have strong reservations in engaging in a follow-up project (TE, p. 47). Also, the current practices of poor governance and corruption are highly likely to hamper project benefits in the future (TE, p. 48).

**Institutional framework and governance.** A key risk is the turnover and instability of elected council officials; moreover, there are corruption and fraud in the allocation of forest management permits, and a lack of capacities within councils to tackle these issues. Also, another central risk is the lack of ownership and appropriation of the project by government partners, because of disagreements and distrust (TE, p. 46). Furthermore, the lack of inclusion of the Council Forest Technical Centre in the discussions on the exit strategy is a missed opportunity to strengthen project sustainability. Finally, the replicability and scalability of the project is in doubt, because of the breakdown of the partnership between government agencies, the association of council forests, national and international NGOs, and the failure in documenting, communicating and ensuring the visibility of project actions in national and international platforms.

**Environmental.** Despite project interventions, council forests are likely to experience the risks posed by climate change, forest fires, illegal deforestation and degradation as the pressures on forests will increase due to national deforestation drivers (TE, p. 48).

## 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 TE (p. 42) reports that the amount of mobilized co-financing was USD\$ 4.692 million, i.e., far from the amount indicated at CEO endorsement of US\$ 17.85 million. In contrast, the Final PIR 2022 (p. 43) reports that the final amount was USD\$ 5.085 million. In any case, co-financing from national partners did not materialize nor was regularly monitored, negatively affecting project implementation, especially on Outcome 4 and on the field monitoring and supervision activities by MINFOF and MINEPDED (TE, p. 41).

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 had four no-cost extensions, due to delays in the implementation of activities because of lack of funding, and problems in management, implementation and execution. These extensions allowed the project to partially make up for the delays and ensure a higher level of delivery of project outputs, although some activities were still not implemented or finalized at the moment of the TE.

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 frameworks for stakeholder engagement were either not created (stakeholder committee and Project technical consultative mechanism) nor effective (steering committee, Peasant Forest Committees and Council Forest Cells), with negative consequences on project ownership and appropriation (TE, p. 58). Partners felt uniformed and disengaged in the project, because of several problems in the management and implementation of the project, including poor communication, distrust, and internal conflicts. The TE (p. 46) notes that the lack of ownership and appropriation by government partners is a central risk to project sustainability.

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.

COVID-19 entailed delays in the organization of project steering committee meetings, which in turn caused delays in the implementation of project activities (TE, p. 35).

## 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	MU
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The TE rates M&E design as Moderately Satisfactory, and this review rates it as Moderately Unsatisfactory. Although the M&E plan included some clear provisions in some areas, it was complex and not practical, with some indicators not specific or measurable, or not relevant, and needed revision during project inception.

The TE (p. 49) evaluates the M&E plan as globally satisfactory, although it notes that it was not practical, highly academic, complex and cumbersome, and needed revision during the project inception (TE, p. 52). More specifically, the M&E plan included detailed activities, clearly articulated roles and responsibilities for data collection, reporting and usage for decision making, provisions for evaluation and review, and dedicated budget, as well as provisions for participatory revision after project inception; however, it did not include a dedicated monitoring and evaluation officer. The majority (83%) of indicators were specific

and measurable, while only 67% were relevant; all of them were measurable and time bound. The non-relevant indicators were not suitable for the level of the targeted objective, especially for the target “number of people trained” for the development objective (improve livelihoods). Also, for Outcome 2, indicators focused on the improvement in capacity scores instead of focusing on improved behaviors (TE, p. 49). Overall, the M&E plan was not easy to use, rendering the monitoring difficult and providing little information for decision making (TE, p. 49).

<b>6.2 M&amp;E Implementation</b>	MU
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The TE rates M&E implementation as Moderately Satisfactory, and this review rates it as Moderately Unsatisfactory. Although some activities were completed, overall, the M&E plan was not revised to address gaps in design, and was not implemented as planned, with no evidence that data were used to improve project implementation.

The M&E plan was not revised in time, and was not implemented as planned. As the expected co-financing did not materialize, the effectiveness of government monitoring and supervision on the fields was limited (TE, p. 50). Field missions to assess progress on the ground were performed by the project team and the Lead Technical Officer. Statutory steering committee meetings were organized to discuss project action plans, budget, and provide strategic guidance. Moreover, progress implementation reports were prepared and submitted as per M&E plan, including the MTR (performed with a delay of 1 year; TE, p. 36), which proposed recommendations that were either partially addressed or were not effective (TE, p. 51).

## 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>	U
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The TE rates project implementation as Moderately Satisfactory, and this review rates it as Unsatisfactory. The GEF agency had a weak performance in project preparation and implementation, with significant problems of poor communication, internal conflicts, mistrust and disagreements with the executing agencies and other partners, lack of foresight and proactiveness, which were not identified in time and were mostly unaddressed or inadequately addressed, leading to implementation delays and low project effectiveness.

FAO ensured oversight and supervision through a project task force; it had the dual role of implementing agency and of one of the executing agencies (TE, p. 54).

In general, poor communication with partners, personal issues and conflicts within the FAO team, mistrust and disagreements with government and partners, lack of foresight and proactiveness, non-respect of

contractual obligations under the letters of agreement with partners and consultant, were significant implementation barriers (TE, p. 36), negatively impacting also the level of stakeholder engagement and participation in the project (TE, p. 40). The separation of roles between FAO and partners was not always known and accepted, causing frustrations and disagreements (TE, p. 55). FAO was perceived as not being accountable to the government, because of arbitrariness and unilateral decision-making at different levels (TE, p. 47). Also, within FAO, lines of responsibility and command remained tense and conflictual, and the problem was not successfully addressed during project implementation (TE, p. 56).

In many cases, the procurement of goods and services was implemented without consultation with project partners (TE, p. 55). Several stakeholders raised their concerns over the credibility and transparency of the selection process, conducted by FAO, of the three NGOs (Monitor Trust, OCD, and IUCN), recruited through letters of agreement to lead the revision of the management plans drafted under Output 1.1.2, also because no staff of MINFOF or MINEPDED were involved in any phase of this process. Moreover, only Monitor Trust had the relevant accreditation by MINFOF (TE, p. 28). The reason for this choice seems to lie in the need to identify organizations with sufficient financial resources to pre-finance activities on the field and to avoid the problems faced earlier on in the project, when activities were delayed because of lack of co-financing ability. In addition, disagreements were recorded between MINFOF and FAO, as well as within FAO, on the funding of the monitoring missions linked to the validation of the revised management plans (Output 1.1.2); these difficulties could have been avoided by clear, initial and ongoing communication (TE, p. 28).

Initial delays in the implementation of activities related to Outputs 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 were recorded, because of disagreements between FAO and the government on related terminologies used in the project document, which led to revisions and a non-optimal use of resources (TE, p. 30). Moreover, lack of organization and coordination in the management of the procurement for services to implement soil sample analyses (Output 3.1.1) led to an unnecessary 8-months delay on a process that was already late; this was attributed to FAO’s inability to manage the procurement process and to communicate effectively, because of a lack of ownership and proactiveness. This ineffectiveness led to two additional activities under the same output not being initiated (TE, p. 33). In addition, there was no evidence that FAO initiated a discussion on the sustainability of the project with the Council Forest Technical Centre, which was not consulted or involved in the planning of the exit strategy, thus representing a missed opportunity given their strong institutional anchoring in council forests (TE, p. 47).

<b>7.2 Quality of Project Execution</b>	MU
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The TE rates project execution as Moderately Satisfactory, and this review rates it as Moderately Unsatisfactory. Despite a good performance in some areas, poor coordination, lack of funding, and progressive disengagement negatively affected project execution, contributing to the delays in project implementation and negatively affecting project effectiveness.

MINFOF and MINEPDED were the two government executing agencies of the project. Despite challenges in mobilizing their own funding, project staff were effectively allocated and expected administrative roles were adequately performed. However, technical activities were not optimal due to poor coordination

with the technical project unit, lack of funding, and progressive disengagement from the project. FAO subcontracted the delivery of their share of project activities through letters of agreement, which proved to have initial poor delivery of outputs, insufficient technical staff, and lengthy delays in validation and settling of payments. Also, the management of consultant was suboptimal in terms of value for money and timeliness in their recruitment and termination (TE, p. 57).

## **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. 75) proposes the following lessons:

- Project/programme design, appraisal and planning. Although the design of this project followed a participatory process including all key project stakeholders, which ensured that the project design was relevant, robust and feasible to achieve its objectives, the lack of validation of this particular project by national stakeholders led to various challenges. Ensuring participation also sends a message of fairness and creates a conducive environment for trust and collaboration to strive.
- Project/program management, including financial and human resources issues. Having a balanced and realistic budget and a project team with sufficient complementary skills provide the framework for successful project implementation. This requires the ability to listen to experts and to integrate their contributions to budgeting activities; otherwise, project activities are unlikely to be delivered. As with budgets, project formulators and managers must act decisively when skills gaps are identified within the team either through providing opportunity for further capacity building or integrating new staff to the project team. FAO's global network provides it with unique access to experts that can be drawn on to support project implementation, but these decisions have to be taken promptly to bridge the gaps between project needs and human resource availability.
- Project/program management, including financial and human resources issues. This project has also shown the importance of clear definition of roles and responsibilities and lines of accountability within projects. It also highlighted the necessity for mechanisms for redress and performance monitoring which go beyond administrative benchmarking to considering the underlying factors which affect project performance. Such systems could alert decision makers and bring them to make timely decisions to address problems before they escalate and impact project delivery.
- Integrated approaches. Projects adopting integrated approaches require spaces for stakeholders to share their experiences and expertise. This requires a collaborative working and learning environment, which allows for failures and successes to be integrated as part of a collective learning process towards a common goal. The experience of this project, where project activities were not synchronized and path dependencies were not clarified, led to delays and non-

achievement of project results. As a capacity building project, no mechanisms for post training support to beneficiaries was put in place.

- Co-financing. As national partners are not always able to generate or mobilize stated match funding in GEF and other projects, mechanisms need to be put in place during the design and formulation phase to assess the ability of organizations to effectively deliver on financial targets. Monitoring of these contributions on a regular basis also allows for the project team to keep track of risks and potential impacts on the project.
- Stakeholder engagement and communication. Projects need to actively develop and implement stakeholder participation and communication plans. Strong engagement of beneficiaries, partners and government are required to ensure ownership and sustainability of the project. This engagement and communication about the project promote visibility and facilitates anchoring project gains within ongoing national and international processes. By so doing, the project's coherence, sustainability and demonstration effects can be achieved. Stronger engagement and communication are also likely to promote goodwill amongst stakeholders and willingness to collaborate.

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

The TE (p. 71) proposes the following recommendations:

To FAO:

- FAO needs to urgently engage in an inclusive, participatory process to develop the project's exit strategy.
- FAO should consolidate the capacity building gains acquired to strengthen the pathway to the environmental and development impacts of the project
- FAO needs to come to an agreement with government partners (MINFOF and MINEPDED). No effort should be spared in ensuring joint FAO/MINFOF field supervision visits are organized to assess progress and ultimately validate the nine revised plans. For those uncompleted, reallocate further resources to ensure all 17 council forest management plans undergo revision.
- In future projects, the FAO should develop clear internal project guidelines which clarify the roles, scope and limits of different actors intervening in the project. These guidelines need to be agreed from inception and will clarify information flows between actors and the mechanisms for addressing disagreements and conflicts.
- FAO should review its matrix of responsibilities and clarify the modalities for addressing disagreements and conflicts within PTF.
- FAO should establish a mechanism for monitoring the technical delivery of projects by the Project Task Force to address underlying project performance challenges.
- FAO needs to strengthen the management framework for delivering projects of this magnitude through having a dedicated monitoring and evaluation team, procurement plan, specific financial management procedures and guidelines for partners, and grievance mechanisms through which individuals who feel aggrieved can register their complaints.

To government:

- The government needs to explore opportunities for a follow-on phase of this project to capitalize on and develop the gains achieved through this pilot initiative.

To GEF:

- Provide funding for a follow up phase or subsequent project to guarantee impact.

## 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 within 6 months from project end	HS
2. General information: Provides general information on the project and evaluation as per the requirement?	The TE provides GEF project ID, lists the executing agencies, and specifies key project milestones and GEF environmental objectives, and the evaluators that conducted the evaluation	HS
3. Stakeholder involvement: the report was prepared in consultation with – and with feedback from - key stakeholders?	The TE identified the key stakeholders and sought their feedback on the draft report, which was incorporated, but not that of the OFP	S
4. Theory of change: provides solid account of the project's theory of change?	The TE describes the project's theory of change and the links and mechanisms to achieve intended impact; it presents some assumptions and briefly discusses the validity of some of them	HS
5. Methodology: Provides an informative and transparent account of the methodology?	The TE provides a full description of the methodology used, including information sources used, list of people interviewed, information of project sites and activities, tools and methods for evaluation, and limitations	HS
6. Outcome: Provides a clear and candid account of the achievement of project outcomes?	The TE provides a clear and full account of project relevance to GEF, country priorities, and of project design, and of project performance on all outcome targets; it discusses factors that affected their achievement, and reported on timeliness and efficiency	HS
7. Sustainability: Presents realistic assessment of sustainability?	The TE presents a full assessment of project sustainability, including risks,	HS



	their likelihood and effects, and an overall rating	
8. M&E: Presents sound assessment of the quality of the M&E system?	The TE fully assesses M&E design and implementation, including whether information from the M&E was used for project management	HS
9. Finance: Reports on utilization of GEF funding and materialization of co-financing?	The TE reports on the mobilization and use of GEF funds and of co-financing, including their amount and type, reasons for differences from the amounts indicated in the project document, and how these affected the achievement of project results	HS
10. Implementation: Presents a candid account of project implementation and Agency performance?	The TE fully assesses the performance of both the implementing and executing agencies, including challenges and how these were addressed	HS
11. Safeguards: Provides information on application of environmental and social safeguards, and conduct and use of gender analysis?	The TE reported on the implementation of environmental and social safeguards, and on the conduct of the gender analysis and the implementation of related actions	HS
12. Lessons and recommendations are supported by the project experience and are relevant to future programming?	The TE presents lessons supported by project experience and discusses their applicability; it reports recommendations including content and action taker	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 written in English; it is easy to read, well-structured and consistent, and makes good use of tables and charts	HS
<b>Overall quality of the report</b>		HS

**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

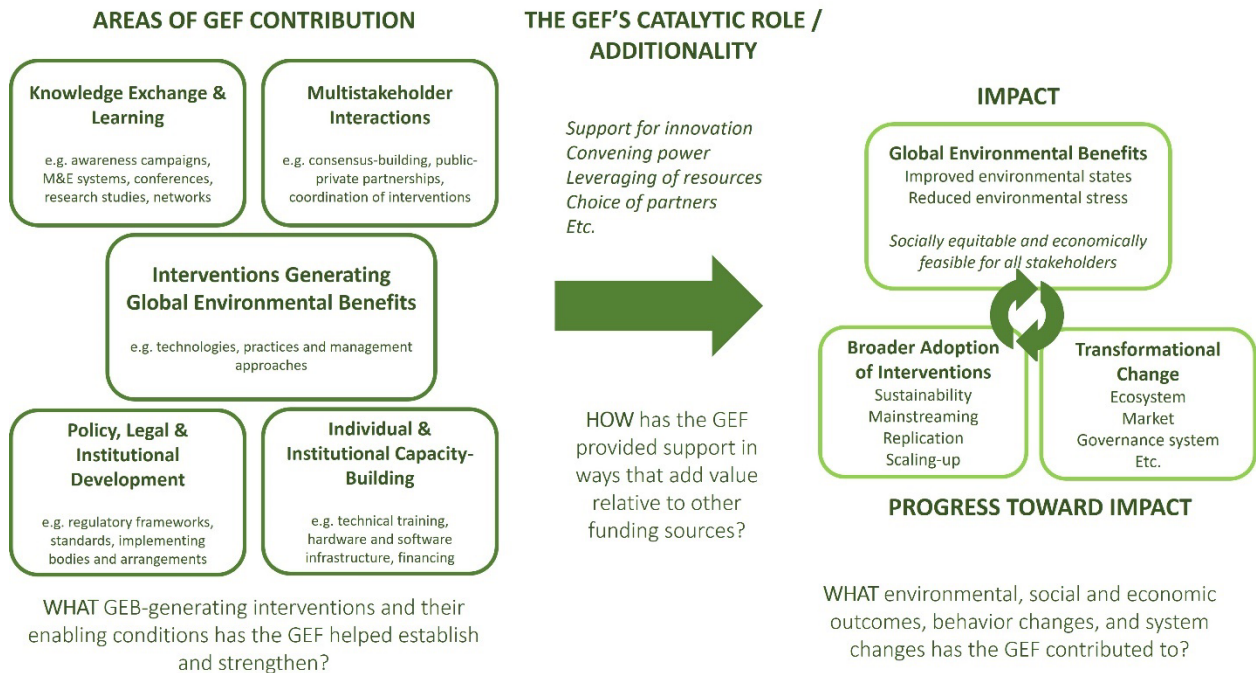


Figure 1. The GEF IEO's updated Theory of Change Framework on how the GEF achieves impact

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 OPSS (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>