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Global Environmental Facility
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**Final Evaluation**

**Improved management and conservation practices for Cocos Island marine conservation area Project**

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Global Environmental Fund

United Nations Development Program

# Final Evaluation

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## ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ACMIC | Cocos Island Marine Conservation Area |
| CDR | Combined Delivery Report |
| CORACMIC | Cocos Island Marine Area Conservation Regional Council |
| FAICO | Foundation for the Friends of Cocos Island |
| FFEM | French Fund for the Environment |
| GEF | Global Environmental Facility |
| INCOPESCA | Costa Rican Institute for Fishing and Aquaculture |
| Marviva | Marviva Foundation |
| MINAET | Ministry of Environment, Energy and Telecommunications |
| MRE | Management Response Evaluation |
| PIR | Project Implementation Review |
| PNIC | Cocos Island National Park |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| PRODOC | Project Document |
| SINAC | Conservation Areas National System |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The "Improved management and conservation practices for Cocos Island Marine Conservation Area Project ", aimed to improve the Cocos Island Marine Conservation Area (ACMIC) management, to strengthen associated conservation practices and enabling environment to ensure long-term reduction to the Island threats, promote sustainable development of its natural resources conservation of its globally important biodiversity. Its overall objective was "to improve the management and conservation practices on Cocos Island Marine Conservation Area, and it will result in the reduction of threats to the Island's marine and terrestrial biodiversity through strengthening protected areas management and regulating local economic activities in a sustainable manner".

This final evaluation was conducted between September and December, 2011, in order to assess Project's achievements in accomplishing its general and specific objectives, design, its general technical and administrative management, and its performance. It has been performed according to the UNDP / GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, contemplating assessment of project concept and design, project implementation and results regarding its effects, impact, catalytic effect, sustainability and mainstreaming. The evaluation was based on a participatory approach and the application of the five main evaluation criteria: a) relevance; b) effectiveness, c) efficiency, f) effectiveness, and g) sustainability. It considered document's review, interviews with relevant actors and visiting Cocos Island. The overall project's assessment was conducted under the GEF's established system for such projects.

Cocos Island is considered a priority conservation area of global importance. The project was linked to development plans, environmental policies, the biodiversity national strategy and country's management and conservation of protected areas and UNDP Biodiversity Strategy.

The scheduled execution time was 48 months. Its inception proposed date was January 2004. Activities began in 2005, the technical closure occurred in December 2010. The budget execution reached the amount of $ 921.036.60 (nine hundred twenty-one thousand and thirty-six U.S. dollars, sixty cents).

Regarding the project design analysis, its aim and purpose were clearly defined and corresponded to the problem solution. The logical framework was amended. The baseline consideration in 2007, allowed estimating its determinants magnitude. Even so, the project had very ambitious goals. The problem in relation to illegal fishing and the eradication subject were configured with greater dimensions than the project design capacity. Specific objectives contributed to achieve the overall objective. In general terms, the expected results add to the specific objectives. Indicators to measure program performance presented definition and relevance problems. The project internal logic is clear. The way in which assumptions and risks were forth, with dazzling precision allowed to anticipate the conditions under which the project would be implemented.

The project was developed in the form of "partial National Execution". During the execution period, project context had a great political, institutional, administrative and technical dynamism. Implementation phase stars in 2005, almost a year later. The project was coordinated by a small three-person unit. Its operation was limited due to personnel changes and lack of managerial staff over long periods.

Understanding and institutional arrangements between the three project partners (MINAET-GEF (UNDP)-FFEM, were fundamental. ACMIC provided the necessary human resources to execute the ACMIC operative plan. The CORACMIC influenced in not achieving the Component 3 goal. The Pilot Committee played an important role, but the technical committee did not achieve the desired participation. The two development agencies involvement is posed as a complicating factor in project's implementation; it affected project coordination and efficiency in administrative processes.

GEF funds financial management was very satisfactory. UNDP rules were followed. Internal control was supported on three external audits. FAICO management as FFEM resource managers was efficient.

Appropriate mechanisms were used when monitoring and evaluating. It included the participation of stakeholders in the various management levels. Project's operative framework and GEF and UNDP procedures were followed-up.

Adaptive management was very satisfactory and the project objectives remained until its end. Replicability level was satisfactory. Technologies and experiences in diving practices control, public policy instruments generation and social dialogue processes for their achievement, were developed.

ACMIC and SINAC, as the executing agencies, effectively influenced in the proposed activities performance. UNDP significantly contributed and had an important role in key periods. ACMIC improved its skills in the project.

Regarding the financial situation, the project's estimated amounts reached $ 8.259,871, which represents a greater figure greater than that $ 3,149,553.00 expected in the PRODOC. Co-financing increased from $ 2,174,553.00 to $ 7,287,636.00. This account includes $ 80,731.00 provided by the ANTENA project.

With regard to the incremental costs analysis, the project contributed to improve biodiversity conservation at the island broad environment (illegal fishing reduction) and adjacent ecosystems (improved dive tourism monitoring); creation of the new Marina area of Seamounts Management, and an active integration to the Tropical Eastern Pacific corridor eco-region conservation strategy. In land area, the terrestrial ecosystem remains similar to the original state, with some positive changes for forest deprived areas recovery. The project succeeded in establishing the base line that can support its effects research, and contributed to international water management larger system at the Eastern Tropical Pacific eco-region, and other globally important ecosystems. It also allowed database and research plan establishment at the local level, which increased knowledge and skills on their estimation and management, as well as positive changes in exotic plant species removal. This project achieved the protection of marine and terrestrial ecosystems, present in the nation conservation strategies and commitments. Through GEF contribution of ($ 921,036.6), the project reached a total cost of $ 7,299,871.00, of which the co-financing amounts were in the order of $ 7,259,871.

Component 1, "Improve enforcement and compliance with regulations for marine park protection within ACMIC", was evaluated as very satisfactory. Systematic observations of illegal fishing in PNIC were carried out through the project. Sustainable tourism practices are currently implemented. Regarding the buffer areas, a great project's achievement was his special contribution to the PA "Seamounts Marine Area Management" declaration, the only one under that management category in Costa Rica, whose extension is 9640 square kilometers. The project also successfully supported the creation of a system to estimate the environmental damage caused by illegal fishing, which is applied with great success. Fishermen presence and activity in the PNIC was reduced and PNIC equipment was improved. Agreements were increased and thus institutional strengthening through the tools that support ACMIC conservation management, and has also improved in fishing vessels timely identification and control. Illegal fishing detention, reporting and prosecution processes were improved using the environmental damage economic valuation methodology. The knowledge on legal aspects for illegal fishing control on behalf of staff on the island was increased. Efforts were made to improve control and legal processes to reduce illegal fishing.

Component 2, "Improve ACMIC's management of diving and terrestrial tourism to reduce physical damage to the marine and terrestrial ecosystems", was evaluated as highly satisfactory. ACMIC has yielded more control and supervision on tourism and tourism operators. The existing regulations are implemented and anchor's audits are held several times a day. Tourism businesses supported anchoring sites construction and 100% of the visitors are informed and their activities are monitored and controlled during their visit, meeting the Park rules established in the Tourism Monitoring Plan developed by the project. Visitors' comments on ACMIC information and park management have notably improved. 90% of the tourists gave a positive opinion and were satisfied with their visit and diving experience in the island. The ecosystem health presents average results, with a 2% increase in hammerhead sharks (Sphyra lewini) abundance. Collaboration and volunteers length stay to support activities in the PNIC was overcome.

Component 3, "Eradicate pigs and control other key invasive species to allow restoration of native species populations and ecological processes", was evaluated as moderately unsatisfactory not only because of the limited success achieved, low advance level, but strongly because of species and ecosystem restoration control actions suspension. The activities undertaken by the project, at all operational and executive management levels were satisfactory. With regard to political management undertaken by MINAET and CORACMIC highest authorities, was very unsatisfactory. Control strategy was suspended in the second half of 2008. Control of mammals' exotic species remains as a task for ACMIC. The ecosystem restoration program was suspended and just 30% of the land requiring restoration was intervened. This restoration small step had no success, since deer were responsible for removing the trees planted by project. Strategy to avoid invasive plant species reintroduction functioned properly. For ONC NATURAL study, specialized equipment was acquired and its use should be maximized and provide adequate maintenance, considering replenishment and renewal also.

Component 4, "Develop financial instruments to generate revenues to sustain on-going conservation operations and provide economic incentives to promote Island natural resources sustainable use". This was evaluated as moderately satisfactory. Meanwhile, actions with stakeholders' participation were managed, but revenues were not able to maintain conservation regular operations and provide incentives to promote resources sustainable use. Fundraising strategy (ANTENA) was implemented but was not continued. An amount of $ 110,549.86 was collected of which $ 80,731.18 were used to finance PNIC control and surveillance program. The trust fund administered by FAICO was supported. FAICO and ACMIC staff were trained in strategies for fundraising. An official site http://www.isladelcoco.go.cr was implemented. PNIC reached the second place as one of the even world wonders.

Component 5, "Reform relevant policy and legislation to create a functioning and effective enabling environment for ACMIC necessary to support objectives 1-3", was assessed as satisfactory. Actions made led to mediation between the parties involved in the Cocos Island conservation, contribution of technical, scientific events and management process to define the Seamounts PA. The necessary actions with all stakeholders' participation were managed, and contributed to increase MINAET leadership on this issue. However, this component has failed to provide a policy to facilitate Goal 3 achievement, related to relevant exotic species eradication. Regarding the project relevance, its validity to conserve Cocos Island ecosystems was verified, and also that the proposed components correspond to the threatening biodiversity real problems. Scientific and practical criteria are still valid.

The project had a moderate effectiveness. Although the objectives achievement under component 1 and 2 was very satisfactory, the overall assessment was affected due to the low level (very unsatisfactory) achieved in component 3, caused by eradication suspension, and on component 4 (moderately satisfactory), relative to low results on income resources to support ACMIC's regular costs.

Project efficiency was moderately satisfactory as the execution period had a significant prolongation, there were delays in implementation caused by design (structure and logic of intervention), aspects, implementation (two management systems, sometimes asynchronous; execution periods disruption), and politics that disrupted activities implementation.

The project had an important catalytic effect as it contributed to the Seamounts PA declaration, with a demonstrability criterion, and with knowledge, experience and best application practices for SINAC and other PAs.

Project's results sustainability will be conditioned by the approach in which ACMIC can cope with current limitations on financial, social politic, Institutional and governance fields and environmental risks.

As main conclusions, the following can be mentioned: project performance level was satisfactory; its ability to attack all threats and to change stakeholders' behaviors was limited in terms of available time and resources required. Despite the difficulties faced, the achieved results significantly contribute to ACMIC's better practices and conservation. It achieved public goods production, and results' demonstrability, replication and application. Nevertheless there is a general risk probability to its results sustainability, related to financial, socio-economic, institutional framework, governance and environment aspects. It was extremely relevant that it was consistent with the need to conserve and protect ecosystems of global importance, directly intervening on the threatening subjects. It was possible to improve ACMIC's management and conservation practices. Even though, not all reported results were proportional to the expected outcomes. Creating CORACMIC, adversely affect in achieving pigs and other invasive species eradication control goals. At the institutional level there was no awareness on the importance of invasive species management in a national park. To manage the financial resources from two separate sources, did not facilitate its financial or administrative management. There was no clear political and technological definition to solve the problem on the "Captain" nationalization, legalization and operation. Lack of human resources and equipment, as well as a transportation program and vessels maintenance program, could become a limitation to conservation. The project could demonstrate that there are limitations of maintenance personnel trained and hierarchy, working schedules and appropriate job category for patrol personnel, dependence that still have of tourist vessels, given limited assigned staff and diving equipment.

As mentioned in the report, key recommendations are: a) To review CORACMIC actions, b) To Immediately care about ecosystems restoration, b) To define a clear policy on the exotic and invasive species management and control, d) To establish a control strategy that allows to reduce ecosystems threats by exotic species, e) To continue monitoring the exotic species populations impact on ecosystems, f) To strengthen FAICO's financial capacity, g) To systematize the lessons learned on exotic species eradication and control, h) To continue monitoring exotic wildlife populations and ecosystem effects, i) To hold a new baseline measurement, j) To nationalize and operate the "Captain", j) To build the Monitoring Centre and the proposed hydroelectric in the PNIC Chatham Bay, k) To incorporate trained personnel with hierarchy to maintain the vessels, l) To improve current working schedules and inadequate assigned category given by

the Civil Service to patrol staff, m) To incorporate more staff and diving equipment for tourism control, n) To continue with the fundraising strategy (ANTENA).

Project's performance level was satisfactory. Project's overall results were satisfactorily achieved; ACMIC´s management and conservation practices were improved. For further details see the table below.

| **Monitory and Evaluation** | **Qualification** | **Comments** |
|---|---|---|
| *M & E general quality* | S | Oriented and allowed to adjust the actions that were strategic to results achievement. |
| *M & E Project's inception design* | S | The design could anticipate the need and methodology to solve the PNIC conservation problem. However, with higher expectations not proportional to project's offer. |
| *M & E Plan Implementation* | HS | Was a strong element that ensured evidence for timely decision-making when needed.. |
| **IA and EA execution** | | |
| *Overall Project's implementation / execution quality* | S | Strong changes in the implementation context, constant changes in the organizational structure and repeated shutdowns, as well as political authorities' decisions, affected project performance. However, difficulties were solved through hard work and adaptive management, leading to sustain the project in a complex political and institutional context, and managing the intervention facilitating synergies and arrangements with institutions, to take advantage of the project and its resources to strengthen PNIC conservation. |
| *Implementing Agency Execution* | HS | UNDP role as the implementing agency was important to overcome project's critical moments. Provided support to SINAC in follow-up, technical aspects, and contribution to the pilot committee. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Executing Agency Execution* | S | SINAC and ACMIC gave all their available resources for the project's proper operation. Decisions of higher authorities limited their institutional capacity to continue with component 3 |
| **Results** | | |
| *Project's results overall quality* | S | It is high because the project had to face several periods of results adjustments, and despite the difficulties faced, those involved were able to appreciate that these results contribute to better practices and PNIC conservation. Exotic animal species control was an unfinished issue. |
| *Relevance* | R | The project was extremely relevant because it corresponds to the need to conserve and protect globally important ecosystems, directly intervening on issues representing threats. |
| *Effectiveness* | S | ACMIC management practices and conservation were improved. Although not all reported results were proportional to the expected results. |
| *Efficiency* | HS | Since runtime had an important extension, there were delays in its implementation |
| **Catalytic Role** | | |
| *Production of a public good* | Yes | Participation and public policy instruments development, and best practices. |
| *Demonstrability* | Yes | Public policy instruments development and sustainable practices development. |
| *Replication* | Yes | Good practice are disseminate in other Pas. |
| *Application* | Yes | SINAC strategic planning preparation, Applied in other PAs. |
| **Sustainability** | | |
| *Overall probability to sustainability risks* | MU | Risks are presented for sustainable financial, socio-economic, institutional framework, governance and environmental aspects. |
| *Financial resources* | MU | There are financial risks. Financial instruments to cover regular expenses were not achieved. |
| *Socio-economic* | L | Socio-environmental conflict over illegal fishing is still present. |
| *Institutional framework and governability* | MU | Policies gaps in ecosystem restoration and exotic populations control in PAs. INCOOPESCA and SINAC legal and institutional frameworks in conservation. |
| *Environmental Risks* | L | No risks to environment were identified. The threats are caused by exotic animal species uncontrolled populations |
| *Overall project's results* | S | Project's results achieved Project's objective. |
| Source: Own elaboration<br>Nomenclature[1]: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Very Satisfactory (VS); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) | | |

[1] According to UNDP (2011)

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose of the evaluation[2]

The assessment requested by the United Nations for Development Program, aims to assess the project "Improved Management and Conservation Practices for the Cocos Island Marine Conservation Area" final phase.

## 1.2 Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation scope was defined by the following specific objectives:

- To evaluate the Project's design.
- To analyze the project's implementation, review the achievements in compliance with the project's objective and expected results.
- To review the project's achievements in meeting the objective and expected results.
- To establish project's importance, performance, relevance, implementation and success.
- To provide evidence of the potential impact and results sustainability, including the project's contribution to capacity building and achieving global environmental goals.
- To identify and document lessons learned.
- To make recommendations to improve the design and implementation of other UNDP / GEF and other agencies and countries projects.

[2] Under the terms of reference a set of specifications (see Annex 1) required by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) are established.

### 1.3 Evaluation criteria

The evaluation looked[3] to assess the following project aspects:

1. Project concept and design aspects, including the Logical Framework, Assumptions, Risks, Budget, Co-financing and if it was an opportune moment.

2. Project implementation: Support and supervision of the execution / implementation agencies, monitoring and evaluation (including Tracking Tools); stakeholders participation, adaptive management.

3. Results: Effects, Impacts, catalytic effect, sustainability, mainstreaming in other UNDP priorities such as support programs as defined in UNDAF and CPAP, as well as mainstreaming issues like gender and South-South collaboration.

   For this purpose, the application was based on the five main evaluation criteria[4] established in UNDP and GEF monitoring and evaluation policy: a) relevance; b) effectiveness, c) efficiency, f) effectiveness, and g) sustainability.

   To meet the posed objectives, criteria were operationalized into evaluation questions applied to the consulted stakeholders and documents review. Which are included in Annex 2.

   Project's overall assessment[5] was carried out according to GEF established systems for this type of projects.

[3] As requested in the TORs.
[4] According to UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policies (UNDP a, 2011 and UNDP b, 2011)
[5] In agreement of the following category: a) Highly Satisfactory; b) Satisfactory; c) Moderately Satisfactory; d) Moderately Unsatisfactory; e) Unsatisfactory; and f) Highly Unsatisfactory.

### 1.4 Methodology of the evaluation

The evaluation process was based on a participatory approach application, supported by consultation at different stages of the project with several stakeholders.

Methodologically, was guided by the UNDP (2011) specification. The following evaluation activities were also developed:

- _**Documents Review:** looked at the content analysis of documents considered. Relevant information was systematized and incorporated into the results and analysis presented in this Report. See Annex 3, list of documents consulted. Importantly, the reports provided by UNDP, ACMIC, program monitoring and planning documents, ex-ante evaluation. (PIR, Tools, coordinator's reports).

- _**Interviews with relevant stakeholders.** Open interviews were held, semi-structured interviews and three focus group with staff based in Cocos Island. Annex 3 name the persons interviewed.

- _**Field visit**. A visit to Cocos Island was held between 01 and 11 September, 2011. Project's activities, working conditions, logistical difficulty in respect of matters affecting the operation, were observed at field level.

- _**Draft report review.** The preliminary report was knowledge among stakeholders, in order to undertake comments, corrections or clarifications to the report, these were received and incorporated in the final version, according to their relevance level.

## 2 The Project and its development context

### 2.1 Legal Framework

In April 2004, UNDP and the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) signed the Project Document (PRODOC) for the Project "Improved Management and Conservation Practices for the Cocos Island Marine Conservation Area."

The project is part of the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of the Republic of Costa Rica, signed by the parties on August 7, 1973 and promulgated in Act 5878 published in "La Gaceta" on January 31, 1976. Just as the Convention on Biological Diversity that the Republic of Costa Rica law from June 30, 1994 (Act No. 7416 of 07/28/94) ratified on September 8, 1994 (Decree # 23605-RE).

## 2.2 Project's inception and length

The scheduled execution period was 48 months. The proposed date for its inception was January 2004. Activities began on 2005, the technical closure occurred in December 2010.

## 2.3 Problems identified

The following threats to Cocos Island conservation were identified in the PRODOC:

a. Extensive pelagic fishing within and near the marine protected area was significantly reducing globally threatened fish stocks species of economic value and affecting the major breeding sites located within ACMIC, reducing recovery and sustainability of fish stocks chances in the region.

b. Diving operations were poorly managed causing impacts on coral ecosystems and this activity expected growth could delay corals natural recovery severely damaged by El Niño.

c. Poorly managed land tourism activities were producing physical damage to ecosystems and introducing invasive species.

d. Invasive species introduced on the island had adapted to the island environment, altering island environmental and ecological species composition processes. Plants like vines and lianas are degrading and changing important forests structure. Animals such as pigs and rats act as predators and disrupt the food chain. It was postulated that both invasive flora and fauna will continue successfully competing with native species and further degrade the environment.

## 2.4 Objectives of the project

The project sought to improve Cocos Island Marine Area Conservation management (ACMIC), strengthening the associated conservation practices and creating an environment that would ensure threats reduction to the island in the long-term, promoting sustainable development of natural resources and biodiversity of global importance conservation. The following objectives were planned for this purpose:

**Overall Objective**

To improve Cocos Island Marine Conservation Area management and conservation practices, and it will result in the reduction of threats to the Island's marine and terrestrial biodiversity through strengthening protected areas management and regulating local economic activities in a sustainable manner

**Specific Objectives**

1. Improve enforcement and compliance with regulations for marine park protection within ACMIC.
2. Improve ACMIC's diving and terrestrial tourism management to reduce marine and terrestrial ecosystems physical damage.

3. .Eradicate pigs and control other key invasive species to allow native species populations and ecological processes restoration.

4. Develop financial instruments to generate revenues to sustain on-going conservation operations and provide economic incentives to promote Island's natural resources sustainable use.

5. Identify and recommend relevant policy and legislation reforms to create a functioning and effective environment enabling ACMIC to support *Objectives 1-3*

### *2.5* Organizational structure

The project implementation was handled under the organizational structure[6] established in the PRODOC. During implementation, the Cocos Island Marine Conservation Area Regional Council (CORACMIC)[7] was created. Regional councils are instruments created in Costa Rican legislation under the Biodiversity Act. For CORACMIC[8], is a figure with great power and influence in decision making and policy management of what can be done in ACMIC.

[6] This is also described in the Mid Term Evaluation.

[7] MP-MINAET. Decree No. 35542-MINAET, Cocos Island Marine Conservation Area Regional Council Regulations. La Gaceta No. 229 - Wednesday, November 25, 2009.

[8] CORACMI has the following powers: 1) To approve AMIC specific strategies, policies, guidelines, orientation, plans and budgets, proposed by the Director, 2) to define specific issues for the area management and subject to National Council approval, 3) to decide, in conjunction with ACMIC Director, on endowment funds, special donations and income from services sales management, 4) to approve annual budgets and operating regulations for the Regional Council organizations.

# 3 RESULTS

## 3.1 Concept and Design

Cocos Island is considered a priority area globally important for conservation. It is a World Heritage Site, a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. SINAC objectives for Protected Areas consolidation is to ensure national biodiversity conservation and promote research in and around Protected Areas. The country aims[9], to consolidate 100% of the Cocos Island National Park surface as an Ocean site of global importance because of its unity. It is also part of the Marine Conservation Corridor of the Tropical Eastern Pacific (CMAR), a regional cooperation initiative[10] for marine resources sustainable use and conservation, led by the Governments of Ecuador, Costa Rica, Colombia and Panama.

The project had very ambitious goals, especially in regard to control illegal fishing and the eradication of exotic and invasive flora and fauna species, and degraded ecosystems recovery.

It is important to mention that for the design analysis its condition in the field of innovation was considered, given that although its rationale corresponds to a clearly identified problem, the solutions proposed in the eradication and marine conservation areas monitoring subject was new to the country.

Priority problems or needs to which Project's attention addressed were clearly identified. Estimation of the causing variables magnitude was not precisely defined. It was until the baseline lifting that they were more accurate.

[9] National conservation goals of the Protected Areas System of Costa Rica, under the Work Programme on Protected Areas of the Convention on Biological Diversity. SINAC-MINAET IV Country Report to the CBD. Costa Rica. 2009.

[10] Joint effort in the 5 core areas: National Park and Galapagos Marine Reserve, Cocos Island National Park, Malpelo Wildlife Sanctuary, Gorgona National Natural Park and Coiba National Park.

The project was linked to the country's development plans, environmental policies, country's biodiversity and protected areas management and conservation national strategy, as well as ACMIC; also in line with the UNDP Biodiversity Strategy at national level.

The end and purpose of the project are clearly defined and corresponds to the problem solution.

Evidence from national / international studies or researches was not sufficient to demonstrate that the services or products provided by the project were adequate to achieve the end and purpose intended by the program, especially on the eradication and control of illegal fishing issues.

The problem in relation to illegal fishing and the eradication subject was configured with greater dimensions than the project design capacity. While the component on financial instruments had to overcome limitations imposed by Law 8422[11] on corruption and illicit enrichment and legislation on concessions in protected areas. These aspects should be taken into account to value reviews and adjustments made in the logical framework.

Specific objectives as were defined, contribute to achieve the overall objective. In general terms, the expected results contributed to the specific objectives. Limitation in the project design vertical logic is observed in some results level, as: 1) Improve fishermen awareness, 2) Tourism infrastructure on land, 3) eradication activities.

There were indicators to measure program performance at Goal, Purpose, Components, Activities and Inputs level. However, these presented definition and relevance problems, as in some cases they are beyond the project scope and the country possibilities. For example, consider: 1) that at "the end of the project there would not be illegal fishing", 2) fishermen awareness could be achieved, or 3) that "revenues would cover ACMIC operating costs."

Project's internal logic is clear, however the entire logical framework matrix vision does not have that condition, as it does not allows project's full understanding. Internal logic was maintained over time, even with the adjustments that were subsequently presented and reported in the PIR.

[11] Act 8422, Law against corruption and illicit enrichment in public office, published in "La Gaceta" No. 212, of October 29, 2004.

The way in which assumptions and risks were delivered, anticipated with utmost precision the conditions under which the project would be implemented. Among the conditions that the project had to overcome: 1) limitations on feral pigs eradication and other species control, 2) fishermen attitude expected changes on their awareness and willingness to participate, 3) new tourism infrastructure availability, 4) limitations on pig populations re-colonization or re-occupation, 5) revenues generated by tourism activities and sanctions to fund ACMIC operations, 6) tourism companies independence on ground shipments, 7) potential donors existence, 8) enough capital for Revolving Fund, 9) feasibility studies for Radio COCO with a positive result, 10) accomplishment of the Scientific Symposium, 11) book demand and 12) INCOPESCA support.

### 3.2 Project implementation

The time to execute the project was opportune since the problems identified diagnosis, in terms of biodiversity threats and terrestrial and marine ecosystems of global importance management and conservation difficulties. Previous studies demonstrated the need for immediate intervention with actions taken by the project.

### 3.3 Implementation approach

The project was developed as a "Partial National Execution". It had SINAC-ACMIC support and participation, which made possible to reach internal and external institutional arrangements that allow its implementation and execution. Since its inception, it was considered that there was no experience or a clear institutional policy on eradication or “invasive” populations control issues.

Implementation phase starts in 2005, almost a year later. Since its inception there were methodology differences with FFEM on how to address the eradication of invasive species issue.

The project was coordinated by a small three-person unit. Long periods without project's coordinator significantly affect its advance and miss its implementation continuity.

Implementation level was affected by personnel changes, which occurred in all management and bodies levels involved: MINAET political authorities, UNDP country office residents and environmental official, FFAMN representative, SINAC and ACMIC directions, CORACMIC and MINAET higher authorities' role.

Understanding and institutional arrangements between the three project partners (MINAE-GEF (UNDP)-FFEM, were fundamental. Despite its institutional deficiencies in resources, SINAC and ACMIC provided essential inputs for project implementation, which effectively influenced the proposed activities implementation. SINAC gave leadership to the coordinator and almost lose its role in policy and institutional management key aspects. Participation in all management levels was of key importance in achieving results and supporting external shocks to which the program was subjected on eradication issue and the Seamounts Marine management area creation.

MINAET leadership had its ups and downs, also in ACMIC. Political support does not remained constant so that project importance and priority stability was affected, which also affects ACMIC security and leadership. ACMIC had little input in policy decisions and its actions in project coordination support framework, were limited to those policy decisions.

CORACMIC initially supported the actions taken by the project, however such support was not sustained in its advanced stage, drastically affecting the eradication component and affecting this goal achievement.

ACMIC had limitations on the necessary human resources availability to undertake the project, which fail to cover even the basic ACMIC operative plan aspects.

The organizational structure defined for the project included two consultation instances and technical support to the coordinator. The Pilot Committee whose participation and integration should be closer since the beginning; and the technical committee whose expected involvement failed due to lack of attendance of those who composed it and lack of convocation from project's coordination.

The logical framework was modified for the project adaptive management at institutional and operational context prevailing during the implementation phase. The base line was not drawn at the execution inception; it was not until 2007 that it became available.

With project implementation, the invasive species eradication and illegal fishing control in protected areas of PAs issues were situated on the national agenda.

### 3.4 Support and supervision of execution agencies

Under the type of "Partial National Execution", disbursements, goods procurement, services, equipment and consultancy contracts were made and approved by the National Direction and / or National Coordination. Aspects that were subject to ongoing review by UNDP, as GEF's resources.

UNDP was responsible for the administration of GEF funds and support project management and monitoring of its operations and results.

The French government appointed FAICO to manage the resources through its cultural representation "in the country will contribute to project monitoring". To respond to two instances at once hindered coordination management level.

Involvement of two development agencies is seen as a complexity factor in project execution, especially at complementary activities coordination and budgetary execution level. This situation is evident since the beginning with the time lag in operations initiation and financial flows of the two agencies, while in the execution some activities depended on others. The project began operations in March, 2005 and it was not until September, 2005 that the FFEM get involved.

## 3.5 Planning and financial management

Financial management has been very satisfactory. GEF financial resources were managed by UNDP office in Costa Rica, who also supported the definition of the PAO and expenses supervision. For the latter report an instrument known as CDR (Combined Delivery Report) is used, where performance and costs levels are established. CDRs are quarterly reports, annually auditable and are reconciled with Project's Director. Financial management followed the standards of the UNDP National Execution Project Management Handbook. Internal control was supported in external audits[12] conducted in 2005, 2006 and 2008.

Financial resources joint management was not possible, and as mentioned, this affected project coordination and efficiency in administrative processes due to delays in FFEM funds transfers to FAICO. FAICO management was efficient but their efficiency was affected by delays in FFEM funds to their accounts.

## 3.6 Monitoring and evaluating stakeholders participation

Following project's operational framework and GEF and UNDP procedures, monitoring and evaluation count with participation in the various levels of management. Appropriate mechanisms were used, disagreement with the strategy and requirements established in the PRODOC.

With support provided by UNDP, it was possible to have the Project Implementation Review (PIR), the (CRD), the Management Response evaluation ((MRE) instruments that allowed actions follow-up and to support project performance management.

[12] The contents are explained further on.

Mid-term Assessment was accomplished, from which the Steering Committee, established guidelines for improvement.

Three audits were conducted during 2005, 2006 and 2008. They incorporated into their analysis issues related to financial management, administrative structure, recruitment, substantive and financial planning, PRODOC design, performance reports monitoring, internal control procedures, equipment, budgetary implementation, the combined expenditures report, administrative and financial management risk, and recommendations compliance.

At project implementation inception, the original logical framework had a low value as a management tool; the suggestions provided by UNDP through PIR (Project Implementation Report) allowed overcoming this deficiency.

Two years after implementation inception, indicators and baseline development were elaborated, which has not been measured in its second opportunity.

To monitor the action taken, there were well documented bi-annual reports[13] presented by the coordinators.

Poorly conceptualized and with definition and relevance problems, indicators were identified. This prevented an adequate follow-up to the proposed activities. These indicators were defined with UNDP technical assistance as part of project's adaptive management.

[13] This is recorded in the second and third coordination period.

### 3.7 Project design adaptive management

The adaptive management was very satisfactory. Project's objectives remained until its closure. Project's context had political, institutional, administrative and technical support dynamism during its execution; aspects which influenced the presence of limiting factors and support, leading to program's adaptive management. Based on this principle, some logical framework indicators and targets were modified, programming, budgets, actions and products foreseen at the original design. This management favored project's progress, despite the fact that was not able to control the political aspects which affect certain results achievement.

### 3.8 National ownership

National ownership was satisfactory in both operational and managerial levels; they run and develop tools and best practices resulting from the project in a daily basis, as diving tourism control and illegal fishing control actions. Process development of pending results at project's end also continue for their achievement, as Seamounts management protected area the declaration, and store concession to receive tourists. New international and national initiatives, managed by ACMIC and SINAC authorities, contemplates continuation and development of project's actions and results. New proposals for PA preservation are prepared.

### 3.9 Replicability

Replication level is successful because technologies and expertise in diving practices control and policy instruments and social dialogue processes generation were developed to achieve it and deserve to be replicated in other country's marine areas conservation.

Joint action between various stakeholders and instruments were successful and also worth to be highlighted. Tripartite Commission performance, composed by ACMIC / SINAC, Marviva and the Coast Guard Forces, .should also be emphasized.

Experiences on eradication in protected areas gained importance within the project, and those obtained by the project must be systematized while the presence of invasive species also affect other areas of the protected areas national system in the country.

Although reference to the national context was made, the developments mentioned above can be replicated and considered to improve similar issues processes in other international areas.

### 3.10 Stakeholders participation

Despite financial and staff limitations, ACMIC and SINAC as executing agencies effectively influenced in the proposed activities performance.

In key moments, UNDP contribute on follow-up, monitoring and technical assistance, which improved project implementation. Additionally, UNDP country office facilitates recruitment and management processes and liaison with the UNDP Regional Center located in Panama, who provided permanent technical assistance to the project.

ACMIC improved their skills with the project in regard to public policy instruments, procedures and management practices. Also due to officials who were specialized in inspection, monitoring, management and control activities. However, limitations remain (Chinchilla, I and Serna, J., 2009) in human resources number, labor categories classification improvement, financial resources and working equipment.

Steering Committee participation degree had ups and downs. Their contribution increased since the intermediate stage towards the project's end. In general terms, its duties were successfully fulfilled as set out in the PRODOC.

FAICO is important on project activities sustainability, their proximity and special linkage with Cocos Island conservation objectives. FAICO developed their duties as required by FFEM, but should have avoided that role while is also a manager in Cocos Island conservation.

They have fostered strategic alliances that allow potentiating project results and other initiatives developed in the Cocos Island. Agreements* with FAICO and the "Costa Rica forever" initiative are maintained; also developed strategic alliances with Conservation International (CI).

### 3.11 Budgetary implementation

Accounting 2004-2011 expenditures period, budgetary implementation[14] reached a figure of $ 921.036.60 (nine hundred twenty-one thousand and thirty-six U.S. dollars, sixty cents), which represents 94.96% of the funds provided by GEF[15].. See Table 3.1.

[P] Nonprofit association that manages public-private conservation initiative aimed to consolidate marine and terrestrial protected areas system in Costa Rica. For further information visit http://www.costaricaporsiempre.org

[14] This performance level must be interpreted considering the variations in implementation periods and in activities and products as were initially defined in the PRODOC.

[15] Contribution of $ 25,000.00 of the PDF is not included, source PRODOC.

**Table 3.11: Budgetary implementation**

| Year | Amount disbursed $ US | Budgeted Amount $ US | Disbursed percentage with regard to annual budget (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2004 | 4919.21 | 42500 | 11.57 |
| 2005 | 101504.7 | 130014 | 78.07 |
| 2006 | 170858.1 | 187258.73 | 91.24 |
| 2007 | 264587.1 | 388804.72 | 68.05 |
| 2008 | 224394.1 | 399600 | 56.15 |
| 2009 | 101504.7 | 130014 | 78.07 |
| 2010 | 40210.34 | 40282.93 | 99.82 |
| 2011 | 13058.42 | 43093.75 | 30.30 |
| Total | 921036.6 | 1361568.13 | 67.65 |

Source: Own elaboration. Based on 2004-2011 period reports, UNDP Project Budget Balance.

## 3.12 Financial aspects

Table 3.12 presents the results on Project financial of estimates information, including disbursements, PRODOC budgets, and budgets subsequently added to PRODOC and foreseen budget.

Expected amounts reached $ 8,259,871, which represents a greater figure than $ 3,149,553.00 specified in the PRODOC[16]. Co-financing increased from $ 2,174,553.00 to $ 7,287,636.00, influencing this change contributions made by FFEM, FAICO, MARVIVA and the Government of Costa Rica. This account includes the $ 80,731.00 provided by the ANTENA project.

[16] PRODOC, P 39

**Table 3.12.: Financial information review**

| Partner or contributor name (including Private Sector) | Contributors' nature | Amount used in project preparation (PDF A, B) | Amount budgeted in the project | Additional amounts budgeted after project completion | Total Disbursement estimated at 30 November 2007 | Total disbursement expected at project completion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| GEF contribution | GEF | 0.03 | 0.98 | - | 0.92 | 1.00 |
| Cash co-financed -managed by UNDP | United Nations Agency | | | | | |
| Cash co-financed -managed by partner | | | 1.12 | 2.91 | 4.14 | 4.11 |
| FFEM | Bilateral donor | - | 0.92 | - | 0.97 | 0.92 |
| Government of Japan | National Government | | 0.10 | | 0.08 | 0.10 |
| Government of Germany | National Government | - | 0.03 | - | SD | 0.03 |
| UNESCO | United Nations Organization | | 0.04 | | 0.06 | 0.04 |
| FAICO | NGO | - | 0.04 | 0.12 | 0.16 | 0.16 |
| MARVIVA | NGO | - | - | 2.79 | 2.79 | 2.79 |
| ANTENA | | | | - | 0.08 | 0.08 |
| In kind Co-financing | | - | 1.05 | 2.10 | 3.15 | 3.15 |
| Government of Costa Rica | National Government | - | 1.05 | 2.10 | 3.15 | 3.15 |
| Co-financing Total | | - | 2.17 | 5.00 | 7.29 | 7.26 |
| Total for the project | | 0.03 | 3.15 | 5.00 | 8.21 | 8.26 |

Source: Own elaboration. Based on information provided by UNDP on November 16, 2011, ACMIC[17] (March 12, 2008), FAICO[18] (30 September 2010), Marviva[19] and Mid-term evaluation. Note: Rounding figures based on the original figures. Study

[17] SINAC counterbalance Study. (SINAC, 2008).
[18] Communication of Lic. Alejandra Villalobos, FAICO Director.
[19] Communication of Dr. Jorge A. Jiménez, Marviva Director.

### 3.13 Incremental costs

With regard to the incremental costs analysis, the project allowed global benefits in the following topics in its final phase:

**a. Biodiversity:** marine area contributed to improve biodiversity conservation in the island broad environment (illegal fishing reduction) and adjacent ecosystems (improving diving tourism monitoring). New Seamounts Marine Management Area creation. Active integration to eco-region conservation Tropical Eastern Pacific marine corridor strategy. Terrestrial area ecosystem to a similar state to the original, with some positive changes as of recovery of devoid forest areas.

**b. Climate change:** Succeeded in establishing the baseline that can support research of their effects.

**c. International waters:** Contributed to a larger system of international water management in the Eastern Tropical Pacific eco-region, and ecosystems of global importance.

As also allows benefits at local level in the following areas:

**a. Biodiversity:** It allowed database and investigation plans establishment, increased knowledge and skills for its estimation and management; positive changes in exotic plant species removal. Marine and terrestrial ecosystems protection is present in nation's conservation commitments strategies.

**b. In terms of financial costs:** Through GEF contribution of ($ 921036.6), the project reached a total cost of $ 7,299,871.00, which co-financing amounts were in the order of $ 7,259,871.

### 3.14 Results by component

**COMPONENT 1: IMPROVE ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR MARINE PARK PROTECTION WITHIN ACMIC**.

*The island has great importance at both marine and terrestrial ecosystem. The need to protect PNIC arises as service functions to preserve global environmental. It takes into account the existence of an integral human development problem.*

This component has a very satisfactory value[20]. Although the problem was clearly identified, the project's ability to attack all causes and change stakeholders' behaviors was limited in terms of required estimated time and resources.

On the conservation status of reefs and associated marine life, available studies prepared by CIMAR allowed to estimate between 5 and 30% coral cover. It was possible to observe key indicator species in some areas, such as dinoflagellates (Gambierdiscus toxicus), Porites lobata and octagonal urchins (Diadema mexicamun). Coral reefs quality is studied through initial testing in coral cores.

With regard to terrestrial ecosystems, they will improve its structure and functions. There are no estimates of exotic species impact on endemic species at the PNIC terrestrial area.

Illegal fishing systematic observations were carried out in PNIC, stated in half-year reports based on patrolling activities which provided useful information for indicators development to ACMIC. Through co-financing, the project acquired a boat to improve patrolling activities; with the limitation that legalization phase has not been completed though limiting its use in control practices.

Sustainable tourism good practices are currently implemented. This has been possible through instruments development defining the areas and possible activities to be performed. There is a park management plan, a tourism good practice manual, and a tourism monitoring plan. All of them are daily applied by officials and mandatory for tourists. Monitoring is effective and it is only limited by consequent constraints for more staff and diving equipment needs.

[20] In accordance to UNDP classification (2011).

Fishing of any kind is prohibited in the PNIC. As for the buffer areas, a great project's achievement was its special contribution to PA "Seamounts Marine Management Area, declaration, unique under this management category in Costa Rica, which measures 9640 square kilometers. This defined clear policies for sustainable fisheries development and prohibits industrial fishing and promotes sustainable access to people who develop friendly conservation arts-and resources and marine biodiversity protection.

The project also successfully supported a system creation to estimate the environmental damage caused by illegal fishing, which is applied with great success. This methodology provides support to economic sanctions claims against employers, as happened with the Panamanian flag tuna boat Tiuna, who was arrested while carrying about 12 tons of live species which were returned to the sea and about 280 tons of yellow fin tuna in their warehouses. Damage was estimated at $ 350,000.

Reducing fishermen presence and activity in PNIC was also an achievement. The average number of species found attached to long lines in each patrol, fell from 17 specimens found in 2006 to 5 in 2008. The line length was reduced from 1.3 miles in 2006 to 0.3 miles in 2010.

PNIC equipment was improved. Regarding to in use marine equipment and boats availability, ACMIC had just a patrol vessel and a Zodiac. By 2010 they started to have equipment to improve their intervention capacity in patrolling and monitoring: 1) 2 patrol vessels, 2) 2 Zodiacs, 3) 2 speedboats, 4) 2 new additional Yamaha 90cv motors for coastal ships. It also has a Maintenance Plan and training in ACMIC ships maintenance and 2 contracts for fleet maintenance.

Agreements were increased and thus institutional strengthening through the tools that support ACMIC conservation management. With these new institutional arrangements between SINAC-ACMIC and strategic partners seeks to ensure regulations compliance: 1) Letter of Understanding with FAICO to support fund raising control, 2) Letter of Understanding with Under Sea Hunter enterprise to support

fundraising control; 3) Letter of Understanding with Okeanos Agressor company to support fundraising control, 4) agreement between University of Costa Rica and SINAC, to create PNIC repository information within UCR integrated library system, 5) agreement with CIMAR to monitor coral reefs is pending , agreement framework development is awaiting, 6) Natural ONCA agreement for exotic and endemic species management is also pending 7) existing agreements with tour operators were validated until 2012.

Studies on fisheries sector consciousness are scarce. In 2007, it is reported that before he project's implementation, 41.7% of Puntarenas fishermen would fish in a marine protected area when fishing was poor in places where their incursion were common. This can be seen in two ways: first, justification on management and protection measures increase; second, on the need to address the causes that create social and environmental conflict through appropriate public policies.

Project also improves in fishing vessels timely identification and control. Project installed a VMS system to control ships entry to PNIC. This helps to monitor fishermen in the new Seamounts PA and also provide protection to rangers during patrolling activities.

Illegal fishing detention, demand and prosecution processes are improved. Although have not been able to obtain 70% success in the number of ships brought to trial. Yet progress in this area has been significant. In 2009 there were three trial requests for illegal fishing, the three cases were taken to trial: 1) Tiuna Vessel (Panama), 2) King of Kings Ship (Costa Rica), and 3) Albatros I ship (Costa Rica). The Environmental Tribunal gave a verdict in favor to the National Park, and the environmental damage cost was estimated at $ 668,427.81. In 2010, two filed lawsuits about illegal fishing activities and 8 complaints for contempt of court had not been brought to trial.

Procedures for illegal fishing prosecution were improved using the environmental damage economic valuation methodology. Between 2000 and 2008, fifteen cases of illegal fishing were reported, an average of one new case every year. The methodology was designed by project staff and was officially adopted and currently implemented by ACMIC. It has the limitation that only applies where the prosecutor requested. The ACMIC has a limitation that is that it can only be applied at Prosecutor requests. AMIC have a legal department that is responsible for each case monitoring and improve communication with the Prosecutor to achieve its implementation in all cases. The project supported the process in terms of logistics and monitoring.

Island staff knowledge on legal aspects for illegal fishing control was increased. Since project implementation, testing rangers in operating procedures and regulations was established and a 100% approval goal was proposed, 60% were approved by 2008.

Efforts were made to improve illegal fishing reduction control and legal processes. The strategy must be rethink in terms of violations detection and reporting. Greater strategic and legal changes should be made through detection system changes and fisheries law changes allowing offenders prosecution.

**COMPONENT 2: IMPROVE ACMIC'S DIVING AND TERRESTRIAL TOURISM MANAGEMENT TO REDUCE PHYSICAL DAMAGE TO THE MARINE AND TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS**

This component has a highly satisfactory assessment. ACMIC has yielded more tourism and tourism operators control and supervision. It should be mentioned that it still faces the challenge of independence of the latter for officials transfers to the island and necessary equipment replacement so that diving control be safe and effective for their officials' life.

The anchorage regulations proposed by the project is waiting for the National Conservation Areas Council (CONAC) approval to become official. Meanwhile, existing regulations are implemented, and anchorage control is held several times a day, resulting in 100% of vessels obeying anchoring rules in PNIC. Given that PNIC still not have the necessary facilities, it was achieved that through project's management, tour operators commit to construct four to six anchoring sites, which the first one was already constructed.

Good Practices for Tourism Activities in Cocos Island National Park Guide has been completed and distributed. 100% of its visitors receive information during their visit. There are two interim positions for staff serving tourism. Also 100% of the tourists are informed via a welcome video, and 90% receive information on fundraising options. Current limitation includes diving equipment renovation, consisting of clothing, compasses, and masks and so on.

Tourists receive induction since the first day of their arrival to the island. They are trained in the rules to respect marine and terrestrial spaces. Their activities are monitored and controlled during their stay at the authorized visitation sites.

Hundred per cent tourists accomplished park's rules (without penalties during the reported period). This control process is regulated by the Tourism Monitoring Plan developed by the project.

Visitors' comments on ACMIC's information and fleet management has noticeably improved. Ninety percent of the tourists gave a positive opinion and are satisfied with their visit and the diving experience on the island.

In terms of ecosystem health, the results are abundantly encouraging. In December 2008, there was a slight increase (2%) in hammerhead sharks (Sphyra lewini) abundance recorded in a new relative abundance of 87.9%. This is of significant value since this species had been reduced in abundance by 71% in 1992-2004 period. There are no noticeable changes in 95%Triaenodon obesus (whitetip shark) abundance.

More than 100% of volunteers help to perform trail maintenance activities and buildings in the PNIC was overcome. Of 24 volunteers who visited the island in 2005, such assistance increased to 48 in 2008 and 45 in 2009.

**COMPONENT 3: ERADICATE PIGS AND CONTROL OTHER KEY INVASIVE SPECIES TO ALLOW NATIVE SPECIES POPULATIONS AND ECOLOGICAL PROCESSES RESTORATION.**

This component has a moderately unsatisfactory assessment not only because of the limited success achieved, low level of progress, but more heavily because of control actions suspension on species and ecosystem restoration. Assessed as satisfactory level on project's activities undertaken both at operational and executive management levels, but valued as very unsatisfactory at political management on behalf CORACMIC MINAET' highest authorities.

During 2005 and 2006 there was no advance. For 2007, with the ecology specialist recruitment, information collected (technical and scientific) and strategies developed were noted.

Control strategy was suspended in the second half of 2008, following a specific request of the Government of Costa Rica. Despite project's efforts, due to MINAET[21] guideline, exotic species management in PNIC did not continue; this decision was based on: 1) CORACMIC's[22] management opposition, and 2) ONCA NATURAL[23] studies (ONCA NATURAL, 2008). It should be noted that this study was based on population monitoring, but did not consider measurement of these populations' effects on ecosystems.

Eradication was considered a controversial issue at the end of President Arias administration. Despite considered as a subject sufficiently analyzed to begin operations, there were opinion differences at all levels on the strategy and mechanisms to carry it out. Eradication was stigmatized in the public eye, and it was feared that the issue could add more pressure on the authorities, along with other socio-environmental conflicts of the moment, as was the case of Industrias Infinito mining concession, known as Las Crucitas. CORACMIC demanded a feasibility study on environmental impact (VIA) for invasive species eradication, which was not considered during project's design phase. Given the uncertainty created, national authorities' vision transforms from a technical to a political issue and the eradication strategy changed, reaching consensus by that time on that species control strategy would be more appropriate to country's environmental policies. Later, VIA study presented did not receive the Environmental Technical Secretariat (SETENA) approval, which posed fewer opportunities to manage these species control.

[21] As detailed in the Steering Committee meeting minutes of March 27, 2009, where the decision to transfer the funds from this component to the contingency item was made and will be relocated in accordance with the proposal that the coordinator to be hired in the coming days will prepare.

[22] Minute of the exotic invasive species control strategy of 2007-2008, approval and suspension process chronological order.

[23] ONCA NATURAL (2008), "Develop a Management Program to exotic invasive species and preparation of simultaneous mammals' eradication campaign in the Cocos Island National Park."Consultant reports, Costa Rica: MINAET / SINAC / ACMIC / GEF / UNDP, 2008.

Mammal's exotic species control remains as ACMIC's task, given that with the project a significant advance was not possible[24].

At the time of suspension, the project had hired a science advice to develop a monitoring strategy and protocols. All visitors were informed about invasive species and received instructions on bio-security. The operation had begun and in 2008, 40 pigs (approx. 10% of the population) and 30 deer had been eliminated. As a result of the suspension, all control activities related to wildlife were suspended.

As for ecosystem restoration by restoring native tree species, restoration program was suspended and was barely intervened, 30% of the land requiring restoration. Two coffee hectares (20% of total) had been removed with the same purpose. A volunteer program was implemented to support these activities. Despite efforts, little progress in restoration had no success since the deer were responsible for removing the trees planted by the project.

Strategy to avoid invasive plant species reintroduction operated properly. Currently there is control over seeds introduction. Plant waste processing and "compost" operation run as ACMIC's staff daily activity.

Specialized equipment was acquired for ONCA NATURAL study. Today, along with other goods purchased by project, all are in possession of ACMIC. This project's contribution is within the national heritage, and the goal is to focus on maximizing its use and provide adequate maintenance, also considering its replenishment and renewal.

[24] Nor was it for the National Park Service in 1991. That despite that Executive Decree 20749-MAG of August 21, 1991 was issued, the authorization to remove all the pigs, to advance the issue significantly also failed.

**COMPONENT 4: DEVELOP FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS TO GENERATE REVENUES TO SUSTAIN ON-GOING CONSERVATION OPERATIONS AND PROVIDE ECONOMIC INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE ISLAND'S NATURAL RESOURCES.**

This component has been rated as moderately satisfactory due actions were managed with all stakeholders participation, but generated revenues were not able to maintain regular operations and provide conservation incentives to promote resources sustainable use.

It was considered that National Park rates were competitive, so there has been no change in the tariff for the national park and remains: $ 25 daily admission and $ 10 per day dive.

Fundraising strategy (ANTENA) was successfully implemented while it was operating, $ 110,549.86 was raised through this initiative, of which $ 80,731.18 were used to finance PNIC's control and surveillance program. The program was not continued after project's completion.

Progress was made in new income sources identification and management. "Costa Rica Forever" project will fund the PA management Seamounts Marine Management Area Plan. Tourists' attention store concession and collection center operation will be nearly approved.

The trust fund administered by FAICO delivers investments to ACMIC at the end of the year end. For 2009 it was U.S. $ 430,000 and for 2010 it was expected to provide additional $ 10,000. ACMIC and FAICO staff were trained in fundraising strategies.

It was not possible to verify that traditional income sources were improved and implemented.

The official site http://www.isladelcoco.go.cr was implemented and received over 2,000 visits during the first half of 2010. It is estimated that over 100,000 people are exposed to information about PNIC ecological importance.

PNIC obtained a second place, in terms of prestige, between world's islands due to the International Internet Campaign to include Cocos Island as one of the world seven wonders.

**COMPONENT 5: IDENTIFY AND RECOMMEND REFORMS OF RELEVANT POLICY AND LEGISÍATION TO CRÉATE A ÍUNCTIONING AND EFFECTIVE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR ACMIC IF FOUND NECESSARY TO SUPPORT *OBJECTIVES 1-3.***

This component has been rated as satisfactory. The actions led to mediation between the parties involved in Cocos Island conservation, technical events contribution, scientific and management process to define Seamounts PA. The necessary actions were managed with all stakeholders' participation, and contributed to increase MINAET's leadership on this issue.

On June 23, 2011, by Executive Decree No. 36452-MINAET, "Seamounts Marine Management Area" PA was declared. It is the only PA under this management category in Costa Rica, and measures 9,640 square kilometers.

Definition of ecological fees administratively feasible for visitors within PNIC is still pending. With the Use Plan and Tourism activities monitoring Plan implementation, it is expected to be defined. And it keeps the number of visits per year of 2500-3000 and 60 divers per day. The agreement with CIMAR also will support carrying capacity determination.

The project supported CORACMIC participation in illegal fishing control policy, and also supported the tripartite commission, composed by ACMIC, Coast Guards and MARVIVA, on illegal fishing control. This commission provided significant financial resources to ACMIC conservation.

The certification scheme design for friendly fishing to reduce fishing impact within the buffer zone was suspended.

Illegal fishing control strategies continue focusing on patrolling activities, monitoring the cases taken to court, and on environmental damage assessment effective implementation.

Despite the pro points, this component has failed in providing a direction for a policy to facilitate Goal 3 achievement of, related to exotic species eradication.

### 3.15 Project's relevance

Once project's completion, the initial proposal validity is verified, which consists in project's relevance to conserve Cocos Island ecosystems, and due to its global importance, its attention on ACMIC involvement and needs attention regarding country's development plans, environmental policies, national biodiversity strategy and management and country's protected areas conservation. Also in keeping GEF Biodiversity area and UNDP Biodiversity Strategy at national level and national and international stakeholders needs.

The thesis that proposed components corresponded to the real problems threatening biodiversity in terrestrial and marine ecosystems, was also verified.

The scientific and practical criteria to design problems' solution still exist. However, political criterion threatens and questions the eradication component relevance and favors a new proposal that promotes solutions through exotic species management and control.

With regard to ACMIC possibilities, establishing the need to have the support to address threats to ACMIC conservation also succeeded.

### 3.16 Project's effectiveness

Not all reported results are proportional to the expected results if taking into consideration the problems that the project originally sought to address. Although risk management was satisfactory, it was not possible to control the negative effects that would cause political decisions on ecosystem restoration process driven by the project; similarly, those that limited progress in strengthening ACMIC financial capacity.

The project had a moderate effectiveness. Although objectives under component 1 and 2 were very satisfactory achieved, this assessment affects the low level achieved (very unsatisfactory) on objective 3, caused by eradication suspension, and Objective 4 (moderately satisfactory), relative to low scores on income sources to support ACMIC's ongoing costs.

Although the problem was clearly identified, project's ability to attack all causes and change actors' behaviors was limited in terms of required time and resources estimation.

ACMIC's achieved an increased control and supervision of tourism and tourism operators. It should be mentioned that it still faces the challenge of independence from these companies for transfers of officials to the island, as well as necessary equipment replacement to control that diving is safe and effective for the officials' life.

Eradication and ecosystems restoration had low progress levels due to species control actions suspension.

Despite ANTENA project successful experience, generated revenues were minor to maintain conservation regular operations and provide economic incentives to promote resources sustainable use.

Project contributed to mediate between the parties involved in Cocos Island conservation, and managed the Seamounts PA consultation and definition process and also taking actions for all stakeholders' participation and helped to raise MINAET leadership on this issue.

### 3.17 **Project's efficiency**

Project's efficiency was moderately successful as its implementation time had a significant prolongation, there were implementation delays caused by design aspects (structure and intervention logic), implementation (two management systems, sometimes asynchronous; (execution periods disruption), and politics aspects that disrupted activities implementation.

### 3.18 **Catalytic effect**

The project contributed to create a public good as was the participation to generate public policy instruments for island protection through Seamounts PA declaration, which also contributed to a globally important good.

Also contributed with the demonstrability criterion as the results obtained with the strategies for policy instruments development and sustainable diving development, deserve to be disseminated and replicated in other marine PA.

Knowledge and experiences were taken into account in the SINAC strategic planning preparation. With regard to good practices, they are analyzed so to be applied in other PA that conserves marine ecosystems.

### 3.19 **Mainstreaming**

UNDP considers that the project is included in the environmental projects portfolio aimed to strengthen Costa Rica contribution to global environmental public goods. It is linked to "United Nations Development Assistance Framework" (UNDAFs, 2007), in the environmental section, at the "economic and socio-cultural practices in priority groups for environmental sustainability" axis, and at CPAP, environment, energy and risk management in institutional strengthening and relevant actors capacity building area, in order to promote natural heritage management, conservation and sustainable and equitable use.

Aspects of human rights and gender equity were not considered at its inception. An experience of South-South collaboration took place in at least one occasion, when ACMIC officials knew about Galapagos island exotic species control.

### 3.20 Sustainability

Project's results sustainability will be conditioned to the way in which ACMIC can cope with current limitations on financial, socio-political, Institutional and governance field and environmental risks.

*Financial Resources*

Due to ANTENA project continuation was not possible, financial sustainability will remain heavily dependent on the Republic national budget and FAICO's contributions, donors and initiatives such as "Costa Rica Forever" and other new projects to be generated and can support PNIC conservation.

As a result of the project, it is expected that the store to be concession on the island can generate incomes to improve protection and control. Additionally, that the training provided to FAICO and ACMIC staff, and more information through the web, will also support this same line.

*Socio-Political Aspects*

Environmental policies to promote PNIC and all ACMIC conservation are maintained. Currently, with greater interest since the newly created "Seamounts" PA made possible to strengthen the East Pacific region marine corridor initiative, this arouses interest in developing new projects to support the country in this task.

PNIC's illegal fishing socio-environmental conflict continues, forcing to remain vigilant in this field. Although the project developed an important role in the dialogue and social awareness framework, at present there is no sign that the social aspects as a whole may encourage Cocos Island future conservation. However, it should be noted that the stakeholder network involved in conservation has grown considerably, as well as fishermen network with which the project was related, which are the beneficiaries of the SMPA conservation and proper use and PNIC protection. Likewise it can be noted that the number of volunteer doubled, suggesting greater potential for collaboration in certain activities to promote conservation.

*Institutionalization and governance*

The institutional and governance framework was strengthened by the SMPA creation. Nevertheless, weaknesses remain in the laws related to control and penalties for illegal fishing. There are policies gaps for ecosystem restoration and exotic populations control in the PA.

Adding up that SINAC and INCOOPESCA legal and institutional frameworks, regarding conservation does not match, which prevents to respond in a relevant way to illegal fishing applicable issues. In contrast with this situation, partnerships with Coast Guards and MARVIVA, as well as with University of Costa Rica and the Universidad Nacional agreements, or international institutions as National Geographic, were positive.

The institutional aspects of governability to be considered should include:

- To develop a dialogue with stakeholders in the illegal fishing conflict in PNIC areas.
- The enactment of new legislation that addresses the causes affecting PNIC ecosystems conservation.
- To strength stakeholders network to support PNIC institutionalization and governance

*Environmental risks*

It was not possible to reduce the environmental risk from the damages caused by exotic animal species to PNIC ecosystems. Furthermore, the control program still needs more support to address illegal fishing.

Tourism activities risks remain controlled and audited.

To reduce environmental risks there should:

- Maintain agenda and implement a new strategy to control exotic species populations.
- Improve human resources, minimum and necessary equipment to support the sustainable tourism program.
- Follow-up project's outputs, such as boat legalization, monitoring and control practices.
- Give a new role to the maintenance and equipment chief, so he has hierarchy and responsibility for fuel and flammable material management and storage on the island.

The project demonstrated that PNIC maintains trained personnel shortages for vessels maintenance, which affects patrol. In addition, actions are affected by current work schedules and inadequate category assigned by Civil Service to patrols staff. Also requires more personnel and equipment for diving tourism control.

### 3.21 Project's performance qualification

Project's performance level was satisfactory. Project's overall results were successfully achieved; management practices and ACMIC conservation were improved. For more details see Table 3.21.

| Table 3.21: Project's performance qualification | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Monitory and Evaluation** | **Qualification** | **Comments** |
| *M & E overall quality* | S | Oriented and allowed to adjust the actions that were strategic to the results achievement. |
| *M & E in project's inception design* | S | The design achieved to anticipate the need and methodology to solve PNIC conservation problem. Although expectative was higher than those offered by the project. |
| Implementation Plan M & E | HS | Was a strong element that ensured evidence for decision-making at the time they were required. |
| | | |
| *Overall quality of Project's implementation / execution* | S | Strong changes in the implementation context, constant changes in organizational structure and repeated activities stoppages, as well as political authorities' decisions, affected project's performance. However, through hard work and adaptive management, difficulties were solved, sustain the project in a complex political and institutional context, and managed intervention arrangements facilitating synergies and institutional agreements to take advantage of the project and its resources to strengthen PNIC conservation. |
| *Implementing Agency Execution* | HS | UNDP role as the implementing agency was important to overcome project's critical moments. provided support to SINAC in monitoring, technical aspects, and contribution to the steering committee. |
| *Executing Agency Execution* | S | SINAC and ACMIC, gave all their available resources for project's good progress. Decisions of higher authorities limited their institutional capacity to go on with component 3. |
| **Results** | | |
| *Project's results overall quality* | S | Is high because the project had to face several result's adjustment periods, despite the difficulties faced, those involved were able to appreciate that these results contribute to better conservation practices in PNIC, despite this, exotic animal species control issue was unfinished . |
| *Relevance* | R | The project was extremely relevant, because it corresponds to the need to conserve and protect ecosystems of global importance intervening directly on the issues representing a threat. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Effectiveness* | S | ACMIC management and conservation practices were improved. Although not all the reported results are proportional to the expected results. |
| *Efficiency* | HS | Due to runtime had an important prolong, there were implementation delays. |
| **Catalytic Role** | | |
| *Public good production* | Yes | Participation and public policy instruments development and best practices. |
| *Demonstrability* | Yes | Public policy instruments development and sustainable practices development. |
| *Replication* | Yes | Good practice are disseminate in other PA. |
| *Application* | Yes | Preparation of SINAC's strategic planning, application in other PA. |
| **Sustainability** | | |
| *Overall Probability of risks to sustainability* | MU | There were risks to financial, socio-economic, institutional framework, governance and environmental aspects sustainability. |
| *Financial resources* | MU | There are financial risks. Financial instruments were not achieved to cover regular expenses. |
| *Socioeconomic* | L | Socio-environmental conflict over illegal fishing is still present. |
| *Institutional and governance framework* | MU | Gaps in PA ecosystem restoration and exotic populations control policies. SINAC and INCOOPESCA legal and institutional framework in conservation schema. |
| *Environmental Risks* | L | No environmental risks are identified. Threats are caused by exotic animal species uncontrolled populations. |
| *Project's overall results* | S | Project results achieved the project objective. |
| Source: Own elaboration<br>Nomenclature[25]: Highly Satisfactory(HS); Satisfactory(S); Very Satisfactory (VS); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory(MU) | | |

[25] According to UNDP (2011)

## 4 LESSONS LEARNED

1. After a long period for projects' approval, there should be further reconsideration on project implementing proposal feasibility as it was designed before its inception, according to the new arising conditions in current's context, and make necessary adjustments to start the activities execution.

2. On constant changes in responsible coordination personnel, management and technical staff that support executive directors should continue so to provide opportunities for project's successful development, allowing to accumulate historical memory and to improve management processes.

3. A single financial management line in future GEF projects where similar co-financing as that presented in this project, would allow its implementation with a administrative and financial management single model and facilitate its coordination, financial management and internal control work.

4. A timely political management of national counterpart's political and managerial levels is necessary in cases where institutional instruments were provided and not foreseen at project's organizational and operational structure design, which may affect their impact level on project's objectives achievement.

5. Exotic species populations' estimation itself is not enough to suspend eradication and control work on species that threaten ecosystems.

6. Island's staff and supplies transportation mode, dependant on tourist boats, affects the entire logistics, planning and maintenance activities

7. With appropriate policy instruments to regulate tourism activities and resources, it is possible to monitor, control and reduce actions that affect marine and terrestrial ecosystems, by improving diving and land tourism best practice application.

8. Besides considering scientific, social and pragmatic factors on invasive exotic species control activities, a proper policy management and advocacy among stakeholders is necessary.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

1. Project's performance level was satisfactory. Its ability to attack all threats and change stakeholder's behaviors was limited in terms of available required time and resources. Despite the difficulties faced, the achieved results contributed to better practices and ACMIC conservation. Public goods production, demonstrability, replication and results' application were achieved. However, results sustainability presents general risks related to its financial, socio-economic, institutional, governance and environment framework.

1.1.1. ACMIC achieved an increased tourism and tourism operators control and supervision. Physical damage to marine and terrestrial ecosystems was achieved by improving diving and land tourism best practices implementation.

1.1.2. Population control and ecosystem restoration had low progress levels due to suspension of exotic species control actions.

1.1.3. Fundraising strategy (ANTENA) was successfully implemented while it was operating. $ 110,549.86 was raised through this initiative, of which $ 80,731.18 were used to finance PNIC's control and surveillance program. The program was not continued after project's completion.

1.1.4. Generated revenues were not able to maintain conservation regular operations and provide incentives to promote resources sustainable use. However, this experience was generated as a new collection form, which resulted on positive balance facilitating new projects development to support ACMIC financial sustainability.

1.1.5. The project contributed to mediate between the parties involved in Cocos island conservation, and managed the consultation and definition process of Seamounts PA, as well as actions for all stakeholders' participation and helped increasing MINAET leadership on this issue.

2. The project was extremely relevant, as consistent with the need to conserve and protect ecosystems of global importance by intervening directly on the issues representing a threat. It was possible to improve ACMIC management practices and conservation. Even though, not all reported results are proportional to the expected results.

3. Monitoring and evaluation system oriented and allowed to adjust the actions that were strategic to achieve the results. Changes in the implementation, organizational structure, stoppages and political decisions context, affect project performance. With great effort and adaptive management, project management was achieved facilitating synergies and institutional arrangements.

4. UNDP provided an important support to SINAC during project's critical periods and timely follow-up and functional. SINAC and ACMIC, gave all their available resources for project sound management. Decisions of higher authorities limited institutional capacity.

5. Creating CORACMIC as an institutional instrument, was not provided in project's organizational and operational structure design, adversely affect goals achievement as eradicating pigs and other invasive species control, key to allow native species and ecological processes restoration.

6. It was not possible to reduce ecosystems' threats due to pigs, deer, cats and rats populations' presence through the actions that the project managed. These populations still persist and with them the negative effects to the ecosystem.

7. There is no awareness, at the institutional level, on the importance of invasive species management in a national park. The decision to execute exotic species populations control actions, characterized and analyzed in a scientific view became in a political and authority exercise issue. Lack of a pragmatic solution, the issued guideline was not enough to effectively solve the problem.

8. To manage financial resources from two separate sources did not facilitate financial or administrative management. Increased risk and vulnerability when executing planning, budgeting, coordination and monitoring steps.

As a single project, there should have been defined only one financial resources administrative entity

9. The baseline was not measured again and exotic species monitors are still pending. Decision making for ACMIC's management is limited due to lack of information, because there is no proper research system, training, transference and knowledge management support for biodiversity protection.

10. Lack of a clear political and technical definition to solve the nationalization, legalization and operation problem of the "Captain".

11. The biggest challenges faced by the country on Cocos Island conservation are: to achieve an illegal fishing more efficient control; to promote sustainable fisheries models in the Seamounts Protected Area, and to reduce invasive exotic species in PNIC.

12. Human resources and equipment scarcity, as well as a transportation program that eliminates dependence on tourism enterprises, allowing island' working roles arrangements and a boat maintenance program, could become a limitation to maintain illegal fishing control and best practice protocols implementation on diving and land tourism achievements. Project successfully demonstrated that:

    12.1. The patrol actions are limited by vessels mechanical problems because it lacks of trained and hierarchy maintenance personnel responsible for this process.

    12.2. Work schedules and job category for patrol staff do not correspond to duration and control actions implementation time nature.

    12.3. Staff's arriving roles, ACMIC´s activities execution and budget are affected due to dependency on tour vessels.

    12.4. Tourism activities control development and improvement is limited by the lack of assigned staff and diving equipment with deterioration signs or poor condition.

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SINAC shall jointly review with ACMIC, actions of CORACMIC and its members in regard to their influence degree on unsuccessful results related to exotic species control and ecosystem restoration, also their actions' scope and steps to take for future projects.

2. Cocos Island ecosystems restoration problem requires immediate attention. Exotic mammals species control performance has been postponed for more than twenty years, since the first decree that presents this subject as a measure to protect the ecosystem, was published. Solutions must be practical and ensure efficiency in the medium term, with all stakeholders' participation and clearly setting out each one responsibilities regarding policy decisions and actions effects.

3. MINAE and SINAC should define a clear policy on exotic and invasive species management and control in protected areas.

4. ACMIC must establish a strategy in order to develop control actions that allow reducing ecosystems threat by exotic species in the medium term.

5. ACMIC must continue monitoring the exotic species populations' impact on ecosystems. Integration with this initiative through universities agreements will be a more cost efficient measure, avoiding high expenses and taking advantage of public infrastructure that provide this support as part of their purposes.

6. ACMIC's remaining task is to execute a control plan that articulates in a strategic way all actions, resources and institutions involved, in accordance to problem dimension and threats to ACMIC's conservation.

7. Upcoming GEF projects must weigh the advantages and disadvantages of separately managing the money of the various financial sources. To improve coming projects' efficiency and management with GEF participation and a co-financing partner, UNDP shall be in charge of the financial management.

8. FAICO should develop an own and integrated project into ACMIC, so to strengthen their financial capacity through instruments and public-private initiatives creation and development. philanthropy issue should be reorganized, as legal counsel considered it like illicit enrichment

9. Lessons learned in exotic species eradication and control should be systematized as a starting point for strategy design to be developed in PNIC and in other protected areas.

10. ACMIC and SINAC should strengthen their programs and projects monitoring system, so that this will raise the latter implementation efficiency and its credibility with international and cooperation organizations is not affected, leading to possible reduction of support for conservation.

11. SINAC and UNDP should establish communication processes and improved administrative and financial management in future projects, in order to promote an appropriate financial resources management and an efficient operationalization and implementation.

12. In projects with high staff turnover, permanent induction processes among staff of agencies involved in planning, management and actions implementation is necessary in order to allow new counterparty's representatives as well as operational managers be trained in this field.

13. GEF, UNDP and SINAC future projects should improve the design phase in aspects related to planning tools, such as logical framework and indicators; as to strengthen management, monitoring and results follow-up tasks. With regard to project's operational structure, the design must incorporate ACMIC's structure and processes to facilitate their implementation, ownership and activities and results sustainability in the field. To consider transferring national leadership to the Conservation Area Director, that in this case will be ACMIC.

14. Exotic wildlife populations and ecosystem effects should continue be monitored. As well as alternatives to allow management of these populations negative impacts and ecosystems recovery.

15. A new measure to baseline, indicators review and monitor exotic species populations should be made.

16. Research, training, knowledge management and transfer to advance in AIMIC's biodiversity protection, should be strengthen.

17. Because of the need to have a ship with greater capabilities for operational control, MINAET should support urgent and effective actions to achieve the "Captain" nationalization and right to operate

18. A strategy should be prepared to continue invasive species control.

19. To continue the project to build for the Monitoring Centre and the proposed hydroelectric at PNIC Chatham Bay.

20. To strengthen institutional and governance issues should be considered:

20.1. To develop dialogues with stakeholders on illegal fishing in PNIC areas conflict.

20.2. Enactment of new legislation that addresses the causes affecting PNIC ecosystems conservation.

20.3. Strengthen stakeholders' network in support to PNIC institutional and governance.

21. To reduce the environmental risks caused by tourism activities, continuity to the project's products should be provided, such as boat legalization, monitoring and control practices.

22. Keeping in agenda and implementing a new strategy to control exotic species populations.

23. Project demonstrated that PNIC shall: a) Incorporating hierarchy trained personnel on vessels' maintenance, b) Improve current work schedules and inadequate category assigned by the Civil Service to patrolling personnel, c) Incorporate more staff and diving equipment for tourism control.

24. In order to improve project results sustainability and future management of PNIC, fundraising strategy (ANTENA) should continue, which was successfully implemented while operating.

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# 8 **ANNEXES**

## 8.1 ANNEX 1: Terms of Reference

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

PROJECT: IMPROVED MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION PRACTICES FOR COCOS ISLAND MARINE CONSERVATION AREA
TERMS OF REFERENCE

1) BACKGROUND

Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (M & E) of UNDP / GEF
Project's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (M & E) of UNDP / GEF has four objectives:

1. _____To monitor and evaluate project's results and impacts;
2. _____To provide information for decision-making and implementing any necessary changes or improvements;
3. _____To promote accountability in resources use;
4. _____To document, provide feedback and disseminate lessons learned.

To ensure M & E effectiveness of projects, continuously used a range of appropriate tools for the project life, for example, indicators periodic monitoring, midterm audits, audit reports and final evaluations.

In accordance with UNDP / GEF M & E policies and procedures, all GEF funded projects, medium or large, must conduct a final evaluation at the end of the project.

These terms of reference relate to the Final Evaluation of Improved management and conservation practices for Cocos Island marine conservation area project; for related issues on the evaluation content and methodology, referred to GEF Project Evaluations Guidelines (version for external reviewers).

Project objectives and context

Background

UNESCO declared Cocos Island a World Heritage Site in December 1997 and in 1998 Wetland of International Importance based on the International Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Site), because of its a Global Biodiversity Significance. The Cocos Island maintains more than 98% of its original species and is one of the four areas in Costa Rica with the highest number of endemic species. It has a total of 1,600 species on which 216 are endemic (13.5%).

The Country Cooperation framework for Costa Rica prioritizes the improvement of the management of protected areas that are part of SINAC. The government has petitioned that UNDP and the French Fund for the Environment (FFEM) participate, finance and provide technical support to the international agreements that the country has subscribed to, in this case, in order to conserve marine and land biodiversity– of global importance-existent on the island. As a result, two projects have been formulated: Improving the management and conservation and management practices in the Marine Conservation Area Cocos (GEF-UNDP) and protecting biodiversity **in Costa Rica's** Cocos Island marine conservation area (FFEM).

The overall objective of this project is to improve the management and conservation practices on Cocos Island Marine Area Conservation, and it will result in the reduction of threats to the Island's marine and terrestrial biodiversity through strengthening protected areas management and regulating local economic activities in a sustainable manner.
The illegal fishing within the ACMIC and industrial fishing in the surrounding Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ due to its acronym in English) has the greatest negative impact on the marine biodiversity in ACMIC. It will be most ecologically advantageous and cost-effective to focus marine conservation efforts in the medium-term on ensuring enforcement of the Island's Marine Reserve and enlarging it as appropriate.

This is due to the fact that the shallow marine area around the Island has been identified as an important area for biodiversity and particularly a place for pelagic species to rest and breed and for larvae dispersal There is great pressure on the resource due to poaching within the National Park by national and international fishermen chasing tuna and other pelagic species. In 2006, conservation area confiscated more than 460 miles of fishing line and more than 15 800 hooks with over a dozen different alive and dead pelagic species attached to these lines. The fishing pressure has been associated with a decrease in the abundance of hammerhead sharks and white tip during the last 12 years (Myers, et al, under review).

Specific Objectives

Specific Objective 1

Improve enforcement and compliance with regulations for marine park protection within ACMIC.

Specific Objective 2

Improve understanding and management of ACMIC seabed.

Specific Objective 3

Improve ACMIC's management of diving and terrestrial tourism to reduce physical damage to the marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

Specific Objective 4
Eradicate pigs and control other key invasive species to allow restoration of native species populations and ecotogical processes.

Specific Objective 5
Develop financial instruments to generate revenues to sustain on-going conservation operations and provide economic incentives to promote sustainable use of the Island's natural resources.

Specific Objective 6
Identify and recommend reforms on relevant policy and legislation to create a functioning and effective enabling environment for ACMIC if found necessary to support *Objectives 1-3.*

2) OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The Final Evaluation (FE) is a UNDP / GEF requirement, and thus is initiated by UNDP Costa Rica Country Office. This evaluation is conducted in accordance to UNDP and GEF guidelines, regulations and procedures as reflected in GEF projects evaluations guidelines. A rigorous analysis and good documentation are crucial to the assessment quality.

Final evaluations are intended to evaluate project's implementation, to review project's achievements in meeting the objective and expected outcomes, to assess project's design, to establish Project's importance, performance, relevance, implementation and success; to search evidence of results potential impact and sustainability, including project's contribution to capacity building and achieving global environmental goals. These evaluations also seek to identify and document lessons learned and make any recommendations to improve the design and implementation of other UNDP / GEF and other agencies and countries projects.

The lessons learned will also serve as a guide for future interventions when discussing project's implementation, project's achievements review in achieving specific objectives and results. Establish the relevance, performance and success of the project, including the sustainability of the results. The evaluation will also collate and analyze specific lessons and best practices related to the strategies employed, and implementation or enforcement mechanisms, which could be relevant for other projects in the country and elsewhere in the world. Therefore, the assessment is also of interest of institutions and entities involved in the implementation.

The main stakeholders involved in this evaluation are:

- _____ Ministry of Environment, Energy and Telecommunications (MINAET)
- _____ Conservation Areas National System (SINAC)
- _____ Cocos Island Marine Conservation Area (ACMIC)
- _____ Cocos Island National Park
- _____ United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Costa Rica and Panama Regional Office
- _____ Global Environment Facility (GEF)

3) SPECIAL INCOMES TO BE CONSIDERED

The Final Evaluation Report must be submitted in English language; only the executive summary is presented in Spanish.

4) _____ EVALUATION SCOPE

The Final Evaluation should be based on the application of the five main criteria which are: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, results and sustainability. These criteria will be defined through a series of questions to cover all of the following three aspects of the project:

a) _ Project's concept and design aspects, including the Logical Framework, Assumptions, Risks, Budget, Co-financing and if the time was appropriate.
b) _ Project's Implementation: executing/implementing agencies support and supervision, monitoring and evaluation (including Tracking Tools), stakeholders' participation; adaptive management.
c) _ Results: Effects, Impacts, catalytic effect, sustainability, mainstreaming in UNDP other priorities such as support programs as defined in UNDAF and CPAP, as well as mainstreaming issues as gender and South-South collaboration.

This includes project's classification (valuation) using the categories of Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Moderately Satisfactory, Moderately Unsatisfactory, Unsatisfactory, and Highly Unsatisfactory (see Guidelines to Assess GEF Projects).

5) EVALUATION'S EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The expected outputs of this evaluation are three:

1. _____ Inception report (as described on page 5 of Evaluation Guidance for GEF--financed projects in Annex 2)
2. _____ Oral presentation of evaluation's preliminary findings to the UNDP office in Costa Rica and Ministry of Environment. A similar presentation will be made to the performers group, with a summary of the improved management and conservation practices for Cocos Island marine area conservation project.
3. _____ The final report will be prepared by the consultant. The assessment report contains the findings, the performance assessment, lessons learned, recommendations and best practices description.

The evaluation report should be based on GEF guidelines and standards for final evaluations and will be structured according to the detailed scheme in Evaluation Guidance for GEF--financed projects.

6) METHODOLOGY

The evaluation methodology to be applied must follow the defined guidelines in the Evaluation Guidance. The main information written sources for this assessment are:

- _____ Project Document (PRODOC)
- _____ Project Reports
- _____ Minutes and decisions of Project's Steering Committee

- _____ Project Budgets
- _____ Project Work Plans
- _____ Progress Reports
- _____ Middle Term Evaluation
- _____ List and contact details of project staff and other interest groups related to the project
- _____ Project Implementation Reports (PIR)
- _____ Project communication materials: publications, brochures, press releases, etc.
- _____ UNDP planning documents (UNDAF, CPD, CPAP.
- _____ Relevant National legislation to the project and any other material that may be considered useful.

It is recommended that the evaluator presents in the inception report the proposed methodology to conduct the assessment, as it will be discussed in advance with UNDP Costa Rica and the Ministry of Environment to create a balance of written information, interviews and field visits (see details in Annex 2: Evaluation Guidance for GEF--financed projects).

7) The Evaluator

An independent consultant will conduct the final evaluation of this project. The evaluator should have a wide range of skills and knowledge - analytical and project evaluation expertise, technical skills related to invasive species, environmental issues and experience with social and economic development issues, and of linking this with the public policy cycle of environmental sector. The evaluator should also have an updated knowledge of GEF strategies and policies. Logistical and administrative support will be provided to this consultant at local level.

The consultant must submit the evaluation report, and will define the methodology and the timing of their inputs for the report and the final revisions. Evaluator‘s appointment will be financed by the project budget.

To achieve the evaluation objectives, the consultant is required that their efforts are in line with the ethics rules to which reference is made in the Guide, and the Code of Conduct attached in Annex 4 is signed.

## 8.2 ANNEX 2: Criteria and Questions

Evaluation Criteria
Effectiveness

To what extent were project results achieved?
In what way positive and negative effects not considered in the project were caused?
In what ways are foreseen long-term emerging effects to the project?
How the other limiting or supportive factors influenced in results' achievement?

Evaluation Criteria
Sustainability

In what way the benefits from the project may be maintained or increased in the future?
How can risks that affect the sustainability of the results be presented?
How the projects M & E System can support project's results future management?

Evaluation Criteria
Efficiency

How project's modifications contributed in the obtained objectives and results achievement?
How institutional arrangements influenced project's results achievement? To what extent strategic partners completed co-financing and other commitments made before and during program implementation?
How the M & E system was implemented? (Design, financing, operation use; successes and failures).

Evaluation criteria
Relevance
How realistic were project's intended outcomes?
Were project results consistent with the focal areas / strategies of operational program and country priorities?

Evaluation criteria
Effectiveness (effects, impacts)

Are the project's results commensurate with the expected results (as they are described in the project document) and to the problems that project sought to originally address (ie. original or modified project objectives)?
To what extent was the project goal achieved?
How the results do allowed the objectives achievement?
Are the achieved results realistic for this type of project?

Evaluation criteria
Replicability (Catalysis)

Which project's aspects deserve to be replicated in future initiatives?
Which project's aspects do not deserve to be replicated in future initiatives?

## 8.3 ANNEX 3: Stakeholders interviewed

1. Fernando Quirós, ACMIC Director
2. Geiner Golfín. PNIC Director
3. Kifah Sasa. Former Project Coordinator
4. Florangel Villegas. Former Project Coordinator
5. Vannesa Zamora. Former UNDP Projects Officer
6. Guiselle Borrase, former Administrative Assistant
7. Alberto Cortez. CIMAR Researcher
8. Daniel Lefort. Cooperation and Cultural Action for Central America Counselor, French Embassy
9. Alejandra Villalobos. FAICO Director.
10. Guisselle Méndez. SINAC Director.
11. Ronald Vargas, Former SINAC Director.
12. Raúl Solórzano, Former SINAC Director.
13. Jairo Serna. Former project official
14. Lara Blanco. Assistant Resident Representative. UNDP.
15. Luisa Carvalho Resident Representative. UNDP
16. Jorge Rodríguez, former ACMIC/SINAC Director.
17. Fernando Mora. Operations manager. UNDP.
18. Santiago Carrizosa, Regional Technical Advisor, UNDP-GEF Panama.
19. Carmen Castro, Coast Guard. Police Force.
20. Jorge Jiménez, MARVIVA General Director.
21. Filander Ávila, ACMIC official.
22. Víctor Acuña, ACMIC official.
23. Vinicio Mesén, ACMIC official.
24. Manuel Ruiz, PNIC Assistant Administrator
25. Steven Alvarado, ACMIC official.
26. Roberto Cubero, ACMIC official.
27. Guillermo Pérez, ACMIC official.

## 8.4 ANNEX 4: Incremental Costs

| Item | Base Line ( BL) | GEF Project Alternative (A) | Increment (A - BL). Analysis to November 2011 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Global Benefits | | | |
| - Biodiversity | | | |
| 1. Marine | Threat to marine biodiversity by illegal fishing and marine tourism in a world natural heritage site and RAMSAR site. | Illegal fishing reduction through appropriate monitoring and control systems.<br>Conservation of adjacent marine ecosystems due to proposed sustainable diving maritime tourism. | Improved biodiversity conservation in the island's broad environment (reduction of illegal fishing) and adjacent ecosystems (improved dive tourism monitoring)<br>Creating the seamounts management area resource.<br>Integration to eco-region conservation strategy East Pacific corridor. |
| 2. Terrestrial | Introduced flora and fauna species threaten the destruction of a unique terrestrial ecosystem Oceanic Island.<br>Threat to loss isolated ecosystem for evolution studies. | Eradication of introduced flora and fauna species in the park's land area.<br>Restoration of ecosystems degraded by past and present human influence as a future baseline for evolution studies. | Terrestrial ecosystem to a similar state than the original. With some positive changes for some forest devoid areas recovery. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| - Climate change | Threat of habitat destruction and loss of point to study climate change effects on flora and fauna | Degraded ecosystems recovery as a baseline for future studies on climate change | Baseline to study the effects of climate change |
| - International Waters | Possible effects on marine fauna and flora in several countries, as Cocos Island is a marine currents confluence of wide geographic coverage. | Illegal fishing reduction through monitoring and appropriate control systems. | Contribution to a larger management system of international waters in the Eastern Pacific eco-region ecosystems of global importance. |
| Local Benefits | | | |
| - Biodiversity | Threat to science and national education resources. | Degraded ecosystems recovery. Resource for science through recovery methodologies and future studies | Database and research plans. Increased knowledge and skills for its estimation and management.<br>Positive changes in exotic plant species removal.<br>Marine and terrestrial ecosystems protection. |
| Costs | ( $ 960.000. 00) | ( $ 8,259,871) | ( $7,299,871.00) |
| Co-financing | | ( $ 7,259,871) | ( $ 7,259,871) |
| GEF Contribution | | | ( $921036.6) |

Source: own elaboration

**8.5 Annex 5: Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement Form**

Evaluators:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and: respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

**Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form**[26]

**Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System**

**Name of Consultant:**_____

**Name of Consultancy Organization** (where relevant): _____

**I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.**

Signed at (place)on

Signature:_____

[26] www.unevaluation.org/unegcodeofconduct

**Annex 6: Evaluation Report Clearance Form to be completed by CO and RCU and included in the final document**

Reviewed and Cleared by

***UNDP Country Office***

Name: _____

Signature:_____ Date: _____

***UNDP- GEF- RCU***

Name: _____

Signature:_____ Date