

Terminal Evaluation Validation form, GEF Independent Evaluation Office

1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		5735	
GEF Agency project ID		Not reported	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-5	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		Conservation International	
Project name		Effectively Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Government Policy and Private Sector Practice: Piloting Sustainability Models to Take the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) to Scale	
Country/Countries		Bolivia, Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, China, DR Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lao PDR, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Paraguay, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe	
Region		Global	
Focal area		Biodiversity	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		BD Objective 1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems BD Objective 2: Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes/Seascapes and Sectors	
Stand alone or under a programmatic framework		Standalone	
If applicable, parent program name and GEF ID		N/A	
Executing agencies involved		Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		Birdlife, IUCN ARO and IEB: secondary executing agencies Several civil society organizations, NGOs, indigenous communities' organizations: consultation, beneficiaries	
Private sector involvement (including micro, small and medium enterprises) ¹		Several private actors (agribusinesses, banks, forestry companies): consultation	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval (MSP) date		3/3/2016	
Effectiveness date / project start date		4/1/2016	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		3/31/2021	
Actual date of project completion		7/31/2022	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	0.2	0.2
	Co-financing	-	-
GEF Project Grant		9.8	9.8
Co-financing	IA own	14	14.697
	Government	-	-
	Other multi- /bi-laterals	41.62	52.004
	Private sector	-	-
	NGOs/CBOs	28.88	28.99
	Other	-	2
Total GEF funding		10	10
Total Co-financing		84.5	97.69 ²

¹ 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](#))

² The PIR 2022 (p. 2) reports a co-financing realized as of June 30, 2022, of USD 101.189 million.

Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)	94.5	107.69
Terminal evaluation validation information		
TE completion date	8/11/2022	
Author of TE	Cynosure International, Inc.	
TER completion date	12/15/2023	
TER prepared by	Emanuele Bigagli	
TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)	Mariana Vidal Merino	

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

2. Summary of Project Ratings

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

3. Project Objectives and theory of change

3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

The objective of the project was “to demonstrate innovative tools, methodologies and investments, and build related capacities, through which civil society in three pilot biodiversity hotspots, in partnership with public and private sector actors, can cost effectively conserve biodiversity and progress towards long-term institutional sustainability, and to replicate demonstrated approaches in nine additional hotspots” (TE, pp. 2, 46). The expected global environmental benefits expected to be generated by the project are the following: (i) One million hectares of productive landscapes effectively mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and sustainable use; (ii) Strengthened management and enhanced sustainability of 20 Protected Areas within Key Biodiversity Areas; and (iii) Reduced threats to populations of 20 globally threatened species (Pro Doc, p. 56).

3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

Neither the TE nor the Project Document specify a development objective as different from the global environmental objective. The project is expected to deliver socioeconomic benefits to local communities, through e.g., increased income, food security, and resource rights, enhanced and more secure delivery of ecosystem services, especially freshwater provision, fisheries production and flood protection (Pro Doc, p. 59).

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 scope of work for the Easter Afromontane and Indo-Burma RITs was revised in 2017 and additional resources were provided (PIR 2019, p. 16). Also, in 2020 several grants in the Cerrado were extended and/or restructured, and four multi-hotspot grants were amended to adapt to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that activities could be safely implemented (PIR 2021, p. 25).

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:** biodiversity hotspots are the most biologically diverse, yet threatened ecoregions globally. Threats include climate change, biodiversity loss, destruction of ecosystem health, integrity, and functioning, and overexploitation of ecosystem goods and services (TE, p. 27).
- **Barriers:** identified barriers to achieve CEPF’s long-term goal include: (i) limited knowledge, awareness or application/replication of successful approaches; (ii) limited track record of Civil Society Organizations at influencing public policy or at establishing effective partnerships with private companies in sectors driving biodiversity loss; (iii) Limited institutional capacity and financial sustainability of multi-sector conservation programs; (iv) Lack of costed long-term visions (TE, p. 27).
- **Strategy:** The project will use innovative tools, methodologies and investments, and build related capacities, in three pilot biodiversity hotspots: Cerrado; Eastern Afromontane; and Indo-Burma. This is to be implemented via the following strategy: (1) Developing long-term conservation visions, financing plans, and associated strategies for biodiversity hotspots; (2) Ensuring the financial and institutional sustainability of multi-sector conservation programs; (3) Amplifying the impacts of CEPF investments through enhanced and innovative public and private sector partnerships; (4) Replicating success through knowledge products and tools (TE, p. 27).
- **Impacts:** cost-effective biodiversity conservation and prevention of new threats; long-term institutional stability.

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 the project as “Highly Relevant”, and this review rates it as Satisfactory. The project was highly relevant to, and aligned with, GEF plans and policies, international and national obligations, as well as to the needs of local communities; it was well-designed, although with some shortcomings.

The project was consistent with GEF-5 Biodiversity Objective 1 (Improve sustainability of Protected Area Systems), in particular Outcome 1.1 on the improvement of the management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas and Outcome 1.2 on the increased revenue for protected area systems to meet total expenditures required for management. Moreover, it was consistent with GEF-5 Biodiversity Objective 2 (Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes and sectors). It was aligned with the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Strategic Plan 2011-2020, especially with Strategic Goal A on mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society, and Strategic Goal E on enhancing implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building (TE, p. 25). At national level, the project was aligned with the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans of the various project countries. Also, it was highly relevant to the needs of

key stakeholders (TE, p. 26), including civil society organizations, and indigenous and women’s groups (TE, p. 4).

The project design was sound, and it was formulated based on an extensive consultative process involving local and international civil society organizations, donor partners, local indigenous communities, and public and private sector stakeholders (TE, p. 30). It included generic assessment criteria and frameworks on various project components, which allowed the project to work in a flexible and adaptive way across the numerous project countries, without being over-prescriptive. An indigenous people policy was developed, according to which the small grants to be funded were required to prepare a social assessment of the impact on indigenous peoples, to negotiate with them compensations for any negative impacts, and to provide information on project aims and activities in local languages (TE, p. 79). Also, a Process Framework for restrictions to access to natural resources and a Physical Cultural Resources policy were developed (TE, pp. 78-79). Gender considerations (TE, p. 33) and safeguards were well integrated into the project results framework. On the negative side, the project could have benefited from preparing an entry and communications strategy to get local stakeholders acquainted with the project objectives and raise sufficient awareness and visibility in the local civil society, particularly in areas where the CEFP had no prior presence or engagement, such as the Cerrado hotspot (TE, p. 31). Moreover, during implementation, the amount of small grants proposed in the project design for the Cerrado hotspot proved to be insufficient and had to be revised (TE, p. 32).

4.2 Coherence	S
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The TE does not rate coherence, and this review rates it as Satisfactory. The project was aligned with previous and existing projects and interventions; the project design was internally coherent.

The project represented Phase III of the CEPF Strategic Frameworks (TE, p. 4); it was built on the significant experience of the CEPF in partnership with Conservation International and the GEF, incorporating the lessons learned from Phases I and II and from other related projects (TE, p. 32). As for internal coherence, the project design was sequential; the Outcomes were interlinked, and the outputs were aligned with one another (TE, p. 32).

4.3 Effectiveness	MS
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The TE provides a rating of effectiveness for each of the project Outcomes, with four outcomes rated as Satisfactory, one as Highly Satisfactory and one as Moderately Satisfactory³. This review rates effectiveness as Moderately Satisfactory. The project achieved the majority of (but not all) the outcome targets.

The project achieved or exceeded the majority of the project objective indicators. As mentioned in Section 6.1 of this document, these indicators were duplicated and appeared as Outcome indicators for each project Component.

³ The effectiveness of Outcomes 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, and 4.2 were rated as Satisfactory, while that of Outcome 3.1 was Highly Satisfactory and that of Outcome 4.1 was Moderately Satisfactory (TE, p. 7).

The project developed and implemented the required long-term vision for each hotspot and received 46 endorsements (against a target of 10). Moreover, 52 grantees improved their financial and institutional sustainability (original target: 60), including 11 indigenous people's organizations (original target: 5), but did not achieve the target of 5 women's groups, with only 1 group recording the desired improvements. The target of 1 million hectares of production landscape under biodiversity mainstreaming was exceeded, with 2.2 million hectares of production landscapes, 2.8 million hectares of protected areas, and 6.68 million hectares of conservation corridors. Finally, 4 best practices were demonstrated and adopted, meeting the set target (TE, p. 46).

More details for each Component are as follows:

Component 1: Long-term visions. The three targets for the three Outcome 1.1 indicators were achieved. The project developed the abovementioned long-term visions for each pilot site, established clear targets for graduation of civil society from CEPF support in the three pilot hotspots, and received 46 endorsements of the long-term visions, exceeding the target of 10, although 37 of these endorsements were concentrated in the Cerrado hotspot.

Component 2. Financial and institutional sustainability of programs. For Outcome 2.1, two indicators were achieved, and one was partially achieved. The project achieved the target related to the 20% improvement in collective civil society capacity in the three pilot hotspots, and exceeded that for the number of grantees showing at least a 20% improvement in gender mainstreaming (57 against an original target of 30). However, the target of at least 60 grantees, including indigenous people organizations, and women's groups, showing at least a 10% improvement in civil society tracking tool scores, was not reached (52 at the end of the project). For Outcome 2.2 (*increased and more sustained financial flows to civil societies engaged in the conservation of biodiversity, from diverse sources, including non-traditional sources*), the indicator of funds available in sustainable financing mechanisms to support priorities in long-term conservation visions was partially achieved (USD 21.1 million including USD 2.2 million from non-traditional sources and USD 600,000 from private sector models, against a target of USD 20 million including USD 5 million from non-traditional sources and USD 2 million from private sector models)

Component 3. Innovative public and private sector partnerships. All the seven targets were achieved or exceeded. The project demonstrated effective ways of mainstreaming biodiversity in more than 2 million hectares of production landscapes. A total of 87 protected areas had new management models and improvements in METT scores (original target: 20), while 33 globally threatened species had reduced threats to their population (original target: 20). Moreover, 7 conservation corridors had enhanced ecological connectivity (original target: 6); 443 communities had increased, gender-equitable access to ecosystem services (original target: 250); more than 77,000 women and 68,000 men had direct socio-economic benefits (original target: 25,000 women and 25,000 men), and more than 141,000 women and 132,000 men had indirect benefits (original targets: 125,000 women and 125,000 men).

Component 4. Replication through knowledge products and tools. For Outcome 4.1 (*CEPF investments in other hotspots strengthened through the adoption of successful models and tools developed in the pilot hotspots*), two targets were achieved, and two other targets were not achieved. While 2 policy

demonstration models and 2 management best practices were adopted in at least one additional hotspot, only 4 additional hotspots had long-term implementation structures (original target: 9), and only 1 addition hotspot had a regional resource mobilization strategy (original target: 9). This was due to the restrictions imposed because of COVID-19 and the unfavorable global climate, which shifted donor priorities and made leveraging additional financing much more challenging (TE, p. 65). As for Outcome 4.2 (*Models, tools and best practices developed under the project are widely available and inform other actors developing public-private partnerships for biodiversity conservation globally*), both targets were achieved. Three models, tools and/or best practices were adopted in areas outside CEPF investment, and 6 knowledge products were prepared, including 1 related to gender mainstreaming and 1 to indigenous people.

4.4 Efficiency	MS
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The TE provides a rating of efficiency for each of the project Outcomes, with five outcomes rated as Satisfactory and one as Moderately Satisfactory⁴. This review rates efficiency as Moderately Satisfactory. The project used almost all GEF funds, while the high number and diversity of grants and grantees and reporting requirements negatively impacted efficiency. The project was extended twice for external circumstances (i.e., COVID-19) and to allow the finalization of the last administrative requirements.

The project used 99.7% of GEF funds (TE, p. 5), mainly for Component 3 (59%), followed by Component 2 (26%) and Component 4 (10%). As of 31 March 2022, 99.7% of GEF funds were spent.

Two factors increased the burden of work of the Regional Implementation Teams and negatively impacted project efficiency. First, the high number of grants and the great diversity of organizations required additional training and support for grantees to sustain the grants. Second, small civil society organizations lacked the capacity and required support to meet the significant grant reporting requirements (TE, pp. 83-84).

The project was extended twice for a total of 16 months; while the first extension was due to the negative consequences of COVID-19, the second, 4-month extension was needed to finalize and submit the last documentation and the TE (TE, p. 35; PIR 2022, p. 3).

4.5 Outcome	S
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The TE does not provide a project outcome rating. This review assesses project outcome as Satisfactory. The project was relevant and its design was sound and coherent; it achieved the majority of the set targets and was cost-efficient, although delayed by external factors.

Environmental impacts. The project strengthened the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in over 2 million hectares of production landscapes. Moreover, it introduced new management models with direct participation of civil society in 87 protected areas, corresponding to an area of more than 2 million

⁴ The efficiency of Outcomes 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, and 4.2 was rated as Satisfactory, while that of Outcome 4.1 was Moderately Satisfactory (TE, p. 7).

hectares. Ecological connectivity was enhanced in six conservation corridors for a total of more than 6 million hectares. Also, threats were reduced to 33 globally threatened species (TE, p. 71).

Socioeconomic impacts. The project increased the access to ecosystem services for 443 indigenous and local communities, and made it more gender-equitable, thus directly or indirectly benefiting more than 400,000 people, of which about 210,000 are women, especially in the Eastern Afromontane hotspot (TE, p. 72).

Enabling conditions. The project successfully established a long-term vision for biodiversity conservation in each hotspot, strengthening the capacities of the key stakeholders, as well as the capacity and awareness of civil society (TE, p. 68). However, the endorsements received were concentrated in the Cerrado hotspot, while the 2 other hotspots received a low number of endorsements and were less relevant for other donors and civil society organizations (TE, p. 84). The project improved the capacities of the Regional Implementation Teams on portfolio management, grant management systems, and implementation of safeguards (TE, p. 70), and those of the grantees in relation to improving their management practices, better incorporating financial accountability mechanisms and safeguards into their projects, improving their proposal development and project design skills, and increasing their confidence in their ability to manage bigger projects and source funding from additional donors (TE, p. 68). However, this increase in collective civil society capacity was concentrated in the Cerrado hotspot, while Indo-Burma hotspot showed more modest improvements.

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

4.6 Sustainability	L
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The TE rates sustainability as “Moderately Satisfactory”, and this review rates it as Likely. The project focused on building capacities for the sustainability of long-term biodiversity conservation; there are some financial, sociopolitical and environmental risks, which are either low or are not expected to have a considerable impact on project sustainability.

The project aimed to ensure the long-term sustainability of biodiversity conservation in the three pilot hotspots, by providing a long-term vision, form the key institutions to implement them, and providing technical assistance to strengthen their capacities, while at the same time develop the capacities of local civil society (TE, p. 67).

Financial. The project secured funding for continued activities in the Indo-Burma hotspot, and it is highly likely that additional funds will be secured also for the Cerrado hotspot (through GEF-7 STAR allocation). Although the donors showed a strong inclination to continue supporting the CEPF in the future, the project had limited success in translating this interest into continued funding for the Eastern Afromontane hotspot. More in general, the long-term implementation structures established by CEPF will face risks from factors beyond project control, such as the global economic climate and the priorities of donors (TE, p. 68).

Sociopolitical. The TE (p. 69) considers sociopolitical sustainability as likely, as the project showed to effectively manage sociopolitical risks. This risk came from political instability and conflict, which played a role in shifting the project's approach in the Eastern Afromontane hotspot (TE, p. 69), and from the unfavorable political environment, which challenged the engagement of civil society organizations with the public sector in the Cerrado hotspot.

Institutional framework and governance. The TE does not mention any risks related to institutional frameworks and governance.

Environmental. Environmental risks may come from climate change and variability, although these risks are expected to be low and gradual (TE, p. 7), thanks to the fact that the project successfully managed to incorporate climate change adaptation strategies and other measures to mitigate these risks (TE, p. 69). As such, the TE (p. 69) considers environmental sustainability as likely.

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 project had eight co-financing partners, with a cumulative amount committed of USD 84.5 million in cash. Overall, the co-financing materialized was higher than the amount committed, with some partners having a higher and others a lower amount than what was committed. More in detail, Conservation International contributed USD 14.7 million (against a committed amount of USD 14 million); the European Union contributed USD 26.6 million (against a committed amount of USD 19.2 million); the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation contributed USD 18.2 million (against a committed amount of USD 15 million). On the contrary, the Government of Japan contributed USD 0.4 million (against a committed amount of USD 14.8 million), and the MacArthur Foundation contributed USD 6.471 (against a committed amount of USD 11.85 million), due to the closure of its global program on Biodiversity in 2019 (TE, p. 44). Also, other co-financing partners contributed to co-finance the project, although their contribution was not planned. It is the case of the French Development Agency (USD 17.4 million) and other partners that totaled about USD 2 million.

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 was extended twice at no cost for a total of 16-month period, and closed on 31 July 2022 (TE, p. 18). The first no-cost extension was granted for 1 year in May 2020, due to the negative impact of COVID-19 on project implementation (TE, p. 35). The second extension was granted for 4 months from 31

March to 31 July 2022, with the purpose of conducting the Terminal Evaluation and compile, submit, and revise the final reports (PIR 2022, p. 3).

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 did not evaluate or provide systematic information on stakeholder ownership. Some elements presented, that could indirectly imply ownership from stakeholders are the following: (i) the fact that the project was strongly aligned with the needs of local communities, including indigenous and women groups (TE, p. 25), which were consulted for project design; (ii) the satisfactory execution of the project by CEPF and Regional Implementation Teams, which was instrumental to achieve the project outcomes; (iii) the satisfactory implementation of the Stakeholder Management Plan by Regional Implementation Teams, which included the engagement of stakeholders through training and technical support, among others (TE, pp. 45, 76).

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 travel restrictions, which prevented the implementing agency from undertaking field missions and slowed down progress in project implementation, especially on Component 4 and on several of the grantees' projects. In fact, COVID-19 entailed an unfavorable global economic climate that resulted in shifts in donor priorities and made leveraging additional funds more difficult (TE, p. 65). These factors, in addition with the important gains in exchange rate in the case of the Cerrado hotspot, which provided grantees with more local currency, ultimately led to the request of a 1-year no-cost extension, which was granted for the period of March 2021 to March 2022 (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	MS
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The TE rates M&E design as Satisfactory, and this review rates it as Moderately Satisfactory. The M&E plan was sufficiently well-designed, although there were some shortcomings in terms of duplication of indicators, missing definitions, and over-reliance on self-assessment tools.

The project results framework included specific and measurable indicators, baselines, and targets for each outcome and output, together with a clear methodology for data collection and monitoring, well-defined roles and responsibilities, and dedicated resources. (TE, p. 32). However, the project objective indicators were identical to the Outcome indicators of all 4 Components, and had no targets assigned. In addition, the targets of some Outcome indicators (*Outcome 3.1.1*: hectares under effective biodiversity mainstreaming; *Outcome 3.1.2*: Protected areas under new management models; and *Outcome 3.1.3*:

globally threatened species with reduced threats to their population) were not disaggregated by hotspots (TE, p. 33). Also, the M&E plan did not define the socio-economic benefits to be measured through Outcome indicators 3.16 and 3.1.7 (TE, p. 34). Moreover, to measure the improvements in civil society capacity and in gender-related issues, the M&E plan over-relied on the use of the Civil Society Tracking Tool and the Gender Tracking Tool, without making available other forms of independent verification that would effectively address the possible biases and errors implied in the use of these tools (TE, pp. 33, 42).

6.2 M&E Implementation	MS
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The TE rates M&E implementation as Satisfactory, and this review rates it as Moderately Satisfactory. The M&E plan was implemented as expected, although there were areas where implementation was not completely satisfactory.

The implementation of the M&E plan was under the responsibility of the CEPF (TE, p. 40), while Regional Implementation Teams administered the M&E tools to its grantees and collected and reported on the data obtained from them (TE, p. 5). The Civil Society Tracking Tool and the Gender Tracking Tool were used to collect data based on self-assessments and track progress against targets, as per the M&E plan. This entailed issues of reliability and responder bias, which required additional ad hoc verification measures by Regional Implementation Teams (TE, p. 5). Reporting was produced as expected and included useful information, although it was limited to quantitative indicators and did not provide an integrated and comprehensive picture of the grantees and their activities (TE, p. 41). The baselines of some Outcome indicators were updated two months after project start (TE, p. 33). The project successfully addressed the limitation in M&E design related to the lack of disaggregated targets for some Outcome indicators, by collecting and reporting data in a disaggregated way (TE, p. 33). However, the project did not report on Outcome indicator 4.2.1 (measuring the adoption of best practices, models and tools in areas outside CEPF investments), but only on the associated Output indicator 4.2.1 (measuring the number of knowledge products developed under the project and made publicly available; TE, p. 33). Moreover, the reporting requirements proved to be burdensome and challenging during implementation. This was not only for the CEPF, which had to produce quarterly and annual progress reports, and quarterly technical and financial progress reports offline, due to the lack of an electronic grants management system, but also for the civil society organizations, whose capacity was limited due to their small size. This required the provision of additional training, taking away resources that could have been spent in other strategic project activities (TE, p. 41). Self-reported data to measure progress towards some impact-level indicators were validated through in-depth verification exercises, ensuring credibility and confidence of the results reported (TE, p. 42). The results of the Tracking Tools were used to identify the grantees that needed additional support (TE, p. 42).

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.

7.1 Quality of Project Implementation	S
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The TE rates the quality of project implementation as Satisfactory, and this review concurs. The implementing agency performed as expected, with no salient weaknesses.

Conservation International implemented the project in a diligent and timely manner, following the tasks assigned in the project document. It reviewed and approved the annual procurement plans and associated budget to ensure their alignment with the given project budget and timeframe, and the various reports submitted by the executing agency to verify progress towards the project's results. It had a close and cordial working relationship with the executing agency, organizing regular and ad hoc meetings to clarify issues and address emerging issues. It participated in monitoring activities as expected, and undertook a monitoring field mission for each of the three hotspot areas (TE, p. 5).

7.2 Quality of Project Execution	S
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The TE rates the quality of project execution as Satisfactory, and this review concurs. The executing agency had a satisfactory performance, with not salient weaknesses.

The larger grants were managed directly by the CEPF Secretariat, while the smaller grants were executed by the Regional Implementation Teams in each hotspot (TE, p. 5); this division of roles and responsibilities was instrumental to project success, as Regional Implementation Teams had the necessary mobility and knowledge of the local contexts, which CEPF could not have (TE, p. 5). Project execution by CEPF was in line with design and GEF guidelines (TE, p. 38). A core team inside the CEPF acted as the Project Management Unit and was responsible for the daily execution, coordination, monitoring and oversight of the project (TE, p. 35). In addition, a CEPF Working Group was established, including technical staff from global donor partners, and provided additional oversight (TE, p. 36). Significant collaboration and mutual support were observed between CEPF and Regional Implementation Teams (TE, p. 37). CEPF staff was adequate and consistent, and provided substantial experience and engagement during project implementation (TE, p. 38).

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. 86) proposes the following lessons:

- The CEPF's entry into a new hotspot should be accompanied by an explicit entry and communications strategy which sets aside time and budget to do initial outreach with civil society to raise awareness and visibility regarding the CEPF prior to issuing calls for proposals.
- The use of the Regional Implementation Teams to contract and manage the small grants component was effective due to their on-the-ground presence and knowledge of local contexts

through which they were able to provide hands on and continuous support to local civil society organizations.

- The use of Master Class model for providing targeted trainings to project grantees prior to the start of implementation on various aspects of the project cycle was found to be highly beneficial to grantees in terms of improving their knowledge and skills regarding project design, proposal development and implementing project safeguards.
- Sufficient attention should be paid to the risk profiles of project grantees such that the proportion of grantees needing continuous and significant support and hands-on support is minimized to avoid efficiency losses.
- In terms of gender mainstreaming, the inclusion of women-only organization as grantees should be supplemented by a focus on the overall active participation of women within grantees' organizations as well.
- Influencing public sector policy, especially at national levels, as well as business practices of large agrobusiness requires significant stakeholder engagement and relationship building over extended periods of time. Larger grants to more established grantees for longer implementation periods may be more suitable to achieve higher-level effects on public policies and private sector business practices.

8.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

The TE (p. 87) proposes the following recommendations for CEPF:

- In light of the early challenges face by the project in garnering sufficient quality applications from civil society in the Cerrado, it is recommended that the CEPF develop engagement strategies as part of project design with time and budget allocated towards conducting outreach with key stakeholders such as civil society in any new hotspot that the CEPF enters, so that the CEPF raises its visibility and awareness in the region prior to issuing calls for proposals.
- It is recommended that the CEPF adopt the Master Class model, found to be highly beneficial by the grantees in improving their skills, across all current and future hotspots it engages in.
- It is recommended that the CEPF undertakes a review of the graduation benchmarks in each hotspot to monitor progress made towards the achievement of graduation targets for civil society, particularly in light of the global economic downturn and changes in funding landscapes that may have impacted the initial timeframes developed in the long-term visions.
- It is recommended that the CEPF adopt a more flexible approach in setting targets for women's groups and consider the active participation of women within project grantees' organizations as an indicator as well, instead of only considering women-only organizations.
- It is recommended that the CEPF institute annual stocktaking exercises in the form of a convention or workshop within each of the hotspots that focus on broader engagement of stakeholders beyond civil society organizations, including donors, private sector, and public sector stakeholders which can be used for the purposes of dissemination of best practices and lessons learned, networking between different organizations, and raising the overall profile and visibility of the CEPF in any given hotspot.

- Financial sustainability of the CEPF's investment is contingent on a host of factors such as donor priorities regarding a hotspot, political environment in a national context, as well as the geographic spread and scope of a hotspot. It is therefore recommended that the CEPF pay specific attention to these crucial factors when planning for long-term investment in any hotspot to enable success of its investments.
- The impact of the project's portfolio has varied across the hotspots in terms of improvement in civil society capacity, provision of benefits to communities, and increases in areas under biodiversity mainstreaming, among others. This differential level of impact is coincidental with varying levels of approaches and strategies used across the three hotspots in terms of the use of small and large grants whose average amounts have varied across the type of hotspots, types of organizations and types of projects funded, and types of approaches used by Regional Implementation Teams for supporting and engaging grantees and other stakeholders. It is therefore recommended that a systematic impact assessment be undertaken across the project's portfolio to examine the approaches used in developing portfolio of projects to uncover learnings on effective strategies and approaches that can be scaled up in other hotspots as well as the types of strategies and approaches that have not been effective in order to re-examine their use in future CEPF investments in other hotspots.

The TE (p. 89) proposes the following recommendations for CI and GEF:

- The reporting requirements placed significant burdens on the CEPF as well as the Regional Implementation Teams who had to provide significant additional support to project grantees in meeting their reporting requirements. Therefore, it is recommended that future projects address this issue by simplifying the reporting processes.
- Local civil society organizations and Regional Implementation Teams across the three hotspots highlighted the need to simplify and streamline the project's safeguards in the context of administering small grant amounts to smaller organizations, often lacking the necessary organizational capacity and infrastructure, for projects with shorter durations and making them fit for purpose. It is therefore recommended that the CI-GEF, in collaboration with CEPF, undertake a review of the safeguard mechanisms and requirements in the context of small grants so that they are easier to understand and implement for such projects.

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	S
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, the evaluators, and specifies 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, but does not report on whether or not their feedback was sought and included in the draft report	MU
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 key assumptions, but does not discuss whether or not the latter remained valid	MS
5. Methodology: Provides an informative and transparent account of the methodology?	The TE lists the documents reviewed, the interviewees, describes project sites and activities and the tools and methods used for evaluation, but does not describe the limitations	MS
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 and country priorities; it comprehensively evaluates project design and project performance on all outcome targets; it discusses factors that affected their achievement, and reported on timeliness. It did not report systematically on project efficiency	S
7. Sustainability: Presents realistic assessment of sustainability?	The TE presents a full assessment of project sustainability, including risks, their likelihood and effects, and an	S

	overall rating that was not, however, aligned with GEF ratings	
8. M&E: Presents sound assessment of the quality of the M&E system?	The TE assesses M&E design and describes its implementation, including the use of information from the M&E was 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; it discusses reasons for differences from the amounts indicated in the project document, but does not discuss how these affected the achievement of project results	S
10. Implementation: Presents a candid account of project implementation and Agency performance?	The TE thoroughly evaluates the performance of the implementing and executing agencies, including the discussion of 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
Overall quality of the report		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

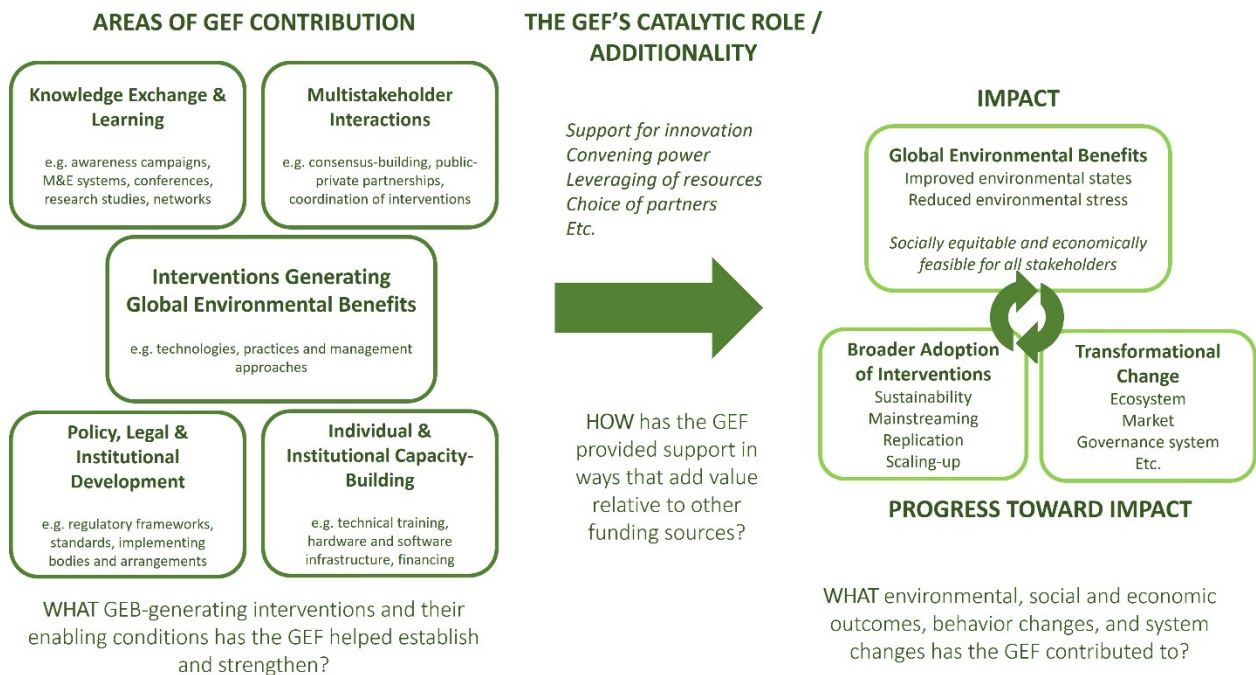


Figure 1. The GEF IEO's updated Theory of Change Framework on how the GEF achieves impact

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 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

Intervention	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. https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019
Activity (of an intervention)	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.
Outcome	An intended or achieved short- or medium-term effect of a project or program’s outputs. https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019
Impact	The positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a project or program, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019
Environmental outcomes	Changes in environmental indicators that could take the following forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress reduction: reduction or prevention of threats to the environment, especially those caused by human behavior (local communities, societies, economies) • Environmental state: biological, physical changes in the state of the environment http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf
Social and economic outcomes	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.
Synergies	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.

	http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-multiple-benefits-gef-support-through-its-multifocal-area-portfolio-map-2016
Trade-offs	A reduction in one benefit in the process of maximizing or increasing another benefit. http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-multiple-benefits-gef-support-through-its-multifocal-area-portfolio-map-2016
Broader adoption	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). http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf
Sustainability	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. https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019
Replication	When a GEF intervention is reproduced at a comparable administrative or ecological scale, often in different geographical areas or regions. http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf
Mainstreaming	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. http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf
Scaling-up	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. http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-gef-support-scaling-impact-2019
Transformational change	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. http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-gef-support-transformational-change-2017
Additionality	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. https://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/council-documents/files/c-55-me-inf-01.pdf