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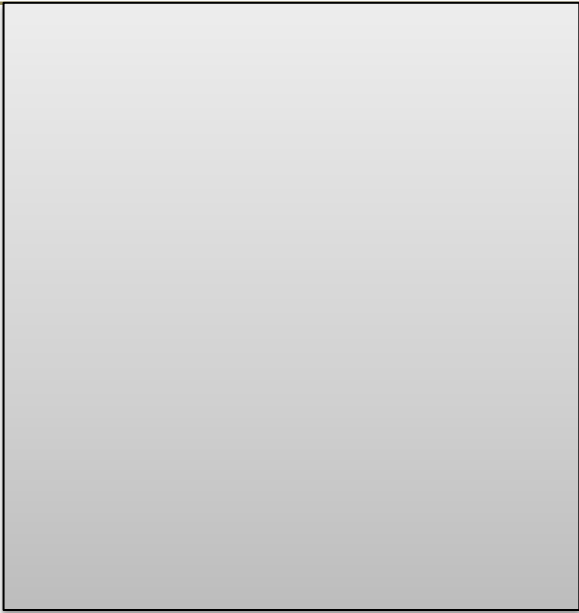
Partners: Ministry of Environment and Natural

Resources. INPESCA, INTUR, local NGOs,

Municipal Governments, INATEC, PIMCHAS Project,

LIDER, Friends of the Earth,

CUCULMECA, SAF-CAFTA



**TERMINAL EVALUATION
PROYECT SINAP
SDC- 132-2012
Nicaragua, Central
America**

Nicaragua, Central America

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April 2013

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i) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Project summary table

The project summary table shows a concise overview of the project and identifies the project within the GEF and UNDP, the country and the region where it is implemented, the area of interest, the Operational Program, the Implementing Agency and other stakeholders, as well as the budget at the time of approval for U.S. \$ 6.23 million and the executed budget at the end of the project which totalled U.S. \$ 5.98 million.

Table 1. Project summary table

Project title	Strengthening and Integration of Efforts for the Sustainability of the National System of Protected Areas			
Identification of the GEF Project:	3422		at the time of approval (millones de USD)	by the end of the implementation (millones de USD)
Identification of the UNDP:	00055603	Funding of the GEF Project:	1.8	1.76
Country:	Nicaragua	IA and EA have:	0.03	0.018
Region:	Latin America and the Caribbean	Government:	0.32	0.32
Area of interest:	Biodiversity	Others:	4.08	3.9
Operational program:	12 Integrated Management of Ecosystems	Total co-funding:	4.43	4.238
Executing Agency	Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources	Project total expense:	6.23	5.988
Other Stakeholders	INPESCA, INTUR, local NGOs Municipal Governments, INATEC, PIMCHAS PROJECT, LIDER FRIENDS OF THE EARTH, CUCULMECA, SAF-CAFTA	Project document signing: (project start date)		December 2008
		Closing date (Operations):	Budget: November 2011	Reality: December 2012

Sources: ProDoc, CDR 2009 - 2012, reformulated LF, PMU Advance Report 2012

2. Project description

MARENA, through the Directorate-General of Natural Patrimony and in compliance with its institutional mandate as the guiding, regulating and facilitating body responsible for the protection and preservation of natural resources and the environment, with the help of associated counterparts, has set the goal of providing the National System of Protected Areas (SINAP for its initials in Spanish) with the technical and financial tools needed to become a change agent for the preservation of biodiversity.

With this purpose, the project "Strengthening and Catalyzing the Sustainability of Nicaragua's Protected Areas System" was prepared, based on SINAP's Development Strategy and Plan and building on existing diagnoses that identify a number of barriers to be overcome in the institutional strengthening of SINAP. In this way, the project was designed with substantial support from key stakeholders, who contributed technical tools and financial proposals to develop and implement the project under MARENA's responsibility.

The project proposed a new approach to planning, management and administration of protected areas, including territorial involvement in order to promote the sustainable use and rational exploitation of natural resources.

This project was funded by the Global Environment Facility - GEF and implemented by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA) following the National Implementation Modality (NIM). The GEF Implementing Agency for this project was the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of Nicaragua. The project implementation period was 45 months (nearly four years), from 2009 through December 2012.

The Project Goal was defined as follows: "Nicaraguan society conserves biodiversity in-situ through a sustainable National Protected Areas System".

The Project Objective is: "The Nicaraguan Protected Areas System is effectively managed through legal reforms, strengthened institutions, sustainable financing and partnerships"

This objective was assessed through the evaluation of 4 outcomes: (a) Enhanced Policy and legal framework enables improved SINAP management and finances; (b) PA management responsibilities are shared by key stakeholders; (c) Capacities for sustainable financing of SINAP and PAs developed and (d) Institutional management and learning within project and MARENA.

The project began in four pilot Protected Areas (Padre Ramos, Pilas -Hoyo, Dipilto-Jalapa and Datanlí-El Diablo) and had an influence on 28 Protected Areas over the course of its implementation. Its objective was to strengthen sustainable financial mechanisms, by analyzing and strengthening the legal framework and making viable proposals for financial mechanisms for sharing responsibilities and commitments with institutional decision-makers; local governments; landowners; and users of the natural resources, environmental goods and services of the Protected Areas; through participation, strategic alliances, negotiation and organization.

This evaluation has been carried out in constant adherence to the guidelines, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF, as set out in the UNDP Guidelines for the Evaluation of GEF Funded Projects and the Terms of Reference (TOR) attached to the consultancy documents.

3. Evaluation ratings

Table 2, corresponding to the evaluation ratings, was prepared on the basis of a compilation of primary, secondary and technical information, including, notably, the questions in the UNDP evaluation guidelines and their respective rankings or ratings. Interview formats were designed for each type of actor to be interviewed, such as Project Officials, MARENA officials at the central and territorial levels, UNDP officials and local actors (NGOs and beneficiaries). Furthermore, the observations noted during field visits were used as inputs to the valuation.

Table 2. Project performance rating

1. Monitoring and Evaluation: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S) Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Rating	2. Performance of the IA and EA: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S) Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Rating
M&E Initial Design	S	Quality of the UNDP implementation	(MS)
M&E Execution Plan	(MS)	Execution Quality: Execution Agency	(MS)
M&E General Quality	(MS)	General Quality of the Implementation and Execution	(MS)
3. Evaluation of results: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S) Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Rating	4. Sustainability: Likely (L); Moderately Likely (ML); Moderately Unlikely (MU); Unlikely (U).	Rating
Relevance	(R)	Political / Institutional	(MU) national (ML) local
Effectiveness	(MS)	Social	(MU) national (ML) local
Efficiency	(MS)	Financial	(MU) national (ML) local
General rating of project results	(MS)	Environmental	(MU) national (MU) local
General likelihood of sustainability			(MU)
5 Impact: Significant (S) Minimal (M) Negligible (N)	Rating		
Environmental Status Improvement.	(N)		
Environmental Stress Reduction	(M)		
Progress towards stress/status change.	(S)		
General rating of project results			(MS)

Source: Original, based on UNDP/GEF evaluation guide

4. Summary of conclusions, lessons and recommendations

Conclusions

At the territorial level, the project produced most of the outputs and it achieved the outcomes. At the national level, however, certain limitations were encountered to achieving the same results. The Protected Areas Act was not passed, nor was the Law of Fees, but, in general, the project contributed, though maybe not as much as expected, to improve the management of the PAs.

The project has managed to develop tools and capabilities (short-term results) so that all stakeholders can contribute to improving the management of PAs at the national level. However, some of these tools, such as the financial mechanism and local fund proposals, and the regulation for environmental compensation of the energy sector, among others, are still awaiting approval, implementation, review and institutionalization, so they were lowered them to the output level.

Recommendations

The government (MARENA) should build on the achievements and momentum created by the project to take actions that would make it possible to advance towards the political, legal and financial strengthening of SINAP, such as reviewing, approving and implementing the tools developed and referred to in the preceding paragraph. Similarly MARENA should instruct their delegations to undertake short-term and continuous monitoring of the actions already implemented such as the Collaborative Management Committees, AOPs and business plans. The activation of the donor roundtable is also recommended, to develop the financial strategy, among other actions.

It should be noted that actions that can be undertaken do not necessarily need to have a project approach with external budgets, but they do need to have a political and administrative strategy particularly at the national level. At the territorial level, however, actions could take the form of projects.

The structures created with the Collaborative Management Committees should be sustained and strengthened through continuous work in the territories, for they have shown an interest in the progress of their communities, and significant achievements in terms of organization and coordination.

Consolidating and replicating products and tools generated by the project could help advance to a stage of fuller implementation, especially of management, relationships and communication plans within the SINAP.

Lessons

Formalization and adjustment of the changes within a project, when there are discrepancies between the formulation and execution of the project, is an experience to be considered for future projects. Time should be taken to adjust changes positively, to avoid large gaps between the general outcomes conceived in the initial design of the project and the outcomes obtained during implementation.

One of the lessons learned is that there is always a need for the participation of decision makers and stakeholders during all phases of the project cycle, especially during the implementation phase.

The decision makers involved in the design of the ProDoc were different from those involved in the implementation stage. As a result, it would be important to leave some time, during the stage of adjustments and updating, for the new decision makers to understand and appropriate the concept of the project. In the opinion of the consultant, the central government institutions involved in this project failed to achieve this; an example is the weak performance in promoting Laws and in the consultations with MPs and with key people to mobilize resources and achieve the political will of the highest spheres in the country.

Multi-sectorial alliances and co-financing are some of the good practices in this project, leaving positive results for the attainment of goals in the territories.

The process, structure, and focus of the Collaborative Management Committees, are practices that have improved governability and increased the effectiveness of protected area management. These practices should be reproduced and emphasized throughout the system.

Training and sustainable use projects that benefit the management of the Protected Areas are key elements for attitude changes (more awareness and responsibility for the protection of biodiversity), which the communities in the territories need to embrace.

The management and administration of the subsystems in pilot protected areas, provide participants with specific skills for the effective management of protected areas.

ii) ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

PA	Protected Area
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CMC	Co-operative Management Committee
PACP	Protected Areas Co-management Project
DGTC	Directorate-General for Territorial Coordination
DGP	Directorate-General of Planning
DGNP	Directorate-General for Natural Patrimony
NPD	National Project Director
SD	Superior Directorate
TD	Territorial Delegations
EA	Executing Agency
FE	Final Evaluation
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
GEF	Global Environmental Fund
IA	Implementing Agency
IDR	(for its initials in Spanish) Rural Development Institute
INPESCA	(for its initials in Spanish) Nicaraguan Institute of Fisheries and Aquiculture
INTUR	(for its initials in Spanish) Nicaraguan Institute of Tourism
MARENA	(for its initials in Spanish) Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MIFIC	Ministry of Development, Industry and Commerce
LF	Logical Framework
NIM	UNDP National Implementation Modality
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PANIF	(for its initials in Spanish) Nicaragua-Finland Environmental Program
PASMA	(for its initials in Spanish) DANIDA Funded Environment Sector Support
PIMCHAS	Integrated Project for Watershed Management
PIR	Project Implementation Report
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
AOP	Annual Operational Plan
ProDoc	Project Document
SINAP	(for its initials in Spanish) National System of Protected Areas
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
TOR	Terms of Reference
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
RCT	Rural Community Tourism
PMU	Project Management Unit

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The goal of this evaluation is to analyze the results achieved by the "Strengthening and Catalyzing the Sustainability of Nicaragua's Protected Areas System" Project and also to underline the lessons learned, in order to help improve the sustainability of the project's benefits and also of the UNDP programming in general.

It also examines the efficiency and effectiveness of the project in terms of achieving expected results, and evaluates the relevance and sustainability of achievements as contributions to medium and long term results. An evaluation carried out through an analysis of results, should provide the basis for the follow-up to the project.

In this assessment, the main responsibility of the evaluation team is to examine the following elements: the project design, the objectives established and results achieved; different aspects of the project such as sustainability, appropriation, monitoring and evaluation, and efficiency; the project strategy and development; the relationship among the different actors and their specific roles; the attainment of the results, objective and impacts of the project; the effectiveness of the strategy undertaken by the project especially in the development of the Management Plan; the financial, administrative and managerial aspects of the project; the project's compliance with the rules and procedures of the project's administrative, financial and reporting system, verify that all is in accordance with the rules and regulations of UNDP and GEF, and with the public procurement requirements when applicable.

1.2 Scope and methodology

The project has been designed to facilitate the effective management of the National System of Protected Areas of Nicaragua by means of with legal reforms, strengthened institutions, sustainable funding and strategic associations.

The following elements, among others, were taken into consideration to attain the objective of this evaluation:

- Concept and design of the Project, including procedures and policies, in accordance with the project objectives, the priorities of the Government, the UNDP country program and the priorities of the cooperating agencies.
- Implementation and Project Management with regard to transparency and sustainability in matters related to project design, legal framework and social, environmental and economic risks.

The evaluation was carried out according to the TORs in a period of 20 working days in 30 calendar days, which included an assessment mission in the geographic area covered by the project, which covers the Departments of Chinandega, Matagalpa, Jinotega and Nueva Segovia and encompasses the pilot protected areas of: Padre Ramos, Pilas-Hoyo, Dipilto-Jalapa and Datanlí-El Diablo.

Performance verification was an important element for the monitoring, evaluation and assurance of project efficiency.

The assessment began with the search for and review of key project documents among which the most significant were the ProDoc, the Medium-Term Evaluation (MTE); the Final Report of the Project and the PIRs from 2010, 2011 and 2012. Obtaining these documents took longer than expected and they were finally compiled during interviews with the UNDP Program Officer, authorities of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA) and the Project Management Unit (PMU) in the city of Managua.

The methodological exercise was structured under three headings: determining the research criteria, collection of information, and processing and analysis of quantitative and qualitative information. It started with the preparation of the study and ended with a final report submitted for the approval of the UNDP.

The information gathered in the field, prior documentary research and corroboration with different key players of the project provided the basis for processing information and preparing the final report.

Interviews were conducted with the UNDP Program Officer, and in MARENA with the National Project Coordination (NPC), the Directorate-General of Planning (DGP), the Directorate-General for Natural Heritage (DGNP), the SINAP specific Directorate and with other MARENA staff involved in the project such as the technical assistant and the project manager, with whom we were in constant communication to verify the objectivity of both the documentary research and the field information.

The evaluation team was responsible for determining the research criteria, focusing on covering the largest area and the largest number of beneficiaries, and on projects implemented with measurable results and tangible realities. Thus, the most relevant sites to be visited during the field work were selected and the instruments to be used during data collection were designed, taking into consideration the short time mandated by the ToRs.

Data collection was based on semi-structured personal interviews with key stakeholders, semi-structured group interviews with focal agents and application of the instruments designed for quantitative secondary data collection. Validation of these instruments, primarily for the group interviews, was carried out during the field visits, based on the classification of groups found in the territories.

The information gathering process was modified during the assessment mission, due to different situations in each of the sites visited. The 3 scheduled workshops were replaced by interviews with homogeneous groups in each territory, achieving greater communication and expression of the group feelings, and this provided the evaluation team with a more classified and organized understanding.

During the field work stage, interviews were carried out with staff from the Departmental Delegations of MARENA, municipal officials, representatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and project beneficiaries. A total of 30 people were interviewed in the departments visited, with an equal proportion of women—who stood out for their leadership—and men.

Seven departments were visited (León, Chinandega, Matagalpa, Jinotega, Nueva Segovia, Estelí and Madriz) where pilot projects were implemented; direct communication was established with project operators, in order to open dialogue with beneficiaries in the communities, have interviews with key people and observe directly how the project unfolded in practice.

Once the field work was concluded, a presentation about the preliminary findings was prepared and presented to UNDP and MARENA. The list of people interviewed, the travel itinerary and the summary of field visits are attached as annexes to this report.

1.3 Structure of the Evaluation report

The structure of this final evaluation report of the "Strengthening and Catalyzing the Sustainability of Nicaragua's Protected Areas System" project, was prepared following the guidelines, regulations and procedures of the United Nations for the Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in compliance with the UNDP / GEF Guidelines for Project Evaluation and the specifications cited in the Terms of Reference.

The report consists of five chapters, beginning with the introduction and continuing with the description of the project and its development context. Subsequently, in the substantive section of the report, the findings are divided to cover design and project formulation, implementation and results. The last part of the report presents conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned.

The fifth and final section contains the annexes.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

2.1 Inception and duration of project

The "Strengthening and Catalyzing the Sustainability of Nicaragua's Protected Areas System" project was carried out, according to plan, over a period of 45 months (about four years), from March 2009 to December 2012.

The project was implemented in 4 pilot Protected Areas (Padre Ramos, Pilas-Hoyo, Dipilto-Jalapa and Datanlí-El Diablo) but its implementation influenced 28 PAs. During the implementation period, some of the target indicators for immediate outputs were reformulated, but the overall objective and the outcomes remained intact.

2.2 Problems addressed by the project

The ProDoc strategy proposal emphasizes the need to address the most critical barriers such as strategic management and financing, for they limit the effectiveness of SINAP. Once this this fundamental obstacle is overcome, it would be possible to: i) promote a national atmosphere that facilitates the adjustment of the legal, policy and strategy framework to have a more efficient SINAP operating, ii) share the responsibilities of PA management with all the stakeholders and relevant target groups, iii) improve the financial situation of SINAP, iv) institutionalize learning within the project and MARENA. These barriers remain in place after the completion of the project, but with the positive results and effects achieved in the various levels of the outcomes, it can be affirmed that there is a process of effective change toward achievement of the overall objective in the longer term.

2.3 Project outcomes and development objective

The strategic goal of the project, defined as: "The Nicaraguan society preserves biodiversity *in-situ* through a sustainable National Protected Areas System" was derived from the imperative need to reconcile economic growth and biodiversity preservation in the territories.

To achieve this goal the project instituted a general objective: "The Nicaraguan Protected Areas System is effectively managed through legal reforms, strengthened institutions, sustainable financing and partnerships" which is supposed to be achieved through the development of four Outcomes (intermediate objectives), in correspondence with the main barriers identified:

1. Enhanced policy and legal framework enables improved SINAP management and finances.
2. PA management responsibilities are shared by key stakeholders.
3. Capacities for sustainable financing of SINAP and PAs developed.
4. Institutional management and learning within project and MARENA.

2.4 Predetermined reference indicators

Table 3 presents the baseline and goals for each one of the four outcomes.

Table 3. Predetermined reference indicators

Results	Baseline	Goals
Project objective: <i>"The Nicaraguan Protected Areas System is effectively managed through legal reforms, strengthened institutions, sustainable financing and partnerships."</i>	1 PA (5100 ha)	50 additional PAs (321,813 ha) by S8 ¹
	1 PA with a score over 600.	4 additional PAs with scores over 600.
	SINAP's baseline investment at June 2007 in US\$400.000.	4 PAs with a financial gap reduction of 20%.

¹ Beside the ones that appear in the PIRs, the reference indicators/goals modified during implementation have been included as well.

<p>Outcome 1: (Intermediate result) Enhanced policy and legal framework enables improved SINAP management and finances.</p>	<p>Current legal framework causing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Undefined mandates 2) Low visibility for SINAP 3) Inability to finance PAs through concessions and/or fiduciary mechanisms 	<p>Regulation Reform to the PA regulations approved in S8 clarifying:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Decentralized roles and responsibilities 2) Increased visibility of SINAP 3) Financing SINAP through local financial mechanisms
	<p>Politicians and national and territorial institutional decision makers know the economic, social and ecological value of SINAP.</p>	<p>70% awareness measured through a survey.</p>
	<p>The decentralization agreement is ratified by all agents involved (MARENA and Municipal Governments)</p>	<p>20 municipal authorities agree with and participate in collaborative management for year 2012.</p>
	<p>There are agreements among multilateral projects, municipalities, NGOs and Universities.</p>	<p>At least: 5 agreements with projects of multilateral donors. 1 agreement by a Municipality with PA in its territory. 2 agreements with national universities.</p>
<p>Outcome 2: PA management responsibilities are shared by key stakeholders.</p>	<p>16 have partial structures and 0 are represented and actively communicating with the DGPA in a system.</p>	<p>At least 40 PAs with local structures functioning and will systematically communicating with DGPA at the national level.</p>
	<p>0 agreements/contracts with protocols or standards.</p>	<p>20 PAs under collaborative management, strengthened and formalized, with agreements or accords that include standards and protocols for 2012.</p>
	<p>Impacts evaluated for: 0 projects of sustainable use of natural resources (flora and fauna). 0 improvement projects in fisheries. 0 certification schemes.</p>	<p>Impacts quantified for: Projects of sustainable natural resource use in the process of transfer to local communities in 20 PAs. There has been at least one experience developed and replicated in alternative fishing, reducing the impact on natural ecosystems. Added value to at least one agricultural product associated with protected areas. Certification systems in two PAs.</p>
<p>Outcome 3: Capacities for sustainable financing of SINAP and PAs developed.</p>	<p>There are no accounting reports of PAs.</p>	<p>22 PAs report income and expenses. Accounting reports that include budget-expenditure and income per PA. S8</p>
	<p>PAs without economic values and financial mechanisms to maintain financial sustainability of the SINAP</p>	<p>At least 12 APs have been financially evaluated and 4 of them show improvements underway in their financial mechanisms. Objectives are adjusted according to the measurement of scores by the UNDP, agents and stakeholders.</p>
	<p>\$0.00 dollars per year is the income from concessions.</p>	<p>A consensual regulation that operationalizes the compensation of energy concessions for environmental management. S8.</p>
<p>Outcome 4: Institutional management and learning within project and MARENA</p>	<p>There are none</p>	<p>There is a system</p>
	<p>There are no events.</p>	<p>An event is held by the project completion.</p>

2.5 Main stakeholders

During the formulation of the project, the key stakeholders supporting SINAP at the international level were bilateral and multinational cooperation agencies such as the World Bank (CCAD, Proyecto Corazón and PRODEP) Inter-American Development Bank, (PRORURAL) DANIDA, (PASMA II) and USAID (Management of the Millennium Challenge Account). UNDP is the implementing agency and a leading member of this group of stakeholders. National institutions included INTUR, MIFIC, INAFOR, INETER, the Municipalities and the Councils of the Atlantic Autonomous Regions, among others.

The key stakeholders who participated and contributed resources during project implementation, besides MARENA as the executing agency, were INPESCA, INTUR, local NGOs, Municipal Governments, INATEC, PIMCHAS PROJECT, LIDER, FRIENDS OF THE EARTH, CUCULMECA, SAF-CAFTA. It is important to note the genuine interest of the

Collaborative Management Committees where they are working, including a broad representation of both public and private sectors.

2.6 Expected results

In the original ProDoc, the proposal was to concentrate on the most critical barriers relating to the strategic management and financing of SINAP, in order to improve its effectiveness in protecting biodiversity.

These are the four outcomes of the project:

Outcome 1. Enhanced policy and legal framework enables improved SINAP management and finances.

Outcome 2. PA management responsibilities are shared by key stakeholders.

Outcome 3. Capacities for sustainable financing of SINAP and PAs developed.

Outcome 4. Institutional management and learning within project and MARENA

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Project design and preparation / Relevance

3.1.1 Logical framework analysis

In general, at the level of design and preparation, the project contains and is part of the national, regional and international environmental objectives and priorities in all areas. It complies with adequate planning and definition of indicators and goals and it includes, in the general and specific objectives, among others, the following topics and national strategic and development documents at local and regional levels:

- Strengthened National System of Protected Areas / Biodiversity Strategic Priority No. 1: *Catalyze the sustainability of protected areas within the context of national systems;*
- In the pilot PAs, the Project supports global environmental benefits / GEF Operational Programs 1-4;
- The project is consistent with *Global, Regional and National Priorities*. It helps strengthen the Protected Areas Work Programme (CBD-COP 7);
- The DGAP, with support from the Environmental Program Nicaragua - Finland (PANIF-APB), began developing the SINAP Strategic Development Plan in 2000 (PRODOC, 2008). The Nicaraguan government used the information to produce the SINAP Development Strategy, used to design this project. (PRODOC, 2008)

The project is formulated in accordance with the main national planning and policy instruments in support of objectives of national scope relating to SINAP, and of territorial scope in relation to specific protected areas, which implies creating synergies with other organizations primarily in support of the general objective.

The timing of the project, in the context of its design, was projected based on the achievement of the 4 outcomes / intermediate results, and took into account that in the area of system support the involvement of other actors was required, which was part of the programming.

Similarly, the detailed planning of activities, the identification of indicators and goals, as well as the partnership agreements prior to approval of the project were adequate. However, this changed by the time of implementation, following the change of government. An adjustment and analysis was required of the outcomes / intermediate results to be achieved under the current situation and with the new stakeholders in place.

The project was designed with a focus on two levels: a) the National System, and b) the territorial level.

The system-level interventions would establish a facilitating environment, with the preparation of legislation and policies that would help to overcome the political and financial barriers, and to develop a redefined, redistributed and reconceptualised SINAP, with a Management Plan and a Financial Plan.

The interventions at the territorial level in the PAs consisted of installing and testing the territorial components of the financial and management systems, implementing pilot projects, developing payment systems for concessions and revenue tracking.

The thematic content of the project is relevant because it addresses the principal challenges, barriers and implications affecting Protected Areas in Nicaragua and it anticipates the opportunities expected for achievements.

The project responds to the main national plans, including poverty reduction initiatives that would stimulate economic development among private property owners living in the PAs:

- The Re-definition of SINAP coincides with the 2001-2005 Nicaraguan Environmental Plan which defines priority actions for SINAP.
- The National Human Development Plan of Nicaragua, 2009 - 2011 (PNDH, 2009 for its initials in Spanish). The proposal has been adapted to the social and development priorities of the current government.
- The National Environmental and Climate Change Strategy (2010-2015) and the Government's priorities in the medium-term (2010-2016). Since 2007, the Government of Nicaragua has been promoting the "Citizen Power Model" as the principal management policy, and the National Human Development Plan, as the foundation for the country's socioeconomic management. Human beings are the centerpiece in this model, which is based on the principles of fighting poverty, promoting sovereignty, food security, state decentralization and empowering citizens for a sustainable economic and social development. (Final Report, MTE).

- The National Biodiversity Strategy includes, as part of its short-term objectives, the promotion of the economic viability of biodiversity and establishing payments for ecosystem services as mechanisms to support conservation.

The level of participation of stakeholders in the formulation of the project was sufficiently appropriate, as demonstrated in the ProDoc, through precise planning of the activities to be performed and the identification of the sources of resources and partnership agreements prior to project approval. The current territorial beneficiaries of the project, obviously did not participate in the design of the ProDoc, but they did play a part in the adaptive management of the proposals that were implemented.

Stakeholders participating in the preparation of the ProDoc included:

- International institutions, national institutions, local institutions and the private sector;
- At the *International Level*, stakeholders that participated during the process of project design were the World Bank (with CCAD in the Corazón Project and PRODEP), the Inter-American Development Bank (PRORURAL), DANIDA (PASMA II) and USAID (Management of the Millennium Challenge Account and the UNDP).
- At the *National Level*: MARENA and DGAP, the Rural Development Institute (IDR, for its initials in Spanish), the Millennium Challenge Account, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAGFOR, for its initials in Spanish) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).
- During the PDF-B phase there was coordination with the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) in relation to the Heart of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Project to avoid overlaps and duplications between projects. The representative of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) participated in the design and accompanied the entire PDF-B process. (Final Report, MTE)
- Additionally, municipalities, community-based organizations and local NGOs involved with the PAs, were selected for consultation and were the main players, whose views were considered for the project design.

However, and despite the existence of a corporate memory within the institutional leadership (MARENA) with respect to its relevance, the project was limited in its implementation efforts as a result of the time lag between project approval and project implementation.

The project document (ProDoc) is well aligned with the main objectives of the GEF area of interest, and with the environmental and development priorities at the local, regional and national levels. The coherence between the ProDoc design and the implementation approach has been well adapted to the political, economic and social circumstances at the time of implementation. **Rating: Relevant**

3.1.2 Assumptions and risks

The main assumption addressed by the ProDoc was political and social stability, taking into account the change of government during the period of the project's implementation, however, they describe the experience as follows: "the recent political change has not affected the commitment to work for an organized but decentralized SINAP; on the contrary, the process has been strengthened." The other important assumption was that inflation was going to remain within predictable limits. In fact, it remained constant and did not cause limitations in the development of the project.

The ProDoc had identified mitigation measures for each risk, in accordance with good practice in the planning of projects of this kind.

3.1. A Lessons from other relevant projects

Alliances were established with other projects in the sector and some bodies that provided joint-funding were part of the project's institutional monitoring committee and attended annual meetings, where they participated in presentations about the progress and achievements reached with the joint-funding and where periodic reports were presented.

Lessons learned, commitments and responsibilities were shared in the environmental education programs carried out through training events, fairs, and reforestation and environmental clean-up days with a high degree of multi-sectorial participation and citizen mobilization.

Collaborative Management Committees with multi-sector participants were another way of sharing lessons learned while emphasizing functionality and operability of working agendas.

The joint-funding of sustainable use projects that promoted research and validation of agricultural production models contributed to the learning shared among agencies and local economies.

3.1. B Planned stakeholder participation

The ProDoc contemplated in its design, that a set of organizations like DANIDA / PASMA, IDR, TNC, MARENA and UNDP would participate giving financial support to some components of the project, but the time lag between project approval and project implementation impeded the materialization of this proposal. Consequently, during the actual project implementation new partnerships were built, as described in the following table.

Tabla 4. Project Alliances MARENA-SINAP-GEF / 2009-2012

Organization	Components	Beneficiaries	Joint-funding US\$
LIDER/FRIENDS OF THE EARTH	Strengthening of capacities	35 Communities / Golf of Fonseca	60,000
UNOP/AMUNSE	Management of NR preservation.	Municipalities of Dipilto, Mozonte, Jícaro, Jalapa and San Fernando.	235,000
CUCULMECA	Investment plans for farms in PAs	355 families	223,500

UNAN-MANAGUA	Technical assistance and training / sustainable management of NR	30 Rural women / Municipality of Morazán	12,000
PIMCHAS PROJECT	Replication of subsystem model in Estelí-Jinotega PA	Replication of PA subsystem model	50,000
SAF-CAFTA	Agricultural Forestry System Implementation. Training and investment in farms Tepesomoto-La Pataste.	35 landowners	15,000
TOTAL			595,500

Source: Cedeño.V Final Report of the *Strengthening and Catalyzing the Sustainability of Nicaragua's Protected Areas System* project.

3.1. C Replicability

The project was properly designed with the intention that from proven actions at the local level, such as the administration and financial systems, the experience would be replicable in the 4 PAs and then in the whole SINAP, under the heading of "progressive scale-up".

With regard to project results, in some cases, such as the replication of the subsystem model, it was possible to achieve replication through joint-funding in the subsystem of Estelí-Jinotega. The sustainable use projects of fish in floating cages are currently seeking permission for replication. Technical assistance with local financial mechanisms was requested for: i) Development of the baseline to back up a financial mechanism proposal and a local fund for water management. ii) Requests from collaborative management committees of PAs to learn about and exchange experiences regarding financial mechanisms with the Cañón de Somoto and Dipilto environmental fund. iii) Continuous visits to pilot projects to learn about and share experiences with the most developed sites. (Matagalpa, Palacaguina)

3.1. D Comparative advantage of the UNDP

The UNDP has been the main implementing agency of GEF funds in Nicaragua, and the principal promoter of compliance with the Rio Conventions. By the time the project was formulated, there was already some experience in mobilizing funds for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Climate Change Framework Convention and the Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought.

The formulation of the project was in line with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Nicaragua at the time (2002-2006). This document outlined the goals and main objectives and strategies of cooperation for UN assistance for 5 years. The project was fully aligned with the UNDP Cooperation Framework for Nicaragua, which underlined Environmental conservation and sustainable use of natural resources as specific objectives. The Project directly supported the following objectives of the UNDAF at that time:

- Strengthened institutional capacities for the integration of environmental and sustainability approaches at different levels of decision-making.
- Promotion of a constructive dialogue between decision-makers and civil society, to include sustainability criteria in development policies.

- Strengthened local capacities for environmental management.

Similarly, the Project contributed to the following service lines of UNDP: "Producing replicable poverty initiatives at the local level, associated with policy change" and "Improving sustainable livelihoods for low-income citizens."

The project was also entirely consistent with the Millennium Development Goals, especially MDG 7 on Environmental Sustainability, by aiming at the alignment of environmental issues with local and national policies.

3.1. E Connections between the project and other interventions in this sector

The strategy adopted to implement the project, included among its actions the establishment of the baseline to identify and characterize the different actors in protected area subsystems.

Having identified and characterized the different actors, it was possible to carry out joint actions with other organizations that had a territorial presence. These actions were developed in partnership with the following NGOs: FUNDAR, FRIENDS OF THE EARTH, LIDER, UNOPS, and UNITE-MANAGUA, which strengthened the project through: co-financing, equipment, infrastructure, water source protection, socio-economic alternatives, agricultural production, training and baseline studies, among others.

In this context, some examples of joint actions that had positive results for the beneficiaries of the project were:

- The preservation and sustainable use of natural resources (management and reproduction of black conchs and reproduction of conch larvae in Padre Ramos); the proposal for watershed management (in protected areas of Dipilto-Jalapa); the economic appraisal of the protected areas and updated management plans among others.
- Along with other projects in the territory, experience sharing workshops were also held on environmental management and for consultation about the new model of collaborative management.
- Commitments and responsibilities in protected area management were shared. Collaborative Management Committees were formed and their members in the territory were democratically selected.

3.1. F Administrative procedures

The Nicaraguan Government implemented the project under the UNDP Modality of National Implementation (MNI). As the implementing agency, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA) was responsible for directing the project, in compliance with the outputs and expected products, making effective and efficient use of resources allocated in accordance with the Project Document.

The UNDP monitored the direction and orientation of the project in order to contribute to the maximization of the scope, impact and quality of its products. Moreover, as a GEF implementing agency, the UNDP was also responsible for the administration of resources in accordance with the immediate objectives of the Project Document, and for compliance with its own guiding principles of transparency, competitiveness, efficiency and economy.

MARENA prepared Annual Work Plans presenting the project's activities and results expected from their implementation. The Plans showed the implementation periods for each activity and the parties responsible for their implementation.

The project office was established with a National Project Director (NPD), a Technical Coordinator (TC), a Technical Assistant and an Administrative Assistant.

The Project Document called for the creation of a Coordination Committee, which would act as the operational agent for project implementation and adopt strategic decisions: approval of the project's operational plan and financial budget.

3.2. Project execution / Efficiency

3.2.1 Adaptive management (changes in the project design and project results during implementation)

The implementation of the Project has been carried out efficiently, for it applied the performance systems of both MARENA and UNDP. The project was implemented in compliance with adaptation of the new strategy, based on technical assistance (consultancies), which made it possible to fulfill the objectives. There is a new Coordination Committee composed of the key project partners.

Since the first level of outputs proposed in the ProDoc, conducive to strengthening the SINAP system, was difficult to attain, since it had to do with external factors over which MARENA had no control MARENA, (National Assembly, Fees Law, among others) the targets, indicators and strategic guidelines were adjusted and modified (April 2011) to align them to the context, political reality and priorities of the government. (Human Development Plan and Environmental Strategy) (updated ProDoc Logical Framework appended)

During implementation, a strategy was proposed and adopted in which the project was reoriented towards the territorial level (the second level of focus foreseen in the ProDoc) and the technical assistance activities were defined.

Table 5. Modified targets and indicators

Indicators / targets	Indicators / modified targets
Outcome 1 Guarantee the legal framework of the Protected Areas Law and the Fees Law	Reform of the Protected Areas regulations and approval of Municipal Ordinances that strengthen the management and sustainable use of Natural Resources in Protected Areas.
	It is difficult to comply with the indicator of revenue generated by concessions and retained by SINAP--in close connection with the adoption of the law of SINAP and the Fees Law--because a legal basis is lacking.

<p>Outcome 2 Promote conservation-friendly systems and practices in the priority PAs (35)</p>	<p>Number of PAs with formalized co-financing in process in order to improve their sustainable management (production practices, institutional strengthening, baseline studies, financial mechanisms, among others)</p>
<p>Outcome 2 Number of PAs under co-management that report income and expenses</p>	<p>Number of PAs with formalized Collaborative Management Agreements and with local financial mechanisms in implementation in order to reduce the financial gap of PAs in SINAP's priority subsystems.</p>

3.2.2 Association agreements (with the relevant regional or national stakeholders)

GEF's implementing agency for this project is the UNDP. The partners in the project include the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Integrated Project for Watershed Management, Water Supply and Sanitation (PIMCHAS) and the Corazón Project.

It has also been possible to create partnerships that promote development and environmental management through strategic alliances within the Collaborative Management Committees (CMC). They serve as forums where different actors converge for discussion of local development and preservation of the PAs.

The partner organizations (PASMA II, Corazón and Bosawas Biosphere Reserve, PRODEP, ACA / CAFTA-DR, MARENA-SETAB, LIDER-ADTE, SINAP and UNOPS, UNOPS / AMUNSE, Líder, Friends of the Earth, CUCULMECA, PIMCHAS PROJECT and SAF-CAFTA) carried out projects worth U.S. \$ 3.9 million. Projects were implemented directly by the donors, since there were no formal agreements between the representatives of MARENA and partner organizations for the Project to implement them.²

3.2.3 Feedback from M&E activities used in adaptive management

Reprogramming of annual funds and level of execution

The logical framework was reformulated in 2011 and changes were made to indicators and targets, but there was no documented evidence found that the budget for each result was reprogrammed.

The PMU used the AOP tool to present the annual activities to be undertaken and the budget projection for each period, approved by MARENA and UNDP. Upon completion of the Project the executed real value is always the same, that is U.S. \$ 1.76 million (Appendix 9 - Table of Co-financing).

The fulfilment achieved between the reprogramming and the funds executed each year were: 2009 36.9% achieved, 83.8% in 2010, 99.0% in 2011 and 82.1% in 2012. (Appendix 9 - Financial Execution of GEF Funds).

The results achieved show the following qualifications: in 2011 the efficiency was Highly Satisfactory; in 2010 and 2012, the efficiency was Moderately Satisfactory; and it was Unsatisfactory in 2009.

² Source: Logical Framework (reformulated) and SINAP GEF Progress Reports, March 2009 to December 2012 (UGP)

3.2.4 Project financing

Co-financing implementation analysis

The initial budget of the project, programmed for execution during the years 2009-2012, amounts to a total of U.S. \$ 6.23 million. It was proposed that these funds would be provided as follows: 28.9% by GEF, 65.5% by partner organizations (PASMA, TNC and IDR), 5.1% by the Government of Nicaragua, and 0.5% by the UNDP³.

During the four year period, GEF disbursed up to U.S. \$ 1.76 million, which is equivalent to 97.8% of the total budget for this agency⁴.

The Government provided the proposed sum in kind, amounting to \$ 0.32 million in goods, identified as vehicles (6), office space in Managua and four departmental delegations, water, energy, internet, procurement management, management of bank accounts, and accounting records. Quantified evidence of the contributions was not available. (Table 6).

Table 6. Co-financing

Co-funding (type/source)	Own financing UNDP-GEF (GEF)			Government			Partner organization			Total		
	(million USD)			(million USD)			(million USD)			(million USD)		
	Programmed	Real	%	Programmed	Real	%	Programmed	Real	%	Programmed	Real	%
Grants	1.8	1.76	97.8				4.08	3.9	95.6	5.88	5.66	96.3
Loans/ concessions												
Support in kind (Gov.)				0.32	0.32	100				0.32	0.32	100
other UNDP							0.032	0.018	56.3	0.032	0.018	56.3
Totals	1.8	1.76	97.8	0.32	0.32	100	4.112	3.918	95.3	6.232	5.998	96.2

Source: ProDoc, Logical Framework (reformulated), CDR (2009 – 2012) Final Report. from May 1, 2009 to December 30, 2012 PMU

3.2.5 Monitoring and evaluation: initial design and implementation

The partner organizations (PASMA II, Corazón and Bosawas Biosphere Reserve, PRODEP, ACA / CAFTA-DR, MARENA-SETAB, LIDER-ADTE, SINAP and UNOPS, UNOPS / AMUNSE, Líder Friends of the Earth, CUCULMECA, PIMCHAS PROJECT and SAF-CAFTA) carried out projects worth U.S. \$ 3.9 million. Projects were implemented directly by the donors, since there were no formal agreements between the representatives of MARENA and partner organizations for the Project to implement them. (Appendix 9 - Co-funding Organizations).

Project monitoring was carried out through quarterly reports, AOPs, PIRs and Monitoring Committees. Although MTE recommendations are considered valid, they were presented in December 2011, when the project was close to completion, so the full implementation of these

³ Source: ProDoc

⁴ Source: CDR 2009 - 2012

recommendations was not possible or at least there is no evidence of it. It is considered important to take up these recommendations in operations or projects designed and implemented in the future. AOPs and PIRs were prepared according to the established methodology and procedures and presented in due time.

Consistent coordination was achieved between the UNDP and the executing partner for operational and financial aspects. Overall qualification M&E: **Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**.

3.2.6 Coordination of UNDP and partner for implementation and operations

The budget of \$ 1.8 million was distributed in the four years of the project, however, in the first two years, disbursements equivalent to 79.6% of the total were scheduled (Chart 1).

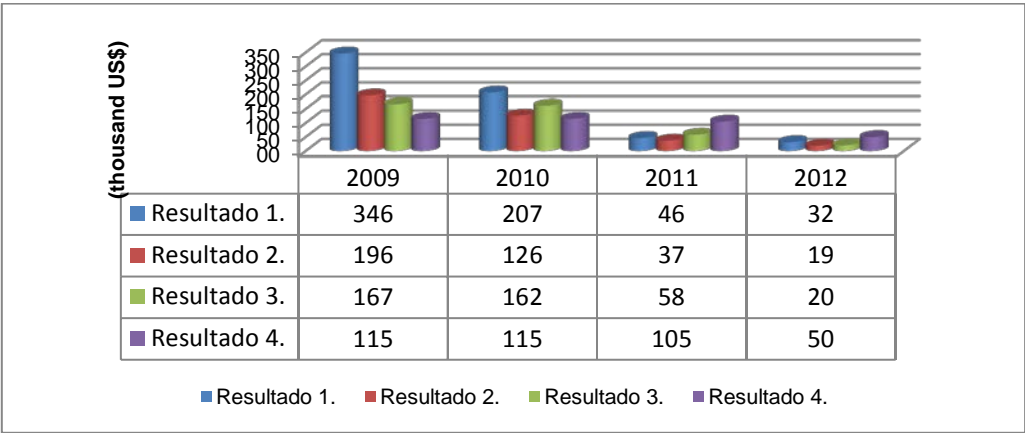


Chart 1. Project budget (thousand US\$) Source: ProDoc

During the four years of its operation, the project was financed with liquid funds contributed by GEF for up to U.S. \$ 1.76 million, achieving 97.8% fulfillment of the budget funds by the end of 2012. There is a balance of U.S. \$ 40.6 thousand budgeted for 2013 (Chart 2).

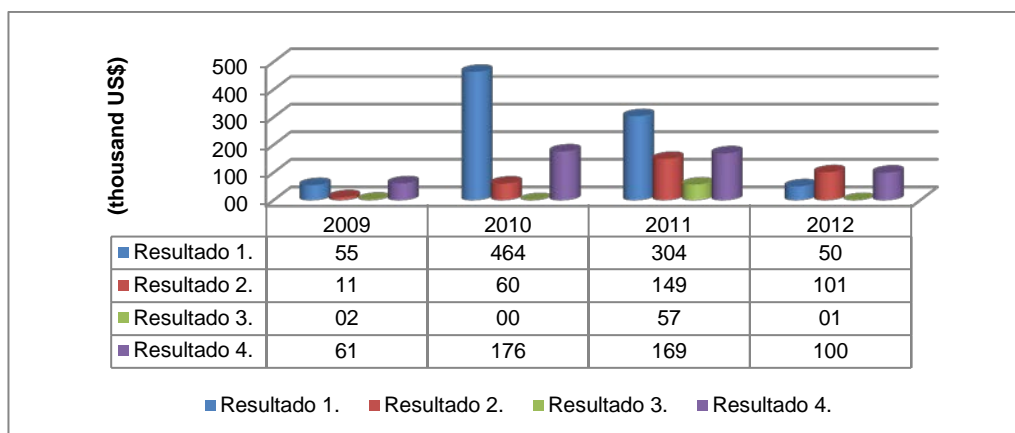


Chart 2. Budget Execution of the Project (US\$ miles) Source: original

According to the annual CDR reports, the summary of the funds used (U.S. \$ 1.7 million) shows the following attainment levels for each outcome of the logical framework:

- **Outcome 1:** The initial budget for Outcome 1 represents 35% (U.S. \$ 630.7 thousand) of the total. Fund execution reached 50.1% (U.S. \$ 890.3 thousand) of the total, an increase equivalent to 41.2% of the original projection.
- **Outcome 2:** The initial budget for Outcome 2 is equal to 21.0% (US\$ 378.6 miles) of the total. Fund execution reached 17.9% (U.S. \$ 321.5 thousand) of the total sum, showing a decrease of 15.1% compared to the initial projection for this Outcome.
- **Outcome 3:** The initial financial projection for Outcome 3 is equivalent to 22.6% (U.S. \$ 406.7 thousand) of the total value. Fund execution reached 3.3% (U.S. \$ 59.0 thousand) of the total sum, showing a decrease of 85.5% compared to the initial projection for this Outcome.
- **Outcome 4:** The original plan for Outcome 4 represents 21.3% (U.S. \$ 384.0 thousand) of the total sum. In practice, it reached 28.1% (U.S. \$ 506.4 thousand) of the total value, showing an increase of 31.9% compared to the initial budget for this outcome (Table 7 and Appendix 9 - Project Budget - Allocation by Outcome).

Table 7. Use of funds per outcome

Outcomes	Projection	%	Execution	%	Difference%
Outcome 1.	630.7	35.0	890.3	50.1	41.2
Outcome 2.	378.6	21.0	321.5	18.1	-15.1
Outcome 3.	406.7	22.6	59.0	3.3	-85.5
Outcome 4.	384.0	21.3	506.4	28.5	31.9
Total	1,800.0	100.0	1,777.2	100.0	-1.3

Source: ProDoc, AOP 2010 – 2013 and CDR 2010 - 2012

3.2.7 National budget allocation

The share annually allocated to MARENA from the National Budget of Nicaragua, has been decreasing since the start of the project in 2009 until its completion in 2012.

Consequently, the share corresponding to the Directorate-General for Natural Patrimony (DGPN) which contains in its internal structure the Directorate of Protected Areas, along with Water Resources and Biodiversity, has decreased by half (50%) during the same period, moving further away from what was outlined in the logical framework which was aimed at achieving a more significant economic leverage towards the National Directorate of Protected Areas.

If this were case, as is indicated in the budget, from U.S. \$ 1.58 allocated for every hectare of protected area, the amount was reduced to only U.S. \$ 0.98 per ha / year. (Table 8).

Tabla 8. **MARENA Budget (millon US\$)**

Institution	2009	2010	2011	2012
MARENA	7.0	5.4	6.7	8.9
Natural Patrimony	4.9	3.0	3.3	3.0
%	69.6	56.5	49.6	34.1
hectares (millon)	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1
Cost in US\$ per hactare	1.58	0.98	1.07	0.98

Source: National Budget

General rating for implementation and execution: **Moderately Satisfactory (MS).**

3.3. Project Results

This section presents the project's achievements in relation to what was planned, essentially using the results chain used to prepare the logical framework⁵. Special attention will be paid to the four outcomes, which represent the expected changes in performance and the effectiveness of the main actors involved in the management of PAs.

The short-term results (outputs) will be used as evidence of the success or lack of it of the project to provide the tools and capabilities that may lead to changes in performance and effectiveness of the actors.

The main documents consulted have been: the logical framework and the results framework, Medium-term Evaluation Report, Final Project Report (Cedeño, V. 2012), the information contained in the Project Implementation Reports (PIR 2010, PIR 2011 and PIR 2012) and the AOPs 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2013.

⁵ Results based management chain. RBM chain, page 14, UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF-Financed Projects.

3.3.1 General results / Project objective

Project objective: The Nicaraguan Protected Areas System is effectively managed through legal reforms, strengthened institutions, sustainable funding and partnerships.

Designed as part of a set of strategic interventions referring to conservation that at the time were implemented in Nicaragua, this initiative sought to improve SINAP's Development Strategy to improve the protection of biodiversity in pilot PAs.

General Objective Impact Indicators

Impact indicator: Number of PAs and Has. with improved conservation management

Target: 50 additional PAs (321,813 ha.) for the S8

Achievements:

-28 PAs have improved their management through greater institutional presence; planning tools, organization of CMCs; Environmental Education; pilot projects, among others.

Achievement of 56% of the target.

-252,970 hectares is the extension of land integrated to the management areas where the 28 PAs are located.

Achievement of 78.6% of the target.

- **Impact indicator:** Number of PAs with a management score above 600 on the TNC scale.
- **Target:** 4 additional PAs with scores above 600.
Achievements: 13 PAs with scores greater than 600. 225% achievement of the goal.
- **Impact indicator:** Reduction of the financing gap
Target: 4 PAs with financial gap reduction of 20%.
Achievements: financial gap was reduced in 5 Pas: Masaya Volcano, Somoto Canyon, Dipilto-Jalapa, La Cumplida and Yalí Volcano.
Achievement of 125% of target.

Evaluation

This objective is still in place and in the process of attainment, because it is a broad-spectrum objective that allows for the formulation of further steps to achieve it.

The objectives of the ProDoc were adequately formulated, in accordance with the national needs and priorities, and are also part of important guidelines in the principal international agreements the country has subscribed.

The progressive scales approach established in the ProDoc allows the project to progress towards meeting long-term goals. The rescheduled targets for the ultimate result (project objective) achieved substantial achievement percentages.

Improvement in the management of intervened PAs was achieved through actions promoted by the project such as institutional presence; planning instruments to increase

management capacity; the creation and organization of Collaborative Management Committees (CMC); programs for Environmental Education as a cross-cutting centerpiece of all actions; and pilot projects for sustainable use, among others. This allows them to become agents of behavioral change within their areas of influence.

The achievements in management ratings above 600 on the scale of the TNC and reducing the financial gap have shown good attainment levels in terms of outcomes (becoming an agent for progress towards a change of attitude), in the context of pilot PAs. These achievements must be maintained, consolidated and extrapolated toward the System.

It is evident that this indicator, reducing the financial gap, has been reformulated over the course of the project implementation and that its medium and long term impacts will require other actions and strategies in order to be achieved. Since the formulation and design of the original project, in the section of Project Indicators, Risks and Assumptions, this indicator was considered a long-term effort, and its achievement was not realistic within the project period, due to the considerable size of the financial gap in the country.

3.3.2 Medium-term results

1. Enhanced policy and legal framework enables improved SINAP management and finances.

With the legal, policy and strategic frameworks functioning, this initiative sought to improve the national facilitation environment that would allow SINAP to function effectively. (ProDoc)

Indicators and targets

- **Indicator 1.1** Legislation allows the APs to function effectively and existing barriers due to the current legislation are overcome.
Target: Reform of PA regulations approved in the S8 clarifying: - decentralized roles and responsibilities; - Increased visibility of SINAP; - SINAP financing through local financial mechanisms.
Achievements: 1. The SINAP Policy formulated and approved by MARENA. 2. Administrative regulations have been developed to put into practice the payment of 0.5% of gross earnings in the sector of renewable energy generated in protected areas. 3. The Biodiversity Law, which incorporates the Law of Protected Areas and has been approved by the National Assembly, has been reviewed and adjusted. 4. New SINAP regulations (collaborative management) under review and final adjustments.
- **Indicator 1.2** Level of awareness among politicians regarding the importance of SINAP for the national economy.

Target: 70% awareness measured by a survey.

Achievement: Survey was not carried out.

- **Indicator 1.3** Increased cooperation between MARENA and regional governments for the integration of biodiversity and PA management.

Target: 20 municipal authorities agree and participate in collaborative management by 2012.

Achievements: 40 municipal authorities agree and participate in collaborative management. Achievement of 200% of the target.

- **Indicator 1.4** Number of agreements expressing multisectoral support for an updated strategy and conceptual framework for managing SINAP.

Target: At least: 5 agreements with multilateral donor projects; 1 agreement per Municipality PAs in their territory; 2 agreements with national universities.

Achievements: 5 agreements with multilateral donor projects were achieved: Friends of the Earth, UNOPS, Alianza, PIMCHAS and INATEC. Agreements with municipalities with PA in their territories. Agreements with national universities were reached with national universities: León, Estelí, Somoto and Matagalpa.

Outcome 1 Evaluation

Outcome 1 is one of the key results of the project around which the other results turn. The Protected Areas Law and the Fees Law were not achieved during the period of this project. The target was adjusted to "reform of PA regulations". (ML 2011)

This adjustment diminished the expectations raised in the main focus of the project, with decisive impacts on importance of the achievements and in the pursuit of complementary advances.

Three studies were drawn from the reports of the project and its outputs / results : 1) The baseline study for the economic valuation of environmental services, 2) The proposals of the value of compensation for Environmental Services of water provided to users in the agro-export production sector and, 3) The proposal of a differentiated payment mechanism for Environmental Services of water in the Dipilto-Jalapa subsystems, among others.

The project succeeded in formulating and approving, within the framework of national public policies, the Policy of SINAP, an important instrument for non-coercive social transformation with referential content, which makes it possible to know and interpret the government's intentions regarding SINAP.

Administrative regulations were developed to put into practice the payment of 0.5% of gross earnings in the sector of renewable energy generated in protected areas, but intense political lobbying is required to achieve implementation.

The Biodiversity Law, approved by the National Assembly, has been reviewed and adjusted. This new Biodiversity Law complements and reinforces the issue of funding for management of protected areas, since this issue was not well defined in the Regulations of SINAP, affecting articles 29 and 30 of the Law.

A consensus was achieved regarding the new Regulation of SINAP which was prepared. It establishes the model for subsystems of protected areas, improvement in the governance of protected areas, and the creation of local financial mechanisms. The regulation also proposes a redefinition of SINAP's structure and the baseline has been determined for the economic value of ecosystem services of 36 Protected Areas.

The transfer of knowledge regarding the economic value of environmental goods and services produced in SINAP is underway.

The survey foreseen to identify the level of awareness of politicians about the importance of SINAP has not yet been carried out. It is an important step for advancing--by building awareness and participation of the political sector--toward judicial security of the system.

Cooperation for the integration of biodiversity and PA management among MARENA and regional governments has been increased.

MARENA has cooperation agreements and operational agendas with universities (UNA and UNAN); agreements with NGOs (Friends of the Earth, Cuculmeca, PIMCHAS, UNOPS). These actions tend to increase inter-agency cooperation.

Agreements for Collaborative Management of Protected Areas have been established with local governments and actors, an important initiative that implements a new form of citizen coordination, organization and participation.

These achievements impacting on outcomes are positive results that will help induce changes in social behavior, once they emerge from the current stages of revision, approval, or implementation where a large number of these results have been left. This makes it difficult to measure the effect the adaptation and improvement of local capabilities can have in the territories. For this reason they should remain in force as a platform established to continue the process of implementing objectives / outcomes of the project, especially the strategic objective that contemplates a more long-term approach.

2. PA management responsibilities are shared by key stakeholders.

This initiative would help establish and strengthen the institutional structures of multiple stakeholders, so they could become more effective and capable of engaging other agents in the management of PAs. (ProDoc)

Indicators and targets

- **Indicator 2.1** Number of PAs with a functioning participatory (multi-sector) structure in communication with the DGPA.
Target: At least 40 PAs with local structures functioning and systematically communicating with the DGPA at the national level.
Achievements: 19 PAs operate with Collaborative Management Committees (CMC). Achievement of 47.5% of the target.
There is no systematic communication with the DGPA at the national level.
Indicator 2.2 Number of agreements signed within the framework of strengthened and formalized collaborative management of PAs, including defined standards and protocols.
Target: 20 PAs under collaborative management, strengthened and formalized, have agreements or arrangements that include standards and protocols by 2012.
Achievements: 19 PAs operate with CMC. Achievement of 95% of the target.
11 Collaborative Management agreements were signed, integrating 19 PAs and 40 municipalities.
 - **Indicator 2.3** Multi-sector committee coordinates and analyzes the impacts and lessons learned from the model projects to convert present practices into biodiversity compatible production.
Target: Projects for sustainable use of natural resources in the process of transfer to local communities in 20 PAs.
 - At least one alternative artisanal fishing experience has been developed and replicated, reducing the impacts on natural ecosystems.
 - Value-added has been developed for at least one agricultural product associated with the PAs.
 - Certification Schemes in two (2) PAs.**Achievements:** The project did not get the co-financing to develop sustainable use projects. They have been carried out in partnership (co-funding) with actors working in the area of influence of the PAs.
 - Research consultations were conducted for the creation of breeding zoos for: iguanas, deer, lowland paca (*guardatinaja*), rural tourism, water trails, black conchs, caged fish and crocodiles.
 - No activity was developed for adding value to agricultural products.
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Outcome 2 Evaluation

Outcome 2 is the most outstanding within the overall framework of the project since, with the adaptive management model, it was possible to build a certain platform with shared responsibilities, with agents and key stakeholders through the creation of the Collaborative Management Committees, and the implementation of pilot sustainable use production projects in partnership with local NGOs, among others.

By operationalizing the Collaborative Management Committees, the project has improved the management of 19 protected areas, which are part of the 4 subsystems designed. There is no systematic communication with the DGNP at the national level. It is important to boost communications with the DGNP, as an action leading towards relationships that generate comparative advantages, since a financial contribution is sought in the future, according to the ProDoc, for the central SINAP.

Agreements for collaborative management of 19 protected areas have been signed. 11 agreements of Collaborative Management comprising 19 PAs and 40 municipalities are signed. These agreements provide significant organizational and collaboration security for the support of protected areas.

Four pilot projects for sustainable use of natural resources by the community have been established. Research consultations were conducted for the creation of breeding zoos for: iguanas, deer, lowland paca (*guardatinaja*), rural tourism, water trail, black shells, caged fish and crocodiles. These are basic activities that are generating greater efficiency and behavioral changes in the sustainable use of natural resources in the projects that are already in operation such as conch production and fish in cages.

NGOs provide funding for some of the pilot projects, thus achieving an important and desired leverage for integration of the project and the organizations operating in the territory. Activities for adding value to agricultural products have not been carried out. Certification Schemes were not carried out. Progress has been made in promoting the capacity for sustainable financing of SINAP.

3. Capacities for sustainable financing of SINAP and PAs developed.

Improving the financial situation of SINAP through the transformation of its financing system to generate, retain and account for funds, and invest them more effectively in the territory. (ProDoc)

Indicators and targets:

- **Indicator 3.1** Number of PAs reporting revenues and costs.
Target: Revenues and costs are reported in 22 PAs, with an accounting operation that registers budget, expenditures and income for each AP. S8
Achievements: 5 PAs (Masaya Volcano, Somoto Canyon, Dipilto-Jalapa, La Cumplida and Yalí) prepare budgets and keep accounts with reports that register income and expenses.
Achievement of 22% of the target.
- **Indicator 3.2** Number of PAs with financial mechanisms consensually accepted and in process of implementation for the sustainable management of protected areas in the

municipal framework. This indicator replaces the following indicators: 3.2. Increase in score in UNDP financial scorecard; 3.3. Revenue generated by concessions and retained by SINAP and the local PA; and 3.4. Increase in public investment over baseline to support PA management.

Target: At least 12 PAs have been economically valued and 4 of them show improvements of financial mechanisms in process of implementation. The objectives are adjusted according to the rating assessment by the UNDP, the Agents and Stakeholders.

Achievements: The Project has designed and implemented (at the pilot level) financial mechanisms for environmental compensation for the goods and services produced in PAs. There was no information found on the No. of PAs.

- **Indicator: 3.3** An inter-institutional legal proposal has been prepared and consensually accepted for renewable energy concessions that would generate income for SINAP.
- **Goal:** A consensually accepted regulation is available that would operationalize compensation by the energy concessions for environmental management. S8

Achievements: A Legal and Technical Report was prepared and delivered to the authorities of MARENA.

Outcome 3 Evaluation

Outcome 3 was considered one of the most significant components in the initial focus of the ProDoc, as a core element for attaining gradual sustainability achievements for SINAP. Together with Outcome 1, it is also a component that requires the greatest political effort within a high decision-making level in the national context, preferably between government and donors.

At the territorial level, there are records of the development and establishment of financial mechanisms and local funds in some Collaborative Management Committees, that are already reporting—in the case of Somoto Canyon--auto-sustainability of their activities for 2012, with projections to surpass their revenues in 2013.

5 PAs (Masaya Volcano, Somoto Canyon, Dipilto-Jalapa, La Cumplida and Yalí) prepare budget and accounting reports that register income and expenses.

The Project has designed and implemented (at the pilot level) financial mechanisms for environmental compensation for the goods and services produced in protected areas. This activity has not yet had effects for it is still in its demonstration phase.

A Legal and Technical Report was prepared for operationalizing compensation for energy concessions and it has been delivered to the authorities of MARENA for approval. This is an important achievement for the financial sustainability of SINAP, so it should be promptly approved, agreed upon and formalized.

4. Institutional management and learning within project and MARENA.

Institutionalize the learning experience within the project and MARENA, to attain the best use, sustainability and replication of lessons learned. (ProDoc)

Indicators and targets:

- **Indicator 4.1** Project financial management system
Target: A system is in place.
Achievements: A system is in place that functions effectively.
Indicator 4.2 Number of events for the transmission of lessons learned in the subsystems of SINAP and Natural Patrimony.
Target: An event is held for the project closure.
Achievements: No information is available.

Evaluation Outcome 4.

The main contribution of this component is the establishment of a financial management system for the project that is operates effectively (AOP, Budget, Quarterly and Annual Progress Report, Annual CDR and Audit Report).

Information was not obtained on an event—to be held at the end of the project—for the transmission of lessons learned within the SINAP.

Qualification Outcomes and Achievements

Evaluated Components	Rating
Project objective	Moderately unsatisfactory (MU)
Outcomes and Products	Moderately satisfactory (MS)

3.3.3 Overall qualification of the project according to the evaluation criteria

The **Design of the Project is Satisfactory (S)** because:

It was prepared according to all the international regulations and standards, with the participation of key stakeholders and it responds to national priorities.

The logical framework complies with the majority of the indicators and goals of the project, which were oriented toward: i) Improving the effectiveness of management of the protected areas, with improvement initiated in 14 PAs. ii) Improving the sustainability strategy of SINAP, with advances achieved through the proposal and validation of the PA subsystems; iii) Promoting the financial sustainability of the PAs, initiated by the proposals for financial

mechanisms at the national level, based on revenues from tourism, the environmental service of water and regulations for capitalization of 0.5% of renewable energy.

The Qualification of the **Attainment of the overall objective** of the project is **Moderately unsatisfactory** (MU) because:

The initiatives achieved within the new modified strategy of the project did not achieve the results expected initially. The scope of the contribution of these achievements to the overall project objective was less than expected. The adaptations proposed for the project were based on changes in the indicators of some results, leaving for a little later the possibility of achieving the overall objective. The principal adaptations were those concerning: a) improving the legal framework through a SINAP Policy and reform of the Protected Areas Regulation and b) promoting local financial mechanisms within the framework of the pilot sub-systems.

An initiative to improve the biodiversity law was incorporated to the adaptation process, integrating financial mechanisms for the conservation and sustainability of biodiversity. There was an amendment to the Law; it was passed onto the environmental committee of the National Assembly for review and it was subsequently approved.

The last adjustment was to change the indicator to promote PA Co-management to Collaborative Management.

The qualification for the **Implementation** of the Project is **Moderately Satisfactory** (MS) because:

Execution of 83.8% was achieved in 2010 and 82.1% in 2012, in compliance with the reprogramming in the AOPs, evaluating only the execution of the 1.8 million supplied by GEF.

Part of the adaptation strategy was aimed at strengthening, with an unplanned budget some successful elements of the project: the official incorporation and validation of subsystems of Protected Areas; the programs of awareness and environmental education; the practical development of pilot projects for sustainable use, with multi-sector participation, organization and partnerships; and local financial mechanisms.

Resources were efficiently used, taking into consideration most of them were allotted to technical assistance. There was full compliance with the new targets reoriented to the territory, which was the 2nd focus of the ProDoc. Resources were allotted to identify baseline study consulting needs, associated with co-financing of co-investments, aimed at pilot projects for sustainable use and community socio-economic alternatives. These projected more funding to strengthen initiatives that were already operating.

The qualification regarding the achievement of **Results** is **Moderately Satisfactory** (MS) because the Project managed to establish positive actions around its overall results, mainly in all the initiatives aimed at the territory of the intervention.

The processes that stand out for producing behavioral changes in the PAs that were the object of this intervention are:

- The official validation of the Collaborative Management Committees, improving governance of the Protected Areas where they operate.
- The financial mechanism and local funds initiatives, in the process of maturing in the medium-term, within the legal framework of the municipalities, providing greater understanding of more efficient management of natural resources.
- The Protected Areas monitoring system model (applied to the PAs of the Madriz--Nueva Segovia Subsystem) has improved the vision of integral management of ecosystems.
- The environmental education program put into operation in the subsystems of protected areas with practical actions for reforestation and clean-up have managed to mobilize citizens to share responsibilities and commitments.

The processes that, despite the efforts expended, did not manage to achieve the desired result were:

- The Pilot Projects for community tourism and crocodile breeding in Padre Ramos and Tule exploitation in Puerto Morazán. There was no tourism strategy in alliance with INTUR and TUOPERADORAS, with financial support for marketing and promoting the image of tourism in protected areas (according to interviews with focal groups).
- In two of the four centers of wild flora and fauna, there was a failure to comply with commitments of agreements and the protocol for management of breeding species, as well as low institutional capacity of the territorial delegations of MARENA in monitoring and management of the pilot projects.

The assessment of the evaluation criteria is shown for the four outcomes in relation to the established objective.

3.3.4 Relevance

Relevant, (R) because the logical framework meets most of the indicators and goals of the project, aimed at improving the management effectiveness of protected areas as per the focus of the project. This would be achieved with the support of laws and policies to facilitate financing, and create an improved strategic framework and institutional capacity that would contribute to improving the SINAP.

The four outcomes of the project were systemically designed so their achievements are interdependent. Nevertheless, outcomes 1 and 3 are significant results at the national level, and therefore have to be achieved through a strong medium and long term political strategy.

3.3.5 Effectiveness and efficiency

Effectiveness, Moderately Satisfactory (MS) because these four outcomes were not fully achieved within the period of the project. However, many of its medium-term results, or outputs, were in fact achieved, providing moderate effects (bases) for the target groups. This

indicates that they are results that are likely be achieved through the implementation of other projects or other actions generated by the central government or by the beneficiaries themselves.

Efficiency, Moderately Satisfactory (MS) because part of the adaptation strategy was aimed at strengthening, with an unplanned budget, the official incorporation and validation of subsystems of Protected Areas and awareness and environmental education programs, with the practical development of sustainable use pilot projects, with multi-sector participation, organization and partnerships, and local financial mechanisms. This was accomplished with the help of various NGOs working in the country, fulfilling one of the commitments in the ProDoc in terms of obtaining returns for actions taken.

3.3.6 National involvement

The design of the ProDoc took into account the principal national plans, including in the results the connections between the DGNP and the productive sectors in order to promote a relationship, that did not exist before, with private property owners living in the PAs and the development of PA management agreements under a decentralized system which is a national priority.

The Strengthening SINAP project coincides with the country's Environmental Plan, which includes among its short-term objectives, promoting the economic viability of biodiversity, taking into account its wealth as an economic value, as well as the costs of its degradation. The development of better management plans is also part of this strategy.

For the UNDP it was a high priority project, in full agreement with its Country Cooperation Framework (CCF 2002-2006). (ProDoc)

Taking this approach from the design stage, increased the chances of participation of government officials, especially those in the project's area of influence. By the same token, civil society is fully involved in the territories, joining in Collaborative Management Committees. The Protected Areas Policy has been approved by the government and it maintains a basic financial commitment.

3.3.7 Integration

In accordance with the UNDP country programming and approach, some actions with positive effects for the beneficiaries of the project can be identified. These constitute a base for a scale of progressive actions leading to changes in attitude of the population towards the preservation of biodiversity in the territory. For example: the program of environmental education and awareness; the model and process of agreements for collaborative management of protected areas; the economic assessment studies of subsystems in protected areas; the pilot *Tule* handicraft project, benefiting 35 women; workshops for training in management of tools, guidelines and field practices.

3.3.8 Sustainability

In its formulation, the ProDoc guided the actions to be taken in this period of the project and future actions to manage the system and its long-term financing. Hereinafter is a description of how the project leaves the majority of its results in the process of development, approval, revision, validation, or implementation. It cannot be categorically stated whether these actions will survive past the termination of the project, but neither can be certified that they will be lost. It will all depend on the overall institutional management, on the coordination and dialogue with donors and on the actors in the territories.

Environmental sustainability is where all project results converge. In this regard, there are still no traces of improvement in attitudes at the national level, in terms of positive thinking toward PA. In this case, it seems that changes could move up from the territorial to the national level. One of the major activities accomplished for this purpose, has been the promotion of sustainable use pilot projects that are friendly with biodiversity or at least that mitigate their effects in the communities around the PAs.

Rating: Moderately unlikely (**MU**) at the national level. Moderately unlikely (**MU**) in the short-term, at the territorial level. This result will remain a work in progress, until the other results of the project as whole become consolidated. Only then, will its effects on environmental sustainability be seen.

3.3.9 Impact

Through the final evaluation, it is possible to identify the project as one where foundations have been built. Actions should continue progressively, until the large barriers that need to be faced are overcome and it is possible to see, in the short and medium term, some demonstrations of effective change.

However, as mentioned in previous chapters, situations are visible that suggest that conditions are in place in the platform built through this project that could lead to the desired impact in terms of progressing towards the hoped-for change of state.

4. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS

In this section, conclusions and recommendations are grouped into national level and local level components, in order to take into account the particularities of each of them, for they each describe different aspects of the challenges of managing SINAP. Therefore, different follow-up strategies will be needed.

4.1 Outcomes at the national level

4.1.1 Conclusions

The analysis of the achievements and results of the project define it as a project to set the foundations for future progressive escalations. From this perspective, and in accordance with some statements in the ProDoc and based on the Results Based Management framework

(RBM), the medium-term results (Outcomes) and the ultimate result (Project objective) were not achieved in this period.

At the territorial level, the project produced most of the outputs and it achieved the outcomes. At the national level, however, certain limitations were encountered to achieving the same results. The Protected Areas Act was not passed, nor was the Law of Fees, but, in general, the project contributed, though maybe not as much as expected, to improve the management of the PAs.

The project has managed to develop tools and capabilities (short-term results) so that all stakeholders can contribute to improving the management of PAs at the national level. Unfortunately, they are still waiting for approval, implementation, assessment and institutionalization so they were lowered them to the output level.

4.1.2 Recommendations

The government (MARENA) should build on the achievements and momentum created by the project to take actions that would make it possible to advance towards the political, legal and financial strengthening of SINAP, such as reviewing, approving and implementing the tools developed and referred to in the preceding paragraph. Similarly MARENA should instruct their delegations to undertake short-term and continuous monitoring of the actions already implemented such as the Collaborative Management Committees, AOPs and business plans. The activation of the donor roundtable is also recommended, to develop the financial strategy, among other actions.

It should be noted that actions that can be undertaken do not necessarily need to have a project approach with external budgets, but they do need to have a political and administrative strategy particularly at the national level. At the territorial level, however, actions could take the form of projects.

Promote and formalize a political dialogue to boost the Protected Areas Law and the Fees Law and capitalize and make operational the financial mechanisms for the benefit of protected areas management.

Take advantage of the good results obtained with the strategy of the project in terms of community participation and continue the process of expansion of these best practices, consolidating, from the central level, multi-sector alliances and co-financing.

It would be beneficial to consolidate and replicate the products and tools generated, in order to move to a stage of more widespread implementation, principally of management plans, relationships and communication within SINAP.

To carry out all these efforts, formulated here as recommendations, it is necessary to have a SINAP that is strengthened in its administrative, financial and human resource structures.

4.2 Outcomes at the local level

4.2.1 Conclusions

The project managed to achieve up to the outcomes in the four pilot APs, but the consolidation and replication of most of the products and tools generated is lacking.

The four outcomes have not been achieved in full in the period of project implementation. The project's strategy in the implementation of actions in the territory, encouraging community participation, achieved good results, with the immediate effects of good community participation and high expectations and commitment to achieve results once dispersed actions are consolidated.

The structures created with Collaborative Management Committees have shown an interest in the development of their communities, with significant achievements in terms of organization and coordination. In this process of implementation of the committees, their composition has played an important role, because different stakeholders converge.

Capacities were developed in human resources leading to obtaining an overview of the problems and identification of possible solutions, and learning from business plans to obtain funding for projects. All of this was supported by coordination, organization and communication.

The strategy of promoting pilot sustainable use projects has contribute to disseminate the practice of “learning by doing” at the community level. The beneficiaries consider that these projects should be further developed in depth and they express that they need more support.

4.2.2 Recommendations

Strengthen the subsystems of the Gulf of Fonseca, Madriz-Nueva Segovia and Matagalpa-Jinotega which have ample potential in the long-term, through a management plan in alliance with key actors in the protected areas, co-financing agencies and the Collaborative Management Committees.

The structures created with the Collaborative Management Committees should be sustained and strengthened through continuous work in the territories, for they have shown an interest in the progress of their communities, and significant achievements in terms of organization and coordination.

Take advantage of the skills gained in human resources within the territories that will allow for cohesion around new actions and promote projects with socio-economic alternatives and stable financial mechanisms.

Support and develop the strategy of promoting sustainable use pilot projects. Projects for conch breeding and fish in floating cages should receive special attention. The latter have not yet

solved the problem of fish feed and the supply of the young fish, a situation that could be solved in alliance with the research units of national universities.

The results of the project, established as a platform, should be turned into an obligatory ongoing process within MARENA and the partner organizations in the territories.

4.3 Lessons

The lack of formalization and adjustment of the changes within a project, when there are discrepancies between the formulation and execution of the project, is an experience to be considered for future projects. Time should be taken to adjust changes positively, to avoid large gaps between the general outcomes conceived in the initial design of the project and the outcomes obtained during implementation.

One of the lessons learned is that there is always a need for the participation of decision makers and stakeholders during all phases of the project cycle, especially during the implementation phase. The decision makers involved in the design of the ProDoc were different from those involved in the implementation stage. As a result, it would be important to leave some time, during the stage of adjustments and updating, for the new decision makers to understand and appropriate the concept of the project. In the opinion of the consultant, the central government institutions involved in this project failed to achieve this; an example is the weak performance in promoting Laws and in the consultations with MPs and with key people to mobilize resources and achieve the political will of the highest spheres in the country.

Multi-sectorial alliances and co-financing are some of the good practices in this project, leaving positive results for the attainment of goals in the territories.

The process, structure, and focus of the Collaborative Management Committees, are practices that have improved governability and increased the effectiveness of protected area management. These practices should be reproduced and emphasized throughout the system.

Training and sustainable use projects that benefit the management of the Protected Areas are key elements for attitude changes (more awareness and responsibility for the protection of biodiversity), which the communities in the territories need to embrace.

The management and administration of the subsystems in pilot protected areas, leave participants trained for the effective management of the PAs.