UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

VENEZUELA

FINAL EVALUATION OF THE GEF PIMS PROJECT 2734 - UNDP 51604

"BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN THE PRODUCTIVE

ENVIRONMENT
OF THE VENEZUELAN ANDES"

FINAL REPORT

Evaluation team
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i. Technical file

Title	Biodiversity Conservation In The Productive Environment Of The Venezuelan Andes
Identification: (UNDP and GEF project ID nos.)	GEF PIMS 2734 UNDP ATLAS 51604
Type of evaluation and date:	Final evaluation Start date: 18/11/2013. End date: 07/01/2014
Project location	Cordillera de Mérida. The States of Mérida, Trujillo, Lara, Barinas and Portuguesa. Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.
GEF Strategic Programme, Operational Programme:	SO2 – OP4/OP3
Implementation partner	Fundación de Capacitación e Innovación para Apoyar la Revolución Agraria (CIARA)
Evaluation team	Rafael Monterde-Díaz (International Evaluator) Freddy Matos (National Evaluator)

ii. Executive summary

Project summary table

Project Title :	Biodiversity Conservation In The Productive Environment Of The Venezuelan Andes			
UNDP Project ID no.:	2734		At the time of approval (millions of USD)	At the time of completion (millions of USD)
UNDP Project ID no.:	51604	**GEF financing:**	7,351,900.00	3,172,387.50
Country:	Venezuela	**IA and EA possess:**		
Region:	Latin America	**Government:**	29,545,061.00	6,576,953.22
Area of interest	BD	**Other:**	0.00	
Operational Programme:	SO2 – OP4/OP3	**Total co-financing:**	29,545,061.00	6,576,953.22
Executive body:	CIARA	**Total project costs:**	36,896,961.00	9,749,340.72
Other partners involved:	MPPA MPPAT MPPPF	**Project document signed (project start date):**		12/12/2006
		Completion date (Operations):	Proposed: 31/12/13	Actual: 31/12/13

Brief project description

The Cordillera de Mérida is a mountain range located in the west of Venezuela, which has high levels of biodiversity in terms of species and ecosystems. The ecosystems are under threat m,from the loss of biodiversity-friendly production systems, such as shade-grown coffee, which has been a major feature of this productive landscape for the last two centuries.

This 7-year project was executed by CIARA, an independent body of the People's Ministry for Land and Agriculture. It addresses a number of key issues which prevent the effective maintenance of biodiversity in this highly diverse productive landscape, with the aim of halting current trends which are affecting the biodiversity value of this landscape mosaic.

The specific objective of the project is that the production systems of local farmers continue to be biodiversity-friendly, based on the following results:

(i) capacity-building between producers for the application of biodiversity-friendly practices
(ii) supportive policies, planning and regulatory frameworks
(iii) methods for replicating the progress made in pilot areas

Evaluation table[1]

Project output ratings			
1. Project design/formulation	Rating	**2. Monitoring and Evaluation**	rating
Concept /Design	MS	Design of M&E input	U/A
National adoption	HS	Execution of the M&E plan	U/A
Participation of stakeholders in its design	MS	General type of M&E	MU
Potential for replication	HS		
3. IA and EA execution:	rating	**4. Evaluation of results**	**rating**
Implementation focus	S		
Type of UNDP application	MS	Relevance	R
Type of execution: executive body	MS	Effectiveness	S
General type of application and execution	MS	Efficiency	HS
Participation of stakeholders	HS	General rating of project results	MS
Financial planning	U		
5. Sustainability	**rating**		
Financial resources	L		
Socio-political	MU		
Institutional framework and governance	ML		
Environmental	ML		
General likelihood of sustainability	ML		

The project performance is satisfactory with regard to the **formulation/design** aspects of the project. In particular, it is worth noting the high level of adoption of the initiative by the national government, clearly reflected in the importance of the project both in the structure and the strategy of CIARA. The model for biodiversity protection in buffer zones, through work with shade-grown coffee production, was established as the key action which can be replicated elsewhere. The project design was highly technical, although it is worth mentioning that one area for improvement was the over-ambitious scope of the project, with regard to the budget and time limitations. Likewise, although many stakeholders participated from government and civil society during the design process, there were deficiencies in the transition from the final design of the project to the creation of project management structures in the early stages, which led to significant delays in getting started with the first programme activities.

Due to the impossibility of accessing diagnostic information, either by the project managers or the evaluation team itself, the **monitoring and evaluation** aspects could not be adequately assessed. Due to the limited use of a framework of original indicators, as well as the lack of specific monitoring

[1] For the purposes of the ratings, we have used the abbreviations available in the document "Guidance for conducting terminal evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects", UNDP Evaluation Office (2012), p.27.

and evaluation protocols in the project (not the case for some specific topics, such as e.g. the number of farms visited), we consider that the general quality of the system is questionable.

Regarding the managing institutions (UNDP as implementer and CIARA as executive agency and implementation partner), the level of **execution** was limited. The rotation of managers and human resources, the difficulties already mentioned and the transition to start-up, as well as the lack of a strategic and operational model which was clearly defined and agreed in the first phase are the fundamental causes of the performance limitations. The most positive aspect was the high level of participation among the stakeholders involved, particularly at local level. The least positive aspect was the performance limitations in terms of budgetary execution.

The project proved to be highly relevant in terms of environmental problems in the project area, given that the degradation of the forest mass and the loss of biodiversity are critical factors which have become particularly noticeable in the last decade. On the positive side, the capacity of the project execution team and the efficient use of project resources are worth noting, as well as the use made of the capacity of other government programmes to develop shared activities.

We also consider that the project is having a positive impact in reversing the trend of the problems mentioned, even if its scope is still limited compared to the size of the areas affected. In this respect, the project is of significant value as an effective working model. On the other hand, other additional aspects of the project have achieved limited results, particularly with regard to the impact on aspects of environmental planning in the area. This is why, generally, the overall **results** of the project are uneven.

Finally, regarding the **sustainability** of the project, we consider that both from the economic-financial point of view and the institutional or environmental perspective, the conditions are in place for the continuity of the positive effects generated by the project, particularly in phase 2. On the socio-political level, the national model for the production and commercialisation of coffee and its consequences with regard to normative aspects could be a potential limitation if it is not explored from within the governmental institutions involved in compensation mechanisms for the particular case of environmentally-friendly production.

Summary of conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

The project has consolidated an effective model for working in areas of shade-grown coffee cultivation which will ensure the high probability of continuity of this practice, and consequently, the conservation of the forest area in the buffer zones of the neighbouring protected areas and the maintenance of biological corridors.

Furthermore, this strategy promotes the gradual transformation of the farms of small coffee growers towards an agro-ecological plan, through the introduction of additional environmentally-friendly practices, which also encourage diversification in production, providing significant environmental benefits and making an important contribution to food sovereignty for families.

The scope of this project is limited to the seven municipalities originally identified as pilot locations: Bolívar (State of Barinas), Andrés Bello and Aricagua (State of Mérida), Andrés Eloy Blanco and Morán (State of Lara), Sucre (State of Portuguesa) and Boconó (State of Trujillo). We hope that extending the scope of this project to the remaining municipalities of the Andean mountains can make a significant contribution in the medium-long term to the conservation of the landscape mosaic. At the end of the project, sufficient information was not available to analyse the conservation status of biodiversity in the area and, as a result, it is not possible to quantitatively evaluate the effect of the project during its execution period.

For the capacity-building component, the project focused its efforts on the adoption of environmentally-friendly practices, generally obtaining successful results with the producers involved. However, no significant progress was made on the component related to environmental public policy at local level. Despite our efforts, municipal institutions have not adopted tools for environmental planning which are useful for biodiversity conservation and the use of sustainable resources in the area. However, we did manage to provide some one-off examples which were of interest at community level and which should be captured and analysed for their potential for replication in the remaining locations.

There is a significant lack of tools for monitoring and evaluation, both at project level and more widely, particularly with regard to the status and trends of biodiversity in the area. The project led to the development of key knowledge products ("*Estudio comparativo de cambio de uso del suelo 2008 – 2012*" [Comparative study of changes in land use 2008-2012] and "*Estudio de diversidad estructural y florística en bosques con café de sombra y sin café, así como el estudio de número de aves y mamíferos por prioridad de conservación observados en los transeptos de bosques sin café y pastizales/tierras agrícolas en el área del acción del proyecto 51604 – Conservación del paisaje productivo de los andes venezolanos*" [Study of structural and floral diversity in forest with shade-grown coffee and without coffee, as well as a study of the number of birds and mammals of conservation priority observed in a transect of forests without coffee and pasture/agricultural land in the activity areas of project 51604 - Conservation of the productive landscape in the Venezuelan Andes]) which were not available during project execution but which should be finalised and made available, given the enormous potential they have as tools for guidance with the continuity of this strategy. It also led to the systematic collection of the working experience of producers in different environments, which will contribute to organisational learning and above all to the refinement of the working model.

The main *recommendations* are as follows:

- Corrective measures:
  - Design: encouraging the effective participation of the stakeholders subsequently involved in the execution, ensuring a smooth transition between both phases; quantifying the goals more clearly and clarifying the scope of the project more precisely, particularly with regard to the results which can be directly achieved through the work of the project.
  - Execution: improving inter-agency communication between IAs and EAs; developing more agile mechanisms for management and decision-making; building a climate of improved mutual trust.
  - Evaluation: planning the compilation of information in greater detail; developing a complete system for monitoring and evaluation which goes beyond just formulating indicators

- Consolidation measures:
  - Further extending the processes of productive diversification, particularly developing the elements of tourism and ornamental flowers, for their important economic potential, as well as reforestation activities, seeking more effective incentive mechanisms
  - Providing continuity and improving links with State financial mechanisms to support producers with the adoption of environmentally-friendly practices (FONDAS, the Women's Bank, Banco Agrícola, etc.).
  - Ensuring the initiation of the Grant Fund for the project as a matter of urgency, to make definitive progress with key processes at community level and, above all, to avoid creating false expectations during the second phase of project execution
  - Consolidating the construction of the Geographic Information System, ensuring its compatibility with similar systems in other programmes of the institution, MPPAT or even other Ministries and related public institutions.
  - Supporting community-based organisations with the development of shared structures, following the guidance of the national development policy.

- Other additional proposals:
  - Developing and validating the Participative Certification model, extending its application to other areas as well as coffee, towards a model of location labels for social and environmental quality
  - Developing a participative environmental planning methodology at local level, from community to municipal level, supported by the GIS. Contributing to the debate on the transformation of the legal framework with regard to geographical classification and landscape planning, to respond more appropriately to current needs and the demands of the local people

iii. Acronyms and abbreviations

ABRAE	Áreas bajo régimen de administración especial [Areas under special administration]
AOP	Annual Operating Plan
BIOCENTRO	Centro para el Estudio de la Biodiversidad Neotropical [Centre for the Study of Neotropical Biodiversity]
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CI	Conservación Internacional [Conservation International]
CIAAL	Centro de Investigaciones Agroalimentaria de la Universidad [University Agro-alimentary Research Centre]
CIARA	Fundación de Capacitación e Innovación para Apoyar la Revolución Agraria [Capacity-building and Innovation Foundation to support the Agrarian Revolution]
CIDIAT	Centro Interamericano de Desarrollo e Investigación Ambiental Territorial [Inter-American Centre for Development and Local Environmental Research]
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CSD	Cooperation for Sustainable Development
EA	Executive Agency
FLO	Fairtrade Labelling Organisations
FONDAS	Fondo para el Desarrollo Agrario Socialista [Socialist Agrarian Development Fund]
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
IA	Implementing Agency
ICAE	Instituto de Ciencias Ambientales y Ecológicas [Institute for Ecological and Environmental Science]
IGVSB	Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar [Simón Bolívar Geographical Institute of Venezuela]
IMO	Institute for Market Ecology
INIA	Instituto Nacional de Investigación y Tecnología Agraria [National Institution for Research and Agricultural Technology]
INPARQUES	Instituto Nacional de Parques [National Parks Institute]
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MINEP	Ministerio para la Economía Popular [People's Ministry of Economics]
MPPA	Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ambiente [People's Environment Ministry - also known by its previous name of Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources - MARN]
MPPAT	Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Agricultura y Tierras [People's Ministry for Agriculture and Land]
MPPP	Ministerio del Poder Popular de Planificación [People's Ministry for Planning]
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OTCU	Operational and Technical Co-ordination Unit
PAT	Tropical Andes Programme
PDPF	Project Development and Preparation Facility
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PPM	Project Planning Matrix

SGP	Small Grants Programme
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound
SNE	Sistema Nueva Etapa [New Stage System]
TOR	Terms of Reference
ULA	Universidad de Los Andes [University of the Andes]
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNELLEZ	Universidad Nacional Experimental de los Llanos Ezequiel Zamora [Ezequiel Zamora National Experimental University of the Plains]
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

1.1 Evaluation purpose

The goal of this evaluation is to analyse what has been achieved by the results of the Terrandina project, assess their importance, their operations, their success and their sustainability, as well as establishing lessons learned and best practices which can improve the sustainability of the benefits of this project and help to improve UNDP/GEF programming in general.

The evaluation covers the entire project period (2006-2013). With regard to substantive content, it provides specific recommendations based on the evidence compiled on internal and external factors and programmatic, organisational-functional, technical, administrative-financial and political factors, or others which had a positive or negative impact on achieving the project results and its contribution to the country's general environmental objectives.

Considering the specific geography of the project, the study of each of the seven pilot project locations has been included in the analysis, at least at municipal level. Due to limited time and resources, access to the community level was limited to a small sample of communities in each municipality. At institutional level, the evaluation tries to provide evidence of the substantive contributions of the public bodies participating, as well as the support of UNDP and GEF as international partners.

Finally, at organisational level, the evaluation process tries to generate materials for knowledge management in the institutions involved, with regard to aspects such as the identification of best practice and worst practice for introducing changes or improvements in the design and execution of UNDP environmental projects in Venezuela; or the usefulness and relevance of the products developed with project support such as tools for the country's environmental policy, among other things.

1.2 Objectives and methodology

The objectives of this evaluation process are as follows:

- Evaluating the extent to which the desired results were achieved during the execution period, as well as the relevance of the project as part of the GEF strategic framework, the UNDP Assistance Framework in Venezuela and the public policies of the country in the area addressed by the project.
- Analysing the sustainability of the effects generated by the project, and in this case, the potential impact of the work in the medium-long term.
- Evaluating the design and execution of the project: consistency between activities, expected results and the achievement of the specific objective.
- Evaluating the activities carried out, the rate of execution, their contribution to the achievement of results and optimisation of the resources employed to achieve them.

1.2.1 Conceptual framework

The main theoretical references used by the evaluation team for the framing of this document are from the following evaluation paradigms:

- We hope to gain a deeper understanding of the true determining factors (theory of change) which affect project performance and not only for the products obtained (Theory-Driven Evaluation approach - Chen, 1990)
- We hope to generate useful information, which can be applied for project improvement during the remaining execution time (Utilisation-Focused Evaluation approach - Patton, 1986)
- When we produce our evaluation conclusions, the result will be the consequence of a negotiated process with the parties concerned (Fourth Generation Evaluation approach - Guba and Lincon, 1989)

The evaluation also takes into account the UNDP Evaluation Policy and the common Norms and Standards for Evaluation of the United Nations.

1.2.2 Information-gathering techniques

Given the characteristics of this evaluation, the following information-gathering techniques were used:

- *Document analysis:* a documentation review was carried out related to the design and execution of the project, reports on products derived from the planned activities (consultation, classification, etc.) and documentation on applicable legislation and the related public policies. We also consulted several scientific sources on specific themes: shade-grown coffee production, certification, environmental services, and others. The complete list of documentation consulted can be found in the annex.
- *Consultations*: a total of 7 consultations were held (one consultation per municipality) with representatives of state institutions at local level (municipal entities, local delegations of MPPA, MPPAT and other appointed bodies). For details of the participants in each consultation, please see the list in the annex.
- *Focus groups*: due to the particular characteristics of each location, different means were used for meetings with producers. In each case, at least one meeting was held in each municipality (up to three in some cases) with small groups (4-10), normally mixed (men and women). The list of these activities can also be found in the annex.
- *Transects*: Visits were made to at least one experimental unit per municipality (up to three in some cases) as well as visits to the traditional farms of the producers. In each case, the activity was led by the producers. Participant observation was also carried out for the complete journey of a tourist route linked to one of the community groups which the programme works with. The details of the units and farms visited can be found in the annex.
- *Workshops*: 4 workshops were held with the technical staff of the different Ministries related to the project. One kick-off workshop, one workshop with the CIARA coordination team, one workshop with the CIARA municipal coordinators and one workshop to discuss the preliminary results of the evaluation.

1.2.3 Analytical focus

The design of the evaluation is a non-experimental type - design D6 which is used in most cases ("Group of beneficiaries after the project without baseline data or control group"[2]). As shown in the evaluation matrix (annex), it was considered important to conduct an analysis of **Programme Theory**, in order to understand the rationale for the project when it was designed, and to subsequently identify the real determining factors which allow us to discern the causal relations between the programme implemented and the results obtained. The focus of the analysis, in any case, is not based on causal attribution, given the complexities of the processes and the lack of a previously planned evaluation which would facilitate this. Rather, when seeking a focus for this evaluation, we emphasised the interest of the parties in evaluating the **contribution** of the programme to its environmental objectives.

Given the nature of the information generated, and without prejudice to the specific use of quantitative approximation in particular cases, the analysis was undertaken with an interpretative focus. We therefore use discourse analysis, both for documentary information and descriptive and evaluative information obtained from interviews and focus groups.

Based on the evaluation questions, the information obtained was compared using a triangulation approach, whenever possible. Due to this methodological choice, and consistent with the theoretical framework mentioned previously, it is especially important to have a process of dialogue and consensus with the parties involved in the evaluation, ensuring in any case the principle of independence from the external evaluation. For this reason, the preliminary results of the evaluation were provided to the project partners after the fieldwork was complete. We hope for a process of circulation and revision of the evaluation report before it is finalised.

1.3 Structure of the report

Following the recommendations of the "Guidance for conducting terminal evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects" indicated in the Terms of Reference for this evaluation, we have followed the outlines suggested in Annex F. Thus, the Executive Summary of the evaluation is presented first, followed by the key features of the assessment (section 1) and project evaluation (section 2). Section 3 contains the detailed evaluation information, including the analysis at the design level (3.1), execution (3.2) and main findings (3.3) following the criteria indicated in the TOR. Finally, in section 4, we give the main conclusions, recommendations and most significant practices.

[2] For a detailed description of the different design options, please refer e.g. to Baker (Baker, 2000)

2. Description of the project and its context

2.1 Start of the project and duration

The project began officially on 12 December 2006, although it had been planned for October of the previous year. The origins of the initiative go back to 2002, with the initial ideas for the concept. Over the following three years, the necessary arrangements were made for project formulation through a PDF-B, with a 10-month duration.

The project duration was 42 months, with completion planned for 31 December 2013.

2.2 Problem addressed by the project

The landscape of the Cordillera de Mérida has suffered from gradual degradation, which according to the project document, was estimated, in the middle of the last decade, to be around 50% of the original forest mass. This loss was fundamentally due to the unsustainable extraction of forest products, mainly indiscriminate logging, which is also usually illegal activity, as most land in this area is protected or under special administration (ABRAE).

A significant part of the productive landscape in the area is made up of shade-grown coffee plantations in small plots of land, a mode of cultivation which has existed for centuries. This approach constitutes a strategy which has allowed part of the forest mass to be maintained in an effective and environmentally friendly way. However, it has also suffered from a process of transformation, due to changes in land use towards activities which are more profitable to producers in the short-term, but very aggressive towards the environment, mainly the gradual conversion of plots of land into pasture for extensive livestock farming.

2.3 Immediate objectives and development objectives

The *specific objective* of the project was to ensure that the systems used by producers in the Coffee/Livestock Region of the Cordillera de Mérida continue to be biodiversity-friendly.

The ultimate development goal which the project aimed to achieve was to maintain the biodiversity value of the mosaic of land uses in the productive landscape of the area in question.

2.4 Indicators and baseline

The Logical Framework of the original project included a wide range of indicators. For the purpose of simplification, we have listed the key indicators in this section, corresponding to a specific project objective.

KEY INDICATORS	BASELINE
IOE.1. Hectares of shade-grown coffee throughout the area which have not been converted to less biodiversity-friendly land uses.	362,400 ha, representing 18.3% of the area
IOE.2. Hectares of forest cover without coffee (including fallow land) throughout the area which have not been converted to other uses.	641,700 ha, representing 32.5% of the total
IOE.3. Forest without coffee in the CLR which has not been increasingly disturbed.	299,400 km2 undisturbed 492,300 km2 mildly disturbed 291,100 km2 moderately disturbed 268,100 km2 highly disturbed
IOE.4. The specific and structural diversity of the forest (with or without coffee) throughout the project area has not decreased	*Not available*
IOE.5. The forest area (with or without coffee) in key connecting corridors between protected areas has not decreased	74,987 ha of shade-grown coffee 183,046 ha of forest without coffee
IOE.6. The vegetation patches in key areas for connectivity between protected areas have not been increasingly fragmented	78 patches (42 of at least 1,000 ha, 29 between 1,000 and 9,999 ha and 7 of more than 10,000 ha)
IOE.7. Forest without coffee in key connecting corridors between protected areas has not been increasingly disturbed	29,759 ha undisturbed 81,242 ha moderately disturbed 33,862 ha moderately disturbed 38,235 ha highly disturbed
IOE.8. Number of families (by socio-economic class and gender of the head of family) with access to water supplies, sanitation, electricity, credit and food security as a result of biodiversity-friendly productive activities.	*Not available*

It is important to mention that neither during project execution nor during this evaluation process have we had access to the diagnostic sources used to develop the baseline references. Indicators IOE.4 and IOE.8 do not provide baseline data due to the fact that in the design, they both planned to use information gathering processes to establish these metrics, as part of the project execution. In the end, these activities were not carried out.

The scope of the project goals and the lack of consensus of the parties on this point was a key factor during project execution, as the report explains in greater detail.

2.5 Main stakeholders involved

The executive agency and main institutional stakeholder was the Fundación de Capacitación e Innovación para Apoyar la Revolución Agraria (CIARA) At the start of the project, this institution was part of the People's Ministry for the Collective Economy (MINEP), which no longer exists. It is now an autonomous body of the People's Ministry for Agriculture and Land (MPPAT).

The People's Ministry for Planning (MPPP) and the People's Ministry for the Environment (MPPA) were also part of the project agreement. At local level, state and municipal delegations participated from MPPAT and MPPP, as well as INPARQUES, also as an autonomous organisation. In some locations, community organisations were involved, such as community councils, cooperatives and other grassroots organisations to which producers belong.
Furthermore, a large number of potential stakeholders were identified during the design process, both public and private, who in the end did not participate.

2.6 Expected results

As described previously, the project is based around three main components, which correspond to the following three key results:

- R1: Producers in the pilot area have the necessary capacity to develop biodiversity-friendly production systems
- R2: Policies, planning frameworks and financial mechanisms which support biodiversity-friendly production systems in the pilot municipalities have been strengthened
- R3: The pilot municipalities operate as platforms for the exchange, distribution and replication of experience on best practice and lessons learned In addition, a fourth result was included with regard to management tasks:
    - R4: Adaptive management principles are supported by monitoring and evaluation tools that help to orient the management functions and project implementation

3. Findings

3.1 Design and formulation of the project

Prior to the analysis of the project design, it is worth reviewing what preceded it, with particular emphasis on the gestation process. The initiative originated in 2002, based on a project proposal driven by the NGOs Programa Andes Tropicales (PAT) and Conservation International (CI), both of which have experience with environmental projects in the Andes. In collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) and UNDP, a process of conceptualisation began, which led to an initial proposal being sent to GEF[3].

As a result of this first initiative, a design process began in 2004, with GEF financing through the Project Development and Preparation Facility[4](PDF-B), with a donation of US$347,500, in addition to the US$42,000 and US$81,000 contributed by PAT and CI, respectively[5]. In this proposal, PAT and CI acted as executive agencies at national level, while UNDP was the main implementing agency. Different stakeholders got involved in the process at local level: bodies with broad recognition in the environmental field[6], as well as the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture, through their regional delegations.

Once the design process was complete, and prior to the financing application to GEF, there was a change in criteria to fit with the project management structure, which meant the executive agency would need to be a government body. Through a process of institutional evaluation, it was agreed that CIARA would be suitable (at the time it belonged to the People's Ministry for the Collective Economy - MINEP), mainly due to its experience in managing international aid projects, as well as the specific importance of the production dimension in the final project design.

The final agreement significantly widened the budget contributions to the project, both from GEF financing and from the national budget. One of the most important factors incorporated into the final project definition with regard to the initial phases was the significant support from the Venezuelan state, with technical and financial contributions channelled through the National Coffee Plan.

[3]Request from the Ministry of Foreign Relations to the Resident UNDP Representative to initiate the application process with the GEF Project Formulation and Preparation Department. Date: 9 September 2002.

[4]This instrument has three modalities (A/B/C). Modality B is used to formulate projects for which a defined profile or concept already exists which includes the GEF priorities. The aim is to prepare a project document which is sufficiently detailed to submit for evaluation and, in this case, approval of the financing required by the GEF Council.

[5]PDF-B Annex 5: Letters of Co-financing from CI and PAT

[6]The Centre for the Study of Neotropical Biodiversity (BIOCENTRO) of the Ezequiel Zamora National Experimental University of the Plains, the Inter-American Centre for Development and Local Environmental Research (CIDIAT) of the University of the Andes, the Institute for Ecological and Environmental Science (ICAE) and the University of the Andes Agro-alimentary Research Centre, the NGOs Cooperation for Sustainable Development (CSD) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

3.1.1 Logical Framework Analysis of the project

Generally speaking, we consider the project formulation to be of very high quality in formal terms. Unfortunately, although in many development projects it is rare to have such a detailed project document at the start, some of the information which became critical during execution is not broken down in sufficient detail, as we will see later.

The project makes correct use of the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). In this respect, the evaluation team differs from the Intermediate Evaluation criteria, which noted the incorrect use of the features of the LFA, in particular the confusion between results and objectives. However, this team considers that the so-called "vertical" rationale of the project, i.e. the causal connection between the elements of the logical framework (from components and activities to the chain of results - products, effects and impacts) is correctly established, we emphasise, from a formal point of view.

The project bases its programme theory on a mechanism of comparative change. There is sufficient specialised reference material, as well as previous experience (in countries with similar problems to those in this area, with precedents in similar projects at smaller scale) to indicate that conservation in forest areas of high biodiversity value is compatible with environmentally friendly production uses, including shade-grown coffee cultivation. On the other hand, there is contrasting evidence on the validity of incentive mechanisms for coffee producers based on transformation towards the production and commercialisation of coffee, with added value generated from environmentally friendly processes. Yet although there is no explicit formal framework of inter-relationships between the different stakeholders in the project context (activity model), there is an exhaustive list of potential stakeholders, both participants and strategic partners, with their potential role in the process.

The logical structure of the project is based on four main components. Firstly, it aims to develop sufficient capacity at the level of shade-grown coffee producers, with regard to technical aspects - environmentally friendly production - and other areas such as improving organisational skills and environmental awareness. In an entirely complementary way, the project includes another demonstration component, with strategies based on the exchange of knowledge between producers, the use of experimental/demonstration farms and other similar mechanisms. This is also part of the strategy to extend the coverage of the project for greater effectiveness, and over time, to improve efficiency in terms of the use of resources, creating the maximum possible impact on producers (benefiting from the capacity of the most advanced and the most committed producers, thus embedding the process in the local environment).

At the same time, the project hopes to influence public policy, particularly at municipal level, through land planning proposals incorporating conservation priorities through sustainable agricultural production, with particular reference to coffee. Finally, a fourth component considers mechanisms for the systematic collection, monitoring and evaluation of data on the progress of production units in different areas, both purely agricultural and also socio-economic and socio-cultural. Beyond its usefulness in the project context itself, this component demonstrates its capacity to convert experience into a valid model which can be scaled up, not only at programme level (coffee-based projects) but also as the basis for a valid record for the executive agency to include in its programme portfolio.

The four components are reasonably internally consistent with regard to achieving the specific project objective, based on maintaining environmentally friendly production processes in the coffee/livestock region of the cordillera de Mérida. We note, however, that the monitoring and evaluation component has perhaps the least consistent focus, particularly with regard to the lack of

specific information. It is not sufficiently well set out in the project document, particularly with regard to the system to be developed, which appears to have been based on a conventional mechanism for monitoring the achievements of the project itself. However, this is a minor issue in the project rationale.

In the formulation of objectives, the project has a realistic approach, based on achieving the minimum requirements for biodiversity conservation in the area. Although the project strategy includes activities with greater impact in terms of environmentally friendly practices (greater diversification in production, agro-ecological production integrated into farms, etc.) it is assumed that in terms of results (project objective), sustainable change requires a slow dynamic, and therefore in conservation terms it is sufficient that current practices are maintained (basically just shade-grown coffee). This cautious approach, interestingly, contrasts with the over-ambitious scope in terms of goals, which is analysed further below.

The "horizontal" rationale (consistency between the different elements, with their goals, indicators and means of verification) reveals significant limitations which also constitute one of the critical points of the project, not for formal reasons but because of the consequences arising from it, mostly in the initial phase of execution. The formulation presents an excessive number of indicators, mostly highly overlapping and therefore redundant for this reason. On the other hand, some of the indicators considered do not have a baseline or, as a result, a specified goal (it actually says in the project that this would be part of the initial activities).

However, the most obviously critical aspect in this respect, both in the prior analysis phase and during the compilation of field data, relates to the definition of key project goals. The evaluation does not have access to the diagnostic information used in the project design, and therefore it is not possible to track the process of defining the goals specified. However, simple estimates demonstrate that either the scope was simply unachievable within the project structure, or that the indicators represented a very general point of reference in the project area, with little to no possibility of attributing any changes produced to the contribution made by the project[7].

Thus, with regard to these key indicators (PRODOC, p. 29), we consider that there are limitations in their definition as a balanced system for monitoring and evaluation. Although some indicators are suitable in terms of SMART qualities[8] (e.g. *"*number of producers who adopt these practices in the pilot areas"), many of them are difficult to measure (e.g. "connectivity of the landscape", "ecological role") or not very relevant (e.g. "number of land use plans"). Similarly, serious questions can be raised about strict causal attribution when considering issues such as "increasing the incomes of families" as a direct result of the project, given that in a project of this nature, it is almost impossible to separate effects of this type from other factors which may have come to bear which are not

[7]An example which illustrates this particularly well are the goals set for producers throughout the area. In order to work directly with 35,000 productive families, with an average capacity of 30 families per field technician/year, more than a thousand professionals would be required, a completely disproportionate number (significantly more that the total CIARA staff for all its programmes). Especially given that it concerns a calculation which includes producers who are indirectly affected (a point which should be indicated), even for an optimistic ratio of 4 to 1 (for each producer who benefits from the project, 4 neighbouring producers adopt environmentally friendly practices under their influence), you would still need a team of more than two hundred full-time field professionals (in practice, the CIARA team has 22 fieldworkers for 7 municipalities, not counting the 7 members of the coordination unit)

[8]High-quality references for internationally accepted indicators. Regarding the acronym of the criteria: (S) Specific, (M) Measurable, (A) Achievable, (Relevant), (T) Timebound.

attributable to the project.

As an absolutely minor point, we note with regard to the creation of indicators that the project does not follow the formulation set out in the LFA in the orthodox sense, that is, incorporating the summarised formulation of the quantity, quality, timescale, location and benefits aspects mentioned. However, it does set out more explicitly the baseline values available at the time of the design, as a basis for goals to be established subsequently. Once more this evaluation team differs from the criteria established by the Intermediate Evaluation, considering that this formulation, although it is not the most orthodox, does not contradict the ultimate nature of the indicators and is consistent with the framework available in the Project Planning Matrix (PPM). Therefore, it could be considered valid, as long as the baselines estimates and goals were relevant, realistic and measurable, as mentioned previously.

3.1.2 Risks and assumptions

The design conducted an exhaustive analysis of the project context, mainly with regard to the environmental aspect but also in other areas (economic, political-institutional, socio-cultural). As an exception to this, we note the lack of consideration given to gender equality and the human rights agenda, although with regard to the latter, we can assume this project fits in with the goals of Sustainable Human Development.

Based on this analysis, the project formulation includes a coherent description of the potential risks, both in the logical framework (PPM matrix) and in the narrative. Up to seven major risks were identified with regard to Result 1 (R1):

- Regarding the stability of national and international prices for products derived from biodiversity-friendly practices (low risk)
- Exports not subject to restrictions (low risk)
- Stable national currency (medium risk)
- Relatively stable interest rates (low risk)
- Costs of certification remain within reasonable limits (low risk)
- Unexpected plagues and illness do not arise (low risk)
- Reputation of the country as an attractive destination (low risk)

On first sight, it seems fairly obvious that although the factors identified appear to be an adequate description of the risks, there was an excessively optimistic view of the risk levels. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate this point.

Although we know in principle that during the two years prior to project execution, there was a minor recovery in tourist activity (particularly in inbound international tourism), at the time of the project design, the data available (probably information going up to 2004 at the latest) indicated a significant drop in this sector of the economy[9].

Prior to the project diagnosis, researchers from the National Institute for Research and Agrarian Technology (INIA) detected and reported the potential threat of the Coffee Berry Borer, already present in the state of Táchira since 1995 and in the state of Lara since 2000, in the area of Caspo, 10 km from Sanare, in the Andrés Eloy Blanco municipality[10] (one of the project pilot locations). It has

[9]Word Bank (2011) World Development Indicators. ISBN: 978-0-8213-8711-5

[10]For more details, see the studies by Fernández and Cordero: Fernandez, S. y Cordero, J. (2007) Biología de la broca

harmful consequences for the quality of the grain, which is left practically empty by the actions of the insect.

Another striking example is the price of coffee certification. There have been several studies (already available at the time) on Development Aid projects, which clearly indicate that one of the factors limiting access for small producers of the relevant crops, such as coffee or cocoa, for this kind of certification, is precisely the high cost of international certification processes (Pagiola and Ruthenberg, 2003)[11]. In fact, many of the strategies for such Development Aid projects include provisions for dealing with this barrier to entry through non-refundable resources.

Quite clearly, the risk assessment was more than optimistic. In a simplistic reading of the Logical Framework structure, these factors no doubt have a critical influence on the logical chain of results, and from this viewpoint, it was used by the evaluation team to positively assess their identification. However, also from this perspective, these factors do not stand up to the most superficial analysis. Anecdotally, we note that during the project execution absolutely all the risks identified arose to a significant extent, both in themselves (due to national and international circumstances) and with regard to the project (due mainly to public policy decisions, as discussed later in the analysis of results, section 3.1).

3.1.3 Lessons from other relevant projects incorporated into the design

The project design included a large number of well-established strategies. The work of conservation through shade-grown coffee and complementary cultivation on small farms was part of the ecosystems services strategies which were already being applied in the decade prior to the project formulation. At international level, and particularly in the Latin American region, there are many successful examples of this, particularly in Mexico, Central America and Colombia, among others. At the time when the project under evaluation was being designed, we note that said mechanisms had already gone from being pilot projects and programmes, to a consolidated strategy, although obviously on a small scale compared to the coffee market overall.

This experience of environmentally friendly coffee cultivation attracted a considerable degree of International Development Aid, both for its environmental aspects and the alternative production methods for small-scale producers in some of the poorest rural areas. We must remember that this coincided with an international crisis in coffee prices, which began at the end of the 1990s. Thus, numerous bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as civil society organisations from Northern countries, began to invest funding in this kind of project, mainly through non-refundable aid programmes.

However, the project also considered experience being developed in Venezuela, particular in the project work area. As noted in the project introduction, the initiative originally came from PAT and CI, who had successful experience with this previously, at a small scale, with actions such as environmentally friendly practices, certification for organic coffee or community-based tourism

del café Hypothenemus hampei en condiciones de laboratorio. Bioagro, Vol 19 (1) and Fernández, S., Cordero, J. (2005), Evaluación de atrayentes alcohólicos en trampas artesanales para el monitoreo y control de la broca del café Hypothenemus hampeiBioagro Vol 17 (3)

[11]Pagiola, S. and Ruthenberg, I. M. (2003), *Venta de biodiversidad en una taza de café: el café cultivado a la sombra y conservación forestal en Mesoamérica*, in Pagiola, S., Bishop, J. and Landell-Mills, N.,*La venta de servicios ambientales forestales*. National Institute for Ecology and Climate Change. Secretary for the Environment and Natural Resources. Federal Government of Mexico.

enterprises. Although these strategies were included in the project design, the demonstration role of the PAT and CI examples were given lower priority as soon as they were no longer key stakeholders, becoming yet another part of the framework for articulation at local level.

On the other hand, we would like to mention the case of the Quebrada Azul cooperative in particular. This small cooperative in the Andrés Bello Municipality, created at the start of the 1990s, managed to obtain certification in a very short time (less than 4 years) from the IMO[12](for organic production) and FLO[13](fair trade), with a working approach very similar to that of the project. The Quebrada Azul experience was considered by the project designers to be a successful example (PRODOC p. 32). This cooperative also appears to be the only baseline reference used for some indicators of results, such as "number of farms in the pilot coffee/livestock region with certified coffee" or "number of producer organisations in the pilot coffee/livestock region who participate in biodiversity-friendly practices". It also indicates the important inspirational role of the model of this cooperative, which influenced the project design, particularly at micro level (working with producers).

3.1.4 Planned participation of the stakeholders involved

The project design was a lengthy process (roughly 4 years) with an important technical component, as well as coordination of stakeholders, at both national and local level. In the initial phase of the concept, as mentioned previously, the key actors were the NGOs PAT and CI, who successfully joined forces with the national government - mainly through MARN, and to a lesser extent through MPPAT and MINEP/CIARA - and UNDP. Specifically, the connection arose from a CI proposal on the gradual creation of an ecological corridor along the length of the Andes, a shared objective of these institutions.

The phase of formulation through the PDF-B instrument facilitated a dynamic of greater participation of local stakeholders. One significant milestone in this regard, noted by several of the people interviewed, was the formulation workshop held in Panama, with the participation of institutions such as ULA, INPARQUES and a regional delegation of MARN, among others. This phase allowed numerous activities to be deployed at local level to identify needs and establish strategies, not only for the environment but also with regard to other aspects of the problem (socio-economic in particular). Semi-structured interviews and 6 local workshops were held (government bodies, local representatives of national organisations, missions, cooperatives, local NGOs and some community-based organisations which included coffee producers).

Finally, the project included an extensive strategy for the participation of relevant local stakeholders with a view to execution[14], a total of 28 public and private national bodies (both central and local) and 23 groups and collectives at community level.

Broadly, we consider that the design gave detailed consideration to the participation of project stakeholders, although they mainly played a consultative role, leaving the main design decisions to be taken by the promotional group. In this respect, the focus did not appear to facilitate the process of ownership, above all at local level. The case of the collective of small coffee producers is particularly worth mentioning, as they were not given sufficient hearing in the project design process. This may

[12] Institute for Market Ecology (Switzerland)

[13] Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (Germany)

[14] PRODOC, Part IV: Participation Plan for stakeholders. pp. 90-102

partly explain the bias towards aid noted in one part of the project design, the part regarding benefits aimed at producers.

It is also important to analyse the nature of the participation of the project executive agency, as we will see in the chapter on implementation, as this constitutes a key factor which explains certain difficulties during start-up. Although CIARA seems to have been involved in the various phases of formulation (including from the start in 2002, in the conceptual definition), the role given to this body was only partial and not very relevant in the early stages. Subsequently, given the change in criteria mentioned previously, towards the end of the implementation phase, CIARA became the project's national partner and this is how it was presented in the final version.

As a result of all this, the institution found itself with an undesirable role, with the central responsibility for a project which it had not developed itself. On the other hand, also mentioned previously, this challenge was aggravated by the differences between the body's central goal (agricultural expansion) and the project objectives (environmental conservation). In sum, CIARA found itself being asked to lead a project of considerable scope and complexity which it had not designed, when its specialist skills as a government body only covered one of the project themes (even if it was the most relevant body in terms of resources). No doubt it was not in a very comfortable position, to be responsible for achieving results.

3.1.5 Potential for replication

The design included a strategy for replication as a central part of the project rationale. The mechanism set out was based on activities in seven (7) pilot areas in the first stage, with the aim of obtaining initial results as a demonstration, as well as allowing the adjustment of working tools in terms of capacity building and technical assistance. Subsequently, in the second phase, it would be extended to 13 more municipalities in the Andes mountain chain.

The seven pilot municipalities were selected with an international focus, seeking locations with specific potential, using criteria focused mainly on having a greater understanding of the capacity for action in the planned project.

- Previous experience of concrete demonstrations
- Receptiveness and sufficient commitment from the stakeholders
- Different levels of dispersal and geographical access, with municipalities from all parts of the mountain range[15]
- Locations with investment from the Government in coffee, prioritising areas with higher investment
- Different levels of human development, prioritising the poorest areas
- Potential to implement schemes for channelling contributions to the cost of environmental services

Finally, it is worth noting that the project could count on the technical deployment of the regional delegations of the various Ministries involved as a key structure for replication. In that respect, this evaluation considers that this strategy presents certain deficiencies, when taken as the only mechanism for sharing knowledge and experience, given the limitations on staff and resources in certain local areas.

[15] With the exception of the state of Táchira, which was excluded due to its involvement in a previous project

3.1.6 Comparative advantage of UNDP

At the time of the project design, UNDP had sufficient capacity as the implementing agency of this project. Firstly, the UNDP office in Venezuela has experience in managing GEF projects, and is the entity with the largest number of GEF projects in the entire country portfolio (including projects at both national and regional scale).

Secondly, at the time of the design, UNDP was managing two projects related to this one: GEF/UNDP "Biodiversity Conservation in the North and Central Andean Plateau", with a regional focus, and GEF/UNDP/Rainforest Alliance "Biodiversity Conservation for Coffee", with a national focus. Assigning it to UNDP meant there would be a certain potential for collaboration, and in any case the adoption of shared working criteria.

Finally, it is worth noting that throughout the process from the original project conceptualisation, UNDP Venezuela maintained a fluid relationship of communication and collaboration with the project promoters, both with the NGOs involved and the managers at MARN. It is particularly relevant to highlight this final point, as the institutional dynamic with MARN in this context - sufficiently regular communication and high-level coordination - fluctuated significantly during the course of the project.

3.1.7 Links between the project and other work in the sector

The project included certain considerations in this respect, taking connections with public policy and other international aid projects into account, as well as consistency with the UNDP country programming framework.

With regard to the public policies related to the project, the design highlighted two connections:

- At macro level, consistency with the "National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan" of 2001.
- At meso level, complementarity with the National Coffee Plan.

In the latter case, articulation with the project mainly concerned the financial aspect, as this state programme was the main source of co-financing. However, the project document does not set out the concrete aspects of coordination between these two strategies[16].

On the other hand, with regard to international aid, four projects were identified as being related to the project, or influencing it:

- "Combating Soil Degradation in Arid and Semi-arid Zones of the States of Falcón and Lara" (GEF/ UNDP)
- Common Code of the Community Coffee Initiative ("Initiative 4C"), supported and facilitated by Group 4C of the European Federation of Coffee, the Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and German International Aid (GTZ)
- "Biodiversity Conservation in the North and Central Andean Plateau" (Regional projectGEF/ UNDP)
- "Biodiversity Conservation for Coffee" (GEF/ UNDP/Rainforest Alliance)

The first two examples have a number of things in common with this project and thus a certain complementarity. However, in the third example, we note that the areas of work of both projects do not exactly coincide. In any case both projects do share certain strategies, mainly sustainable management, capacity building, environmental education. Finally, the fourth project is an initiative which was not carried out in Venezuela, where the relationship was based on the potential advantages for certain certified Venezuelan producers generated by this project in certain markets, such as an increase in the sales price.

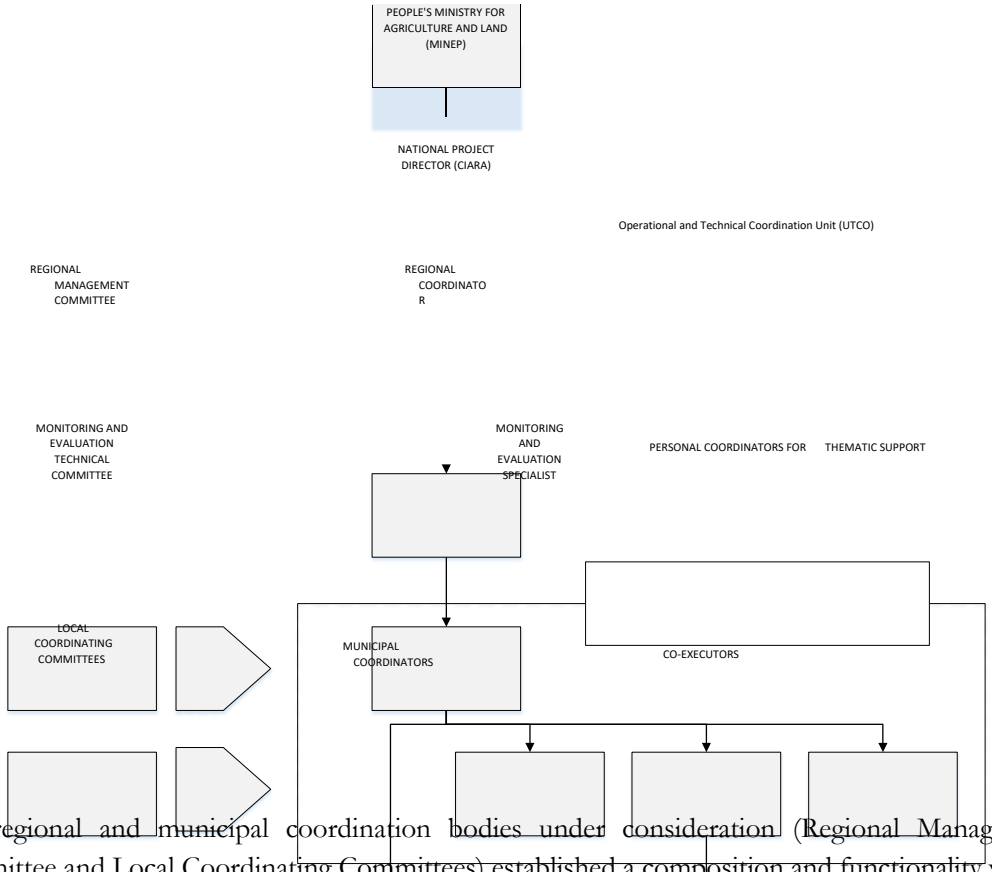
With regard to articulation with UNDAF 2003-2007, in the view of the evaluation team, the project could directly contribute to objectives 9 (Socio-economic indicators and indicators on ecosystem services used during the design of initiatives on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity) and 10 (Building capacity of local government and communities to participate in and implement initiatives on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity). The PRODOC refers to the capacity of the project to also contribute to certain thematic areas prioritised by CPAP: gender equality, energy and environment and democratic governance, although it does not specify in what way. Similarly, it mentions the potential contribution to the Millennium Development Goals 1, 3, 4, 7 and 8.

[16]There is a reference to the contribution of the National Coffee Plan in the Executive Summary, Table 1 - Co-financing, which indicates in general terms that the Plan will co-finance activities of "technical assistance and expansion".

3.1.8 Management arrangements

The project is implemented under the Full National Execution modality (NEX). This option is suitable for the project characteristics, given the management capacity of CIARA at the time.

On the other hand, the project established a very comprehensive project management structure, which was not lacking in complexity. The original organogram can be seen below:



The regional and municipal coordination bodies under consideration (Regional Management Committee and Local Coordinating Committees) established a composition and functionality which, although they appear coherent in theory, were not really viable in practice, particularly with regard to the governmental institutions not directly involved in project execution. It is worth remembering that apart from CIARA, the availability of staff in local offices of the various ministries involved was and continues to be very limited, which by definition makes it more difficult to participate in these coordination spaces.

3.2 Project execution

3.2.1 Adaptive management: changes to the design and/or products during execution

In the execution phase of this project, two main phases can be distinguished, differentiated chronologically by the mid-term evaluation, carried out in 2010. Thus, the management dynamic as well as the project performance were distinctly different in each of the two phases.

As already noted in the design analysis, a key factor influencing the project performance from the start lies in the changes made towards the end of the design process with regard to institutional leadership. Thus CIARA was not in an easy position when the project began, as it had not actively participated in most of the design process and thus inherited a project and communication model which was not necessarily suited to its mission and characteristics.

In fact, this was one of the changes of focus which CIARA had to make, going from an initial model with a high level of decentralisation in the execution (based on collaboration and subcontracting by the NGOs who were going to be the executive agencies) to a more centralised model, in which the executive body was more directly involved in the practical implementation of the planned activities. This change, however, was not sufficiently consolidated until after the intermediate evaluation, although it became formally effective when CIARA designated a project team exclusively for this purpose.

Changes were also made at the start to the institutional guidelines which strongly influenced some of the key principles on which the project was based, which in turn influenced the logical and predictable result of the project performance, particularly in the first phase. Thus, elements such as payment for environmental services or international coffee certification processes were immediately brought into question and, in practice, eliminated as a possibility for the project. As a result of this re-centralisation in the execution of activities, a policy of almost total exclusion of non-state actors was imposed, for specialist NGOs in particular, confirming the disconnection between the design process and project execution, and leading to the loss of expertise generated and the opportunities for coordination between different stakeholders designed into the initial process.

However, faced with this changing scenario, the project coordinators did not initiate significant changes either in the project strategy or the results framework during the first years of execution. The adaptive management in this period was therefore virtually non-existent. As a result it led to a low level of budget execution and the physical impossibility of obtaining the results originally anticipated (though this aspect is also strongly influenced by the over-ambitious original goals, which is discussed in section 3.1 below)

The mid-term evaluation led to a change in the project cycle, with the introduction of certain measures to make progress with project execution which has, as a result, generated interesting results which can be seen today. From the perspective of the final evaluation, the two initiatives with the greatest subsequent positive impact which came out of this process were the so-called "Strategic Committee[17]" and the proposal for reformulation of the project. The first one constituted a re-conceptualisation of the strategic levels of project management, i.e. re-establishing a mechanism for coordination between the different national public institutions involved in the project. This committee, which became operational in 2011, was to be a space for decision-making at political

[17] A high-level project coordination space, made up of the Ministries involved in the project: MPPPF, MPPA and MPPAT. The project partners CIARA and UNDP were also included in this space.

level. The initiative reflected the intention behind the design of the coordination spaces mentioned in the previous section (Regional Monitoring Committee and Municipal Coordination Committees), but with an important difference: the consensus decisions reached in this space would be at a high institutional level, in order to streamline the implementation of changes based on the resolutions adopted.

One aspect that has generated the most frustration in the project team is undoubtedly the scope of the project and particularly the level of goals set out in some of the key indicators (basically surface area and production units /family units served). It has been shown that the project experienced significant pressure to obtain results (most likely unnecessary), which resulted in the process of reformulation of the logical framework at this late stage. Thus, in the 2011[18] Strategic Committee, the project team made a proposal for changes to the framework, to suit the actual execution capacity, given the resources and time available until the end of the execution period (less than two years)[19].

In the technical team's view, this framework proved extremely useful for the final part of the project. In the view of the evaluation team, the proposed changes did not affect the specific objective of the project, not even its work strategy, which was carried through to the new proposal. It was essentially a change in the scope, as well as how to measure it. No changes were made to the nature of the proposed products, although we note the increased importance of the training component and to a lesser extent, the demonstration component. In this new version, the project area was limited to 7 pilot municipalities, postponing replication to the 13 remaining municipalities for a subsequent project.

This offers some interesting lessons. On the one hand, the opportunities for participation in the redesign demonstrate ownership of the project (and thus commitment) by the current team. Moreover, the pressure to obtain results is meaningless if it only focuses on the achievement of goals (which may even have been incorrectly set and therefore may not be a useful performance benchmark). Conversely, results-based management for development places the emphasis on mechanisms for change and whether they are able to generate positive effects.

3.2.2 Agreements with relevant institutions in the region

While there has been an adequate level of coordination between CIARA and other institutions (mainly public) at the local level, there are no specific bilateral or multilateral agreements in this regard. The project has played an important role in this type of coordination, as the promoter of these spaces in all the cases observed. Some cases with a remarkable level of coordination are the Boconó municipality (inter-agency coordination) and Andrés Belo (intra-institutional coordination between the different departments, programs and agencies of MPPAT).

The remaining agreements available with some public and private entities belong to the area of contracting services to carry out specific activities under the various project components.

[18] Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the Strategic Committee (09/02/2011)

[19] This new framework could not strictly be considered a "reformulation" in terms of management, as the cycle of approval for the new framework was not completed by the competent bodies of GEF in this matter. Thus, the evaluation should be considered as an internal reorientation document. However, this fact did not detract from the importance of the process carried out, because it had support at both the technical level (project team) and the political level (Strategic Committee).

3.2.3 Feedback from the Monitoring and Evaluation system

The Monitoring and Evaluation system has basically played an information role during project execution, on a relatively limited level. It has allowed some facts to be established about the project progress, mainly oriented towards the external reporting function for management procedures (annual reports, PIRs, etc.). However, it does not seem to have been used for internal functions such as strategic and/or operational reorientation, continuous improvement and organisational learning, for which the project coordinators focus on other qualitative inputs from the technical team.

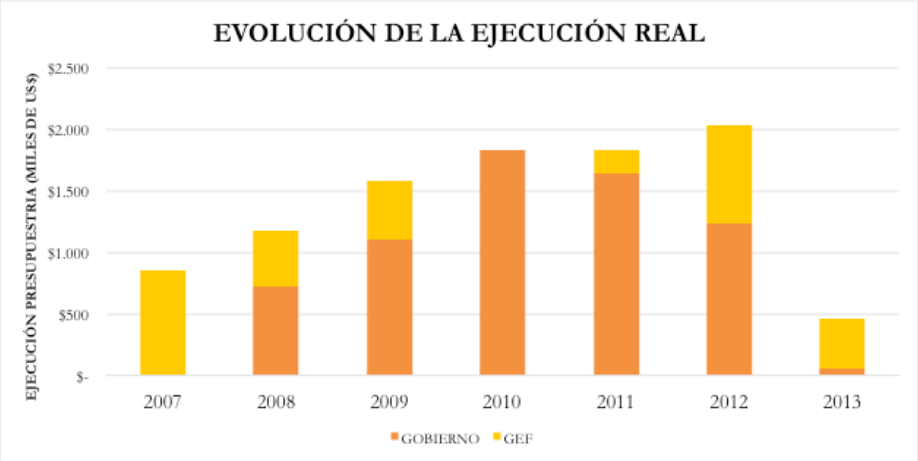
The mid-term evaluation process deserves a special mention. This evaluation exercise can state categorically that it generated highly valuable feedback to the project. The process has generated sufficient information to highlight the paralysis suffered by the project to date in terms of results. As previously mentioned, some of the recommendations made were taken on board by managers and implemented, and as a result at the end of the project we can see positive changes clearly linked to the influence of this process.

As a significant "signal" about the importance of this evaluation in the project cycle, it is worth noting that all the stakeholders interviewed directly or indirectly about project management used the interim evaluation to distinguish between two different stages of the execution period, not only as different time periods, but also due to the differences in management style that denote each stage, with the second stage influenced by the window of opportunity provided by the evaluation.

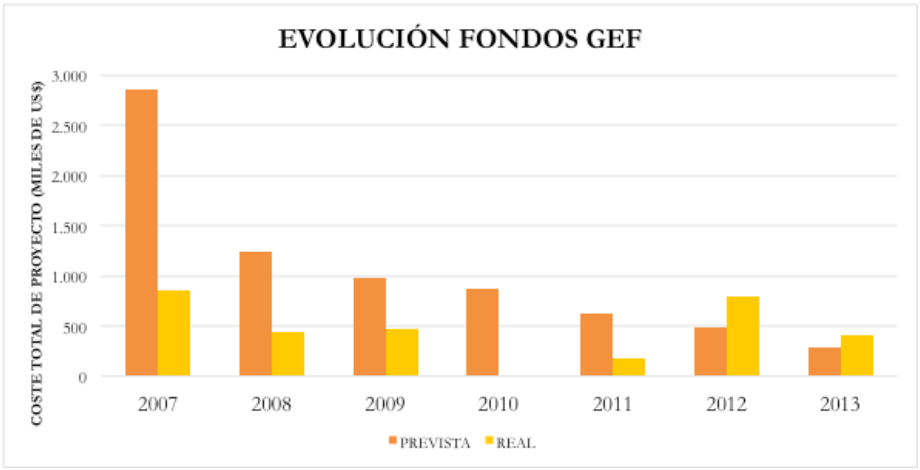
3.2.4 Financial management of the project

The financial aspects of the project, inevitably, were significantly affected by the technical and political changes the project experienced in its different stages. As a result, in general terms it is clear that the original financial programming has not been fully achieved. However, as we will see below, the changes are mainly of a quantitative and not qualitative nature, that is, they fundamentally affect the level of execution but not the quality nor the transparency of the project executed with GEF funds.

The original project budget was for a total of US$36,896,961, with a government contribution of US$29,545,061 and total GEF financing of $7,351,900[20]. The annual budget programming showed a constant annual expenditure (around US$ 5 million annually) apart from the first year - around US$ 7 million - due to certain initial investments (this was also the largest annual payment from GEF, at around US$2,862,500). As we can see in the following figure, the dynamics of actual execution were quite different:



Based on general calculations, the level of budget execution was around 26.4%. This amount rises to 43.2% for GEF funds, of which US$3,172,390 were finally executed. The changes to this can be seen in the following graph:



[20]The data for the financial details contained in this section was obtained from the information provided by the project's Technical Coordination Unit. The two main sources used were: a) UNDP documents of accountability for GEF funds; b) the "New Stage" (SNA) project information system of the national government.

Note the lack of financial execution in 2010. This was because no agreement was reached between UNDP and CIARA on the AOP corresponding to this period. 2011 is also significant in this regard, since the low level of execution is due to the fact that the actual period of execution reported is just one month. Generally delays were detected in the receipt of funds which led to subsequent delays in the start of budget execution for all years except 2008 (11 months of execution out of the 12 planned). This is a clear indication of the difficulties which arose in coordination between the national partner and implementing agency with regard to financial execution, as discussed below in section 3.2.6.

With regard to co-financing, the project originally included a large contribution from the national government to the final budget, based on a ratio of one to four (80% from the government contribution, a total amount of US$ 29,545,061). This co-financing would be supported by the National Coffee Plan, as stated in the PRODOC (p. 52). However, from the design stage itself, we see a lack of detail on the programming of these funds, particularly in the method of accounting for these contributions in the project management system. These recording difficulties represent a constraint when making judgements about these government contributions.

In addition to this circumstance, we have detected a fact which generates even more confusion. For one, in the original PRODOC record the contribution is accounted for under "in-kind", while Table 1 of the Executive Project report, which breaks down the co-financing contributions by project results, indicates that in all cases the contribution will be "in cash", for both the national budget channelled through MINEP/CIARA and for precise components (to be specified) of the National Coffee Plan for the target municipalities (pilot and replication).

In the following standardised table, the amounts of co-financing finally obtained are shown. Note that the estimated contribution of the national government has been made based on the information available in the SNA. Given the characteristics of that system (management by project), the reported expenditure corresponds to the direct budget allocated by the national government to CIARA for this activity (basically the staff costs of the project team and other ongoing and miscellaneous costs). As a result, the assessment which is currently available is significantly below the actual contribution of the national government, which does not take into account any contributions from the National Coffee Plan.

Cofinanciación	Financiación propia del PNUD		Gobierno		Organismo asociado		Total	
	Plan	Real	Plan	Real	Plan	Real	Plan	Real
Subvenciones	$7,35	$3,17	$29,55	$6,58			$36,90	$9,75
Préstamos/concesiones								
Ayuda en especie								
Otro								
Totales	$7,35	$3,17	$29,55	$6,58			$36,90	$9,75

Through this source (the only record available) it is not possible to identify contributions from other public programmes, which have nonetheless been working in the field (in a qualitative manner and only with specific cases as examples) and presumably have made a direct contribution to financing project activities, not only through the National Coffee Plan but also through other tools such as FONDAS loans, the Women's Bank and certain programmes (such as the Tree Programme). These programmes do not have sufficiently detailed information in their management systems to allow the contributions to Terrandina beneficiaries to be identified. Nor does the technical team does not keep records of such contributions.

3.2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation: initial design and implementation

The project design included a broad set of indicators linked directly to its formulation (LFA), which in this case was to be the only monitoring and evaluation system available. It is not necessarily a poor choice, although it is advisable to harmonise the formulation and the set of project indicators with the organisation's own monitoring and evaluation practices.

However, in this case the set of indicators in the PPM have not proven useful for the monitoring and evaluation function. There are several reasons which explain this circumstance.

As described in the design analysis, the information used in the diagnosis to establish both the baseline values and the goals was not available during the project execution, an issue which made it difficult in some cases to understand the measurements provided (particularly considering the huge scope of key indicators such as surface area protected or families supported). Yet the design also included some indicators for which no previous measure had been established, demonstrating the need to provide such information at the start of the project as one of its first products, through both external agencies. This activity was not carried out at the time, a question which effectively invalidates the use of such indicators due to the lack of prior information.

As described in detail below in the results section, some initiatives were carried out at the end of the period in order to include some of this missing information, although it was not possible to reconstruct the information from the start of the project. There are two sources we hope can provide relevant information in this regard: the first is a long-term study of forest cover for the period 2008 - 2012, carried out by the Simón Bolívar Geographic Institute of Venezuela (IGVSB) and the second is a study on forest structural diversity (flora and fauna) in the pilot municipalities, prepared by the Environmental Consultants ASOMUSEO.

The project team, meanwhile, from the second management phase, implemented its own system for collecting information, mainly focused on the direct beneficiaries of the work (coffee producers served by the project). The aim of this system was to generate the quantitative information required by the CIARA planning levels and to fulfil part of the donor reporting requirements. It is a mechanism under constant construction which, although it does not allow the whole project to be assessed strictly in terms of results, provides valuable information for one part of it. Improvements worth mentioning include progressive integration with the Geographic Information System (GIS) which was also being generated by the project as part of the planned outputs.

3.2.6 Coordination between UNDP and the national partner

The coordination aspects are undoubtedly one of the key factors in understanding the differences observed between the project plans and what was finally executed. As indicated in section 3.1.8, during the design phase a particular management structure was established, which had both an operational core and different inter-agency spaces.

Coordination between the executive agency and implementing agency was primarily at the operational level, between the Operational and Technical Coordination Unit and the UNDP officer in charge of the project at all times. This is an aspect worth noting, as a significant deficiency which can be seen throughout the project execution is the imbalance between discussions at operational level and strategic level, with significantly less emphasis given to the latter (which cannot be judged for certain periods of the project due to the lack of documentation).

The creation of the Strategic Committee in 2011 succeeded in partly making up for this, since it opened up a space for discussion among representatives of the Ministries involved in the broader themes of the project at a higher political level. However, this space was used less and less frequently after it was created, judging by the decreasing number of annual meetings. In any case, judging by the content of the topics covered by the Committee, we can see that on some occasions the substantive content of the project was addressed (the project themes), focusing primarily on the administrative aspects of conflict resolution and finding consensus solutions in this area.

As the project theme was so critical for both government policy and UNDP priorities in the country, there was a surprising lack of high-level institutional interaction (at least documented interaction) e.g. between the Resident Representative and the Ministers involved, even more so considering that the project had such a low level of execution after the first years of execution, as well as some specific conflicts of interpretation regarding the project strategies and its relevance in the political context of the time.

There is another element which can be considered as a limiting factor in this respect. We note that generally that the project was influenced by a certain amount of job rotation that directly or indirectly affected the project. In the case of the implementing agency, the project went through 5 different stages of coordination. In the case of the executive agency, this number falls to two, but it has also undergone changes, in both ministerial affiliation (MINEP to MPPAT) and the leadership of the institution (3 different Presidents).

In the management plan, both entities specifically point to communication mechanisms as the fundamental constraint for solving problems effectively and efficiently. Issues such as the development and adoption of management tools such as AOPs, PIRs, terms of reference for recruitment and annual reports, among others, have been a source of conflict over time, which resulted not only in delays in execution but also significant attrition on both sides.

Having consulted both institutions on this matter, there is no consensus on the root causes. They point to both technical aspects (expertise in handling financial management procedures for GEF funds, differences in interpretation regarding costs attributable to the project) and attitudes (different perspectives on priorities for meeting strict deadlines and protocols). The lack of records of the agreements reached, as well as the difficulties in the historic transmission of previous information, are aspects that significantly limited this communication.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 General results

Below we set out the most relevant project results, described according to the structure of components[21]on which the project is based.

R1. Producers in the pilot area have the necessary capacity to develop biodiversity-friendly production systems

This is one of the components where the most satisfactory level of results were achieved. It may well be that CIARA's extensive background in the field of Rural Expansion contributed significantly to the success of this aspect, since agricultural training is one of their main strengths.

We consider that the producers targeted by the project, in general terms, developed the necessary capacity for the use of biodiversity-friendly practices and they are in fact gradually changing their production methods. We also note the adoption of practices to improve the quality and productivity of shade-grown coffee, although the effects of this change in behaviour will not be visible for a number of years, given the complexities of this topic and the initial state of many of the plantations before the project began.

The project worked directly with a total of 2,912 production units across the 7 pilot municipalities. Given the availability of human and material resources in each local team (maximum of 3 field technicians per municipality, sometimes with no community transport available), as well as the type of assistance offered (intensive with the presence of technicians on the farms, with frequent follow-up) we consider that the quantitative scope was appropriate, even if it was vastly different to the goal set out in the initial design.

In practice, the project demonstrated that for effective support for capacity building and transition to environmentally friendly practices, producers need to receive almost one-to-one attention, which greatly reduces the ratio of staff to around a maximum of 30 production units per technician per year. This is vital organisational learning for replication of the model in subsequent versions of the programme, in these or in other municipalities.

As a result of these changes in production patterns on farms, improvements can be seen in aspects of quality of life for families, particularly relating to income and, above all, to the diversification and enrichment of dietary intake. The integrated farm model is allowing families to manage their livelihoods more autonomously, generating savings in food consumption and agricultural materials, and in some cases the possibility of selling the surplus in the local market.

This component also aimed to raise awareness among programme beneficiaries of the need to maintain a respectful and balanced relationship with the environment. The deployment of environmental education activities is also generating very positive results. Firstly, we see an increased awareness of the environment among the producers themselves. It is significant to note that the changes made are not confined to a purely instrumental question (the environment as a tool) but are generating changes in the value system, where respect for the environment is increasingly important. Producers constantly relate agro-ecological practices in their own farm or municipality (local

[21] In order to simplify the analysis, this section will focus on the components corresponding to results R1, R2 and R3. Result R4 refers to project management tasks, which are evaluated in different sections throughout the report.

perspective) to global environmental benefits (such as water quality, prevention of global warming, reducing pollution, the environmental legacy for future generations, etc.).

Secondly, a strategy that has proven effective even in the short/medium term has been the joint programme with schools and educational units in general. Various types of activities have been promoted in the education field, as well as basic training for teachers. An interesting effect which has been noted as a result of this work is the indirect influence achieved on producers through their children, who bring new ideas about environmental protection home from school, even regarding specific agricultural practices.

This component also included work at the organisational level, with a view to strengthening the capacity of producers to act collectively to defend their common interests, as well as the environmental values promoted by the project. While there have been interesting individual cases, we have not been able to confirm the widespread success of this strategy[22]. What is clear is that the impact of this aspect is definitely less than in previous cases. However, it is precisely this aspect which is crucial for sustaining the results obtained and, above all, the ultimate objectives of biodiversity conservation in the area.

Two strategies were key to the original design, particularly (as discussed below) as part of the initiative's sustainability strategy, and yet have not been implemented: international certification for coffee[23] (organic, fair trade, bird friendly) and ecosystem services schemes[24] (also known as payments for environmental services). The fundamental reason lies in changes to the national political context.

Finally in this section, a basic monitoring system was developed for the farms directly served by the project in order to obtain information on production. Data collection has improved over the course of the project (more information collected per farm compared to the initial surveys), including geo-location in the final phase of development.

R2. Policies, planning frameworks and financial mechanisms which support biodiversity-friendly production systems in the pilot municipalities have been strengthened

This is the component with the lowest level of progress and the fewest results. It is worth noting that it also represents the weakest part of the design, a factor which considerably affected performance in this area.

[22] One of the project outputs is the systematic collection of various significant project experiences in these two areas. One of the areas for systematic collection focuses on organisational capacity building for producer associations. During this evaluation process we did not have access to the conclusions of this activity as it was still being developed.

[23] This strategy was affected mainly by the change in policy regarding the production and marketing of coffee, whereby the Venezuelan State considered it a priority to secure the domestic market with affordable prices for the local people. As a result, regulatory measures were adopted which, among other things, prevented the export of coffee by private entities and, consequently, made the above certifications pointless, at least at international level.

[24] There is some confusion over terminology and the potential initiatives that may be included in an ecosystem services scheme, as this terminology can be used to describe market-oriented measures - with a high risk of the non-rational use of natural resources - or biodiversity conservation strategies and impact mitigation programmes which respect the natural cycles environment. The legal framework in place during the project execution allowed such strategies to be tested, from the Environmental Law (2007), Section VIII (Economic and fiscal incentives) to the 2010-2020 Action Plan of the National Strategy on Biological Diversity (Strategic approach 8, Specific objective 8.3)"Sustainable use of environmental services and their intangible value..." A more complete discussion of this subject can be found in Encinas, O. (2009) Pago por servicios ambientales (PSA) and its potential in Venezuela, Venezuela Forest Review, Vol 53 (1), pp. 103-110

There are two main limiting factors to which the project did not give sufficient consideration. First of all, there is little leeway for working at local level within the legal framework for land planning, although there have been successful experiences which demonstrate there is some room for possibility. The project tried to develop processes to take advantage of this during the first phase (mainly in 2008), through training and awareness-raising activities with technicians and municipal authorities. However, this approach was unsuccessful due to the lack of follow-up, as well as the context of difficult communication between national and local institutions with regard to planning decisions.

Secondly, local entities generally had a low level of internal technical capacity to carry out this kind of work. The project included a range of actions aimed at strengthening this aspect, in terms of training as well as developing tools. The planned approach had a major shortcoming with regard to support for capacity-building processes, focusing more on delivering tools, providing external technical consultation and specialised training.

The project was probably designed like this due to the influence of the original promoters, prior to the incorporation of CIARA as the executive agency. CIARA partially refocused the strategy, placing greater emphasis on support for planning processes promoting joint activities with local stakeholders (particularly in the public sector) and continuing to develop a GIS, but mainly focusing on support for the project itself.

The first approach got some results, which could be viewed as a pilot experience to be learned from. Regarding the work at community level, it is worth noting the experience of Las Gualbas (Sucre Municipality, Portuguesa State), which achieved a significant level of ownership by families, using a participative approach. At the municipal level, relevant experience was developed in Andrés Bello, with the creation of an inter-agency space, driven by the local CIARA team, where usage proposals were developed which incorporated criteria for biodiversity conservation and sustainable production. In the latter case, we note the assessment which all the stakeholders involved in this process made of the technical input delivered by the project: A long-term study (2003-2008) on vegetation cover in the municipality, developed by external consultants[25].

The GIS was developed mainly during the second stage of the project. Unlike the project provisions up to that point, with a multiplicity of geographical systems created by different stakeholders to be integrated at a later date, it was decided to develop a system primarily to meet the needs of the project and of CIARA. The system is currently operational, and could provide relevant information for scaling up and replicating the project with new producers, although there is no evidence that it has been used for this purpose so far.

Finally, this component includes a working approach based on the development of financial mechanisms to facilitate the application of environmentally friendly practices. This component is based on two complementary strategies. Firstly, the project's ability to mobilise resources from other public programmes or work with institutions at the local level to facilitate access to financing for producers. Secondly, the launch of their own fund based on micro-finance, to pay for practices which cannot be financed through public financing.

[25] This technical assistance case is important when assessing the major significance of having this type of information available, not only for project managers but also for the stakeholders involved. This further demonstrates the urgency of having this information available for the other municipalities. The tasks carried out by IGVSB and ASOMUSEO, mentioned in 3.2.5., were carried out late and the performance of both institutions was very poor, particularly in the first case with delivery delays of up to two years and incomplete products at the project closing date.

The project team has been successful in mobilising resources from other public programmes, either financial or through contributions in kind and/or technical assistance. In this regard, we note the ability of the field teams to promote joint work with public institutions and encourage support for producers using environmentally friendly practices. Financing was obtained from FONDAS and the Women's Bank, with the terms of the second financing scheme being better suited to the needs of the project participants [26], as well as helping to generate a positive impact in terms of new opportunities for women. Regarding in kind mechanisms, collaborations with MPPA and the Tree Programme to create nurseries for forest species have also had satisfactory results.

Regarding the Grant Fund itself, we would like to make a point about its design before evaluating the results. This mechanism was considered as a way of facilitating the development of activities which, as mentioned previously, have become irrelevant strategies due to the country's situation. This applies to aspects such as certification and generally everything related to the provision of environmental services. Likewise, the entities which the Fund was going to work with, the so-called rural banks, were also disregarded during the project due to the presidential decision not to use them for the development of public programs.

An alternative was therefore sought, and that is why the use of the Small Grants scheme was proposed. This system is particularly suited to the purposes of this project component, both for its relevance for this type of micro-finance project (initiatives of community-based organisations working on environmental issues) and the expertise previously gained by UNDP with regard to the SGP. Finally, the two agencies did not reach agreement on the final format, nor on other questions about management mechanisms, which is why the scheme was not implemented. There have certainly been negative consequences, given that in the communities, work with producers had already begun to identify and formulate proposals for small grants and their expectations were not satisfied. In fact, in the field, a certain degree of frustration was found among producers, which also resulted in a loss of credibility for the field technicians.

R3. The pilot municipalities operate as platforms for the exchange, distribution and replication of experience on best practice and lessons learned

This component has generated significant results at the producer level, although the strategy was not implemented as intended. Replication was planned for 13 more municipalities after consolidating experience in the 7 pilot municipalities. The magnitude of the scope made it advisable to focus once more on efforts in the pilot municipalities, basically developing discussion and distribution activities in these areas. Given the changes to the project and the problems in the first stage, the evaluation team considers the consolidation approach to be the best option.

With regard to the documentation of experiences and methodologies, we found that the project generated sufficient material in various formats[27]. The environmentally friendly practices were also

[26] For the purposes of this report, it is worth describing in detail both the mechanisms and the specific characteristics of each institution, although it would be advisable for future projects to have this information available in detail so that more stable complementary strategies can be established, rather than one-off cases which rely on people's willingness to participate each time.

[27] This does not include web-based versions, which were considered in the initial project but have not been developed.

documented[28], which facilitates the increasingly standardised work of field technicians on new farms which are gradually being incorporated into the project. However, the tools that are generating the best results in terms of replication at producer level are those related to sharing experience and knowledge and "farmer to farmer" training. In this respect, the 35 experimental units created to support the project particularly stand out. In all the pilot municipalities, producers say the experimental units have been a valuable reference point for them to learn from and also encourage them to move towards more eco-friendly practices. These units have the distinction of being local producer farms and not academic model plots. Therefore, the demonstration effect is much more significant in terms of motivation for other producers.

Nevertheless, this process of exchange is still in the development stage, which continues to be mainly driven by support from CIARA. In this sense, we have not seen leadership from producers in promoting a shift towards environmentally friendly production, with a more community-based or collective approach. While on an individual level, they are positioning themselves as key participants in promoting change, they still cannot claim to have reached a more proactive level in their communities. There are, however, some interesting exceptions to be considered, again in terms of learning rather than as a direct effect attributable to the project.

The Andrés Bello Municipality provides some examples of community organisation which are worth noting[29]. The project has carried out joint initiatives with these groups, particularly in the field of community tourism. While these groups have their own organisational momentum, they have been set up as spaces to support the promotion of environmentally friendly practices, to reach a higher level both in terms of an increased number of producers, and the impact on local political bodies. The country's new political context creates a window of opportunity for this type of grassroots organisation, which played a much smaller role at the time when the project was designed. The new scenario allows us to speak of joint networks of stakeholders, although not quite as envisaged by the project for this component, which is based on a more conventional model of civil society participation, without such a leading role for public institutions and community organisations.

Finally in this section, another outcome worth noting is the systematic data collection for four experiences within the project framework, a strategy with significant potential to contribute to a more accurate understanding of the social processes generated[30].

3.3.2 Relevance

With regard to donor priorities, we note first that between the design period and the project execution, GEF amended and extended its global strategic framework. We then describe the schemes in place when the project was conceived as well as the current ones, in order to assess the relevance of the project both at the time of its formulation and in its subsequent performance.

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[28] Technical Paper "Biodiversity-friendly practices applied in the municipalities served by the Terrandina project" (2011)

[29] Of particular note was the case of the "Tambor" community, which was developed based on the organisational experience of the Community Council of Mirabel, La Azulita.

[30] The systematically recorded experiences focused on the following four areas: The adoption of biodiversity-friendly practices, organisational capacity building, institutional coordination, and environmental education and awareness in schools. The final outcomes of the systematic data collection were not available at the time of the evaluation, so they could not be evaluated as outcomes, nor used as a secondary source of information for the evaluation process itself.

The project design was consistent with Strategic Priority 2 of the Biodiversity Focal Area of GEF (BD2), given that it focused on maintaining biodiversity conservation in production systems, although it is was hoped that it would have a certain indirect influence on protected areas. Also consistent with Operational Programme 4 (Mountain Ecosystems), the project aimed to promote the sustainable management and use of ecosystems in the Cordillera de Mérida, complementing the protected areas which had already been established.

On a broader level, the design was also consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). In particular, this project was an opportunity in terms of its innovation component, present in Decision VII/12, which invites the parties to the participate in the "sustainable use of the components of biological diversity, including the concept of sustainable forest management, e.g. through the development of pilot projects."

From the perspective of the current framework (GEF-5), the project continues to show consistency with strategic objectives 2 (biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in production landscapes) and to a lesser extent 5 (integration of CBD obligations into national planning processes). Regarding the focal areas, we should also mention its impact on the following items:

- Focal Area 3 (Soil degradation - Desertification and deforestation), given that it is the main objective of the project (to prevent the loss of forest mass in the buffer zones of protected areas). The central strategy (avoiding land use change) is also part of this focal area with regard to soil degradation, critical for both the conservation of mountain ecosystems and securing the livelihoods of vulnerable populations.
- Focal Area 5 (Sustainable Forest Management), tangentially, incorporating reforestation strategies as part of the process of preventing land use changes.
- Focal Area 6 (Cross-cutting capacity development) particularly with respect to the components on influencing public policy (environmental planning, land use, regulations for use) and the monitoring and evaluation of environmental impacts.

The project is consistent with national policies, in both its design and execution. Firstly, from a macro perspective, the project fits into the various National Development Plans of the last decade. The Regional Development Plan (2001-2007) in force at the time of the design is in line with the project objective, stating that the environment "should not be viewed only from a conservation perspective but also for its contribution to quality of life and the development process." This includes some strategies related to the project, such as sustainable forestry or the model of Sustainable agro-industrial villages included in the Zamora Plan[31], although there is no specific link with coffee and the emphasis on agro-ecological production.

In the national plan which was in place during the project cycle (Simón Bolívar National Plan 2007-2013), there are several strategic approaches which are sufficiently in line with the project components. Guideline II "Supreme Social Happiness", promotes the consideration of biodiversity as a "source of wealth and potential for development of the country" (line II.M). Furthermore, working with shade-grown coffee producers fits with the perspective of "a development model that places human beings at the centre of its attention must reconcile

[31]The Zamora Plan or Zamora Programme was a presidential measure enacted at the beginning of the last decade, aimed at reorganising and cultivating unused land with agricultural potential to eradicate landlordism, within the so-called Agri-Food National Security Programme (Decree 3.408, "Strategic and operational planning for the struggle against landlordism", 2001).

their relationship with the environment, promoting a model of production and consumption that limits growth without disregarding the rights of the poor." (line II.N). The environmental education aspects are also a priority, as an activity which "should permeate all social strata and all educational levels."

The project is sufficiently covered by strategy-II 3.7 "Ensuring management of the biosphere to produce sustainable benefits", and specifically sub-strategies II-3.7.1 (Encouraging a model of environmentally sustainable production and consumption) and II-3.7.5 (Planning and regulating the use of areas under special administration measures). With regard to the latter strategic approach, it is striking that the project component concerning the impact on environmental planning at local level encountered significant limitations to its performance (as described in the previous section), despite having direct[32]support from the main tool of public policy planning during the project execution period.

Regarding the legal framework, the project fitted without significant limitations into the main instruments of the current legislation in force: The Water Act, Forest Act, Comprehensive Agricultural Health Act, Biodiversity Act, Organic Law on Food Security and Sovereignty. One exception worth mentioning relates to the limitations of the project with regard to the Law on Land Planning, both in terms of advocacy and local environmental planning. We note that this is a rule dating back to 1983, enacted in a context that differs greatly from the model used by the current government, which articulates a conception of land planning as a top-down process, with local government relegated to the role of a non-binding advisory body (except for the adoption of rules and regulations for use, which in the strict sense of the law would only apply to urban land). However, the law allows a certain leeway, so the poor performance in this regard (described above) is to be found in issues of dialogue and coordination between national and local institutions.

Finally, at the programme level, we should mention some of the key policies in the agricultural sector with which the project has tried to coordinate its efforts. It is important to note at this point the inconsistencies found between the project strategy and the guidelines for instruments such as FONDAS. Both Terrandina and FONDAS share objectives and targets at the local level, but in practice were found to be developing different and even conflicting approaches: Terrandina has been working with coffee producers, taking an agro-ecological approach, while FONDAS has been encouraging these same producers to use agro-chemicals through agricultural credit mechanisms.

The damage done by such contradictions goes beyond the potential inefficient use of public resources, an issue which is also significant. The main problem is that they create a lack of credibility for state institutions among producers and consequently slow down the process of change, which is complex and long term. This example, and even more so the particular case of the Great Agrovenezuela Project[33], were particularly striking examples working against CIARA's efforts in this project, as it not only offered an alternative to producers (financing and inputs in terms of donations), who apparently preferred this to the capacity development work with CIARA, but also in the case of the Great Project, CIARA's institutional commitments meant changing the roles of the field technicians working almost exclusively on this programme, leaving producers with no support for

[32]Remember, the project locations are mainly ABRAE areas, referred to in Strategy II-3.7.5

[33] Created in 2010 (Official Gazette No. 39,523), the objective of the "Gran Misión Agrovenezuela" was to ensure the right to food security through technical assistance, the provision of materials and finance for farmers. It consists of the People's Ministries for Agriculture, Science and Technology and Defence, the Public Bank, the Bolivarian National Armed Forces and PDVSA.

their environmentally friendly practices.

However, the CIARA-Terrandina team has succeeded in effectively managing these changes in the institutional context, developing leadership in the field to establish partnership strategies with these programmes, in some cases obtaining financing for the producers involved in the project.

3.3.3 Efficiency

The specific objective of the project focused on the ensuring that farmers in the Coffee/Livestock Region of the Cordillera de Mérida continue to use biodiversity-friendly production systems. To measure the level of achievement of this objective, eight (8) key indicators were established.

This evaluation is not able to state with sufficient accuracy whether the project objective was achieved in the terms established in the design, particularly in relation to the specific goals. However, some observations can be made about other effects that can be seen using a different framework of analysis, since the original scheme for project monitoring and evaluation is now almost entirely lacking in validity.

It is worth noting at the start the factors which limit the use of the original system of indicators. One of the key factors has already been discussed in the design section and is related to diagnostic information and the over-ambitious scope of the project. The goals established in the indicators for this objective are unachievable for a project of this size[34], and in any case, as mentioned previously, we have not been given the original sources used to establish these goals, in order to understand how they were determined and the reason for setting them at this level of magnitude. We also note that 25% of the PPM goals are incomplete, as they refer to a "baseline" to be established at the start of the project, although this is a secondary issue (subject to completion, a question which didn't arise, as mentioned below).

Another reason is the lack of information available during project execution and at the end of the project. Two separate studies[35]were planned, to generate the information needed for the system of indicators (7 of the 8 key indicators depended on these sources) but they are not available. This is definitely the key constraint, not only for external evaluation, but above all, for the capacity of the project to use this key information to assess the potential scope and, in particular, to address the continuity of this type of action with concrete data, to enable better strategic guidance and improvements in the processes of decision making.

Nevertheless, the assessment itself may provide some insight into whether the intended effects of the project were achieved, leaving aside the question of scope. We can state categorically that the

[34]This is amply demonstrated by the first indicator established, "Hectares (ha) shade-grown coffee throughout the area that have not been converted to less biodiversity-friendly land uses", with the goal of maintaining a total area of 362,400 ha. If you take an average area of 2 ha per production unit, the project would have to meet this target for (and therefore work with) more than 180,000 farms, which gives an idea of how unrealistic it is. According to the final results produced by the CIARA records, the average size of the farms supported is 1.5 ha/producer, which would raise this figure even further. It is also surprising that the indicator framework itself noted, for result R1 (directly related to the farms supported) a goal of 35,000 shade-grown coffee farms maintaining such cultivation which, when combined with previous data, implies an average farm size of more than 10ha per producer. This figure is well above the category of "small producer" as well as not being representative of most farms in the project area.

[35]Consultation discussed in section 3.2.5: A long-term study of forest cover assigned to IGVSB and a study of biological diversity, assigned to ASOMUSEO.

project has encouraged behavioural changes in coffee producers, towards the adoption of more environmentally friendly practices, including the continued production of shade-grown coffee.

We also note the impact on aspects that improve the productivity of coffee farms in this way, although the actual increase in production per hectare is an effect which, due to its biological nature, will only start to become significant after the project is complete. In the latter regard, what the project has achieved is to improve the technical capacity to obtain this, with an emphasis on integrated agro-ecological production.

At the same time, there is increased awareness among producers of the importance of biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources. We consider that this process points to a change in the value system, whereby the environment is no longer considered a minor issue, additional or even expendable when the need arises. It has become a central aspect linked directly with a new conception of the "good life". In addition, we noted an impact on organisational aspects, such as the creation of community-level conservation committees, although to a much lesser extent.

The effects on the landscape are also beginning to add up. All of the producers consulted in the field, as well as other stakeholders interviewed, made qualitative judgements about the changes they observed in their environment, to which the project has contributed (without taking credit for all of the changes). Local stakeholders confirm that "indiscriminate logging has been significantly reduced" "the use of agrochemicals has fallen," "there has been reforestation on farms and in schools," among other observations.

Finally, you can make a basic assessment of the scope of these effects, not so much by comparison with the baseline set out in the design, but in order to gauge the extent of these changes. No great differences were observed in the profiles of farms being studied, from which we can extrapolate[36]that, on average, the observed effects are occurring to a greater or lesser degree in the 2,912 production units supported by the project.

3.3.4 Efficiency

In a project of this nature, it is complex to conduct an analysis of efficiency in the strict sense, i.e. a comparison between products obtained versus the cost of achieving this, then further comparison with the alternative methods of achieving the same goal. It is complex due to the nature of the actions and the intended purpose, but particularly due to the fact that these are not products with an established market for comparison. That is why the following assessments are limited to reviewing the practices employed to manage the resources used.

Having consulted the sources on execution of expenditure, we consider that in general terms, the criteria of austerity and transparency were applied to project performance regarding the use of resources (both donor and national government resources). No problems were detected with regard to proof of expenditure in the project documentation. Based on a sample of different types of expenditure (human resources, procurement, equipment maintenance, consulting) we observed that

[36] This assessment has at no time made any suggestion of statistically significant implication of the observed effects. The minimal differences observed in the farms studied, for both within and across municipalities allows us to make the reasonable assumption that the dynamics were similar for the entire population supported. However, it would be desirable to test this hypothesis using data from the entire population or alternatively, using an ad hoc study sample. The conditions of this evaluation did not provide adequate time or resources for a study of this nature to be conducted.

these remained at market prices, from which we can assume that the activities associated with them were carried out at reasonable cost, and therefore efficiently. This is consistent with the working style of the project team, particularly the coordination team, demonstrated through interviews and observation of them.

However, some points regarding costs should be highlighted that may be relevant for lessons learned on how to manage new projects:

- Maintenance costs for equipment (office equipment and transportation in particular) were underestimated in the design. This led to certain limitations towards the end of the project, observed in the field for example when field technicians required transportation to reach the locations of certain poorly served communities.
- The team in general, and in particular some of the local teams, reached the limit of their capacity to provide high-quality support for producers. This not only limited the potential of the project to achieve wider coverage, but also put the quality of service offered to producers at risk.

Finally, a brief analysis of ratios (for illustrative purposes) provides an additional measure of the project contribution. Considering the producers supported, the project is estimated to have had an incremental cost of just under 980 BFs per production unit/year. Taking as a reference just the regulated price of coffee in 2013 (BFs 2,150/quintal at the highest point), an improvement in productivity of one quintal/year on farms would be of greater benefit than the cost incurred by the project.

The farms supported by the project have diversified their production, obtaining additional resources with short-cycle products (bananas, vegetables) while they have avoided incurring maintenance costs because of their increasing self-sufficiency. The monetisation of these additional benefits is even further evidence of efficiency in the use of project resources.

3.3.5 Ownership by the recipient country

It can be stated categorically that the national government has taken full ownership of the project. The institutions involved, and particularly the executive partner, CIARA, show a high level of interest in both the problem addressed and the programme itself. The project has succeeded in putting the issue on the public agenda and gradually obtaining greater public resources with their approach, both directly (in terms of co-financing of the project) and indirectly (by using resources from other programmes for the beneficiaries of this one).

There are two facts which, in the opinion of the evaluation team, are clear indications of this process:

- During the project execution, CIARA provided a working team with its own staff dedicated 100% to the project, with minimal turnover and a significant degree of autonomy in management and decision making. This fact is also valued by participating institutions (including the UNDP country office) as an example of the strategic interest of the government in this project.
- At the time of this evaluation, there was already a firm commitment from MPPAT and the CIARA Board to continue the programme into a second phase[37], which would unite an important part of the action strategy and the current beneficiaries of Terrandina, at the same time as extending the scope to municipalities which include those originally identified in what would have been the "replication component" of the original design (13 municipalities).

[37] The current name given to this phase is "Café Andino"

With respect to the remaining government entities involved (MPPP and MPPA) we note the creation of the Strategic Committee as a sign of increasing participation, although with a much lesser degree of commitment than the executing agency. Meanwhile, the local authorities (mainly municipalities) have shown some degree of interest and have on occasion facilitated certain processes already underway, although one cannot speak strictly of project ownership.

3.3.6 Integration

This section provides a summary of the relationship of the project with other UNDP priorities in the country. Regarding joint project work with other initiatives of the UNDP Country Programme 2009-2013, there has been a consideration of the combined effects of the project in relation to other projects in the Environment portfolio of this office, in particular the project "Strengthening the financial sustainability and operational effectiveness of the Venezuela Park System", because it is a GEF-funded project aimed at the INPARQUES institution (key local stakeholder in this project), which also addresses the search for alternative income and partnerships with other interested parties in protected area buffer zones. Likewise, during the past year the UNDP office has tried to develop a more fluid process of coordination with the MPPA, both for these and the remaining projects in the portfolio.

With regard to the other priorities of CPAP 2009-2013 (Reducing poverty and inequality and achieving the MDGs; Partnerships for institutional capacity building and the promotion of inclusive participation; Management of risks and natural disasters), no documentary references have been found on mechanisms for the integration of this project with these approaches and the corresponding actions associated with the remaining portfolios. However, it is worth noting that all matters relating to the production capacity building component of this project are part of the working approach of the poverty reduction strategy, defined as "reinforcement of spaces for the participation of women and men in promoting local, land-based socio-productive development with gender equality" (CPAP, paragraph 4.2.a)

3.3.7 Sustainability

In this section, three levels of analysis are distinguished: individual, institutional and contextual. Regarding the individual conditions for sustainability (referring to the principal recipients, i.e. coffee producers) we consider that a positive framework has been provided for the continuity of the effects over time:

- Changes in the behaviour of producers towards an agro-ecological approach, mentioned previously as one of the effects of the project, are progressive, well supported and focused on continuity
- Similarly, the producers have developed technical skills with regard to environmentally friendly practices that they have taken ownership of, with a view to maintaining the positive impact of these practices over time, particularly due to the autonomy they give the producers in different areas (less dependence on industrial materials, increased income, improved diet)
- As also mentioned above, coffee growers are developing greater environmental awareness, incorporating biodiversity conservation into their value system, beyond the purely instrumental

- One further aspect not considered in the design that may strengthen continuity of the production of shade-grown coffee, including in adverse conditions (impact of pests, extreme weather events, periods of unfavourable coffee prices): the socio-cultural dimension of coffee cultivation. All the farmers interviewed, even when questioned about the profitability of coffee cultivation, emphasise its continuity as an element of their own culture and sense of belonging. This is an aspect which should be remembered and valued as a cultural element, which can also be useful as an additional strategy for sustainability (shade-grown coffee as a local tradition)

Moreover, on an institutional level, the state's commitment to continue the programme (described in 3.3.5) under its own financing scheme will allow support for current processes to continue, both the work with producers and support for the collective initiatives of community councils and producer associations.

Finally, we must mention risk factors of the project context. While the demonstration effect of the project allows the partial prevention of the process of land use change, conditions can still be observed that could eventually reverse this positive trend:

- It is critical not to lose sight of the fact that shade-grown coffee production, given the current regulatory conditions for the domestic market, is not a sufficiently profitable activity for families and consequently cannot be exclusively maintained.
- In the short term, the coffee borer pest and above all blight constitute a significant threat to production, which could also be a catalyst for change to less environmentally friendly practices (particularly conversion to extended ranching).

3.3.8 Impact

Analogous to what is described in 3.3.4, the impact of the project ("maintaining the biodiversity value of the mosaic of land uses in the productive landscape of the Cordillera de Mérida") cannot be estimated due to the lack of information, both in terms of baselines and references during and after the project.

Nevertheless, it is important to note some aspects of the potential impact that the project may generate in the long term. First of all, the project has had a significant influence on diversifying the diet of the families, as well as giving them greater autonomy so they are no longer so dependent on the agro-food market, particularly the import market. In the long term, if these conditions can be maintained, you could point to the potential impact on the food security of families, a clear convergence with the model of the "good life".

With regard to gender equality, although this approach was not included in the design, some interesting effects can be observed. The project is gradually benefiting the community of women, giving them access to training processes and supporting the development of production initiatives led by them. In this sense, the complementary strategy of working with ornamental flowers is allowing the consolidation of profitable economic alternatives with considerable potential to be sustained over time. This has also contributed significantly to the mobilisation of financial resources, supported by the CIARA municipal teams through the Women's Bank. There has been a progressive incorporation of women into spaces for community participation, such as assemblies or even representation in producer associations or community councils. In the medium to long term, these initiatives could have a significant impact in terms of the empowerment of women at local level.

4. Conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

4.1 Corrective measures for the project design, execution and evaluation

Regarding the **design** of the project, it is necessary to firmly secure the participation of all stakeholders potentially affected by the project, and take advantage of the process of analysis and formulation to articulate as clearly as possible what the subsequent involvement of these stakeholders will be. It is vital to ensure participation at all institutional levels, from the most operational level up to the highest political levels, particularly the latter, which is where the lowest levels of participation were found.

Moreover, in the transition between the design and execution phases, it is critical that the main promoters of the project play a key role in both. It is even desirable that this continuity can be maintained on an individual level, with the professionals located in key positions in institutions dealing with both the strategic direction and the operational management of the project.

The project should have been clearer about the expected outreach. Sometimes the design appears to be extremely ambitious in terms of its ability to achieve a wide level of coverage with regard to its direct effects. However, for other more operational aspects, the project operations focus on concrete local activities, with more reasonable expectations.

The confusion created was most likely due to the method of establishing goals attributable to the project. Hence, it is vital in future to establish a system of indicators which are clearly linked to the project's capacity for action. Over-confident plans in terms of the targets set should be avoided by limiting the goals for the direct effects of the project as much as possible.

While this is a conservative approach (particularly in the environmental field, where the mechanisms of interaction between elements of the biological system are complex), from the project management point of view, it reduces the pressure to obtain results, which has been one of the phenomena clearly observed in this case, resulting in considerable stress for the project team and generally for the professionals who are most directly involved in project coordination, both in the executing agency and the implementing agency.

To complete the proposals about the design, we must note the importance of taking the project context into consideration, and assessing its possible impact on performance in a more realistic way. This is a common error in such projects, but special consideration should be made in the case of Venezuela. The processes of social change that have been occurring in the last decade in the country are particularly significant, as is the constant transformation of the model of government. These changes can create windows of opportunity, as well as threats, which the project must be able to anticipate as far as possible, as well as adapting to them during project execution.

Regarding **execution**, the fundamental key to improvement lies in inter-agency communications. More agile and more efficient mechanisms for dialogue between the IAs and the EAs should be established, both for everyday management and particularly for strategic decision-making. It is important to establish relationships of trust to facilitate collaboration.

On the EA side, it must be ensured at the outset that the project team (and particularly those responsible for administrative and financial management) correctly handles the administrative protocols for GEF projects and, where appropriate, arranges the necessary training. Likewise, there should also be an analysis, prior to execution, of whether these protocols represent any kind of legal incompatibility or particular

challenges for management, in order to implement any possible adjustments within the regulatory frameworks of both institutions. On the IA side, it should have the capacity for fluid responsiveness to the requests of the other party.

The agencies should work together to improve their project monitoring mechanisms for greater responsiveness. On the one hand, it would be desirable to use a single system to avoid redundancy and improve the efficiency of this task (as currently noted by international recommendations, the use of national monitoring and evaluation systems should be prioritised to develop this function). On the other hand, not only should the programming aspects be considered (carrying out activities, executing the budget) but elements should be included to allow the degree of progress towards results to be assessed.

Taking this principle and applying it to the **evaluation** processes, it is very important to develop a detailed plan for collecting information for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation, particularly for projects taking place over a long time period, as is the case here. In order to develop the project evaluation system, it is not sufficient to define project indicators in the PPM during the design phase.

4.2 Actions to follow up or strengthen the initial benefits of the project

The most successful component in terms of results is without doubt the production training to support the development of biodiversity-friendly practices. With regard to this, the first step required is to ensure the successful completion of the process of systematic data collection which, together with this evaluation, would provide information about the keys to the success of this model and facilitate its replication in other municipalities of the Andean Cordillera.

Among the various practices included in the project, those directly related to agricultural production (particularly the improvement of shade-grown coffee) have achieved the highest levels of adoption. To ensure consolidation of the model, and above all its sustainability, further work is needed on **farm diversification**, both by way of comprehensive models (farms with the greatest possible diversity) and diversity as it is understood at local level (diversity within the location, with some producers specialising in specific topics). Special attention should be given to the areas of ornamental flowers and community-based eco-tourism, due to their high potential for generating income. There should also be further reforestation activities, seeking incentive mechanisms for producers through state support programmes (along the lines, for example, of the Tree Programme of the MPPA).
Although the processes for transforming farms to use agro-ecological production models are slow (both for biological reasons and socio-economic and socio-cultural reasons), it is important to have **financial support mechanisms** to facilitate the transition, particularly with regard to the implementation of new initiatives for the producer and/or the community. In this respect, it is important to ensure continuity for the joint strategies promoted by CIARA locally, for the mobilisation of financial resources or public programmes such as FONDAS or the Women's Bank, for initiatives related to environmentally friendly practices.

As part of this strategy, we must urgently implement the **Grants Fund** mechanism proposed in the project framework under the topic "*loan funds*" set out in sub-topic 2.4 of the project. While the original design aimed to create credit-based mechanisms, practice has shown that the initial stages of these processes of transition towards environmentally friendly practices are not viable when viewed solely in terms of profitability, and therefore non-refundable financing strategies must be considered. This would not prevent

the establishment of results-based management, which would ensure the efficient use of resources by producers and could generate small revolving funds at a later stage, managed directly by the organisations on the ground, depending on the organisational skills previously developed in the communities.

Coupled with the need (still ongoing) to catalyse these transition processes, as well as generating a demonstration effect in these public programmes in order to build confidence, finalising the process of Fund creation has become a matter of urgency, due to the expectations created in communities at local level. Using the SGP methodology, projects which could be financed through grassroots organisations have been formulated in a participative manner with producers, which greatly facilitates the implementation and achievement of results in the short term.

The SGP scheme would remain a format suitable for managing the cycle of micro-projects, although some adjustments would be required, with nominal ownership by CIARA, to facilitate operational management in the field. UNDP should participate to provide technical support for the process - with a specific agreement - to benefit fully from SGP capacity, particularly with regard to monitoring the environmental benefits generated by the micro-projects and analysing the feasibility of developing "green" rotating funds in the medium term, based on these initial experiences of community organisations.

This initiative may also contribute to another aspect that should be taken care of, with regard to consolidation of the positive effects of several of the aforementioned topics. This involves the **strengthening of community-based organisations** in their transition towards local development. We must not forget that at the current time, the community approach is a cornerstone of national development policy for local capacity building. The continuity of practice already established by the project can and should be ensured through this approach.

While steps have been taken within the project framework, it is important to map the stage of development of community organisations in order to subsequently offer them support and guidance. Likewise, for any future extensions of the project scope, it would be desirable if this aspect was incorporated from the start of the project.

Another strategy to strengthen its potential benefits is of course the completed development of the **Geographical Information System**. The lack of geo-referenced information on various key aspects regarding the project beneficiaries and their socio-environmental context is an important limitation for the consolidation of the project strategy and particularly for its growth and development into a nationwide public policy.

The process of creating the system that should be supported has made a reasonable start, both in terms of equipment resources and technical assistance, and above all, training and updating the CIARA technical teams. Participation in the construction and use of the GIS should be as cross-cutting as possible, involving the municipal teams and even the producers themselves, both for its design (defining the relevant information to be collected), development (through the use of mobile technology) and application (using maps for participative environmental planning, community land use proposals.) The consolidation of this GIS model could definitely help strengthen CIARA at the institutional level by extending the system to its other programmes, which in turn would contribute significantly to facilitating coordination between them and taking advantage of synergies as well as the efficient use of resources and making the accounts publicly available.

The is an appropriate time in the project to address an **expansion of scope**, both in terms of producers in the areas already supported and in particular, its extension to other municipalities. However, this would not be possible without the requisite number of resources, particularly human resources. The current model of fieldwork, with teams of up to three (3) technicians, should be strengthened, and this number increased, in order to maintain the level of quality support given to the producers. It would also be desirable to have a member of the local teams acting as a focal point for coordination with other public bodies at local level, with sufficient availability to facilitate the necessary coordination.

In line with the previous proposal, to facilitate appropriate coordination with the municipalities, it is extremely important for CIARA to establish suitable **protocols for high-level coordination with MPPA**. These institutional arrangements can be very significant in terms of facilitating synergies between public programmes at local level and policy coherence.

4.3 Proposals for future directions which emphasise the main objectives

Four possible working approaches, to be explored, are set out below. The first two are based on proposals that have been part of the lifecycle of the project, which have not yet been sufficiently implemented, but still show great potential. The other two are suggestions from the evaluation team that have not been agreed with the parties. They must therefore be taken in a much more open way, with the limitations that may derive from the lack of knowledge on the part of the evaluators of factors both internal and external to the institutions that could make their implementation unfeasible in practice.

First, it would be very interesting to resume and enhance the proposal for **participative certification** of coffee, and even other agro-ecological products which could potentially be offered by farms and also extended to the tourism sector. This strategy is necessary in the case of coffee, given the particular conditions for regulations of this area. However, at the same time it provides an opportunity, firstly to make possible the certification process viable by avoiding the high costs of international certification, and secondly, to create synergies with other products another producers, which may facilitate partnerships at local level, moving from a product approach to a regional approach in developing the brand.

To develop this, we would suggest a parallel strategy: firstly supporting the work in the community to encourage ownership of the process, and secondly, analysing the experiences of other countries with similar processes in the broad sense (not necessarily for the same topics, but on the creation of stamps, marks of quality, etc.). For the latter part, the partnership with UNDP, taking advantage of their international knowledge networks, can be a significant comparative advantage for the Venezuelan government.

Second, we suggest resuming working initiatives on **participative environmental planning** at local level, both in the community and with municipal institutions. While there have been no significant achievements, the project itself has generated some successful experiences with communities, which are headed in the right direction, and can help it to generate its own working model. Moreover, it would be helpful to conduct a review of any similar experiences in other parts of the country and /or with other stakeholders involved and try to analyse their potential for implementation in the project locations.

While government institutions do not possess the power of legislative development, the knowledge generated from this practice may provide useful information for reform processes to advance the achievement of the country's development objectives. With regard to this, we suggest the parallel development of systematic data collection processes in the windows of opportunity that may arise from

legal changes, so that CIARA can become another channel for communication that meets the demands of public accountability. Also in this case, UNDP could become an interesting ally, supporting knowledge management and the international exchange of successful experiences on sustainable land management.

As for the two most open proposals, first the possibility of generating a **monitoring and evaluation system linked to the GIS**, converging the GIS programme into a more comprehensive information system. This would require consensus on the definition of the evaluation requirements and, above all, an institutional commitment in the medium-long term to the continuity of a system for conducting evaluations with no inconsistencies in the data structure. A system of this type could contribute very significantly to the institution's capacity for management and organisational learning, allowing both short-term management decisions to be made and long-term impact evaluations to be carried out, at much more affordable costs.

The experience of using such a system, as a pilot project, could be useful for CIARA in reaching the next level for establishing a unified framework for all programmes within the institution. In future, this institutional vision could lead to the transition to a fully integrated system of institutional management (ERP philosophy), with large capacity for knowledge management.

Secondly, we suggest developing a strategy for greater **articulation of the programme with the academic and research sector**. Starting with INIA itself, as part of the structure of MPPAT to which CIARA also belongs, and moving on to the various academic institutions in the area, the programme could take advantage of the potential of such institutions beyond occasionally outsourcing technical assistance to some of their professionals (as has been the case during the project). On the one hand, universities committed to local development processes can bring together research capacities to collectively address technical problems that arise during agricultural practice and also have the capacity to attract the attention of producers through activities involving teachers and students (fieldwork, undergraduate dissertations, etc.). Conversely, academic institutions can benefit from access to field for a more participative form of research development and knowledge creation.

4.4 Best practice and worst practice

Although the project has not achieved broad coverage in the area originally set out, the pilot nature of the project which has ended up being the predominant working mode, has allowed us to identify a number of experiences from which to draw extremely useful lessons. The practices described briefly below are those which the evaluation team, in constant dialogue with its partner institutions and particularly with the project team, considers to be representative.

Firstly, the **experimental units based on producer farms** are one of the most promising experiences. Unlike traditional demonstration farms based on ad hoc models created by academic institutions or state institutions (with a very high level of mechanisation), this model has a greater ability to motivate producers in the area, mainly due to the imitation factor: an initiative led by someone of equal social standing (a neighbouring producer) is a very effective way to communicate the feasibility of implementing agro-ecological production systems.

It is also worth noting on the positive side the involvement of producers from these farms in the training processes through a "farmer to farmer" model, which contributes to local capacity building and consolidation of the social fabric. It emphasises the capacity for innovation generated in these spaces, in a kind of participative research process, which facilitates interesting questions such as adaptation of the model

farm to local conditions (specific traditional practices, local dynamics, their own cultural aspects) or the recovery of traditional practices, native species, etc.

Within this model of experimental units, it is worth noting a particular model which has been exceptionally successful in a few cases. It concerns **experimental farms** created in the context of a local **educational unit**. In particular, the case of the Bolivarian School of Potrerito in the Morán municipality (Lara State) could be an interesting example to systematically record and replicate. This is an educational centre that has a farm of a comparable size to the small producers who are the subject of this programme. The farm has been turned into an experimental unit, except that the centre itself has developed an environmental education programme that includes learning about environmentally friendly practices. This technical training has permeated through to farming families through their children, significantly increasing the potential for indirect programme activity.

A second successful practice which should be consolidated, as indicated on several occasions throughout the report, are the **spaces for inter-institutional coordination at local level** created by the CIARA municipal teams as part of the programme. These spaces - both formally in some cases and informally in the majority - have enabled the generation of synergies between different public programmes. As a result, the resources available for producers have increased, while the scope of the related public programmes has also increased (examples already provided such as FONDAS, the Women's Bank or the Tree Programme). At least in the case of MPPAT on an internal level, it should take advantage of CIARA's capacity for working on the ground to coordinate the monitoring of some of these programmes, which are part of the policies of the Ministry itself. This would both improve policy coherence in implementation and provide more accurate feedback on performance, which is currently limited in practice by the lack of financing at local level (particularly for FONDAS).

In a similar vein, the experience of the **Strategic Committee** is an interesting example of inter-agency coordination, this time at national level. Many of the coordination difficulties at local level are due to the lack of harmonisation of strategic guidelines between the different ministerial bodies involved. The particular example of the environment constitutes a clear case of a comprehensive approach, due to the multiple dimensions involved, by its very nature.

This initiative, as explained more fully in the text of the report, was generated based on the findings of the mid-term evaluation, and basically constitutes the creation of a formal space that includes the main bodies involved in the project (executive agency, implementing agency and other ministries) with high-level representatives. Meeting on a regular basis (particularly during the first year of operations, 2011), the committee members have paid particular attention to the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation mentioned above, to ensure its implementation, and to address any difficulties in carrying out the planned actions, seeking consensus to facilitate the process. This body brings dynamism to the project implementation and contributes to the effective resolution of inter-agency conflict, but also has the capacity to develop joint initiatives.

It is also worth noting some practices that would be better to avoid in the future. One of these relates to **programme coherence** and meeting the expectations of producers. At various times during the project, the attention given to producers was limited or even non-existent for extended periods, holding up support processes and generating a degree of frustration among producers. For the successful performance of the project, it is important to avoid these circumstances, given that rebuilding the trust of producers is a very expensive process.

Two particular examples to be avoided are worth mentioning. One of them has to do with the aforementioned Grants Fund. The lack of agreement between the executive and implementing agencies led to the temporary suspension of the fund, which resulted in the producers' expectations not being met (they were awaiting receipt of funds for projects which had already been formulated). The other example is related to the Great AgroVenezuela Project. The MPPAT decision to devote all their human resources to this strategy resulted in the almost complete abandonment of support from the CIARA teams for the Terrandina producers. The change of role also generated confusion among producers, given that some technicians visited the same producers for completely different purposes, and in some cases to bring Mission resources, which directly contradicted the project strategy (e.g. agro-chemicals versus agro-ecological production).

The other practice which should be avoided is the paralysis in project implementation caused by problems in **communication between the implementing and executing agencies** or difficulties in the administrative/financial management of the project. Much of the poor performance in terms ofbudget execution can be found in issues such as the delay in approving the AOP or the actual transfer of funds for execution. It is desirable to identify the main bottlenecks in these cases, to streamline these processes and to focus on the provision of goods and services for the main beneficiaries: the producers.

ANNEX

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

TERMS OF REFERENCE

INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANCY FOR THE CLOSEOUT EVALUATION OF PROJECT GEF PIMS 2734 – PNUD 51604 "BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN THE PRODUCTIVE LANDSCAPE OF VENEZUELAN ANDES"

August, 2013

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PRE-CLOSING EVALUATION
OF PROJECT GEF PIMS 2734 –PNUD 51604
"BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN THE PRODUCTIVE LANDSCAPE OF VENEZUELAN ANDES"

1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the policies and procedures for monitoring and evaluation (S & E) of UNDP and FMAM, all projects supported by UNDP and FMAM-funded, whether they are medium or full size, must make a final evaluation by the end of its implementation. Final evaluations are intended to determine the relevance, performance and success of the project; look for signs of potential impact and sustainability of results, including the project's contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global environmental goals. They also aim to identify and document lessons learned and make recommendations that might improve design and implementation of other UNDP / GEF projects.

These terms of reference (TOR) establish expectations for a Pre-Closing evaluation for the project: *Biodiversity conservation in the productive landscape of the Venezuelan Andes (No. 2734 PIMS)*. This evaluation will provide an input to the final evaluation to be performed later.

This pre-closure assessment is being conducted in order to provide a review of the progress in the project implementation, review project achievements in the realization of their products and determine progress toward meeting the goal and expected results of the project as well as lessons learned.
The evaluation seeks to examine the progress in the implementation as agreed during the meeting of the Project Steering Committee, held in November 2011, including the completion of the baseline studies, the systematization of learned lessons and design and implementation of a proposed investment in the field using the PPD mechanism. This was part of the "management response" to address the findings of the midterm evaluation. Here the essential aspects of the project to be assessed:

PROJECT SUMMARY TABLE

Project title:	Conservation of biodiversity in the productive landscape of the Venezuelan Andes			
FMAM project ID:	2734		*at the time of approval (million USD)*	*at the time of completion (million USD)*
PNUD project ID:	51604	FMAM funding:	7.351.900,00	7.351.900,00
Country:	Venezuela	IA and EA have:		
Region:	Latin America	Government:	29.545.061,00	29.545.061,00
Area if interest:	BD	Other:	0,00	0,00
Operational Program:	SO2 – OP4/OP3	Total Co financing:	29.545.061,00	29.545.061,00
Implementing Agency:	Fundación CIARA	Total expenditure of the project:	0.00	2.548.377,80
Other partners involved:	MINAMB MPPAT MPPPF	Signing of the project (start date of the project):		12.12.2006
		Closing date (Operational):	Proposed: 31.12.13	Real: 31.12.13

The project and its context

The project was designed to maintain biodiversity in the mosaic of land uses of the productive landscape of the Cordillera de Mérida. Its goal is for "production systems in the coffee / livestock in the Cordillera de Mérida to remain biodiversity-friendly"

This seeks to harmonize the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable endogenous productive development ensuring that the proposed measures actually improve and diversify livelihoods without undermining the Andean ecosystem.

As established in the project document, the interventions are targeted to shade coffee plantations of small producers without promoting the extension of them into natural forests. Thus the expected results are:

- Farmers in the pilot municipalities have the necessary skills to develop production systems biodiversity friendly.
- Policies, planning frameworks and favorable financing mechanisms support the biodiversity friendly production systems in pilot municipalities
- The pilot municipalities operate as platforms for exchange, dissemination and replication of experiences on best practices and lessons learned
- Principles of adaptive management supported by monitoring and evaluation tools guide the project implementation and management functions

Some of the established strategic considerations are:

- Avoid the risk that coffee production to expand at the expense of natural forests.
- Support to maximize the diversity of the canopy.
- Emphasis on cost-effectiveness.
- Move towards a comprehensive approach to system / landscape.
- Acknowledgment of the importance of small productive and various units organized in consolidated communities as a prerequisite for sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity in the productive landscape.
- Consolidation of an existing network of organizations and institutions.
- Focus on niche markets for coffee looking for both quality and certification.

In October 2010 this project was subject to a mid-term evaluation where it was suggested that it was not clear that the project was moving forward in achieving its objectives significantly, since the potential perceived impact rests solely locally on a few farmers. There are no measurements that can refute or confirm if there is a decline in biodiversity and the barriers identified in the draft do not continue generating projected losses. The evaluation found that given the small impact of the activities undertaken, it is likely that the project is not moving toward global environmental benefits. The described situation deserved that warranted that the project had significant changes in their institutional framework, strategy and implementation warrant.

2. OBJETIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

Objectives of the Evaluation

The evaluation was conducted according to the guidelines, rules and procedures established by UNDP and FMAM, as stated in the Guide for the Evaluation of UNDP FMAM-Financed Projects.

The purpose of the pre-closing evaluation is to analyze the achievement of project outcomes, determine its significance, its operation, its success and sustainability, as well as lessons learned and best practices that can improve the sustainability of the project benefits and help for a general improve of the UNDP programming.

APPROACH AND METHOD OF EVALUATION

There has been developed over time a focus and a general method for the conduct of projects supported by UNDP and the FMAM. It is expected that the evaluator frames the assessment work using the criteria of **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact**, as defined and explained in the Guide for final evaluations of the projects supported by UNDP and the FMAM (attached to these terms). A series of questions covering each of these criteria included in these ToR (see Annex C of the ToR) was drafted. Evaluator is expected to modify, complete and submit this array as part of an initial evaluation report, and included as an appendix to the final report

The evaluator shall verify how the monitoring of project scope changes have been done, as well as verify changes in planning, verify the supporting documentation and justification of changes, and compliance with approval levels necessary for authorizing changes in planning and project scope.

If it is determined the existence of changes in the scope and planning of the project occurred during execution, the final evaluation should conclude on what were the causes that led to these changes and whether these changes were fully analyzed and properly documented, what was their contribution to meeting the objectives of the project and what were the lessons learned.

The pre-closure evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close involvement with government counterparts, the Country Office of UNDP, the project team, the Regional Technical Advisory FMAM / UNDP and key stakeholders. The evaluator is expected to undertake a mission field in the seven pilot municipalities (Bolívar, Andrés Bello, Aricagua, Andrés Eloy Blanco, Moran, Sucre and Boconó). Interviews were conducted with the following organizations and individuals at least: Ministry of People's Power for the Environment, Ministry of People's Power for Planning and Finance, Ministry of People's Power for Agriculture and Lands, Ministry of People's Power for Economy communal, mayors and governors associated with pilot municipalities, hydraulic system Yacambú - Quíbor, representatives of producers community and associations of coffee producers, among other

[1] For more information on assessment methods, refer to the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of Development Results, Chapter 7, p. 163

The evaluator will review all relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project reports, including annual progress report (PIR) and other reports, reviews of the project budget, mid-term, progress reports, tracking tools at FMAM focal area, project files, national strategic and legal documents, and other material that the evaluator considers useful for this evidence-based assessment. A list of documents that the project team will provide the evaluator for the review is included in Appendix B of the "TOR" of these Terms of Reference.

EVALUATION'S CRITERIA AND RATINGS

An assessment of project performance compared with expectations set out in the logical framework of the project and results framework (see Appendix A) will be conducted, which provides performance and impact indicators for project implementation, along with the corresponding means of verification. The evaluation will minimally cover the following criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. Grades should be provided according to the following performance criteria. The full table in the executive summary assessment must be included. Mandatory rating scales are included in Appendix D of the ToR.

Project Performance Rating			
1.Formulation / Project Design	Rating	**2. Monitoring and Evaluation**	Rating
Conceptualization / Design		M & E design input	
National Ownership		M & E plan execution	
Stakeholder involvement in the Design		M & E general quality	
Replicability			
3. Implementation of IA & EA:	Rating	**4. Results Evaluation**	**Rating**
Implantation approach			
UNDP Quality of application		Relevance	
Quality of execution: executing agency		Effectivity	
General quality of application and execution		Efficiency	
Stakeholder involvement		Overall rating of the project results	
Financial Planning			
5. Sustainability	**Rating**		
Financial resources:			
Socio-political:			
Institutional framework and governance:			
Environmental:			
Overall Probability of sustainability:			

1. Formulation / project design

Must describe how efficient was the design and how the project was conceptualized to address the problem, emphasizing the consistency and logic of the project strategy and its logical framework. This section should include the following:

Conceptualization/design: This section should assess the approach used in the design and give an appreciation of how the problem is conceptualized appropriately and whether the selected intervention strategy was the best option to address barriers in the project area. It must also include a review of the logical framework and whether the various components and proposed activities to achieve the objective were appropriate, viable and responded to the institutional, legal and regulatory environment of the project. It should also assess the indicators defined for guiding implementation and measurement of achievement and whether lessons learned from other relevant projects (in the same focal area) were incorporated into the project design, taking as input, among others, the analysis performed by the project itself.

National Ownership: It should assess whether the initial project idea originated in plans of local, national or sectorial development and if the project meets the national interests in the environment and development.

Stakeholder involvement in the design: It should assess whether there was dissemination of information, consultation and participation of stakeholders in project design.

Replicability: Determine how the lessons and experiences generated by the project were or could be replicated or expanded in the design and implementation of other projects (this also relates to the practices undertaken during implementation).

Other aspects: Evaluate the approach in reviewing project formulation comparative advantage of UNDP as implementing agency of the project; consideration of linkages between projects and other interventions within the sector and the definition of clear and appropriate arrangements of management at the design stage.

2. Project Implementation

Implementation Approach: Regardless of whether the project has been designed correctly, the next question to ask is: *is the project being well implemented*? Among others, the following aspects should be evaluated:

a) The use of the logical framework as a management tool during implementation done so far and all changes made to it in response to changing conditions and / or feedback from monitoring and evaluation activities.

b) Other elements showing that adaptive management existed, such as the systematic development of comprehensive and realistic work plans and / or changes in management arrangements to enhance implementation.

c) The establishment and use of electronic information technologies to support implementation, participation and monitoring, as well as other project activities.

d) Operational relationships between the institutions involved and others and how these relationships have contributed to effective implementation and achievement of project objectives.

e) Technical capacities associated with the project and their role in the development, management and achievements of the project.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): Include an assessment of whether there has been a regular and adequate monitoring of activities during implementation in order to establish whether inputs, papers, calendars, required actions and results have progressed according to plan. If there has been formal evaluations to assess whether actions have been taken regarding the results and conclusions of these. To evaluate this is proposed that reviewers use the following criteria:

a) To evaluate whether there has been so far a proper system of M & E that has allowed track progress towards achieving the objective of the project results.

b) To assess if adequate M & E tools have been used such as baseline, practical and clear indicators, data analysis, studies to assess the outcomes for certain stages of the project (results or progress indicators).

To evaluate whether there were resources and capabilities to perform adequately monitor and if the M & E system was used for the handling / adaptive management of the project.

Stakeholders' participation: This should include an assessment of the mechanisms for information dissemination on the implementation of the project in the first phase and the degree of stakeholder participation in management, emphasizing the following aspects:

a) The production and dissemination of information generated by the project in the first phase.

b) The involvement of local users in project implementation and decision making. Analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the approach adopted by the project in this topic.

c) The establishment of alliances and partnerships between the project and local, national and international entities and the effects they have had on project implementation so far.

d) The participation of governmental institutions in project implementation, the degree of government support for the project.

Financial Planning: An analysis of the following should be included:

a) The actual costs of the project by objective, results and activities.

b) The cost-effectiveness of the results. Is it being a cost-efficient project?

c) The financial management (including disbursement issues)

d) The co-financing.

Methods of execution and implementation: This should consider the effectiveness of the UNDP counterpart and the participation of the Project Coordination Unit in the selection, recruitment, assignment of experts, consultants and national staff and partners in the definition of tasks and responsibilities. The quantity, quality and punctuality of earnings (inputs) for the project with respect to execution responsibilities. Enactment of legislation and budgetary provisions and extent to which they may be affecting the implementation and sustainability of the project.

3. Progress in achieving results

Achievement of outputs / outcomes and objectives: This pre-closure assessment seeks to determine the progress in achieving the purpose and outcome of the project so far. For this it is important to determine the successes and failures of the project that can be identified at this stage, to achieve its objective and results. If the project did not establish a baseline (initial condition) the evaluator, along with the project team should try to determine it using special methodologies to establish achievements, results and impacts properly. This analysis should be carried out based on project-specific indicators. This section should also review the following aspects:

• **Sustainability**: This analysis should be done based on the following four dimensions of sustainability. Besides these dimensions should be classified with the categories described in Annex D of these terms:

- **Financial Resources**: Are there any financial risks that could affect the sustainability of the initiative? What is the probability that there are no financial resources to sustain the project results after FMAM support has ended? (Resources can be from various sources such as public and private sector, resources generating activities, and trends indicate that in the future there may be adequate funding to sustain the project results).

- **Socio-Political**: Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize the continuity of the project results? Is there any risk that ownership of stakeholders is insufficient to ensure continuity of benefits and outcomes? Are the key project stakeholders showing themselves interested in the project benefits to continue? Have been managed to educate the public and stakeholders to continue supporting the project objective in the long term?

- **Institutional framework and governance:** Does the institutional framework and governance represent any kind of risk to the permanence of the benefits of the project? It should also consider whether the systems for accountability and transparency as well as capacity are appropriate and available to continue the initiative.

- **Environment:**
- Are there any environmental risks or activities in the project area that may reduce the future flow of project environmental benefits? The review should assess whether some project activities may exert some kind of threat to the sustainability of the final results.

• Contribution to improving the skills of national / local staff

SCOPE OF THE ASSESSMENT

General Issues

The pre-closing evaluation will assess, at least, the progress towards achieving outputs and outcomes. In this sense, the evaluation should determine the extent to which the results of the project have been achieved, or are expected to be achieved, and evaluate if the project has taken so far, any other positive or negative result.

While the progress of a project is evaluated, the evaluation aims to identify lessons learned and gaps in the process of achieving the goal of the project as stated in the project document and also indicate whether there was any change and if these changes were approved and achieved.

Overall, the assessment should address the following issues and questions related to the project:

Project Design: Does the project design is adequate to achieve the objectives? How well was the project formulated? How current and valid is the design of the project from its original design, and can identify its contribution or not to achieving the objectives set? With the experience gained to date and in view of the current situation of capacities of institutions, Should it adjust or modify in any way the project strategy? Modifications made during execution, resulted in better products and (potentially) major impacts?

Impact: Does the project have made satisfactory progress toward the intended impact? How have they evolved leading indicators?

Indicators: Do the indicators reflect the overall objectives of the project? Are baseline measures taken at the areas where pilot experiences develop?

Implementation and execution: Have performed efficiently and effective the implementation and execution modalities? Is there a clear division of roles and responsibilities among all stakeholders in the project? Was there effective communication between all participating groups? What have been the strengths and weaknesses? Were reasonable the administration costs? How has developed the delivery of co-financing contributions (regarding the delivery schedule, amounts, exchange rates, etc. Special emphasis should be given to this topic)?

Lessons learned: For instance, how it could the impacts / outcomes be more efficiently and effectively achieved? What has worked particularly well and can be considered "best practice"? What should not have been done because I had a small or negative impact on the overall objective?

The assessment should examine and properly assess the prospects of various stakeholders. In most cases, a final evaluation includes field visits to verify the progress in achieving the objectives and outputs of the project and interviews with stakeholders who are key at national and local level, where appropriate. It also analyzes the use of FMAM resources and co-financing in the broader context of the country.

Assessing progress towards the achievement of project results

The results are the effect, in the short or medium term, probable or achieved in the products of an intervention. Examples of results may include, among others, strengthening institutional capacity, an increase in the levels of public awareness (when behavior change is generated), and transformation of policy and market frameworks. As part of the evaluation, the evaluation team will need to quantify project outcomes using indicators and relevant Tracking Tools[2].

To determine the level of achievement of project results and provide a basis for discussion, the following three criteria must be evaluated:

- **Relevance:** Are the project outcomes consistent with the focal areas / operational program strategies and country priorities? The assessment should also measure the extent to which the results specified in the project document are actually outcomes and not outputs or inputs.
- **Effectiveness:** The likelihood of achieving the objectives. Are the results proportionate to the expected project results (as they are described in the project document) and the problems that the project was intended to address?
- **Efficiency:** The extent to which the results are being achieved with greater economic resources possible (also called cost effectiveness or efficiency). Was the project cost effective? Was the project the least cost option? Was the implementation of the project been delayed, and if so, did that affect cost-effectiveness? Whenever possible, the assessment should also compare the cost-time vs. results of the project with other similar projects.

The assessment of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency should be as objective as possible and include sufficient and convincing empirical evidence. Ideally the project monitoring system should deliver quantifiable information leading to a robust assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the project.

In addition to a descriptive analysis, the assessment should rate the project using the following categories:

- **Highly Satisfactory (AS):** The project had no weaknesses in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency.
- **Satisfactory (S):** The project had minor weaknesses in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency.
- **Moderately Satisfactory (MS):** The project had moderate weaknesses in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency.
- **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MI):** The project had significant weaknesses in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.
- **Unatisfactory (I):** The project had major weaknesses in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

[2] For FMAM projects framed under Strategic Priority 1, the use of the METT tool (Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool) is require

Highly Unsatisfactory (AI): The project had severe weaknesses in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

Approach to the sustainability of the project results

Although not intended to evaluate "probability of sustainability of outcomes at the end of the project, and provide a rating for this," it is expected that the evaluation offer clues to analyze the sustainability horizon at the end of the project. To do this, you must pay special attention to the analysis of risks likely to affect the persistence of project outcomes.

Catalyzing Rol

The evaluation will also describe any catalytic or replication effect of the project that can be identified. If no effect is identified, the evaluation will describe the catalytic or replication actions that the project has made.

Assessment of monitoring and evaluation systems

The evaluation will assess whether the project met the project design requirements of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and the implementation of the project M&E plan. Specifically, it attempts to analyze the relevance, feasibility, accuracy, disaggregation and temporal consistency of indicators, and to assess the relevance, feasibility and application of the tools provided in the system of monitoring and evaluation. GEF projects must budget adequately for execution of the M & E plan, and provide adequate resources for the implementation of M&E plan. It is also expected that project managers use the information generated by the M & E system during project implementation to adapt and improve the project. Due to the long duration of many GEF projects, these are also encouraged to include plans for long-term monitoring to measure outcomes (such as environmental outcomes) after completion. It is expected the report to include separate assessments of the achievements and shortcomings of these two types of M&E systems.

Specific Topics

The evaluation should review the progress of implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Steering Committee in response to the findings of the midterm evaluation, including the targeting of project activities related to:

i) The completion of the baseline studies,

ii) The systematization of learned lessons, and

iii) The design and implementation of a proposal to implement the investments planned by the project in the field by applying the mechanism of the Small Grants Programme (SGP).

PROJECT FUNDING/COFINANCING

The evaluation will assess the project's key financial issues, including the scope of planned and carried out cofinancing. Data on costs and financing of the project will be required, including annual expenses. They must assess and explain the differences between planned and actual spending. The results of the recent financial audits should be considered, if available. Evaluators will receive assistance from Country Office (PO) and Project Team to obtain financial data to complete the following table of cofinancing, which will be included in the final evaluation report.

Cofinancing (type / source)	Own UNDP funding (millions of USD)		Government (millions of USD)		Partner agency (millions of USD)		Total (millions of USD)	
	Projected	Real	Projected	Real	Projected	Real	Projected	Real
Subvention								
Loans / grants								
• Aid in kind								
• Other								
Totals								

INTEGRATION

Projects supported by UNDP and GEF funded are key components in the national UNDP programming, as well as in regional and global programs. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the project is integrated with other UNDP priorities, including poverty reduction, improved governance, prevention and recovery from natural disasters and gender.

IMPACT

Evaluators will assess the extent to which the project is achieving impact or is progressing towards achieving impacts. The key results that should be reached in the assessments include whether the project demonstrated: a) verifiable improvements in the ecological state, b) verifiable reductions in the tension of ecological systems, and / or c) demonstrated progress toward achieving these impacts.[3]

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS

The evaluation report should include a section that provides a set of **conclusions**, **recommendations** and **lessons**.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

[3] A useful tool for measuring the impact of progress made is the method from the Manual for Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI) prepared by the GEF Evaluation Office: ROTI Handbook 2009

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation lies in the UNDP CO in Venezuela. The UNDP CO will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation team, which will be charged to project funds. The Project Team will be responsible for keeping in touch with the team of evaluators to establish stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits, coordinate with the government, etc.

4. EVALUATION TERM

The total duration of the evaluation shall be 45 days according to the following schedule:

Activity	Time	Date of completion
Start meeting	*1 day*	*21/10/2013*
Preparation	*5 days*	*21/10/2013 to 25/10/ 2013*
Assessment Mission	*15 days*	*28/10/2013 to 15/11/ 2013*
Draft Assessment Report	5 *days*	*18/11/2013 to 22/11/2013*
Final Report	10 *days*	*25/11/2013 to 06/12/ 2013*

5. FINAL EVALUATION RESULTS

It is expected that the evaluation team accomplishes the following:

Outcome	Content	Time	Responsibilities
Initial Report	The evaluator provides clarification on the periods and methods	Not more than 1 week prior to the evaluation mission	The evaluator presents to UNDP CO in Venezuela
Presentation	Initial Results	End of the assessment mission	Submitted to the strategic committee of the project and UNDP CO
Final Report Draft	Full report with attachments	Within 3 weeks from the assessment mission	Submitted to the counterparty and OP, reviewed by the ATR and the M&E regional office
Final Report*	Report reviewed	Within 1 week after receiving comments on the draft UNDP	Sent to the OP to load the ERC UNDP

*When the final evaluation report is submitted, it also requires the evaluator to provide a 'route of the audit', where it is detailed how it have dealt with (or not) all comments received on the final evaluation report.

ASSESSMENT TEAM INITIAL REPORT

Evaluators will begin an examination and preliminary analysis of the available information, and develop a preparatory initial report based on the TDR, the initial meetings with the program unit and examination of documents. The description of what is being evaluated will show their understanding of logic or theory on the operation of the project, including strategies, activities, outputs and expected outcomes, and the relationships between them. The initial report should include, among other things:

Purpose and scope of evaluation. A clear statement of the objectives of the assessment and key aspects or elements of the initiative that should be examined.

Criteria and questions to be answered by the evaluation. The criteria and evaluation questions used to evaluate the performance and logic.

Evaluation Methodology. A description of data collection methods and sources of information that will be used, including the reason for its selection (as will assist in the evaluation) and their limitations; tools, instruments and data collection protocols, and exchange of reliability and validity for assessing.

Evaluation Matrix. The initial assessment report should have an evaluation matrix that shows each evaluation criteria, questions and sub-questions that the evaluation should answer, and the data that will be collected for each question as well as the methods used to collect data.

A calendar of key stages, of the deliverables and their responsibilities.

Detailed Resource Requirements related to the evaluation activities and deliverables detailed in the work plan.

In addition, the preparatory report should make explicit the underlying theory or assumptions about how each collected data will contribute to understanding development outcomes (attribution, contribution, process, implementation, etc.), and the logic of the methodologies data collection, analysis and preparation of the report that have been chosen, and report the results.

EVALUATION REPORT

This document should be structured logically, it should contain findings based on the evidence obtained, conclusions, lessons and recommendations, and be presented in a way that makes the information accessible and comprehensible. Furthermore, it should meet the following criteria:

- Be comprehensive and well structured
- Describe what being assessed and why
- Clarify the users' issues of concern
- Explain the steps and procedures used to answer these questions
- Present findings supported by credible evidence in response to questions

- Acknowledge its limitations
- Draw conclusions about findings based on evidence
- Propose concrete and practical recommendations arising from the conclusions
- Be written with the users in mind and how they will use the evaluation

Source: UNEG, "Standards for Evaluation in the UN System", 2005. Available at: http://www.unevaluation.org/unegstandards.

6. TEAM COMPOSITION

The evaluation team will be composed of an international and a national evaluator to assist in the analysis of institutional, contextual and social aspects. The consultant should have previous experience in evaluating similar projects. It is an advantage to have experience in projects funded by the GEF. The international consultant will lead the evaluation team and will be responsible for finalizing the report. The selected evaluators should not have participated in the preparation or implementation of the project and should have no conflict of interest with the activities related to the project.

International Consultant:

- Profile: Professional in the area of ecology, biology, environment or related field, with experience in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of environmental projects, with emphasis on biodiversity conservation. With at least 10 years of professional experience in the highlighted fields. The consultant should have experience in at least one evaluation of project implementation under the guidelines of the GEF as is set forth in these terms of reference, prior experience with the methodologies for monitoring and evaluating evidence-based. Domain logical framework methodology. Capacity to work in multidisciplinary teams and relationships with a broad spectrum of stakeholders. Excellent analytical and writing skills. Domain of Spanish and English languages.

- Role within the evaluation team:

    - Leader of the evaluation mission..
    - Vision and overview of project implementation.
    - Responsible for the delivery of the final report (in English)

She/he will be in charge of:

- Evaluate the project design and the achievement of the objectives, outcomes / impacts, and products of the project, implementation of activities and resource utilization. (It should be considered and evaluated the changes made over time to the logical framework of the project in terms of its objectives, expected results and execution mode).
- Assess the implementation capacity of the various departments of the project.
- Assess the technical part of the project, decide on the ecological suitability of the advanced productive programs in the project and in the maintenance of biodiversity in the mosaic of land uses the productive landscape of the Cordillera de Mérida

- Evaluate different aspects of the project as appropriation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, efficiency, financial sustainability and institutional capacity, etc.
- Assessing managerial, financial and administrative aspects of the project.
- Evaluate compliance with the rules and procedures of the administrative, financial system and the project reports, verifying that they are in compliance with financial rules and regulations of UNDP and GEF, and public procurement rules when applying.
- Evaluate the cost effectiveness of the methodologies used by the project to achieve the project objectives.
- Identify key lessons learned that can be spread among relevant GEF projects and between regional and national authorities and actors involved in the project.
- Compile and edit and prepare the final report.

7. ETHICS OF THE EVALUATOR

Evaluation consultants will assume the highest ethical standards and must sign a Code of Conduct (Appendix E) when accepting the assignment. UNDP evaluations are conducted in accordance with the principles described in the 'Ethical Guidelines for assessment' of the Assessment Group UN (UNEG)

8. PAYMENT TERMS AND SPECIFICATIONS

%	Milestone
20%	At the end of the field mission and results preview with the counterparty.
30%	After the presentation and approval of the first draft of the final evaluation report.
50%	After submission and approval by the UNDP CO and ATR definitive final evaluation report.

9. APPLICATION PROCESS

Candidates should send their application from 08 to 26 April 2013. It is suggested to individual consultants to submit applications along with their CVs for these positions. The application must contain a current and comprehensive curriculum in Spanish, where an email and telephone contact indicated. Eligible candidates should submit a financial technical bid, with the total cost of allocation (including living expenses, per diem and travel costs).

UNDP uses a selection process fair and transparent considering the skills / abilities of the candidates as well as their financial proposals. Women and qualified members of social minorities are encouraged to submit their application.

TERMS OF REFERENCE'S APPENDIX

ANNEX A: PROJECT LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

ANNEX B: LIST OF DOCUMENTS TO BE REVIEWED BY THE EVALUATORS

ANNEX C: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

ANNEX D: GRADING SCALE

ANNEX E: FORM OF AGREEMENT AND CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE EVALUATION CONSULTANT

ANNEX F: EVALUATION REPORT OUTLINE

ANNEX G: AUTHORIZATION FORM ASSESSMENT REPORT

ANNEX H: GUIDE TO MAKE FINAL EVALUATION OF PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY THE UNDP AND FUNDED BY THE GEF.

ANNEX A: PROJECT LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Project Strategy	Indicators				
Purpose: Maintaining the value of biodiversity mosaic of land uses in the productive landscape of the *Cordillera de Mérida*					
	INDICATORS	**Baseline**	**Goal**	**Means of verification**	**Assumptions**
OBJECTIVE: *Systems applied by producers in the Coffee lands / Livestock area at Mérida Cordillera remain friendly to biodiversity.*	*Acres of shade coffee throughout the area that are not converted by soil uses less friendly to biodiversity.*	**362,400 ha**, representing 18.3% of the area	**362,400 ha** midterm **362,400 ha** to the end of the project	Satellite Image	• Continuous receptivity by the actors in the "replica target area" to participate in the replication of pilot • Ongoing Government commitment to the smallholder sector
	Hectares of forest cover without coffee (including fallow) throughout the area that are not converted to other uses.	**641,700 ha**, representing 32.5% of the total	**641,700 ha** midterm **641,700 ha** to the end of the project	Satellite Image	
	Forests without coffee ZCG suffer no increase in disturbance.	299,400 km² without disturbance 492,300 km² slightly disturbed 291,100 km² moderately disturbed 268,100 km² highly disturbed	299,400 km² without disturbance 492,300 km² slightly disturbed 291,100 km² moderately disturbed 268,100 km² highly disturbed	Satellite Image	
	Structural and specific diversity of forests (with coffee and without coffee) throughout the project area does not decrease	*To be determined under participatory measurements at project start*	*The goals will be established once the baseline values are defined*	Participatory measurement, by local actors	
	The forest areas (with coffee without coffee) in key areas for connectivity between protected areas does not diminish	74,987 ha shade coffee 183,046 ha forest without coffee	74,987 ha shade coffee 183,046 ha de forest without coffee	Satellite Image	
	Vegetation patches in key areas for connectivity between protected areas do not suffer increased fragmentation	78 patches (42 with less than 1,000 ha, 29 between 1,000 and 9,999 ha, and 7 with more than 10,000 ha)	Not more than 78 patches (42 with less than 1,000 ha, 29 between 1,000 y 9,999 ha y 7 with more than 10,000 ha)	Satellite Image	
	Forests without coffee in key areas for connectivity between protected areas do not suffer increase in disturbance	29,759 ha without disturbance 81,242 ha slightly disturbed 33,862 ha moderately disturbed 38,235 ha highly disturbed	29,759 ha without disturbance 81,242 ha slightly disturbed 33,862 ha moderately disturbed 38,235 ha highly disturbed	Satellite Image	

Project Strategy	Indicators				
Purpose: Maintaining the value of biodiversity mosaic of land uses in the productive landscape of the *Cordillera de Mérida*					
	INDICATORS	**Baseline**	**Goal**	**Means of verification**	**Assumptions**
	Number of families (by socioeconomic status and gender of household head) with access to water supply, sanitation, electricity, credit and food security as a result of friendly productive activities with biodiversity.	*To be determined through household surveys early in the project*	*The goals will be established once the baseline values are defined*	Home studies	
Outcome 1: Farmers in the pilot area have the necessary skills to develop friendly production systems biodiversity	Number of farm families in the pilot area in the coffee lands / livestock areas using friendly productive practices biodiversity as a result of a program to strengthen skills.	**35,000 producer families** with shade coffee (baseline figure will be detailed by farm size and area of shade coffee in a home study done at the beginning of the project)	**35,000 farms** with shade coffee at midterm and 35,000 farms at the end of the project (goals will be detailed by farm size and area of shade coffee once baseline values defined)	Household surveys	• National and international prices of biodiversity-based products are not subject to descending fluctuations. • Government policies relating to the export of coffee allow producers meet the commitments to buyers • No extreme fluctuations occur in the exchange and interest rates • Certification costs remain within reasonable limits. • The biodiversity-friendly crops are not affected by major pests or diseases. • Venezuela remains a viable and attractive tourist destination.
	Number of farms in the pilot area in the coffee lands / livestock areas with certified coffee by type certification (shade coffee, Fair Trade, bird-friendly, organic)	**41 members of producer families** of the cooperative Quebrada Azul have organic certification. **450 producers** of the cooperative COOPALAR y 350 of CROCAF producing Fair Trade coffee (non organic) **Zero producer families** with bird-friendly certification. *Additional information on shade coffee, Fair Trade and bird-friendly coffee is obtained early in the project.*	**200 families** with midterm organic certification and a total of **400 families** by the end of the project. *Goals for other forms of certification will be established once the baseline values are defined.*	Certification records	
	Number of local producer families within the pilot area coffee lands / livestock area (with a monthly income <$ 200) to invest in eco-tourism	**64 producer families** (0.2% of total)	**1,000 producer families** (3% of total) by midterm and **3,500 producer families** (10% of total) by the end of the project	Records of participation in support programs. Record of visits	

Project Strategy	Indicators				
Purpose: Maintaining the value of biodiversity mosaic of land uses in the productive landscape of the *Cordillera de Mérida*					
	INDICATORS	**Baseline**	**Goal**	**Means of verification**	**Assumptions**
Outcome 1: Farmers in the pilot area have the necessary skills to develop friendly production systems biodiversity	Number of producer families in the area near Pilot coffee lands / livestock with an increase of 10% per year in income due to the implementation of friendly production practices biodiversity.	Shade coffee contributes to family income averaged close to $ 425 a year (*to be confirmed and related to the total income of the family through a home study done at the beginning of the project*)	**3,500 producer families** (10% of total) by midterm and 10,500 *producer families (30% of total) by the end of the project*	Household surveys	•
	Value received by producers in the pilot area of the coffee lands/ livestock zone based on biodiversity-friendly products on the market (shade coffee and rural tourism)	Generally the net annual income from shade coffee for small producers is close to $425 by home ($14,875,000 in total, between 35,000 producer families). Generally the net annual income from tourism is near $1560 by home ($99,840 in total, between 64 participating families to the date) *The figures for the home study to be conducted early in the project is to be corroborated*	**3,500 producer families (10% of total)** with an increase in net income amounting to $1,700/ha/year by midterm and **10,500 (30% of total)** by the end of the project **1000 producer families** receiving $1560 per year by midterm (**$1,560,000 in total**) and **3,500** by the end of the project (**$5,460,000 in total**)	Household surveys	
	Number of households in the pilot area of coffee lands/ livestock area with one or more additional sources of income due to the incorporation of friendly production practices biodiversity	**None at the beginning of the project**	**7,000 producer families** (20% of total) and 17,500 producer families *(50% of total) by the end of the project*	Household surveys	
	Number of producer organizations in the pilot area of coffee lands / livestock area participating in biodiversity friendly production practices, which are operating in a consolidated manner	- Cooperative Quebrada Azul with certified coffee (**41 member families**) - Rural Tourism Association ASOBAP, with **85 member families** at the ZCG. **- 450 producers** in the cooperative COOPALAR and **350 producers** from CROCAF producing Fair Trade coffee (not organic)	7 shade coffee producer organizations consolidated (with 500 member in total) and 7 rural tourism associations (with 525 member families by midterm and 1050 by the end of the project)	Producer studies	