

Integrating trade-offs between supply of ecosystem services and land use options into poverty alleviation efforts and development planning in Mixteca.

Terminal Evaluation Report



**Robert Hofstede
27 November 2015**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Project summary table	II
Executive summary	III
Abbreviations	1
I. Introduction	2
II. The evaluation	2
III. The project	3
A. Project context	3
B. Objectives and components	4
C. Target areas/groups	5
D. Milestones/key dates in project design and implementation	6
E. Implementation arrangements	6
F. Project financing	7
G. Project partners	7
H. Changes in design during implementation	7
I. Reconstructed theory of change of the project	8
IV. Evaluation findings	10
A. Strategic relevance	10
B. Achievement of outputs	12
D. Sustainability and replication	21
E. Efficiency	26
F. Factors affecting performance	28
V. Conclusions and recommendations	35
A. Conclusions	35
B. Lessons learned	38
C. Recommendations	38
Appendix 1. Biosketch of evaluator	40
Appendix 2. List of consulted documents	41
Appendix 3. List of interviewed people	42
Appendix 4. Project financing	44
Appendix 5. Terms of reference for the terminal evaluation	45
Appendix 6. Inception report	94

Project summary table¹

GEF project ID:	3813	IMIS number:	GFL/2328/2740/4B64
Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity	GEF OP #:	
GEF Strategic Priority/Objective:	BD-PO2 SP4	GEF approval date:	13 October 2010
UNEP approval date:	28 October 2010	Date of first disbursement:	27 December 2010
Actual start date:	December 2010	Planned duration:	60 months
Intended completion date:	December 2015	Actual or Expected completion date:	n/a
Project Type:	FSP	GEF Allocation:	US\$5,900,000
PPG GEF cost:	US\$100,000	PPG co-financing:	US\$231,726
Expected MSP/FSP Co-financing:	US\$9,788,530	Total Cost:	US\$15,688.530
Mid-term review/eval. (planned date):	July 2013	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	September 2015
Mid-term review/eval. (actual date):	April 2014	No. of revisions:	No.2
Date of last Steering Committee meeting:	21 September 2015	Date of last Revision:	18 July 2014
Disbursement as of 30 June 2015:	USD 5,561,698.20	Date of financial closure:	n/a
Date of Completion:	n/a	Actual expenditures reported as of 30 June 2015:	USD 5,134,546.08
Total co-financing realized as of 30 June 2015:	USD 46,361,249.83	Actual expenditures entered in IMIS as of 30 June 2015:	USD 4,399,803.08

¹ Data from PIR FY15

²The evaluator decided to split this criterion because an average rating for the entire criterion would neither do justice to the poor performance of the sub-criterion "working groups" nor to the good performance of the others.

Executive Summary

Introduction

This document presents the report of the Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project "Integrating trade-offs between supply of ecosystem services and land use options into poverty alleviation efforts and development planning in Mixteca" (hereafter referred to as "Mixteca project"). The evaluation covered the entire project execution period of the project (December 2010 to present) and all of its activities. The Mexico Program Office of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is the Executing Agency (EA) the project, which was implemented in partnership with the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) and the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR). WWF formed a Project Coordination Unit (PCU), which holds office at WWF office in the city of Oaxaca. The Implementing Agency (IA) for the project is the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Main findings

The overall project performance was rated as satisfactory. It was designed in line with the developing priorities, approach and built on ongoing initiatives of governmental environmental agencies. In spite of weak points in the project design, all in relation to inconsistencies in formulation among outputs and outcomes, the project achieved practically all planned outputs and was highly successful in its outcome. The project established an impressive set of demonstration models of good practice in agriculture and management of natural resources management in a large amount of communities. The project managed to generate many examples of government agencies that included ecosystem services considerations into existing or new support programs. Finally, due to good outreach and communication; the Project has become a reference point for biological and geographical information on the Mixteca region. Locally, the project already achieved a certain level of positive impact on stakeholder behaviors, livelihoods and the environment. The project objective has been partly achieved because the implementation of most biodiversity and ecosystem services' considerations is still partial and *ad hoc*. Only in few cases they have been institutionalized by formal decrees. Even though the project objective has been only partly achieved, the project has yet contributed to the overall goal because of the positive impact it achieved on ecosystem conservation and restoration.

Socio-political and institutional sustainability of the project are relatively low for reasons that are mostly beyond the control of the project management. There is only partial adoption and institutionalization of consideration by governmental government agencies and, in consequence, the permanence of these considerations depends fully on continued support by individual decision-makers, stability in policy directions and consolidation of awareness within the institutions. However, changes of institutional leadership and the variable level ownership of the national and regional stakeholders threaten this permanence. Formal inter-institutional coordination was weak. Although the project failed to conform a State level institutional platform, it did constitute on other formal and informal institutional platforms. Most importantly, the extended PSC meetings became an inter-institutional network by itself.

The implementation mechanisms of the project were efficient and effective. The project coordination unit was staffed with mostly local professionals. Their expertise and good relationship with local beneficiaries proved to be a key ingredient in the success of the project. The performance of the project coordinator and the executing agency (WWF) was above standard. The formal working groups that would be established had a poor performance but the project management has continued to interact and coordinate activities with its counterpart institutions and other stakeholders. In general, the collaboration of different groups of stakeholders with the project design and implementation was good. The administrative management of the project was correct and the financial management proved to be outstanding, considering an amount of realized co-financing that was much higher than originally foreseen and a similar amount of additional (leveraged) funding. Backstopping and supervision from UNEP was considered positive.

Main conclusions

The project was highly relevant and consistent with environmental and social issues at regional, national and international level. It supports biodiversity conservation in the Mixteca, which is part of the most biodiverse State of Mexico (Oaxaca). This is also a region that is highly vulnerable for erosion and land degradation leading to widespread deforestation and associated with extreme poverty.

Project outcomes have been well achieved; the project generated much valuable information and tools that were made available to stakeholders in the region to assess, value and monitor BD and ES. Several governmental agencies have integrated ES tools and approaches into their support programs for the Mixteca region. Capacities were created among land users in dozens of rural communities, in order to apply ES considerations in productive activities securing the supply of key ES. Supported livelihoods, and habitat connectivity for globally significant BD was increased through voluntary conservation areas and corridor planning. Finally, the project results were widely and effectively disseminated although few synergies with other terrestrial ecosystem management projects were established.

The project did well in achieving mostly high-quality outputs, and, in quantities attaining higher indicator values than planned. As a result of initial lessons learned from the implementation; activities and outputs were adapted opportunely.

Stakeholders were appropriately involved in producing the programmed outputs. All relevant governmental agencies provided information, were trained on the use of ES and BD tools, and supported to include these in their programs and plans. Local land users and communities lead the development of demonstration models. The degree of community driven-ness of the field-based activities was a mix between activities promoted by the project and activities that were a response to the communities' demands.

The project objective has been partly achieved. Although the project managed to integrate ES and BD considerations in planning and support programs of governmental agencies, the implementation of most of these considerations is still partial and *ad hoc* and BD and ES considerations cannot yet be considered mainstreamed.

Even though the project objective is partially achieved, the project is contributing to the overall goal of ecosystem and biodiversity conservation. The project achieved a certain level of positive impact on ecosystem conservation through direct conservation of areas, establishment of corridors, sustainable forest management and demonstration models to conserve soils and water and to improve the use of biodiversity.

The project generated concrete local impact on the environment and on local livelihoods. Several outputs together cover a large portion of the entire Oaxacan Mixteca. Demonstration models are based on changed behavior of land users and several have shown good potential to be maintained and expanded in the future.

Political and institutional sustainability of the project outcomes is low and constitutes the major barrier to achieve long-term and large-scale impact, because it does not ensure maintaining the achieved (imminent) integration and the of ES and BD considerations within planning and programs of public agencies. Reasons for this low political and institutional sustainability are both the lack of ownership by the main national stakeholders, and non-functioning inter-institutional coordination.

The overall project management was outstanding. The project management unit, the project coordinator and the executing agency performed well and were a key factor for the achievement of outputs and outcomes. The project was executed efficiently in terms of time and costs. Adaptive management was applied appropriately.

In absence of an inter-institutional working group, the Project Steering Committee was converted adequately into a broad platform to provide information to main stakeholders and allow for an inter-institutional space for the analysis of project results and debate about the options to create impact. Participation gradually increased from the original project partners to a broad group of stakeholders. As a result of this, the PSC was less effective as a supervision body for the project.

The project had a good performance in materializing co-financing and leverage additional financial resources.

Summarized ratings table

Criterion	Rating
A. Strategic relevance	Highly Satisfactory
B. Achievement of outputs	Satisfactory
C. Effectiveness: Attainment of project objectives and results	Satisfactory
1. Achievement of direct outcomes	Highly Satisfactory
2. Likelihood of impact	Moderately Satisfactory
3. Achievement of project goal and planned objectives	Moderately Satisfactory
D. Sustainability and replication	Moderately Likely
1. Financial	Moderately Likely
2. Socio-political	Moderately Likely
3. Institutional framework	Moderately Unlikely
4. Environmental	Highly Likely
5. Catalytic role and replication	Moderately Satisfactory
E. Efficiency	Satisfactory
F. Factors affecting project performance	
1. Preparation and readiness	Satisfactory
2. Project implementation and management (a) including the functioning of working groups (b) ²	a: Highly Satisfactory b: Unsatisfactory
3. Stakeholders participation and public awareness	Satisfactory
4. Country ownership and driven-ness	Moderately Satisfactory
5. Financial planning and management	Satisfactory
6. Supervision, guidance and technical backstopping	Satisfactory
7. Monitoring and evaluation	Satisfactory
a. M&E Design	Satisfactory
b. Budgeting and funding for M&E activities	Satisfactory
c. M&E Plan Implementation	Satisfactory
Overall project rating	Satisfactory

Main lessons³

Even though a project focuses on a limited area of influence (in this case, a portion of a State), there are still many national-level policies, legislation and regulations that need to be influenced to create positive impact in the project area.

When at the level of project outputs concrete and positive impacts on the environment and livelihoods are attained, the project's contribution to overall goal (biodiversity conservation) can be underway although the direct project objective is only partly achieved.

²The evaluator decided to split this criterion because an average rating for the entire criterion would neither do justice to the poor performance of the sub-criterion "working groups" nor to the good performance of the others.

³ In addition to the lessons learned described in the MTR report and in the specific study on lessons learned in GEF Mixteca

The non-functioning of the inter-institutional working group, in spite of being established by the State Governor, shows that not even the highest-level policy decisions guarantee follow-up and enforcement of these decisions.

A Project Steering Committee can constitute an adequate *de facto* inter-institutional platform in case other platforms are dysfunctional; with the risk of having the core roles of the PSC (operational supervision) erode.

When an environmental conservation project targets a broad group of stakeholders, including many institutions from sectors others than the environment, it is difficult to achieve immediate participation from all stakeholders. A well-executed stakeholder mapping during project design including an analysis of their expectation and potential role, forms a good basis to progressively (rather than immediately) include stakeholders during project implementation.

Main recommendations

To the main governmental project partners (CONANP, CONAFOR): Considering the crucial importance of an inter-institutional coordination platform to consolidate project results and achieve long-term impact, efforts to establish such a mechanism should continue. To achieve this, a lead agency should take the initiative to convene the group, organize meetings and ensure dealing with priority themes related to the project results. Considering the institutional setting of the project, CONANP is the best-positioned agency to take up this role.

To UNEP and WWF: Most outcomes have been achieved, but the project objective was not completely achieved and, although the project contributed partially to the overall goal, its institutional sustainability is a major issue. UNEP and WWF, both with national offices in Mexico and main responsible agencies for the project, are well positioned to provide a follow-up of the positive outcomes through concrete activities to be developed in 2016.

To all project partners: While the creation of an inter-institutional platform among governmental agencies faces challenges to be installed, there are informal networks that are apt to, at least temporally, provide spaces for collaboration to promote the continuation of project results. Especially the Oaxaca Council for Community Development is an adequate platform to pursue this goal. Project partners are recommended to actively participate in this council and stimulate sustainability of project results in a collective and collaborative manner.

To WWF: The good institutional and personal performance of WWF and its staff in the project execution created high visibility of WWF in the region, as well as a responsibility and expectation towards ensuring the care for the project legacy. In its future institutional plans for Oaxaca, WWF should consider this responsibility and find ways to support permanence of Mixteca project's results, including its support to local organizations and informal networks.

To WWF and project partners: The project has successfully supported a large series of demonstration models. Several of which are not yet consolidated enough. After project closure, project partners that had direct interaction with these groups (particularly CONANP and WWF) must ensure provision of continued external support in order to avoid a fading away of their incipient experience and enthusiasm.

To UNEP: The project contributed to aspects of green economy promotion and TEEB principles. However, its approach and impact has been local. It is therefore recommended that lessons learned from this local experience should continue to form an important input into the national Green Economy strategy, currently promoted by UNEP.

Abbreviations

BD	Biodiversity
CARM	High Watershed of Mixteco River
CDI	National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples
CONABIO	National Biodiversity Commission
CONAFOR	National Forestry Commission (Federal)
CONAGUA	National Water Commission (Federal)
CONANP	National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (Federal)
COPLADE	State Committee for Development Planning
ECOSECHAS	Project "Mainstreaming the conservation of ecosystem services and biodiversity at the sub-watershed scale in Chiapas, Mexico" (GEF-UNEP-Conservation International)
EA	Executing Agency
ES	Ecosystem Service(s)
GAP	Good agricultural practices
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
GNRMP	Good natural resources management practices
IA	Implementing Agency
IEEDS	State Institute for Ecology and Sustainable Development
IWG	Inter-Institutional Working Group
MTR	Mid Term Review
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPC	National Project Coordinator
PIF	Project Identification Form
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PSAC	Project Stakeholder Advisory Committee
ROti	Review of Outcomes to Impacts
SAGARPA	Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (Federal)
SEMARNAT	Secretary for the Environment and Natural Resources (Federal)
SEDAFPA	Secretary for the development of Forestry, Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture ((State); now SEDAPA; without forestry)
SO	Strategic Objective (GEF)
STyDE	Secretary for Tourism and Economic Development (State)
SP	Strategic Program (GEF)
TEEB	The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity
ToC	Theory of Change
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

I. Introduction

1. This document presents the report of the Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project "Integrating trade-offs between supply of ecosystem services and land use options into poverty alleviation efforts and development planning in Mixteca" (hereafter referred to as "Mixteca project"). The evaluation occurred over the entire project execution period (from December 2010 to present) and covered all activities of the project. The total costs of the project were budgeted at US\$ 15,688.530, from which GEF contributed US\$ 5,900,000. The Mexico Program Office of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is the Executing Agency (EA) the project, which was implemented in partnership with the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) and the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR). WWF formed a Project Coordination Unit (PCU), which holds office at WWF office in the city of Oaxaca. The Implementing Agency (IA) for the project is the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

II. The Evaluation

2. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy⁴ and the UNEP Programme Manual⁵, the Terminal Evaluation is undertaken at completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of the results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, GEF, CONANP, CONAFOR, WWF and other main stakeholders of the project. Therefore, the evaluation will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation. Terms of reference of the evaluation are included in Appendix 5 to this report.

3. The evaluation was executed during the August - October period in 2015, by an external evaluator, Robert Hofstede (hereafter referred to as "the evaluator"; biosketch in Appendix 1). In September, an inception report was developed, containing a thorough review of the project context and its project design quality; a proposal for a reconstructed Theory of Change for the project, the evaluation framework and a tentative evaluation schedule (Appendix 6). During inception, initial conversations with the National Project Coordinator (NPC), WWF Mexico's Conservation Director and the UNEP task manager took place to plan for the data gathering of the evaluation. Fieldwork for data-gathering was undertaken from September 21st to September 28th in the Oaxacan Mixteca region and in the cities of Oaxaca and Mexico.

4. In the inception report, an evaluation framework was presented as a matrix of detailed evaluation questions, indicators and sources of verification. In general, the questions were distilled from the ToR for this evaluation and arranged considering the evaluation criteria. The evaluator included additional questions, specifically under the criteria for effectiveness and efficiency (to reflect upon the reconstructed ToC and intermediate states. Several other evaluation questions from the ToR were adapted to the specific context of the project. Possible indicators from the project results framework were included, and when these were not available, the evaluator proposed new indicators.

5. Evaluation indicators have been analyzed using the project's own reporting mechanism (PIR and half year reports) and have been validated through a careful revision of both documents and products (Appendix 2) and through interviews with project staff, partners, beneficiaries and key stakeholders. During the fieldwork process, the evaluator used semi-structured interviews, which included questions of the evaluation matrix. For each stakeholder group (PCU staff, governmental agencies, project partners, project beneficiaries) specific subsets of questions were selected from the evaluation matrix according to the role of the stakeholder in the project. More than 50 persons were directly interviewed, taken among a representation of project staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries (full list of interviewed persons in Appendix

⁴<http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPEvaluationPolicy/tabid/3050/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

⁵ http://www.unep.org/QAS/Documents/UNEP_Programme_Manual_May_2013.pdf

3). Findings were cross-checked as much as possible during different interviews with PCU staff and UNEP project manager; especially if they were based on perceptions. Also, during field visits; short conversations were held with other community members (mostly women) to validate expressions by the interviewed community members.

6. During the fieldwork process, the evaluator assisted a meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC, or *Consejo Directivo*) in the city of Oaxaca, during which the overall project achievements were presented. The meeting was open to all partner organizations and in fact, many of them assisted. In the city of Oaxaca, the evaluator interviewed PSC members and other governmental agencies (CONANP, Secretary for the Environment and Natural Resources -SEMARNAT-, Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food -SAGARPA-, CONAFOR, State Institute for Ecology and Sustainable Development -IEEDS-, Secretary of Tourism and Sustainable Development -STyDE-, State Committee for Development Planning -COPLADE). He visited six project sites in the Mixteca region (Miramar, Caballo Rucio, Santa María Coquila, Teotongo, San Pedro Nopala, Guadalupe Cuauhtepic) to observe the field implementation and meet project beneficiaries and local authorities. Beneficiaries from four other project sites and several local project partners joined the field visits, and, therefore the evaluator could interview a wide range of local stakeholders. During this fieldwork, PCU staff, the NPC and the UNEP Task Manager accompanied the evaluator. These persons did not intervene during interviews with local stakeholders and project partners but their presence did provide the evaluator with ample opportunities to cross-check initial findings. After the field visit, one day was spent in Mexico City to visit UNEP and WWF country offices.

7. The limitations of this evaluation are mostly time-related. During seven effective days of data-gathering in Mexico, only a sample of project partners and beneficiaries could be interviewed and just three days were spent in the actual area of implementation in the field. Therefore, direct observations were complemented by information provided in project progress reports and valuable personal descriptions from project partners. Time was also too short to actually consult bookkeeping or subcontracting arrangements, therefore, the general impression was complemented by interviews with project staff and partners and with financial and audit reports. However, the evaluator judges that in general the evaluation was applied on a representative enough sample of project partners and the consulted information was enough to develop sustained findings.

III. The Project

A. PROJECT CONTEXT

8. The Mixteca ecosystems are of global importance for their unique ecosystem richness, significant biological integrity and important degree of endemism. The Oaxacan Mixteca is composed of three major geographic areas: the high Mixteca, lower Mixteca and the coast, each with its physical and social characteristics that make it an important region of high biological and cultural diversity. It is noted for its impressive mix of tropical and temperate montane pine-oak and cloud forests. This area of relatively low (300 - 700 mm) and seasonally concentrated rainfall is rich in biodiversity, and harbors many unique, endemic and threatened species.

9. The low, highly seasonal rainfall and soils with a lack of crucial nutrients, make agriculture in this region challenging. Moreover, in spite of its rich cultural history and diversity, the Oaxacan Mixteca traditionally suffers from many socio-economic challenges: difficult physical accessibility, low degree of technical and financial support and general marginalization of public services. Traditional agriculture, which was relatively stable, is increasingly abandoned because of low access to water and fertile soils. Monocropping systems are introduced with more environmental impact, resulting in erosion and land degradation. After abandonment of degraded lands, farmers colonize new plots in natural forest areas applying slash and burn techniques. Overall, the Oaxacan Mixteca is now considered one of the poorest regions of the country and food security is low. The high rate of poverty pushed Mixteca inhabitants, particularly men, out of the region to work in other agricultural regions in Mexico, in cities or abroad, leaving the family plots to women and elders, with little capacity to apply good agricultural practice.

10. Because of the dramatic interaction of environmental (low precipitation, poor soils) and social challenges (poverty, migration); biodiversity in the region is being increasingly threatened by habitat and ecosystem destruction and land degradation by an array of low-productivity farming activities. These include deforestation through slash and burn agricultural techniques and for energy needs; cattle and goat rearing with a pasture pressure that can reach 4-5 times the sustainable rate; and an annual migration of more than 100,000 animals, largely goats. Land degradation has reached disastrous levels after years of deforestation. Subsistence food production of basic staple crops generally falls far short of household food requirements.

11. In the region, several support programs by federal (national) and state governmental agencies are in place. These are addressing priority social issues such as poverty alleviation, food security and agricultural production. There are also some governmental reforestation initiatives. However, biodiversity (BD) conservation and ecosystem services (ES) considerations are not yet an integral part of these programs.

12. Root causes for this are complex and relate to factors affecting decision-making on land use. According to the project document, root causes are of physical origin and socio-economic origin. The first are related to the low soil fertility and the high vulnerability of soils to disturbance. Socio-economic root causes are related to the loss of traditional lifestyles (including traditional land use practices) of the indigenous population, generalized poverty and outmigration. Loss of traditional knowledge and practice seemed to have caused more soil degradation and forest loss (because of encroaching agriculture), while poverty and migration is causing lack of labor and adequate knowledge to apply good agricultural practice.

13. Barriers that impede effective biodiversity conservation efforts in the region are linked to institutional deficiencies: (i) A limited level of ongoing assessments and monitoring of natural resources, (ii) A lack of technical background and specialized knowledge needed to bring long term ecosystem stability into the food production equation (iii) A lack of land use plans that take into account ecosystem services. (iv) A lack of inter-institutional coordination needed to oversee the many state and federal support programs. (v) Few focused education and capacity building efforts among indigenous groups to create sustainable food production activities. (vi) A limited capacity within CONANP to upscale pilot interventions in priority areas to harness potential investments for impact at the wider landscape level, and (vii) Poor marketability and profitability of agricultural crops produced, related to the paucity of farmer associations.

14. The project has been implemented in a complex geographical and institutional context. The Mixteca region is large with many scattered human settlements, requiring long travel time to cover the four areas. Oaxaca is the State with the highest number of municipalities in Mexico (500), and especially in the Mixteca, municipalities are small and lack technical and administrative capacity⁶. Governmental agencies for social development, agriculture water and forestry support the region, but because of the difficult accessibility and long communication lines and because most agencies do not have many staff, they encounter difficulty to cover the area. Staff turnover at governmental agencies is a constant, both among field technicians as well as with directive levels in the city of Oaxaca, making coordination and continuity of the support programs a challenge (paragraph 41). Although there is a relatively long history of development assistance to the region, this has not resulted in the presence of many rural development or environment-related civil society organizations or other non-governmental organizations (NGO's). Some organizations, with long stranding local impact, are present and the project has engaged them as partners. In addition, the presence of local academic institutions in Mixteca is low: there are only two local higher education centers (*Universidad Tecnológica de la Mixteca* in Huajuapán de León and the *Instituto Tecnológico* in Tlaxiaco); and in Oaxaca is the *Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez*.

B. OBJECTIVES AND COMPONENTS

15. The objective of the project is to mainstream biodiversity conservation into natural resources, use and develop planning in the Mixteca Region of Oaxaca integrating ecosystem services (ES) tools and

⁶ Most of the political functions (majors, community leaders) are not fulfilled by people that have been prepared for this position (e.g. backed up by a political party) but by local customs and usage, through which any person of the village can be appointed by the others as their leader (information provided during interview with COPLADE).

sustainable livelihood options. The project objective intended to contribute to the conservation of globally important ecosystems and species within the Mixteca region of Oaxaca, including a large number of endemic and migratory species.

16. The project results framework⁷ includes eight outcomes, organized in four project components as follows:

<p>Component 1: Strengthening the knowledge base on the ecosystem approach for biodiversity conservation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1.1: Stakeholders and decision makers at state and local level have increased access to Ecosystem Services tools applicable to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use; • Outcome 1.2: Natural Resources, ecosystem services and biodiversity in the project intervention area are assessed, valued and monitored using the new ES tools and knowledge provided through the project. <p>Component 2: Supporting biodiversity-friendly policy and program development for land use planning and resource use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 2.1: Biodiversity and ES considerations are integrated into state and federal support programs and land use planning. <p>Component 3: Piloting biodiversity friendly programs on the ground.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 3.1: Local stakeholders apply the ecosystem approach for planning and implementation of productive activities and biodiversity conservation; • Outcome 3.2: The supply of key Ecosystem Services is secured, improving ecosystem resilience and leading to improved livelihoods; • Outcome 3.3: Improved land use planning and management practices lead to increased habitat connectivity for globally significant biodiversity within the project intervention area as assessed and monitored under outcome 1.2; <p>Component 4: Outreach and dissemination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 4.1: Project findings, tools and methodologies made available to state and federal decision makers as well as the public, and relevant interest groups; • Outcome 4.2: Coordination and cooperation established with UNEP Ecosystem Management Program (EMP).

17. The project intended to bring long term ecosystem integrity, stability and resilience into the food production equation by promoting science – policy integration, towards good practices in agriculture and natural resource management. It planned to demonstrate how ecosystem management techniques can bring improved water and soil conditions, and better the agricultural productivity in the form of higher efficiencies and yields. Productive activity would, in turn, be concentrated in the most suitable areas, thereby decreasing habitat disruption and encroachment on fragile and biologically significant ecosystems. In this way the project also aimed to achieve global environmental benefits in the form of biodiversity conservation.

C. TARGET AREAS/GROUPS

18. The four zones that make up the project intervention area cover approximately one third of the Oaxacan Mixteca and comprise 567,308 hectares, 41 municipalities and 98 micro-watersheds. The project contemplates three areas: in the Mixteca Alta – Sierra Sur-Juxtlaahuaca, Tlaxiaco and Cerro Negro Yuncaño and one in the Mixteca Baja – Huajuapán de León-Tonalá. These areas were chosen as representative of biodiversity hotspots that interconnect with already established protected areas and thereby could provide biological corridors connecting different ecosystems.

19. The Oaxacan Mixteca, is one of Mexico's poorest regions. Of its nearly 700,000 inhabitants, 68% live in rural areas. Inhabitants are mostly indigenous peoples, principally Mixtecos. At least six other different ethnic groups are present. The rural population of the intervention area (approx. one third of the entire Oaxacan Mixteca) is the primary beneficiary of the project because these are assisted in rehabilitation of traditional land and water management techniques, trained in good agricultural practice and restoration of

⁷ Appendix 4 of the ProDoc (UNEP. 2010. Project Document "Integrating trade-offs between supply of ecosystem services and land use options into poverty alleviation efforts and development planning in Mixteca")

degraded lands and alternative income sources such as tourism. The rural population of the intervention area will also benefit directly from the maintained ecosystem services originating from a better overall environmental situation. Rural population from other rural areas, in similar conditions, can profit from the good examples and knowledge exchange with the project area. Finally, the wider Oaxacan population will profit from a better environmental management thus leading to good water management, maintained production and higher landscape attractiveness.

20. Participation of different stakeholder groups in the project execution is explained in the section on implementation arrangements of the Project Document (ProDoc). The support of the project to the direct beneficiaries (local land users) is provided mostly through farmers' cooperatives; many of which are being stimulated with project support, although the project originally did not include a specific strategy to select communities or cooperatives to be included in the project implementation stage.

21. Governmental agencies, both at federal and state level, and their support programs are another important target group of this project. As a region characterized by above average poverty levels, the Oaxacan Mixteca receives an array of social support programs intended to improve household income and living standards. There are more than 14 state and federal secretariats providing different types of assistance to the population, including farming subsidies, social sector programs and temporary employment schemes among others⁸.

D. MILESTONES/KEY DATES IN PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

22. The PIF of the project was approved on April 24th, 2009, and was awarded a project preparation grant on September 30th, 2009. The project was endorsed by the GEF-CEO on October 13, 2010. Implementation started in December 2010 and continues until December 2015. The Mid Term Review (MTR) was planned for July 2013, but took place between November 2013 and April 2014. On September 21st 2015 (during the evaluation mission), the last meeting of Project Steering Committee was held.

E. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

23. The IA for the project is the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In this capacity, UNEP has had overall responsibility for the implementation of the project, project oversight, and co-ordination with other GEF projects. During the entire implementation of the project, the person with the position as regional focal point for GEF biodiversity and land degradation for Latin America was the project task manager at UNEP, he represented the organization in the Project Steering Committee (PSC).

24. The EA for the project is the Mexico Program Office of the WWF. WWF's Oaxaca office hosts the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) in the city of Oaxaca. Additionally, the project has two field offices in the Mixteca region, in Tlaxiaco and in Huajuapán de León. The PCU is lead by the NPC, has two regional office coordinators and two to three technical staff in each office (Oaxaca, Huajuapán and Tlaxiaco), each focuses on specific thematic issues (ecosystem services and hydrology, biodiversity and monitoring, tourism and business, forestry and restoration, GIS, agriculture, etc.). Although the composition slightly changed during execution, most staff continued during the five years of project implementation. Several long term consultancy contracts for technical staff were set over into fixed term labor contracts half way through the project in order to ensure more stable contract conditions. The PCU was responsible for day-to-day implementation of all project activities, either directly or through management of sub-grants, and for coordination of all activities among the project implementing partners and other institutions. The PCU also supported Steering Committee meetings and other project governance activities and managed project finances. The PCU received continuous technical and administrative support from WWF Oaxaca director and administrative staff as well as from the Mexico country office.

⁸ See section 2.5 and appendix 16 of ProDoc (stakeholder analysis)

25. The PSC was composed initially of CONANP, WWF and CONAFOR as main partners in project execution and chaired by UNEP as GEF IA. The PSC met two times per year and its principal functions were: providing guidance to the execution of project activities, including reviewing and advising on the main outputs, ensuring that the Government's environmental policy is fully reflected in the project, ensuring effective communication and decision-making, and, assisting with mobilization of expertise as needed for proper execution of project outputs. In practice, the PSC meetings were used to present project outputs to project partners and, for each meeting, many project partners assisted. In fact, during the progress of the project implementation, other governmental agencies became *de facto* PSC members as well (paragraph 106). For day-to-day management; a technical group was established, consisting of the NPC and the District Director of CONANP (in charge of the Mixteca area) who met weekly to make all decisions on project investments (consultancy contracts, collaboration agreements, organization of events) in consensus among the two major implementing institutions.

F. PROJECT FINANCING

26. The total costs of the project were budgeted at US\$ 15,688,530, from which GEF contributed US\$ 5,900,000. At June 30, 2015, total expenditure of this fund was 5,134,546 US\$. The originally committed co-financing was 9,788,530 but the total amount of co-financing and leveraged funding surpassed 46M US\$. A complete overview of project financing (to June 30th 2015) is in Appendix 4.

G. PROJECT PARTNERS

27. UNEP is the GEF IA for this project following a request by the Government of Mexico through CONANP. The project execution partners are CONANP, CONAFOR and WWF. CONANP and CONAFOR are the main institutional representatives of national ownership of the project. Their tasks will cover involvement in technical aspects, as well as the mainstreaming of biodiversity at policy level. WWF-Mexico has been charged with project administration, while also contributing to technical aspects in the field.

28. Initially, an Inter-Institutional Working Group (IWG) was established to provide continuity and strengthen the government's Regional Planning Support Group within its initiatives in the Mixteca Priority Region. This would be an ideal project partner platform where all government support programs for the Mixteca region could meet. The IWG would also follow up on this GEF project's strategy and implementation with the participation of local stakeholders and therefore, would be an ideal project partner platform. However, it only met once in a formal setting and afterwards, the only way institutional project partners coordinated was in the Mixteca project PSC meetings (paragraphs 91, 106 and 111).

29. Other project partners included NGO's active in the region, with whom several demonstration models were developed (CEDECAM, *Fundación Comunitaria Oaxaca*, etc.), academic institutions that executed studies and participated in monitoring and some consultancy firms that provided specific services during the execution of the programs. At field level, activities were implemented in different Mixteca communities, where normally the formal coordination took place through existing structures like the Communal Resources Commission, the Rural Producers Association or the municipality.

H. CHANGES IN DESIGN DURING IMPLEMENTATION

30. The project was initially affected by several delays in its first year of implementation. Planning and implementation were hampered by discrepancies between the budget and logical framework, as well as challenges encountered in the management of the contracting process for consultancies. Consequently, initial consultancies were slow at starting and providing key outputs, such as baseline information. During the first two years, the project has gone through two budget revisions that enabled it to recuperate and progress substantially toward its objective in a more cost-effective and cost-efficient manner. According to the MTR, the budget revision succeeded in consolidating similar activities and allowing more cost-effective

implementation toward the project's objective. Also, some minor adjustments were made to the target values and planned delivery dates of indicators, in order to achieve better coherence and realistic delivery of outputs. This was reported adequately through the PIR reports.

I. RECONSTRUCTED THEORY OF CHANGE OF THE PROJECT

31. Based on the project documentation, the evaluator reconstructed the Theory of Change (ToC) that implicitly underlays the project. This reconstruction was done using the GEF Evaluation Office's approach to assess the likelihood of impact that builds on the concepts of ToC / causal chains / impact pathways. The method is known as Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI).

32. In this reconstructed ToC (see diagram below), effort is placed on identifying impact pathways, implying the transformation of the activities that generate outputs (light brown boxes), to outcomes (blue) and impacts (green). Because the project presents a long list of outputs, the consultant decided to rather present one single box of general activities for each outcome in the diagram. Project outcomes are the intended results stemming from these activities/outputs. In the strict sense, intermediate states are the transitional stages between direct project outcomes and the impact. However, in the present exercise, this had to be applied flexibly because some existing outcomes were redefined as intermediate states where these were logical result stemming from other outcomes. Also, the consultant identified other intermediate states, as transitional states between activities/outputs and outcomes.

33. To identify likelihood of desired impact, the assumptions and drivers that underpin the transformation from outputs to outcomes over intermediate states to objectives, should be analyzed. Drivers are the significant external factors that if present are expected to contribute to the realization of the intended impacts and can be influenced by the project partners; assumptions are those external factors largely beyond the control of the project. For the present exercise most assumptions and drivers were taken from the project Logical Framework (purple), complemented with some identified by the consultant (light purple). The consultant tried to differentiate between drivers (marked with D) and assumptions (A).

34. Based on the logical framework, the ROtI exercise linked project activities and the generated outputs to the project outcomes via intermediate states to project objective. The consultant identified four impact pathways, reclassified four existing outcomes as (partial) intermediate states, and identified four other intermediate states. For the fully reconstructed Theory of Change and a detailed description of all impact pathways, see inception report (Appendix 6).

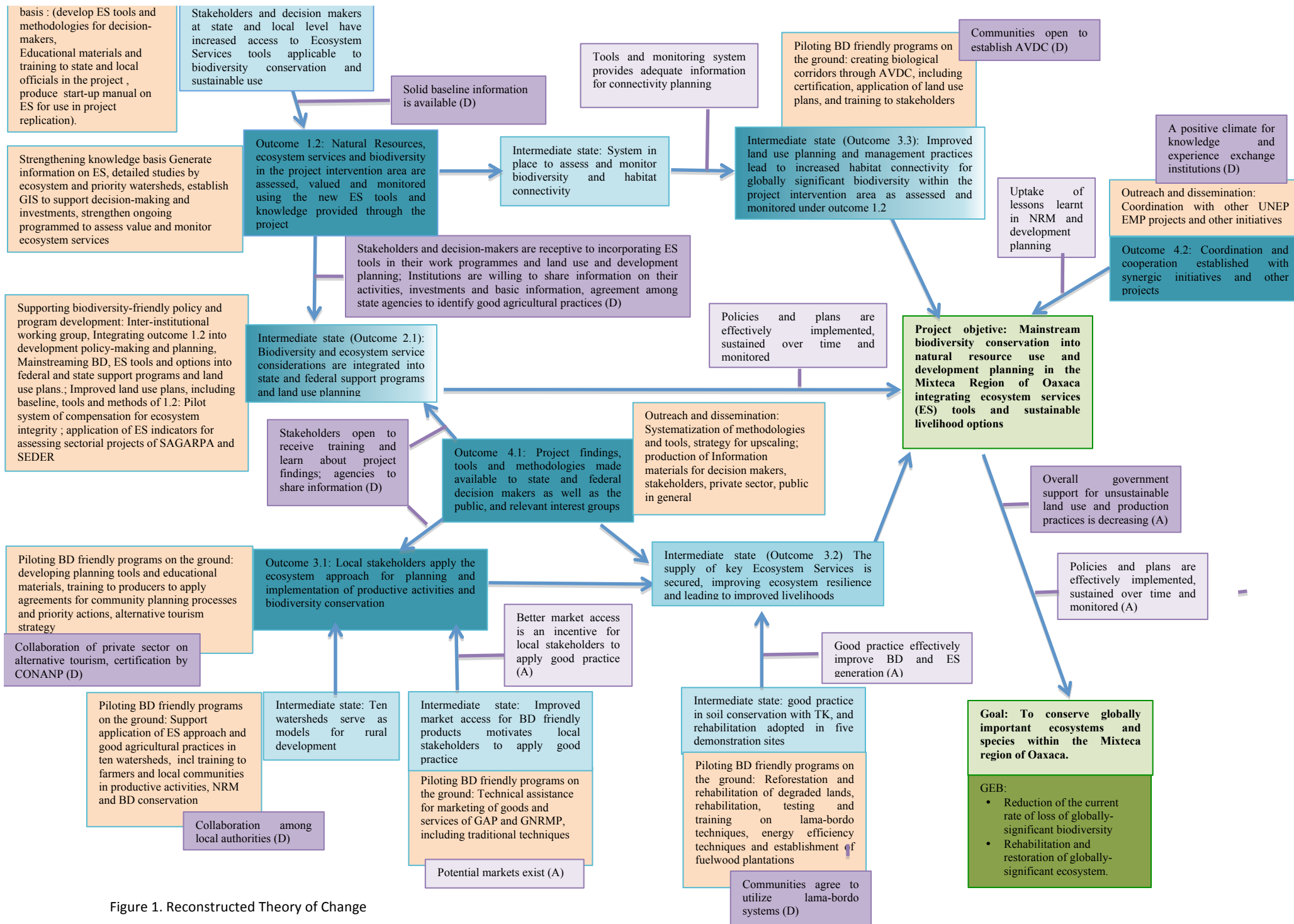


Figure 1. Reconstructed Theory of Change

IV. Evaluation Findings (according to evaluation questions presented in inception report)

A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE

Were the objectives and implementation strategies consistent with: i) global, regional and national environmental issues and needs; ii) expectations and needs of key stakeholder groups; iii) the UNEP mandate and policies at the time of design and implementation; iv) GEF Biodiversity focal area's strategic priorities and operational programme BD-SP4-Policy?

35. The strategic relevance of the project was high, both at the start as well as during the entire implementation period of the project. The ProDoc includes a complete stakeholder identification and the expectations of each stakeholder towards the project. The evaluation of quality of design (see inception report) considered this stakeholder analysis, the participatory character of project formulation and the response to stakeholder expectation among the strengths of the design. The project was consistent with Mexico's Biodiversity Strategy, particularly with its strategic lines 1.1 (in situ conservation), 2.2 (contributions of biodiversity to economy, culture and society), 3.1 (research), 3.3 (recovery of traditional/indigenous knowledge), 3.4 (knowledge exchange), 3.5 (dissemination), 3.7 (training) 3.8 (knowledge management), 4.2 (diversification of agricultural production) and 4.4 (commercialization and market development). Oaxaca, generally considered as Mexico's most biodiverse state⁹, is an obvious region to support the application of this biodiversity strategy. Also recognizing that with 67 % of population under poverty level, Oaxaca belongs to the poorest states in Mexico¹⁰, focusing on biodiversity and ecosystem services tools into poverty alleviation is a logical project goal. The present project's goals and components are a clear reflection of CONANPs long-term strategy (*Estrategia 2040*¹¹). It contributes comprehensively to four of its five thematic axis (integrated landscape management, biodiversity conservation and management, social and cultural participation for conservation, the economy of conservation).

36. The project is in line with sub-regional environmental issues, especially because it supports BD conservation in the Mixteca that forms part of the Oaxaca node of the Mesoamerican biological corridor. This corridor spans from Mexico to Panama and is an important biodiversity hotspot that has been prioritized in regional and national conservation policies¹². CONABIO has identified sustainable productive systems as one of the main tools for conservation in biological corridors. Proof of this is the development of a new full size GEF project (Sustainable Production Systems and Biodiversity Project; 4207, World Bank), which is focusing on this issue and will be implemented in the nodes of the Mesoamerican corridor (Oaxaca, among others).

37. The Oaxaca State Development Plan 2011-2016¹³ includes a transversal policy for sustainability. This policy sustains the organizational process for natural resources conservation in favor of sustainable human development in such a manner that the environment is no longer a sectorial issue, but it stands as a transversal theme in the work plans of all sectorial institutions related to economic, social and human development. The goal of the present GEF project (mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into natural resource use and development planning) is fully in line with this plan. The Mixteca area is considered highly vulnerable for erosion and land degradation, constituting a major threat to biodiversity conservation, water regulation and agricultural production. Innovation in land use systems - while including traditional production techniques- has been recognized earlier as a promising solution for this problem¹⁴.

38. The alignment of the project with GEF biodiversity focal area Strategic Programs 4 of Strategic Objective 2 (SO2) is well explained in the MTR. One of the primary goals of the BD focal area is the maintenance of ecosystem goods and services that biodiversity provides to society. The focus of SO2 is "to support country efforts to integrate biodiversity considerations into sectors that fall outside the environment sector". The focus of the project is on mainstreaming BD conservation and integrating ES tools in development planning by government agencies both within and outside the environment sector.

What was the project's alignment/compliance with UNEP's policies and strategies, particularly the Bali Strategic Plan, gender balance, human rights based approach and inclusion of indigenous peoples issues, needs and concerns, and South-South Cooperation.

39. The project results contribute directly to the Ecosystem Management subprogramme of UNEP Programme of Work 2014-2015¹⁵, particularly to its Expected Accomplishment A (use of the ecosystem approach to maintain ES and

⁹ http://www.wwf.org.mx/que_hacemos/oaxaca/

¹⁰ <http://www.coneval.gob.mx>

¹¹ http://e2040.conanp.gob.mx/docs/E-2040_completa.pdf

¹² <http://www.biodiversidad.gob.mx/corredor/corredorbiomeso1.html>

¹³ http://www.oaxaca.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Plan_Estatal_de_Desarrollo_2011_2016_2.pdf

¹⁴ http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/13/world/americas/13oaxaca.html?_r=2&scp=1&sq=tilantongo&st=cse&

¹⁵ UNEP. Biennial programme of work and budget for 2014–2015 www.unep.org/about/funding/portals/50199/

sustainable productivity); output 1 (maintain or restore ES and integrate the ecosystem management approach with the conservation and management of ecosystems), output 2 (improve food security and sustainable productivity through the integration of the ecosystem approach) and 4 (partnerships to catalyze the uptake of tools and approaches for improved food security and management of ecosystems). It also contributed to Expected Accomplishment C (services and benefits derived from ecosystems are integrated with development planning and accounting); output 1 (improve cross-sector awareness and understanding of the importance of biodiversity and ES for sustainable development and poverty reduction), output 2 (strengthen decision-making through valuation, assessment, demonstration and communication of biodiversity and ES values) and, output 3 (technical and capacity building for effective management of biodiversity and ES).

40. The project contributes directly to Bali Strategic Plan¹⁶, particularly to its objective A(vi) (to develop national research, monitoring and assessment capacity to support national institutions in data collection, analysis and monitoring of environmental trends) through project outcome 1.1 and objective J (to promote, facilitate and finance, as appropriate, access and support of environmentally sound technologies and corresponding know - how), through outcome 3.1. The project did not include a strong gender approach in its design or implementation (paragraph 86). The focus on Mixteca indigenous groups, including the recovery of traditional knowledge and promoting traditional livelihoods, promoting agrobiodiversity and a strong participatory, grass-root driven approach, complies with human rights and indigenous peoples based approaches. Finally, South-South cooperation is evident in a few but clear examples of cooperation with other projects and technology transfer from other South American countries (paragraphs 71 and 109).

Did the (political, environmental, social, institutional) context change during project implementation and how did the project adapt to this?

41. Political changes and staff changes within governmental institutions were the main context changes. Due to presidential and local government elections, there have been governmental changes at all levels during project execution. This has resulted in the changes in name, mandate, hierarchical position or even complete disappearance of several institutes that are important project partners. It has particularly affected the State Commission for Development Planning (COPLADE), which was originally considered an important partner to implement the project locally. With the new Oaxaca state administration, this institution was dismantled and later established again in a restructured format. In addition, at the start of the project an inter-institutional working group was established, chaired by the State Secretary of Finance. However, this body only met once during project execution and due to staff changes at directive level, it did not meet during the current State government administration (paragraph 91). Similar discontinuity occurred in practically all governmental agencies that are key project partners and that have seen frequent staff changes at all levels, from national to local.

42. According to most interviewed persons, these institutional changes are very common in Mexico (and Latin-America in general) and now seen as a major barrier to achieving sustainability of results (paragraph 88). However, this risk was not foreseen in the project risk mitigation strategy of the ProDoc. During the implementation, the project management did apply an adaptive management approach to reduce this risk. Immediately before governmental changes it approached candidates of political positions and after governmental changes, it visited new authorities to present the project and show the advantages for the concerned institutions. However, this has been only partly successful because new authorities at state level frequently had different agendas and changed existing coordination structures. Authorities at municipality level lacked background and technical capacity to immediately support programs promoted by the Mixteca project. In particular cases, changes were so frequent that any continuity was a utopian aim. For instance, the district head of SAGARPA for Mixteca changed three times during the current administration, and the State Forest and Agriculture Secretariat (SEDAFPA) was split at midterm (and recently before the current evaluation) into a separate Forestry and an Agriculture Secretariat with new senior staff. According to the NPC, a better continuity strategy was concentrating capacity building among technical staff of governmental agencies (which have much more continuity) and restrict interaction at a decision-making level of the agencies in order to achieving planning impact and stimulation of inter-institutional coordination).

43. Ongoing interest in financial incentive mechanisms for ES and BD-friendly land use has increased, especially due to the global attention for carbon mitigation. After CoP16 in Cancun (2010), Mexico has become one for the frontrunners in REDD+ issues, and several initiatives focus on the South; their most forest rich region¹⁷. Nevertheless, the project has not tapped into this potential yet; links to the REDD+ readiness process are not evident and inclusion of climate change adaptation strategies in project activities are not specifically reported. Government-supported ES mechanisms have been strengthened (including CONAFOR) and new initiatives (e.g. CONANP-GIZ-EcoValor project)

documents/PoW%202014-2015_as%20approved%20by%20the%20GC%20Feb%202013.doc programme of work unep 2014-2015.

¹⁶ <http://www.unep.org/GC/GC23/documents/GC23-6-add-1.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://theredddesk.org/countries/mexico>

provide additional opportunities. However, austerity decisions made at federal level, related to the lower national income from oil exports, imply a strongly decreased budget for CONAFOR and CONANP for 2016. Initially, this will mostly affect staff numbers but fear exists that this will also affect field programs¹⁸.

The rating for the criterion 'strategic relevance' is 'highly satisfactory'.

B. ACHIEVEMENT OF OUTPUTS

How successful was the project in producing the programmed outputs, both in quantity and quality, as well as their usefulness and timeliness?

44. All outputs of component 1 (strengthening the knowledge base on the ecosystem approach for biodiversity conservation) have been well achieved in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness. Some products have been delivered later than planned, especially because of initial implementation challenges and slow administrative processes with subcontractors (see MTR, and paragraph 102). This was well compensated during the implementation of the remainder of the project and all outputs have been reached. In comparing the performance with the expected target levels of the indicators for the outputs, most were over achieved; only in a few cases the quantity was lower, but never to a critical level. There is only one product (video training material), which has not been delivered yet. The evaluator revised to his best professional knowledge the quality of a subset of products directly¹⁹. The evaluator observed that generally, the scientific quality was high: products were based on up-to-date information and appropriate methods. In a few cases, particularly erosion studies and soil and water studies, are probably of a too academically advanced level to be applicable to decision making at local level. On the other hand, biodiversity monitoring by trained local para-biologists has been useful in engaging the trained local people in conservation and to disseminate results to local decision makers, but the academic value of the monitoring system can be questioned due to incomplete coverage and lack of control of data provision. This shows that there is a tradeoff between academic quality and usefulness of data to inform local stakeholders.

45. In general, the outputs of component 2 (supporting biodiversity-friendly policy and program development) have been partially achieved, due to the unclear formulation of these outputs and incomplete contribution to the outcome. Outputs 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 are formulated similarly as the outcome (inclusion and mainstreaming of ES and BD into governmental programs and planning) and its achievement will be dealt with in the section on effectiveness (paragraphs 57 to 59). The achievement level of the outcome is satisfactory (paragraphs 57) which implies that the activities sustaining this outcome have been executed well. Nevertheless, of the remainder of the outputs, some have been well achieved but others not. The first output has not been achieved: an IWG was established at the start of the project but the structure did not hold (paragraph 91) and although other adequate communication means with stakeholders have been put in place (paragraph 92), this output cannot be considered successful. Also output 2.1.7 has not been achieved to the degree reported by the project: there have been proposals, but no actual mechanisms for compensation mechanisms are in place. The outputs related to land use plans (2.1.4, 2.1.5 and 2.1.6) have been successfully achieved in terms of amount and quality: the interviewed land users that participated in the land use plan developments (Tiltepec, San Pedro Nogala, Guadalupe Cuauhtepac) all expressed their satisfaction with the plans; only in Guadalupe Cuauhtepac the implementation has challenges due to incomplete acceptance. Also output 2.1.8 was well achieved through the monitoring of ES indicators in productive programs in component 1.

46. The evaluator considers that the outputs of component 3 (piloting biodiversity friendly programs on the ground) as formulated, do not contribute in a logical manner to the achievement of the outcomes. The first six outputs of outcome 3.1 (education materials, training materials) are similar to the outputs of component 1. One of the outputs on tourism (3.1.7) deals with a tourism strategy developed at the level of the State in collaboration with the Secretariat of Tourism and therefore contributes to outcome 2.1 rather than 3.1. The other outputs do contribute to outcome 3.1, through development of demonstration models of good agricultural practice, tourism activities and Crassulaceae cultivation. Similarly, outputs 3.2.3 to 3.2.6 (traditional production systems; related to outcome 3.2) contribute mostly to outcome 3.1. Other outputs are well assigned to outcome 3.2 because of their relation to land and forest restoration. Although outcome 3.3 is formulated very broadly (improved land use planning and management practices lead to increased habitat connectivity), its outputs reduce the action to the planning, establishment and management of voluntary conservation areas (ADVC) and planning of biological corridors.

47. Overall, the outputs of component 3 have been achieved with sufficient quality and at a quantity higher than originally planned. Although many have not been implemented in the sense that these were formulated, this has not

¹⁸ <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/ultimas/2015/09/24/riesgoso-el-recorte-de-la-mitad-del-personal-en-conafor-ong-7816.html>

¹⁹ manual on ES Tools (output 1.1.1), education materials (1.1.2), BD data base (1.2.3) assessment of value of ES (1.2.4)

affected the overall achievement of the outcomes. The project established an impressive set of demonstration models. These were developed for different productive models with low environmental impact, adequately planned in the landscape and governed by the community. Therefore, these can be considered as having several of the principles of the ecosystem approach²⁰. A variety of models were supported, with both Good Agricultural Practice, (GAP) and Good Natural Resources Management Practices (GNRMP). According to the project progress reports, these were implemented in a large amount of communities and with many families: 12 communities and 153 families applied maize/fruit tree systems, 11 communities worked with pine resin collection, a total of 110 family coffee plots were improved, 144 training events were held and 18 persons from 7 communities were certified as tourism guides. In addition to the demonstration models, the project achieved outputs on land restoration: together with CONAFOR, more than 5000 hectares of land was rehabilitated through restoration and reforestation and in 13 localities fuelwood efficient stoves were implemented and 94,000 fuelwood trees were produced. The outputs leading to outcome 3.3 (connectivity) have also been well achieved. 4432 hectares have been included in 9 certified ADVs, and two more are in process. An additional 3026 hectares are currently considered as conservation areas through the application of the Community Statute in Santa Maria. The project applied a study to identify biological corridors in the region and defined, in coordination with CONANP and the Indigenous Development Centre (CDI), a biological corridor will be established as a demonstration exercise, considering connectivity with community protected areas, the only federal natural protected area in the Mixteca and dry forest ecosystems along the Mixteco River watershed in 9 municipalities.

48. If the exact formulation of outputs component 3 is considered, the achievement would be lower. For example, output 3.1.12 (ten micro-watersheds that can serve as models for rural development) was produced as combination of two or three demonstration models in 13 communities, but these cannot be considered as a model at watershed level nor was it based on watershed planning. Output 3.1.14 (marketing of goods and services that are the product of GAP and GNRMP, including traditional system production techniques) was achieved for pine resin and Crassulaceae growing, which however are not agricultural practice nor traditional techniques. Outputs 3.2.1 (degraded land reforested) and 3.2.2 (degraded land rehabilitated) seems to have been considered as one single output because the same kind of achievements has been reported by the project. Nevertheless, the level of achievement of the three outcomes was satisfactory (paragraph 60 to 71), which implied that the activities in this component were adequate and the flexible achievement of outputs should be considered adaptive and opportune project management.

49. The outputs of outcome 4.1 of component 4 (outreach and dissemination) have been well achieved. The evaluator personally observed the variety of means and tools the information was adequately disseminated to different audience, even in different language. This varied from technical reports, well-illustrated manuals and toolkits, and internet-based information pages and databases. Although in component 4, the outputs should have been more directed to dissemination of materials than to its production, particularly outputs 4.1.4 (education material) and 4.1.5 (tool kit) are written as products and repeat the outputs of 1.1. The achievement of the outputs contributing to outcome 4.2 (coordination and cooperation established with synergic initiatives and other project) was less satisfactory. The coordination with UNEP was fruitful, with the national and the regional offices, rather than with the Ecosystem Management Programme (see also paragraph 113). There has been scanty coordination with other relevant GEF projects, with the exception of some exchange of experiences with the two other UNEP-GEF projects in Mexico and with PROTIERRAS (FAO-GEF). With counted exceptions (e.g. CONABIO's *Corredor Mesoamericano*), contacts with similar non-GEF projects in the country are not reported upon. There is a good website and Facebook area available, but these focus at an information dissemination level and not in providing a platform for a community of practice.

Were key stakeholders appropriately involved in producing the programmed outputs?

50. In general, stakeholders were appropriately involved in producing the programmed outputs. Most of the outputs of component 1 were generated through studies and production of materials. This was done through consultancy contracts and involvement of academic centers. When appropriate, these were institutions from the region but in several cases the project decided to contract Mexico City-based institutions to ensure high quality. On the other hand, there have been challenges to involve academic institutions from the region (paragraph 115). The outputs of component 2 targeted governmental stakeholders and their involvement as beneficiaries ensured a good participation.

51. Most of the outputs of component 3 were generated through the establishment of demonstration models in communities. According to the land users and local authorities that were interviewed during this evaluation, their participation has been highly satisfactory. The degree of community driven-ness of these field-based activities was a mix between activities promoted by the project and activities that were a response to communities' demand. In many cases, staff of the Mixteca project approached the community and took initiative with different options for

²⁰ <https://www.cbd.int/ecosystem/principles.shtml>

demonstration models. After this, the community took the decision to engage with the project autonomously and considered they governed the process. In several cases, during the establishment of demonstration models initiated by the project, the community requested additional support. For example, in Guadalupe Cuauhtémoc, the project started with tourism, monitoring and conservation activities initiated by the Mixteca project, but during its development, the community identified the need to work with goat farming as well. In San Pedro Nogala, work started with Crassulaceae growing, but the community requested a land use plan development. Finally, there were cases where the communities approached to project to demand support for specific activities. For instance, the community of Tiltepec approached WWF autonomously.

The rating for the criterion 'achievement of outputs' is 'satisfactory'.

C. EFFECTIVENESS: ATTAINMENT OF OBJECTIVES AND PLANNED RESULTS

i. Direct outcomes from reconstructed TOC

To what degree have the project products (e.g. ES tool kits, studies, methodologies, etc.) been accessible to decision makers and other relevant interest groups, and what effect has this had on the appraisal of ecosystem services and biodiversity in the project intervention areas?

52. Outcome 1.1 (stakeholders and decision makers at state and local level have increased access to Ecosystem Services tools applicable to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use) has been well achieved. Many local and subnational stakeholders recognize the Mixteca project as an important generator of knowledge and tools about ES and BD. During the evaluation, a manager of a local development NGO expressed "...GEF funding allowed the Mixteca project to generate studies that show the level of deterioration of natural resources in the area and what are the reasons behind this, as well as providing the tools and scenarios for restoration". A CONANP representative told the evaluator "the key elements to be developed by the project were tools and data for decision making at all levels". In fact, the project generated a wealth of information on biodiversity, water, soils and production systems in the region, through collaboration of leading institutions in the area in Mexico (UNAM, *Colegio de Posgraduados*, ECOSUR). Based on the information on ecosystem services in the Mixteca region, the project developed an ES assessment tool kit and educational material on BD and ES.

53. All information has been made available to government agencies at State level, project partners and local authorities (municipalities, community boards). All interviewed governmental agency representatives declared that project information was delivered to them, and most of the interviewed key agencies (CONAFOR, CONANP, SAGARPA, IEEDS, COPLADE, CDI) confirmed that this was done through actual capacity building to technical staff. According to project progress reports, 80 staff of agencies was trained in the management of information and application of ES toolkits. The invitation of many project partners to PSC meetings also increased availability of the project information (paragraph 106).

54. Outcome 1.2 (natural resources, ES and BD in the project intervention area are assessed, valued and monitored using the new ES tools and knowledge provided through the project) has been achieved satisfactorily. In the reconstructed ToC, outcome 1.1 is considered an intermediate state towards outcome 1.2. The evaluation could confirm that in fact, the better availability of information and tools on ecosystem services and existence of a monitoring system (outcome 1.1) has led to a better appraisal of ecosystem services among many stakeholders, and that monitoring is in place. CONAFOR, COPLADE and CDI representatives directly mentioned they use the maps provided by the Mixteca project to identify areas vulnerable for erosion, ecosystems critical for conservation and areas suitable for restoration or productive activities. Community leaders mentioned that the ES toolkits and education materials were useful tools to raise awareness at community level and promote better spatial management. One representative expressed "once we saw the data of the scarcity of the plants and animals, we asked the project to help us with land planning so we could save the remaining ones".

55. Studies on ecosystem services (incl. watersheds, critical ecosystems, species and, land cover) have been included in a GIS based monitoring system. This monitoring system is operational and its management, although still done by PCU should be handed over to government agencies soon, for which training of staff of different agencies has already taken place. The technical level of this information and of the GIS system was high and required well-trained people and continuous updating. To actually be useful as a tool for ES valuation and monitoring as an input to planning, training of technical staff has to be continued and the receiving agencies will require continued technical and financial capacity to apply the system. In addition, smaller agencies or local decision-making bodies (municipalities) are likely to require translation of the information and tools to a more adequate technical level in line with their capacities.

Is the established BD and ES monitoring process functioning effectively, with key stakeholders?

56. This intermediate state in the reconstructed ToC has been achieved. Although the capacity of stakeholders to sustain the monitoring process in the future is not clear, at the moment, the BD and ES monitoring processes of the Mixteca project is functioning well at different levels. The GIS system developed by the project which includes all data on water, soils, land use, biodiversity land cover etc. is well initiated and ready to be used in regional monitoring as a basis for decision-making. In the provision of data, key stakeholders, among which the participating governmental agencies provided adequately the necessary information. A decision support system was developed linked to the GIS system, so the GIS is ready to be used as a basis for decision-making. Although the project has done considerable efforts to disseminate this system and train technical staff in CONANP and local universities; other stakeholders have not yet fully taken it up. According to interviewed staff of agencies that are potential users of the monitoring system (SEMARNAT, IIEDS, CONAFOR, SAGARPA), the reason why the monitoring system is not yet functioning independently within these agencies is because of internal institutional factors (lack of specific budget and technical staff with enough time) rather than the quality or usefulness of the tool. Specific studies that are considered base-lines for monitoring of ES at community level have been developed by academic institutions with, according to local land users, satisfactory participation of land users in data gathering and model validation. The evaluator joined one event during which a monitoring system was delivered to a local authority and community members. Although the beneficiaries highly appreciated the transparency of the project and the high academic value of the information, they expressed to the evaluator that did not have the technical capacities to use such a monitoring system. Hence, the management of the system by several stakeholder organizations continues to depend on external support. The biodiversity monitoring in natural forests is done principally by local nature tourists guides, trained by the project. At state level, this is partially linked to a CONANP BD monitoring system²¹ developed with project support. Although the academic thoroughness of this BD monitoring system can be questioned; the evaluator considers that it has been useful to engage the local people in conservation, and to disseminate results to local decision makers.

Has the project been successful in influencing government agencies to mainstream biodiversity, conservation, and ecosystem services into policy, regulatory frameworks, Federal/State supported programs, land-use plans and community-based work programs?

57. Outcome 2.1 (biodiversity and ES considerations are integrated into state and federal support programs and land use planning) has been achieved, evidenced by many examples of government agencies that including ES considerations into existing or new support programs, through their involvement in the Mixteca project. Some concrete examples were analyzed directly during this evaluation. This included CDI, which provides grants to indigenous peoples communities for the development of productive projects (mostly agriculture and forestry). CDI formally accepted the information provided by Mixteca on soils, biodiversity, water etc., in the project selection and approval process. This is backed up by the project through direct technical support to CDI technical staff in four regional offices. The STyDE promotes Mixteca as one of the State's eight tourism routes. Thanks to the interaction with Mixteca, the focus of this route now includes natural besides cultural attractions. Six communities with important natural assets are included in the formal work plan for this Mixteca tourism route. Without formally having accepted ES considerations based on Mixteca project outputs, SAGARPA has seen an increase of the demand for and financed more projects related to sustainable agriculture, particularly Milpa development and goat husbandry. According to interviewed high level staff members, SAGARPA is now exploring how to define their investment areas based on Mixteca tools. Regional coordinators of COPLADE use Mixteca information on ES to stimulate municipalities to invest in sustainable production and ecosystem management. COPLADE also uses the management plan of the high watershed of the Río Mixteco (CARM; developed by the Mixteca project; paragraph 58) as guiding for municipality support. Finally, CONAFOR staff mentioned that although they have not changed the programs to support their activities in Mixteca, they do recognize the usefulness of Mixteca ES information to plan these activities and have seen better opportunities to increase the share of native species for restoration purposes. Co-financing data also indicate how government agencies are committed to adapting BD and ES considerations through new financing related to Mixteca project activities (paragraphs 122 and 123).

58. A planning process triggered by the Mixteca project was the development of a management plan of the CARM. This process was based on the information developed by the Mixteca project and the development of the plan counted with the participation of all main stakeholders of the watershed, including 20 municipalities, CONAGUA, CONANP, COPLADE and other governmental and non governmental agencies. State and federal agencies formally accepted the plan, which subsequently was presented to CONAGUA and the Watershed Committee of the entire Mixteco River. CONAGUA agreed to consider this plan as the base line to design and finance the management plan for the entire river basin. Although the formal implementation of the watershed plan has not been concreted yet, according to representatives from the main stakeholders, it is likely it will so soon because of the good quality of the CARM plan and the lack of existing plans for the Mixteco River.

²¹ <http://dsjm-conanp-monitoreo.org/>

59. In accordance to the formulation of the outcome, the integration of BD and ES considerations is limited to programs and planning, and did not yet target policies and regulative frameworks. Interviewed persons at State-directive level of Federal agencies, agreed that the latter would require influencing decision-making levels in Mexico City, within the agencies as well as among parliamentarians. This was not a level where the project intervened. WWF and UNEP in Mexico City explained that as part of their institutional mission, they are supporting BD and ES friendly policies and regulative frameworks at federal level, and they use examples from projects such as Mixteca (paragraphs 69, 109 and 113), but this is a long-term process and impact cannot be expected from a single project.

Did the project succeed in effectively building local capacity in applying ecosystem approaches and good practice in productive activities (e.g. agriculture, tourism), and has this resulted in a marked improvement in the assessment, valuation, and monitoring of ecosystem services in the intervention areas?

60. Outcome 3.1 (local stakeholders apply the ecosystem approach for planning and implementation of productive activities and biodiversity conservation) has been well achieved thanks to the impressive set of demonstration models applied in the landscape and governed by the community. The large volume of project outputs achieved under component 3, as reported in paragraph 45 and in the project progress reports, implied that the target levels for the indicators of this outcome have been surpassed. Ten different types of models for rural development based on the ES approach and good practices in agriculture and natural resource management have been implemented in 68 municipalities, 98 planning processes applying different methodology and ES approach are underway (although this count includes individual and family planning processes), more than 1000 land users have been trained on good agricultural practice and natural resource management, tourism activities have been implemented in six communities and guides were trained.

61. During the evaluation, many signs of positive assessment and valuation were encountered. Representatives from local stakeholders showed understanding of underlying ecosystem approaches to the productive activities. Many expressions from land users indicate that they not only applied the improved agricultural practices or NRM techniques because they see a single economic or environmental benefit but they actually understand the more complex relationship between the ecosystem and the practice applied. Examples were *"I now produce without chemical fertilizer and pesticides because we found out that these in the end deplete the soil and kill beneficial organisms; not using them is also better for our health and requires less investment"* (Milpa producer in Teotongo); *"I like the opportunities that tourism gives us but I became a tourist guide because of my interest in nature and Mixteca trains us to biodiversity monitors, in addition to tourist guides. In that way, I can study our birds and explain to others how to protect them"* (tourist guide, San Andres Lagunas); *"We produce Crassulaceae for the market but first, we make sure we have to produce seeds so we do not need to harvest plants from the wild anymore, where they are decreasing; now we produce enough to plant surplus in the wild. Also, we found that the species that are most endangered in the wild are also the most difficult to reproduce in the greenhouse; there must be a relation, don't you think?"* (community managers of Crassulaceae nursery, San Pablo Nopala); *"We thought that resin extraction damaged trees and that we were killing them. But then we learned that resin excretion is a natural process that simply has to be managed carefully so we depend on the intact forest rather than cutting it away to use the wood"* (pine resin collector, Huamelulpan); *"We now use trees not only to provide shade to the coffee, but also to provide habitat for insects that help to pollinate our fruit trees and provide honey"* (Coffee grower, Miramar).

62. The achievement of outcome 3.2 (in the reconstructed ToC considered 'intermediate state'; the supply of key Ecosystem Services is secured, improving ecosystem resilience....) cannot be fully assessed because it is impossible to find evidence about the provision of ecosystem services, as a result of implementation of the demonstration models by communities. Scholarship²² shows that most of the applied demonstration models likely have a positive effect on the environment compared to other productive activities (organic farming vs. use of chemical fertilizer and pesticides, pine resin recollection vs. logging for fuel and construction wood; improved coffee plantations with diverse shade trees vs. sun-tolerant high productive varieties). Therefore, it can be logically assumed that these models have a positive effect on ES such as biodiversity conservation, soil protection and water regulation. However, without directed and long term monitoring this cannot be proven, especially when there is no account of leakage or additionally. The latter can be the case with improved agricultural practice. For instance, goat keeping is one of the land uses traditionally threatening dry forest integrity. The project trained goat keepers to reduce the forest areas used for goat herding and keep them partly in stables. This reduces impact of goats on the short term, which is positive for ES. However, if the activity is a success but there is no future guidance, this might trigger more goat husbandry rather than an overall reduction. This theoretical scenario cannot be falsified without having monitoring data.

²² Among others: Hassan, R., Scholes, R., & Ash, N. (Eds.). 2005. Ecosystems and Human Wellbeing: Current state and trends. Volumen 1. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. Island Press. Washington D.C. and McNeely, J. & Scherr, S. 2003. Ecoagriculture. Strategies to Feed the World and Save Wild Biodiversity. Washington: Island Press.

63. Additional activities that contributed to outcome 3.2 were land rehabilitation (restoration and reforestation) and reduction of fuelwood usage through implementation of fuelwood efficient stoves. Land rehabilitation and forest restoration on more than 5000 hectares have only been installed since one to two years and it cannot yet be ensured that ES services are guaranteed. However, observations in the field showed good success of the establishment of trees in the field, well-functioning nurseries to continue to produce native species and initial agreements with CONAFOR to use community produced trees for their reforestation activities. Also, interviewed community leaders were committed to continue to produce native trees for future reforestation activities (financed by CONAFOR) rather than exotic tree species *"because they are of multiple use which is better for the families that the single use as timber"*. The positive impact of fuelwood-efficient stoves on fuelwood use is not directly measured by the project. However, two interviewed (female) community members in Santa María Cuquila told the evaluator that currently, all fuelwood demand could be sufficed by plantation treed while before using the stoves, fuelwood was harvested in natural forests. These observations are indications that evidence the application of productive activities and NRM management activities with an ecosystem approach by local stakeholders, which contribute to ES generation.

Through its activities related to securing key ecosystem services and improving ecosystem resilience, to what extent have the rehabilitation initiatives began to translate into improved local livelihoods in the intervention areas? Is there evidence of direct impacts arising from improved living conditions at the local level?

64. The results framework did not provide indicators for the livelihood part of outcome 3.2 (the supply of key Ecosystem Services is secured [...] leading to improved livelihoods). However, the project applied sustainable livelihood assessments (supported by ECOSUR) that provided baseline information on productive activities, land use, income, health etc. These have not been repeated to show changes, but they have been adequately disseminated to the communities and effectively created consciousness about the importance of productive processes. Interviewed land users confirmed their understanding of the different aspects of livelihoods, balancing financial income and other aspects (food security, energy security, health). *"Selling timber and earning money is OK, but we need the forest products for fuel and medicine so if we don't care, we have to buy much more"* (land user, Santa Maria Coquila) and *"The SLA has shown us that income from agricultures is only 25% of the communities' total income which means we should put as much care in investing the money from other sources than from agriculture"* (community leader, Caballo Rucio), *"We have seen how little we actually earn from agriculture so the little extra earnings from resin or tourism are very important for us"* (community member, Tiltepec).

65. The evaluator encountered several examples of demonstration models contributing to improved livelihoods through additional income generation. Particularly pine resin collection, bee keeping, and improved coffee plantations, demonstrated figures of increased and sustained income generation for producers. Interviewed representatives from two communities with pine resin collection activities, mentioned additional income per family of approx. 100 US\$/month. Coffee farmers in Miramar improved management of their coffee farm, and increased production with 40%. Moreover, one farmer won a quality award at a coffee fair and after this, he received a 6 times higher price for his coffee; the bee keepers association in Miramar (51 members) produced 32,000 kg honey/year which is sold at a price of US 2.5/kg. Other activities have shown positive financial figures but based on one single sale (Crassulaceae nursery) or at the level of projections (organic Milpa). The income for participating families, generated from tourism in the cases that were visited, has been marginal. The latter activities (Crassulaceae, organic Milpa, tourism) do have the potential to become sustained sources of income for community members, but should be more consolidated in both technical and marketing aspects.

66. The evaluator observed examples of positive changes in additional aspects of livelihoods as a result of the applied demonstration models. According to project reports, and validated by interviewed beneficiary families: bee keeping, fuel stoves and plantations and resin collection increased the participation of women in productive activities. Tourism activities empowered particularly young people. Several demonstration models (bee keeping, resin collection and commercialization, coffee plantation improvement, tree nursery establishment, Crassulaceae production) required joint work, implementation agreements and investments at community level, which improved social organizations and individual leadership skills.

To what extent have improved land use planning and management practices lead to increased habitat connectivity for globally significant biodiversity within the project intervention area as assessed and monitored under outcome 1.2?

67. This evaluation question reflects outcome 3.3, and has been achieved satisfactorily: target levels for the indicators have been reached and even passed. Concrete collaboration between CONANP and project staff resulted in nine ADVC, with a total protected area of 4400 has. Representatives from a community that was visited during this evaluation confirmed that establishing ADVC created some conflict among the community about the limitations to land use, but a final consensus was reached due to the promise from CONANP to provide grants to the communities with ADVC. On the other hand, land use in the ADVC is not necessary reduced to zero and some productive activities

continue to take place. Sixty community members have been trained to establish and manage ADVCS. In addition to ADVCS, a community system of protected areas in Santa María Yucuhiti protects another 3026 ha.

68. Using the maps and other information generated in Component 1, potential biological corridors were identified as a basis for the work to achieve outcome 3.3. Instead of the targeted two, a total of four corridors are proposed covering the most biodiverse areas of three different landscapes of the Mixteco area and a connecting zone. Based on this information, in coordination with CONANP and CDI, one biological corridor will be established as a demonstration exercise, considering connectivity with some ADVCS, the natural protected area APFFBT and dry forest ecosystems along the Mixteco River. This corridor planning is aligned with the planning of the CARM. The process has been highly participatory, endorsed by all key stakeholders and provides an enabling environment for future application of the corridor establishment (paragraph 58).

To what extent have the project findings, tools and methodologies been made available to state and federal decision makers as well as the public, and relevant interest groups?

69. This evaluation question reflects outcome 4.1, which has been achieved satisfactorily. All interviewed representatives of State and Federal agencies confirmed they have been provided the required information and considered knowledge management by the project transparent. At directive level, dissemination of project findings was done effectively during extended PSC meetings. The evaluator presented one of these and could witness the good attendance during the meeting²³, the detailed level of technical information provided and the delivery of packages of printed material to all participants. According to the consulted minutes of the previous meetings, project findings and products have always been presented in this setting and during the later PSC meetings, attendance was broad, far beyond the 'strictly considered' PSC members (see paragraph 106). More technical information (specific studies, GIS system, ES tools) was disseminated among technical staff, directly involved with support programs to land users, such as SAGARPA local service providers, CDI local technical staff and COPLADE micro-regional coordinators. This is considered an effective strategy because it is the appropriate level of usage of the information. Interviewed representatives at direction level of these agencies confirmed that the information and tools were appropriately disseminated to the local technical staff (including training) but there are challenges for uptake because of the technical capacity of local staff and their high turn-over²⁴. Dissemination of project findings and tools to the national level of federal governmental agencies has been weak. It has been a challenge for the project to connect to central offices of federal agencies (paragraph 80). UNEP's office in Mexico City tried to organize a meeting of national authorities (lead by CONANP) in the Mixteca to show project findings, but only State delegates attended this meeting.

70. The Mixteca Project has become a reference point for biological and geographical information on the Mixteca region. The project has developed a webpage and institutional Facebook page (almost 2000 followers). Interviewed local institutions working with biodiversity and land use (universities, State ecology institute, NGO's) praise the level of transparency and accessibility of the information. More than once it was heard *"this is the first and only information on the whole Mixteca"*. The project concentrated on tailor made communication products for communities and beneficiaries of trainings rather than on widely distributed publications (although there have been some of the latter as well). The evaluator has revised many of these tailor-made communication products and considers them of good quality and adequate for the particular audience.

To what degree of success was the project able to establish synergies with other terrestrial ecosystem management projects in the LAC region and has this resulted in opportunities for increased cooperation and coordination between similar interventions?

71. Outcome 4.2 (coordination and cooperation established with synergic initiatives and other projects) has not been achieved to a satisfactory degree. Although there has been some level of coordination with other UNEP projects related to terrestrial ecosystem management (the indicator used to measure success of this outcome), contact was incidental: The Mixteca NPC has been to a meeting in Nairobi with other UNEP projects, project staff from different UNEP GEF projects met as ES meetings in Medellín (Colombia) and the project manager from the ECOSECHAS project (Chiapas) made a visit to Mixteca to exchange experiences. But there has been little programmatic synergy in terms of systematic communication, information exchange or use of tools developed from other projects. For instance, the ECOSECHAS project developed an interesting tool for ecosystem and biodiversity monitoring by local technicians that could be applied to the Mixteca region, but those tools were shared with the Mixteca project only recently. A positive process is taking place with the UNEP-GEF project in Chihuahua (Tarahumara project) that uses several tools of Mixteca in its project planning and activities. Beyond UNEP projects, the evaluator found little synergy, active coordination or exchange of experiences with other GEF projects or ecosystem management projects in the country

²³ Aprox 25 people of 15 different organizations

²⁴ According to interviewed SAGARPA representatives, about 60% of local service providers in the Mixteca region are considered permanent in the Oaxaca state, while the other 40% tend to migrate from state to state.

or beyond (LAC region). Outputs reported upon (website, Facebook, incidental contact with some projects; paragraph 49) do not imply that there is a community of practice in place.

The rating of the criterion 'achievement of direct outcomes' is 'satisfactory'.

ii. Likelihood of impact using ROTI and based on reconstructed TOC

What is the overall likelihood of impact?

72. Locally, the project already achieved a certain level of positive impact on stakeholder behaviors, livelihoods and the environment. Particularly in component 3 (piloting biodiversity friendly programs on the ground) the results imply good agricultural practice and NRM management in several hundreds of hectares. The outputs are called "pilots" and "demonstration models" but in fact go far beyond that: the amount of area impacted (e.g. several thousands of hectares of sustainable managed natural pine forest with resin extraction, conservation of endangered Crassulaceae species in an entire watershed, 110 improved coffee plots) is much higher than normally considered 'pilot' or 'demonstration' (a few hectares, a couple of families...). The successful implementation of several demonstration models with good potential to be maintained and expanded in the future (particularly coffee improvement, bee keeping, pine resin collection, Milpa-Agroforestry systems) are likely to guarantee the conservation of BD and ES (paragraph 62 and 63) and therefore already attain positive impact on the environment. In addition, the models have not been implemented by the project to showcase, but were actually the result of a process in which the community members chose how to improve livelihoods and land use based on better management of ES. This indicates impact at the level of awareness and livelihood choices. Finally, livelihoods have been positively impacted in several dozens of communities, because income has already been generated with the several mentioned demonstration models (paragraphs 67 and 68). Additional positive environmental impact is generated through the project by conservation of 4400 has of natural forests (ADCV), rehabilitation, and reforestation of another 5000 has (paragraphs 63 and 67).

73. Nevertheless, sustained, long-term and large-scale impact is moderately unlikely with the current lack of institutional sustainability. Several demonstration models for GAP and GNRMP (tourism, Crassulaceae production, organic farming, goat keeping) have not yet reached a level of consolidation that generate positive environmental or livelihood impacts. Because of their early level of development, they will require continued support to generate this impact in a longer term. In general, to create long-term sustained impact on the environment and livelihoods, the positively influenced governmental programs and plans need to be sustained, so these can continue to promote GAP and GNRMP, land use and watershed in the whole region. This political and institutional sustainability is still an important challenge to generate this longer-term impact (paragraphs 79 and 88). The same is true for a larger scale impact: in order to have a longer-term impact far beyond the locations where the project is implemented; replication and up-scaling is required. To reach this goal, the tools and approaches of the Mixteca project should be fully taken up by State and Federal agencies, which has not yet been ensured (paragraph 89).

The rating for the criterion 'likelihood of impact' is 'moderately satisfactory'.

ii. Achievement of project goal and planned objectives

To what extent did the project contribute to the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation into natural resource use and development planning in the Mixteca Region of Oaxaca integrating ecosystem services (ES) tools and sustainable livelihood options?

74. The project objective has been partly achieved. The objective is formulated very similar as outcome 2.1 (biodiversity and ES considerations are integrated into state and federal support programs and land use planning) and the indicators used in the results framework are not appropriate²⁵. In the reconstructed ToC, it is considered that the project objective is achieved when outcome 2.1 is achieved; the assumption between this outcome and the objective (policies and plans are effectively implemented, sustained over time and monitored) holds and additional outcomes (3.2 and 3.3) are achieved as well. The three outcomes are well achieved but the crucial assumption does not (paragraph 77). The difference between the formulations of the project objective and outcome 2.1 is in the word "mainstreaming" (as opposed to "integration"), which can be considered as sustained integration; either by formal decisions or by a prevailing attitude. Although the project managed to include ES and BD considerations in planning and support programs (outcomes 2.1), the implementation of most of these considerations is still partial and *ad hoc*; only in few cases they have been institutionalized through formal decrees. The same holds for outcomes 3.2 (ES provision through field action) and 3.3 (connectivity): although they are (partly) achieved, there is a sustainability

²⁵ See further explanation in paragraph 27 of inception report

challenge (see section on sustainability) and both results are not consolidated through mainstreaming. Component 4 (on communication) contributed indirectly to the project objective, and can be crucial to create mainstreaming through creating awareness among decision makers. In Oaxaca, there certainly is a growing awareness among decision makers of both State and federal agencies, due to good information dissemination by the project and direct involvement of institutions in several aspects of the project. However, rapidly changing staff (paragraph 41) and lack of uptake at federal level (paragraph 69) reduced the opportunities for mainstreaming.

To what degree has the project contributed to the conservation globally important ecosystems and species within the Mixteca region of Oaxaca?

75. Even though the project objective has been only partly achieved, the project has yet contributed to the overall goal because of the positive impact it achieved on ecosystem conservation and restoration (paragraph 72). The indicators for the project objective in the results framework of ProDoc are in fact appropriate to show initial success of the project to achieve the goal: about 7500 has have been included in different types of protected areas (4400 in ADVC and 3000 in Community system of protected areas in Santa María Yucuhiti). Although this concentrated mostly in cloud forest ES, other ecosystems were included as well. In addition, planning agreements (particularly the management plan of CARM, approved by Sate and Federal agencies) brings several thousands of hectares more under certain level of conservation. Although the base line of species populations is established and the BD monitoring system is in place (including some promising preliminary observations on white tailed deer and cat species), this system did not yet report concrete data on population dynamics. Therefore, it cannot be said with certainty if the status of characteristic species has improved. However, considering the better conservation status of several thousands of hectares; it might be easily assumed that the species status in those areas has been improved. In addition, the evaluator observed that several demonstration models include a direct and positive relationship with characteristic species²⁶. If the project manages to ensure better sustainability of outcomes, including the continuation of monitoring systems, replication and up-scaling of GAP and GNRMP, and implementation of watershed and corridor plan,, the project objective will be fully achieved, and the degree of achievement of the overall goal will consequently be improved. Nevertheless, this last step, from project objective to overall goal, also depends on the general assumption about national environmental governance (governmental support for unsustainable land use is decreasing).

Did the other main project assumptions hold? Are policies and plans effectively implemented, sustained over time and monitored?

76. Most project assumptions did hold, but some crucial ones did not, specifically those near project objective, which affected its completion. Along impact pathway 1 of the reconstructed ToC (landscape connectivity), all assumptions did hold, which might be a contributing reason to the positive achievement of all outcomes. Along impact pathway 2 (policy support), the first assumption (available baseline information) is the same as in impact pathway 1. The second (institutions are willing to share information, agreement among state agencies to identify good agricultural practices) also holds. Interviewed stakeholders at decision-making level showed their willingness to collaborate with the project and incorporate ES tools; barriers to more complete incorporation are at a higher decision-making level or related to institutional structures or operation. Willingness to share information is high, evidenced by the inclusion of data provided by most government institutions in the project database.

77. A final assumption along impact pathway 2 (policies and plan are effectively implemented and sustained over time) is key in order to allow the consolidation of outcome 2.1 towards the achievement of the project objective. This assumption does not (yet) hold, affecting the achievement of the project objective (paragraph 74). Although the project did not target policies (paragraph 59), plans and programs were effectively and positively influenced by the project. However, the implementation is still partial and *ad hoc* (for instance the SAGARPA plans) and, with exception of the STyDE, they have not been institutionalized through formal decrees. Even the agencies that have included Mixteca project tools evidently in their planning and programs (CDI and COPLADE) confirm that the sustainability of these decisions still depends on continuity at decision making level within the-agency, which is typically. Furthermore, staff both at decision level and field-level also circulates quickly (paragraph 41). The challenge of continuity is further explained in paragraph 80. Because most programs only recently adopted changes based on Mixteca project tools. Monitoring of the effects of such tools has not delivered any results yet.

78. Most assumptions along impact pathway 3 (ecosystem management and rehabilitation) did hold: although market studies as such were not done, the project did do an analysis of demand to identify several GAP and GNRMP. Also, market access, though relatively informal, did form an incentive for land users to engage and continue with activities such as Crassulaceae growing, tourism and coffee plot improvement. Market access for honey and pine resin

²⁶ Examples are Crassulaceae growing, coffee plantation improvement (including native shade trees), fuelwood and restoration plantations (with native species), all directly contributing to better status of characteristic species.

was well established and formal, contributing to the success of these models (paragraph 65). Collaboration of stakeholders (including private sector) was positive, contributing to the success of the demonstration models. Although there is no concrete evidence that good practice effectively improves BD and ES, this can be assumed with high certainty, sustained by model studies²⁷. Finally, assumptions related to impact pathway 4 (dissemination) did hold partly: stakeholders were open to receive training and learn about project findings and agencies to share information, which all lead to the good contribution of communication and dissemination to the achievement of other project outcomes. However, the assumption that there was a positive climate for knowledge and experience-exchange among institutions apparently did not hold, as evidenced by the limited achievement of outcome 4.2.

The rating for the criterion ' Achievement of project goal and planned objectives' is 'moderately satisfactory'.

The overall rating for the criterion 'effectiveness - attainment of project objectives and results' is 'satisfactory'²⁸.

D. SUSTAINABILITY AND REPLICATION

Socio-political sustainability: Are there any social or political factors that may influence positively or negatively the sustenance of project results and progress towards impacts?

79. The two main political factors that influence the sustenance of project results and progress towards impact are: continuity and changes of institutional leadership, and the variable level ownership of national and regional stakeholders. During the project implementation, all government levels saw elections and administration changed. This implied staff changes at all levels. Changes in administration affect policy directions and budget plans for the partner institutions; of which particularly changes in the Federal agencies (CONANP, CONAFOR, SAGARPA, CONAGUA, SEMARNAT) affect the project because they have more budget for support programs. But even when policy directions did not alter; the change at senior staff level implies a new process of engagement and awareness- rising. Although the project tried to overcome this challenge by concentrating communication and supporting technical staff that normally has longer continuity (paragraphs 41 and 42), changes have affected project performance in several aspects. There are no indications that this situation will improve in the future, which implies a continuous challenge for long term impact, because it affects the key assumption on implementation and continuity of plans and policies, required for mainstreaming of ES and BD (paragraphs 76 to 78).

Socio-political sustainability: Is the level of ownership by the main national and regional stakeholders sufficient to allow for the project results to be sustained?

80. All interviewed senior staff of State agencies and State delegations of Federal agencies confirmed their interest and stressed the importance of the project. Nevertheless, the level of ownership is variable. CONANP developed the project and is the main government agency responsible for the implementation of the project. Nonetheless, the evaluator did not perceive a proactive role in the implementation. Although there is a good working relationship between the NPC and CONANP's Director for the Sierra Juárez and Mixteca region, including weekly meetings to take all major project decisions jointly, the direct involvement of CONANP at institutional level seems not to go at a higher level. Formally, the CONANP's Regional Director for the South Pacific, Southern Frontier and Isthmus is CONANP's delegate at PSC meetings, but he only assisted to two of the seven meetings; once he was accompanied by the federal director for institutional development and in another meeting, the director for international affairs assisted. Recently, UNEP's representation in Mexico tried to organize events in Oaxaca and Chiapas regions to show the results of this project and another one to CONANP staff in Mexico City and other federal agencies and parliament members. These events were organized but CONANP decided not to facilitate the participation of federal delegates. At field level, CONANP did participate actively in several areas, particularly in relation to development of ADVC and in the development of CARM management plan. However, their limited amount of staff (3 persons) and financial capacity (US\$40,000/yr) for the Mixteca implies CONANP's direct participating with field activities was discreet. This situation has not improved during the execution of the Mixteca project and forecasts are not positive either: recently more budget reductions for several states, including Oaxaca, have been announced.

81. The other Federal agency that is a formal member of PSC is CONAFOR. Their participation at PSC meetings was also variable: the State manager (*gerente*) is the formal delegate of CONAFOR, he was present in three of seven PSC meetings (because of staff changes, it were two different persons). Sub-directors were delegated to three other meetings and at one meeting no delegate was present. Apart from initial communications during project development, no communication between the project and higher-level staff at federal level took place during project

²⁷ e.g. models studies on SWAT applied by project in several locations clearly show better water regulation and lower land degradation after application of the GAP and GNRMP.

²⁸ Although two of three ratings summing up to the overall rating are 'moderately satisfactory' and the third 'satisfactory', the evaluator gives an overall rating for effectiveness as 'satisfactory' because the achievement of results

implementation. Interviewed project staff and CONAFOR senior staff at State level considered the collaboration with CONAFOR in project implementation in the field as dual. On one hand, both project and CONAFOR staff confirmed that CONAFOR was the institution that adopted geographical information of the Mixteca at an early stage and used it to direct their support programs (on reforestation and ES). In addition, CONAFOR is the agency that contributed most co-financing to the project. On the other hand, direct collaboration was discrete; the project did not manage to co-implement GRNMP that both institutions promote, such as restoration, pine resin extraction and tourism. Although CONAFOR increases the use of native species in their reforestation and restoration activities; PCU Staff mentioned that they still offer exotic species to the communities where both are present. CONAFOR argues that there is still a demand for exotic species and a limited offer of native species. There is an agreement under development between the Mixteca project and CONAFOR that enables community tree nurseries to provide trees to CONAFOR but this still has to be formalized because CONAFOR demands an amount and quality that requires continuous supply by at least six nurseries. In conclusion, there is a strong collaboration between the project and CONAFOR in terms of use of information and investments in similar issues, but there is still a difference in technical concepts and operational procedures that form a barrier to complete ownership of the project by CONAFOR.

82. Other stakeholders show a different degree of ownership. Although most were consulted about the project during design, they were only actively included with the project some time after implementation started. Therefore, their ownership progressed from low to medium or high. SAGARPA and SEMARNAT are federal agencies that were targeted from start and they have shown openness to ideas of ES approaches. Being responsible for natural resources, SEMARNAT claims they work with an ecosystem approach by default. SEMARNAT has been present in most PSC meetings; early in the project the sub-delegate for environmental management was familiarized with the project and asked to be personally involved ever since. This proves clear ownership. SEMARNAT also has been a keen receiver and user of the project's results. Although it has a limited budget and few programs in the field, it nevertheless contributed with important funding associated to project execution (paragraph 123). Although SEMARNAT it is the Federal agency that coordinates CONANP, CONAFOR, CONAGUA and CONABIO, these agencies are autonomous. SEMARNAT convenes environmental sectorial meetings at state level, which are useful for information dissemination but do not influence decision-making. SAGARPA has shown ownership of project results and adopted concepts in their support programs to local communities (paragraph 57) implying an important amount of leveraged resources for the project (paragraph 123). However, formal integration of ES and BD at institutional level depends on federal decisions to include approaches at operational regulations level. This, more than an issue of ownership, is a complex matter that not only affects SAGARPA but also parliamentary discussions (paragraph 59). CONAGUA was not originally included among the Federal agencies participating with the project execution. However, in their role in water resources and watershed management; they are an important agency for ES management. Although the evaluator considers that the originally planned output on micro-watershed level demonstration site (3.1.12) was not achieved. Studies and scenarios were done at watershed level and the planning exercise of CARM was a very appropriate output at larger watershed level, through which interaction with CONAGUA was well established and ownership by this institution increased progressively until a point where CONAGUA asked to be included in PSC and converted into the agency that provided most leveraged funding (paragraph 123). Ownership of other agencies (IIEDS, COPLADE, CDI) also increased during the project through their progressive involvement in project activities. A good strategy was the *de facto* expansion of PSC meetings (paragraph 106) through which ownership of many agencies was triggered.

Socio-political sustainability: Did the project conduct 'succession planning' and implement this during the life of the project?

83. Succession planning and internal talent development have become a fundamental component of risk management for enterprises²⁹; the same applies for complex projects. The project did not have a formal succession strategy and according to project staff, human resource management was done without noticeable planning. The NPC was a key person in project management (paragraph 108), having developed the project while working for CONANP. He is a renowned specialist in the region and his convening power was key to several project results. He has been leading the project during its entire implementation period but the project oversight had no strategy to eventually replace this position in case of absence of the NPC. According to WWF management, their office in Oaxaca will change its mission after the project finishes and the NPC will not continue to work for WWF. Although the NPC has a strong personal commitment with the project goals and partners and, has concrete plans to provide continuation to project results; the situation does indicate little directed succession planning. Informally, senior staff at PCU is exploring opportunities to establish a local NGO (*asociación civil*) to provide continuity of project results and partnerships. WWF representatives have expressed their interest in supporting such an NGO if effectively providing sustainability of project outcomes.

²⁹ UNEP-FI (2014) Integrated Governance - A new model of governance for sustainability.
http://www.unepfi.org/fileadmin/documents/UNEPFI_IntegratedGovernance.pdf

84. PCU staff has been a relatively stable group during project implementation. As mentioned in MTR, one of the assets of the project is the team of highly capable staff- with many persons from the Mixteca region- (paragraph 107). Although not responding to a specific plan, talent development has been taking place, labor conditions for staff has improved (increased responsibilities, more stable contracts) and individual interviewed revealed that most staff is committed to find a professional future in the region, working to continue to consolidate project results. Two staff members that will be searching for opportunities elsewhere are young professionals with a desire to obtain higher university degrees. The NGO to be established might provide a good working space for several members of the current project staff.

Socio-political sustainability: Are there sufficient government and other key stakeholder awareness, interests, commitment and incentives to integrate Biodiversity and ES considerations into national programs and land use planning? Was sustainability improved through stakeholder strengthening?

85. As discussed in the effectiveness section (paragraphs 52, 53, 54, 55, 60, 61, 67, 76, 78) the project effectively created awareness and improved capacities to strengthen sustainability. This has improved awareness among stakeholders at State level and commitment to integrate BD and ES considerations. Capacities were created at the level of professional (field) technicians and local authorities, which are considered key stakeholders to generate change and consolidate GAP and GNRMP. This partly contributes to sustainability, for instance the local technical support officer on apiculture from SAGARPA in Miramar works there for years and established a stable relationship with the community; being trained now by the project, ES considerations are sustained there. However, this is not the case everywhere because staff changes (other SAGAPRA technicians) and lacking technical capacities among local technicians (COPLADE, CDI with new technicians) are challenges to maintain this capacity.

86. At the community level, the project was successful in creating capacities among land users and in several demonstrating models, the sustainability of this capacity is ensured because the demonstration models already generated positive impact for the land users. In addition, the evaluation has seen a few examples where the trained land users already trained others; either from their own communities or from neighboring communities³⁰. In several communities where the project worked, power relationships were improved privileging women and young people, or providing better governance in general. Because this was not a planned result of the project and no monitoring took place, it cannot be said if this contributed to the project. Gender considerations were poorly integrated in the project as a whole. As noted at inception stage³¹, the project did not include a strong gender approach. Although the project did pay attention to gender aspects such as participation of women in productive activities, and identification of practices that were more favored by women. The evaluator did not encounter a vision on how to promote better gender equity in field practices, community governance or power relations. It is not known how this might affect sustainability.

The rating for the criterion 'socio-political sustainability' is 'moderately likely'

Financial sustainability: To what extent are the continuation of project results and the eventual impact of the project dependent on (continued) financial resources? What is the likelihood that adequate financial resources will be or will become available to continue implementation of the programs, plans, agreements, monitoring systems etc. prepared and agreed upon under the project? Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project results and onward progress towards impact?

87. Project results are not dependent on continued funding, but, to ensure sustainability, further funds are required. During the years of project implementation, there has been an increase of funds for nature conservation, natural resource management, restoration and sustainable production projects in the project area. For a great deal, this has been a direct result of the project, which showed an impressive co-financing success (paragraphs 121 - 123). Although announced austerity policies funds for CONAFOR (the major co-financing agency) and CONANP may reduce (paragraph 43). In principle there is no dependence on future funding to consolidate project results: enough funding will be available to continue support programs from the different agencies. On the other hand, all are funds from government agencies directed to local communities and local authorities (municipalities, regions). In Oaxaca, there is little (national, bilateral or multilateral) funding for private initiatives and few NGO's are active in the region. This does affect sustainability because in absence of a sufficient enough mainstreaming of the approaches promoted by the project in governmental agencies, a non-governmental body is required to continue to broker for this approach and provide continued support to the stakeholders. There are institutional alternatives to the current project implementation institutional framework (paragraph 92), but this requires additional funding. At local level, most

³⁰ Examples: tourism in San Andres Lagunas and Guadalupe Cuauhtepic, Coffee improvement in Miramar, Resin extraction Huamelulpan

³¹ See inception report; paragraph 32

promoted activities are relatively well established and will not need major additional financial support. Others do, but more than financial support, they require technical support, which ideally should be provided by the governmental support programs in collaboration with local development NGOs and others. If the institutional framework is sustainable enough, the dependence on continued funding is reduced.

The overall rating for the criterion 'financial sustainability' is 'moderately likely'

Institutional sustainability: To what extent is the sustenance of the results and onward progress towards impact dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance?

How robust are the institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. required to sustaining project results and to lead those to impact on human behavior and environmental resources, goods or services?

88. Future impact of the project depends fully on the sustainability of the achieved (imminent) integration of ES and BD considerations in planning and programs of public agencies at state level (paragraph 74). A simplified version of the reconstructed ToC (Figure 2) shows that the project provides information and tools (component 1) to create and improve governmental plans and programs (component 2). Through training, the project supports local stakeholders to apply BD and ES friendly practices in the field (component 3). This all has been done well by the project. However, if the project wants to make a sustained contribution to the overall goal of conservation, more local stakeholders should continuously apply BD and ES friendly practices. This can only be attained if governmental plans and programs to support the local stakeholders are sustained over time. Hence, long-term and large-scale impact depends on institutional and political frameworks and governance that support local stakeholders to contribute to ES provision and BD conservation.

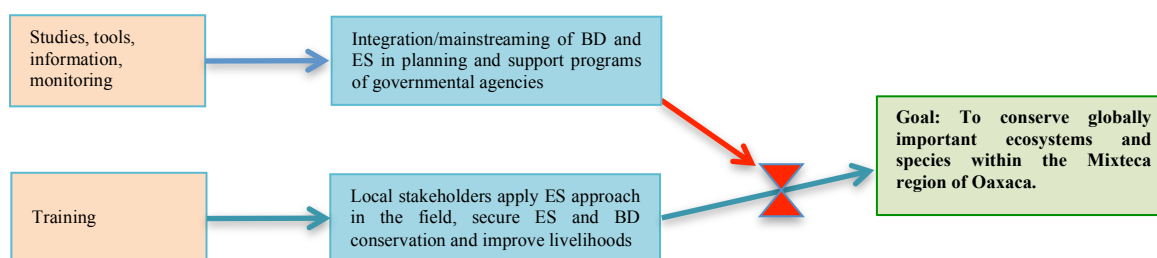


Figure 2: A simplified Theory of Change for the project, to explain that improved plans and programs determine the rate of contribution to long-term and large-scale BD conservation by local stakeholders applying ES and BD friendly activities.

89. There is not (yet) formal adaptation of ES and BD considerations through, for instance, operative regulation. Therefore, the permanence of these considerations in plans and programs depend on a continued support by individual decision makers, stability in policy directions and consolidation of awareness within the institutions. However, the sustainability at individual institutional level is considered relatively low because all agencies have shown high staff turnover, many have seen changes in policy related to this turnover and the main agencies (CONANP and CONAFOR) have a variable level of ownership (paragraphs 80 and 81). This affects the achievement of the project objective and its contribution in long-term: sustained impact. Continued awareness rising and technical support to these agencies is required after project finalization to increase institutional sustainability.

90. Institutional frameworks of collaborating agencies might compensate the observed low sustainability at individual institutional level. Also, such a network could constitute a platform function to align social, environmental and development policies. Even if at individual level BD and ES approaches are integrated in plans and programs of several governmental agencies, this does not necessary apply that these are aligned. For instance, both SERMARNAT and SAGARPA representatives explained to the evaluator that the policies of both agencies are still contradictory, for instance related to animal husbandry and climate change adaptation. Therefore, the project tried to establish a more stable inter-institutional framework continuously without success.

91. During MTR, the challenge of establishing an IWG was already extensively explained and continuing efforts to establish an institutional platform were among the main recommendations. However, in spite of institutional willingness (evidenced by PSC decisions), such a platform was never established during the project (paragraph 111). During the present evaluation, all PSC members were questioned about the reasons beyond this and answers can be summarized as:

(a) Lack of leadership of one single agency. Being the main governmental agency in project implementation, most other agencies expected CONANP would take up leadership to develop an inter-institutional platform but the lack of senior decision-making level in Oaxaca (and at PSC meetings) inhibited CONANP taking up this role.

(b) Lack of high-level decision. Several respondents pointed at a possible role for the State Governor, as highest authority and high convening power. However, at the beginning of the project an IWG was established with governor support, but this was immediately dysfunctional after changes in State administration. Therefore, even high-level support does not guarantee success.

(c) Lack of institutional support from agencies. Although the persons currently assisting PSC meetings show willingness to collaborate in a platform to promote BD and ES approaches, with few exceptions they are not the highest representatives of their organizations and depend on higher-level authority. Due to the fact that the project did not target national level decision makers of Federal agencies and could not convene Secretary-level representative of State agencies, the PSC members were not backed up by their own institutions to initiate inter-institutional platforms.

(d) Turnover of staff at all levels, complicating continuity of discussions on creating platforms. It should be stated that these factors all are mostly beyond control of the Mixteca project management.

92. Although the project failed to form a formal IWG or any other State level institutional platform, it did constitute other formal and informal institutional platforms. Most importantly, the extended PSC meetings became an inter-institutional network by itself. They provided the opportunity to meet key institutions once or twice a year, show project results and agree on strategies, not only for the project but also for other institutions. The decision of the project management to expand the PSC meetings to have many stakeholders around the table (paragraph 106) contributed to the platform-character of these meetings. The committee for the watershed management plan of CARM is another example of a stable inter-institutional group that worked together on issues very closely related to ES approaches, met several times and achieved an well accepted plan. A third group with clear options to attain more sustainability is the Oaxaca Council of Community Development. This inter-institutional group was established as a product of another project, but constitutes an informal information exchange, and a strategic discussion platform among all main stakeholders of the Mixteca project. This group joined one of the field visits for this evaluation. Based on the high attendance of members of the group (80% of members) to this field trip, at more than two hours from Oaxaca city and assuming all assistance had to pay for their own transport, the evaluator concludes that this Council has a high convening power and can provide sustainability to ES approaches in development planning, even though it is an informal network, dependent on the convening power of few people (among others, the NPC of the project). These informal networks provide some hope for institutional sustainability in this furthermore unsustainable institutional landscape.

93. In absence of a government agency with the leadership or the capacity to ensure inter-institutional coordination, it might be expected that WWF, as EA of the project, assumes institutional responsibility to ensure future institutional sustainability. Their senior management explained to the evaluator that the institution is restructuring their institutional mission into a second tier organization, supporting local agencies to develop projects, rather than an organization that develops their own projects. This implies that the WWF office in Oaxaca will be strongly reduced and the Mixteca project staff will not find a working environment at WWF. The evaluator considers that on one hand, this decision reduces the operative capacity of WWF to continue the legacy created the project, affecting institutional sustainability. On the other hand, the vision of WWF to be a second tier organization creates new opportunities for local organizations. Among others, the nature of the institutional relationship of WWF with the Carlos Slim foundation³² enables them to generate funding to support the continuation of Mixteca project results by other organizations.

The overall rating for the criterion 'institutional sustainability' is 'moderately unlikely'

Environmental sustainability: Are there any project outputs or higher-level results that are likely to affect the environment, which, in turn, might affect sustainability of project benefits? Are there any foreseeable negative environmental impacts that may occur as the project results are being up-scaled?

94. At inception stage, it was determined that project outputs will likely all have a positive environmental effect. During the evaluation no ill-planned demonstration models that promote inadequate land use and deforestation were identified. The only consideration might be that supporting productive activities (especially activities that are known to have a high potential impact on BD and ES, such as goat ranching) bears the risk that higher profitability can

³² WWF's institutional agreement with the Carlos Slim foundation implies that these funds cannot be executed by WWF.

stimulate expansion of these activities with negative consequences. The project applied a strategy that complements direct support to land users for sustainable production, with other management tools like spatial planning, environmental awareness raising and incentives/conservation agreements with CONANP (paragraph 51). This integral strategy mitigates the risk that eventual negative environmental impacts may occur as activities like goat ranching are being up-scaled.

The overall rating for the criterion 'environmental sustainability' is 'highly likely'

Are lessons and experiences coming out of the project replicated or scaled up? What are the factors that may influence replication and scaling-up of project experiences and lessons?

95. Up-scaling and replication of project experiences was discrete. The project worked on a large, but defined geographical area: the Oaxacan Mixteca. It actually covered a large area within the Mixteca, including all geographical zones and almost half (68) of all (155) municipalities. This implies that it practically worked at the desired scale and up-scaling is not an issue. In addition, the projects' focus was on mainstreaming concepts through demonstration, information dissemination and training rather than on replicating its demonstration models. Nevertheless, during the evaluation it was observed that replication did take place through individual actions. In Miramar, neighboring coffee farmers and bee keepers already copy the techniques learned by Mixteca project beneficiary land users; resin gatherers share their techniques with other communities, beyond the Mixteca project; knowledge on Milpa and agroforestry is being replicated by other local NGOs in the region; the biodiversity monitoring system of the project is not only adopted by CONANP but replicated in many other communities with ADVIC. Finally, elements of the Mixteca project were included in the design of the Tarahumara UNEP-GEF project. Beyond these examples, replication and up-scaling to other areas and to the national level has not been observed.

To what extent has the project created opportunities for particular individuals or institutions ("champions") to catalyze change?

96. The catalytic role of the project was evident at local level. The replication of GAP to other communities was mostly thanks to well-trained land users, acting as promoters for their acquired techniques. Also project staff were catalysts for action beyond project responsibilities: the fact the project established two field offices in the Mixteca region brought project staff in close contact with locals stakeholders (municipalities, academic institutions, producer groups) and therefore, could disseminate approaches and practices to a wider audience than strictly involved with the project. Finally, the convening power of the project as a whole and its continuous participation in formal (regional NRM committees, microregional committees) and informal institutional networks (paragraph 92), created visibility of the project in the region and catalyzed other organizations to consider ES. As expressed by an interviewed institutional members of the Oaxacan Council for Community Development *"Thanks to the Mixteca project and the continued discourse of the project coordinator, we all know now what ES are, and that we all are thinking about how to ensure these for our target communities"*.

97. The evaluator considers that the positive factors that have influenced replication and the project's catalytic role are: (i) good information dissemination, (ii) successful demonstration models, (iii) well-trained local promoters and, (iv) well informed local staff with good local relationships. Negative factors that have influenced up-scaling and replication are: (a) a unique geographical area provides limited opportunities to upscale, (b) lack of vertical communication within governmental agencies (no exchange of experiences with other regions or to higher level).

The rating for the criterion 'catalytic role and replication' is 'moderately satisfactory'.

The overall rating for the criterion 'sustainability and replication' is 'moderately likely'

E. EFFICIENCY

Did the project build adequately (create complementariness) on existing institutions, lessons of other initiatives, data sources, partnerships with third parties and ongoing projects?

98. The project was designed in line with the developing priorities and approach of governmental environmental agencies that developed the project. During project development, CONANP aligned the Mixteca project with their long term Conservation Program for Sustainable Development (*Programa de Conservación para el Desarrollo Sostenible*). It was developed in parallel with another GEF-UNEP-CONANP project in Chiapas and there were many similarities between both projects. UNEP was selected by CONANP as the GEF implementing agency for these projects because of their competitive advantage in both ecosystem approach and green economy development fields. Support was sought from WWF, being the only major environmental NGO with a long-standing experience in Oaxaca but, also to provide the project with their national and international experience with biodiversity research, monitoring,

communication and conservation. From the start, ES related projects of CONAFOR were associated with the Mixteca project as well.

99. The central outcome of the project (2.1) is to integrate project results, tools and approaches in ongoing support projects and programs. Therefore, building the project upon existing programs was a prerequisite for its performance; and was well implemented. The project adequately identified the relevant projects and programs in the Mixteca region, both from governmental agencies and others, and searched for alignment and complementarity as main activity for this outcome. This did so during project design (see ProDoc) and continuously updated this information (evidenced by examples like the evolving relationship with COPLADE, and the positive relationship with Catholic Relief Services' Agriculture for Needs project).

How was the operational execution vs. original planning (budget wise)? Was the project implemented cost-effective?

100. The original budget (UNEP) format was very detailed in terms of expenditures per output. Among others, there were more than 50 budget lines related to specific outputs/activities. Because several outputs were developed differently than originally designed and many activities had to be rescheduled, the operational execution of the budget had several adjustments. There were minor adjustments made to the distribution per component or budget line, but there were major adjustments within budget lines. For instance, there was an amount of 500,000 US\$ budgeted for capitalization of Mixteca ES fund, planned to be co-funding of CONAFOR concurrent funds. Although some of these funds were used for this purpose, after the initial experiences the project management encountered difficulty to agree on the terms of co-investment with CONAFOR. Therefore, according to project management; it was decided among project partners (UNEP, CONANP, WWF) to reprogram this important amount to co-finance other activities related to demonstration models and other key activities. In addition, several staff positions in the planned budget were implemented differently in the project execution. These changes implied quite a different operational execution than planning, but the evaluator considers that these changes were done in a transparent manner and were well justified to project partners.

101. The evaluator considers that the project was cost-effective; it had an adequate budget in relation to the ambition of the goals. Similar GEF projects (with a geographically limited but nevertheless large project area, different field sites, several project partners and work in various sectors) normally have a GEF grant of approx. 5-7 M\$³³. The achievement of outputs was evaluated positively (paragraphs 44 - 49) implying that the financial means were enough. Especially the amount of demonstration models was impressive, considering these required the development of a community agreement, training, and investment in infrastructure. One of the reasons for the good cost/benefit relationship was that the project aimed to create relatively cheap demonstration models, so state programs could easily replicate them. Data presented to stakeholders during the PSC meeting of September 2015, showed an average cost of approx. 6000 US\$ for each demonstration model. In addition to the GEF grant, co-financing was at much higher than originally expected. Although practically all of this funding was implemented beyond direct administration of the project, several project activities have received direct additional funding from other sources (for instance tourist guide equipment from CONANP, pine resin installation from Carlos Slim foundation-WWF, bio-digesters from SEDESOL; paragraphs 122 and 123).

If present, what have been the main reasons for delay/changes in implementation? Have these affected project execution, costs and effectiveness?

102. Some delays in the execution of the project occurred during the first two years of its implementation. These were mostly caused by administrative procedures, which resulted in long processes to hire staff, consultants and subcontractors/agreements³⁴. According to project staff and WWF representatives interviewed during the current evaluation process, an additional reason was the low availability of available consultants who met the project requirements in the region. All the initial delays were compensated adequately in the second half of the project and have not significantly affected project effectiveness or budget.

Was adaptive management applied adequately? Were any cost- or time-saving measures put in place in attempting to bring the project as far as possible in achieving its results within its secured budget and time?

103. The project was implemented with several changes during its execution that can be considered good examples of adequate adaptive management. The assessment of the quality of design during inception of this evaluation revealed several flaws, particularly about the large amount and the high level of detail of outputs, and about the

³³ Examples GEF grants of similar projects, in terms of geographical area, duration, approach and institutional setting: GEF-ID 3266 (Chimborazo; Ecuador; WB): 3.9M US\$, GEF-ID 887 (Sierra Gorda; Mexico, UNDP): 6.7M US\$, GEF-ID 4883 (Tarahumana; Mexico, UNEP): 4.9M US\$, GEF-ID 5288 (Caribbean coast, Colombia): 6.8M US\$, GEF-ID 4916 (Chocó, Colombia): 5.8M US\$.

³⁴ See MTR report, efficiency section

inconsistencies in formulation among outputs and outcomes. This was recognized during the first period of project implementation and the management found that several outputs were not feasible or not effective to attain the planned outcomes. Therefore many activities leading to outputs were executed differently as the final shape of many outputs was different (see particularly paragraphs 45, 46 and 48). According to project staff and UNEP task manager, this was done because of lessons learned during the first period of project implementation and an adequate adoption of these lessons in activities. Interviewed participants of PSC expressed that these changes were managed with transparency and because the project was considered well performed; there was no further discussion about these changes. The evaluator also observes that this adaptive management is adequate, considering the satisfactory achievement of outcomes within the secured budget and time.

The overall rating of the criterion 'efficiency' was considered 'satisfactory'.

F. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE

Preparation and readiness: Was the project well designed and prepared?

104. The project design was evaluated in detail during inception (see project design quality assessment in inception report); overall rating was satisfactory. Overall strengths of project design are: the background and situation analysis, stakeholder analysis, efficiency and overall implementation arrangements, dissemination and outreach strategies, and project funding. The project design had several weak aspects, particularly gender, assumptions and risks and the definition and detail of some indicators. During the current evaluation, interviewed stakeholders confirmed they were sufficiently informed during the design of the project although not all agencies showed the same level of initial interest. According to representatives of agencies from other sectors as environment; these explained the low level of initial participation as the lack of familiarity with environmental issues. Their interest and active participation grew upon seeing useful information and concrete results. During this evaluation, it was found that the weak points of output and outcome formulation actually put challenges on project execution (see achievement of outputs-section), but adaptive management was well executed (paragraph 103). The project structure was ready at start; according to an interviewed UNEP representative: *"This has been one of the most rapidly starting projects in UNEP-GEF history: there was only one month between project approval by UNEP and start of implementation"*.

The rating for the criterion 'preparation and readiness' is 'satisfactory'.

Project implementation and management: To what extent have the project implementation mechanisms outlined in the project document been followed and were effective in delivering project milestones, outputs and outcomes? Were pertinent adaptations made to the approaches originally proposed?

Where there any operational and political / institutional problems and constraints that influenced the effective implementation of the project, and how did the project tried to overcome these problems?

105. Recognizing that the project milestones, outputs and outcomes were achieved satisfactorily, it is clear that the implementation mechanisms were effective. The implementation mechanisms described in the project document have been generally followed up, with exception of the establishment of inter-institutional platforms, which affects the sustainability of results (paragraphs 90, 91 and 106). Changes at political level in the context challenged the project implementation but were adequately overcome through adaptive management (paragraph 42).

106. The PSC functioned well, especially as an adequate way to provide information to main stakeholders and allow for an inter-institutional space for the analysis of project results and debate about the options to create impact. It was less effective as a supervision body for the project. According to the ProDoc: the PSC was made up from WWF, UNEP, CONANP and CONAFOR. During project implementation the existing PSC members identified the need to include other government agencies with the PSC as well, especially because of the difficulty to create other inter-institutional platforms (paragraphs 91 and 92). Widening institutional participation in PSC was generally done upon invitation: WWF and CONANP identified a certain agency that could provide a positive contribution to PSC discussions and approached these directly to participate). In other cases, new agencies participated on their own demand, asking WWF to be invited out of institutional interest. As a final point, important (non-government) partners in project execution were also invited to participate. This expanding PSC certainly contributed to the project performance in involving more institutions and creating a *de facto* collaboration platform. The evaluator considers that this expanding PSC certainly contributed to PSCs strategic function, especially considering the absence of other collaborating bodies. On the other hand, it did not contribute to their formal administrative role: meeting minutes prove show that there was little debate on budgetary issues or project planning issues. Two interviewed (permanent) PSC members considered the meetings poor for the purpose of supervision and steering the project, because of the few opportunities to discuss management issues.

Was the project management (EA, PCU, NPC) adequate, effective and efficient? (skills, leadership, coordination, adaptive capacity)? Did project management respond to direction and guidance provided by the UNEP Task Manager and the Project Steering Committee?

107. Project management is considered effective. The MTR already stressed the high professionalism of the project staff at PCU, mostly consisting of young people from the Mixteca region³⁵. The present evaluation can only confirm this finding: practically the full team of professionals continued to work during the entire project and their expertise and good relationship with local beneficiaries have been a key ingredient to the success of the project. The project should be commended for its human resources strategy, including a small but crucial aspect of adaptive management, which allowed providing longer-term contracts to consultants who performed well.

108. The NPC was another important positive factor for the project. Before the project started, he was working at CONANP as responsible for, among others, the Mixteca region. In that role, he was crucial for project design and negotiation. Once being hired by WWF as NPC, he did not only bring his knowledge about the project design to the EA but also his good relationships with all stakeholders in the Mixteca region. Thus, according to many interviewed persons, the NPC has been recognized as an expert for the Mixteca region, a champion to generate impact with local stakeholders, and well-related to State agencies. Also, UNEP highlighted the fluent and continuous coordination between the task manager and NPC. The evaluator could evidence the responsiveness of project management to instructions from IA and PSC. The flipside of this obvious positive situation is that the project had a risk of becoming overly dependent on one person, creating a vulnerable situation in the scenario of the person changing jobs. Fortunately, he stayed during the entire project execution but nevertheless; future sustainability is still partly depending on him (paragraph 92).

109. The executing agency was WWF-Mexico. Project management was placed at their Oaxaca office, but the main office in Mexico City did financial and technical backstopping. WWF-Mexico is a program office of WWF USA and pertains to the international WWF network. This situation ensured that the EA is inserted in a broad institutional setting and in theory could mobilize global expertise in many issues related to the project. This has effectively taken place: during the first three years of project execution, the Oaxaca director was directly involved with the project execution in a proactive manner, providing technical backstopping. According to interviewed project staff, the Oaxaca director was technically and strategically well experienced and provided institutional weight to the project. He was present at most of the PSC meetings. When the Oaxaca directors' position was discontinued, this backstopping role was provided by the highest possible position in Mexico, the conservation director. Although for obvious reasons, his direct involvement was more limited than the Oaxaca regional director's, this was compensated by some more involvement at national level with, among others, CONANP. The wider WWF network provided additional value to the project, particularly through technical support from other countries³⁶ and co-financing through WWF's relationship with the Carlos Slim Foundation.

110. The good performance of the NPC, PCU and WWF in general, combined with a weak inter-institutional network (paragraphs 90 and 91) and a suboptimal role in the execution from CONANP (paragraph 80) resulted in a clear visibility of WWF as responsible agency for the execution. The PCU was clearly in the drivers' seat of project execution. Although the project management tried to highlight the "*Proyecto Mixteca*" as a brand, with its own logo and logos from all participating institutions next to it, stakeholders associate the project with WWF. Upon the question "*who is supporting you with this work?*", during the evaluation local beneficiaries most frequently replied "*Proyecto Mixteca*" immediately followed by "*WWF*" and sometimes "*UNEP*"; CONANP was mentioned in only one occasion (in Guadalupe Cuauhtpec, where CONANP financed support projects); CONAFOR was mentioned helping as well but "*apart from the Mixteca project*". The unintended institutional identification of the project with WWF generates an additional expectation level on WWF for the sustainability of the results. During the evaluation, in several communities the land users expressed their wish "*we hope WWF continues to support us*" (see also paragraph 93).

How was the performance of the different working groups established in the project? (IWG, PST, PSAC)?

111. During project design the establishment of several working groups were foreseen, but in practice, these had a poor performance. The MTR analyzed how the project initially received support from the Government of the State of Oaxaca: as a result of the inter-institutional lobbying process, the state governor appointed the Ministry of Finance to assume the presidency of an Inter-institutional Working Group (IWG) that met only once (in 2012). Changes in the state government led to shifts in the partner institutions and made further meetings of the IWG virtually impossible. Also, the planned Project Stakeholder Advisory Committee (PSAC) that would provide a platform for broader on-going consultations with a wide range of local community representatives was not formally established. A small technical

³⁵ MTR report, lessons learned #1, pg 52

³⁶ E.g. the Invest tool, by WWF Colombia, and control of illicit use of wildlife, by the Traffic program.

group between CONANP and WWF, to coordinate direct project execution was established and functioned well to discuss and agree on day-to-day project management decisions.

112. Although the project has continued to interact and coordinate activities with its counterpart institutions and other stakeholders, a formal coordination platform was never reestablished. The MTR recommended a more proactive and formal involvement of a project Technical Advisory Committee (including more than only CONANP and WWF) and a re-initialization of IWG. PSC meeting of May 2014, agreed on formalizing the technical advisory committee with all PSC members plus relevant academic institutions with the principal task to re-initiate an IWG at the latest, by September 2014. Nonetheless, all these efforts failed. Although the failure to establish such an inter-institutional coordination can only partly be attributed to Project performance being one of the main reasons beyond the critical sustainability situation of the project (see paragraphs 87-93).

***The rating for the criterion 'project implementation and management' is 'highly satisfactory'; with exception of 'working groups', which is 'unsatisfactory'*³⁷**

How was the overall collaboration between different functional units of UNEP involved in the project? What coordination mechanisms were in place? Were the incentives for internal collaboration in UNEP adequate? Was the level of involvement of the Regional, Liaison and Out-posted Offices in project design, planning, decision-making and implementation of activities appropriate?

113. This terminal evaluation identified only three different units of UNEP involved in the project: the GEF task manager and administrative staff at the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Panama, the Mexico representation in Mexico City and the Global UNEP GEF "Project for Ecosystem Services" (ProEcoServ). The collaboration with the Panama team has been considered optimal from all sides. The NPC and PCU considered the collaboration both at technical and administrative level as fluent and effective. Although the task manager on average visited the area only once per year, several field staff considered him "as one of us". Administrative staff of WWF in Oaxaca and Mexico City considered UNEP's administrative support as efficient and highly helpful; it was an effective bridge to both GEF and UNEP Nairobi and WWF never had to interact with those (higher level) administrative bodies. PSC members also considered UNEP's task manager's contribution to PSC as strategically constructive ("he sometimes knows the issues better than we do!") and no one felt they were controlled or overly supervised by UNEP. The collaboration of UNEP's representation in Mexico City concentrated on linkages to federal level institutions (paragraph 80), and on including the Mixteca project in their institutional mission to develop a green economy strategy for Mexico. This relatively small but crucial activity could be of high importance to obtain higher-level appropriation of the Mixteca project results and approaches, herewith overcoming an important barrier to sustainability. The planned collaboration with the global ProEcoServ project was limited to some exchange of experiences but never lead to actual collaboration or coordination of activities. The evaluator did not observe any incentives for internal collaboration in UNEP beyond set institutional tasks.

Stakeholder participation, cooperation and partnerships: What was the achieved degree and effectiveness of collaboration and interactions between the various project partners and stakeholders during design and implementation of the project?

How did the relationship between the project and the collaborating partners (institutions and individual experts) develop? Which benefits stemmed from their involvement for project performance, for UNEP and for the stakeholders and partners themselves?

114. Stakeholder participation and collaboration during project design and initial stage of the project implementation are adequately evaluated in MTR report and the inception report. In formal settings, stakeholder collaboration never functioned well (paragraph 91 and 111). However, collaboration of stakeholders with the project on a day-to-day basis was good. Governmental agencies, NGO's and academic institutions were included in the project progressively, and with different roles: as project partners in execution, as target audience to include ES approaches in support programs (mostly governmental agencies), and as beneficiary organizations (farmer organizations, local governments, communities).

115. Project partners were mostly academic institutions and NGO's that collaborated with the project through the execution of collaboration with specific activities (studies, service provision, community outreach, planning exercise). Because of the large volume of studies and activities, many local partners were included and because these were progressively invited to PSC meetings, and interviewed representatives felt they were continuously included with

³⁷ Project implementation and management is one single criterion for rating. However, the evaluator takes the freedom to separate "working groups" as a sub-criterion from the other aspects of project management. An average rating for the entire criterion would neither do justice to the poor performance of this sub-criterion nor to the good performance of the others.

project execution and well updated about the project results. One point of criticism was heard about the involvement of academic institutions: because of administrative reasons, the project team found difficulty including local academic institutions in studies because they could not finance internships of students or other flexible arrangements that promoted their participation. Although this administrative challenge was overcome by subcontracts through a local NGO (*Fundación Comunitario Oaxaca*) it did form a barrier to their participation. Several PSC members mentioned the suboptimal inclusion of local academic agencies in studies as one of the (few) weak points of the project "*a missed opportunity*"; "*a pity not more young talent from the region could profit from this top-level research*". Other project partners, especially at NGO level, profited from the Mixteca project being directly involved in local and regional planning processes, found a broader context for their own work and participate in informal and formal local networks (Oaxaca Council for Community Development, Regional Environmental Council etc.).

116. Government agencies -as the target audience- were carefully mapped and approached during the design of the project³⁸. Their participation in the project increased progressively upon provision of information and tools that could be included their programs. In addition, several were directly involved with the development of demonstration models in the field. The effectiveness of this involvement was good and led to the achievement of outcome 2.1 (paragraph 57). Project beneficiaries at local level have been well-included and received direct benefit from demonstration models, training and involvement in planning exercises (paragraphs 50, 51, 64 and 65). Their participation has provided UNEP and WWF the opportunity to test inter-sectorial coordination in the field, to work on the interface of conservation and rural development, and to learn important lessons for future similar projects.

The rating for the criterion 'stakeholder participation, cooperation and partnerships' is 'satisfactory'.

Country ownership and driven-ness: In how far have the national partners assumed responsibility for the project and provided adequate support to project execution, including the degree of cooperation received from the various public institutions involved in the project?

117. National partners (CONANP) initiated and led the project from its early design. However, the execution was done by WWF and the governmental agencies responsible for the project (CONANP and CONAFOR) have not assumed responsibility for implementation. Their participation was important: and their support to project execution was adequate: they provided important co-financing, participated in strategic meetings (including PSC), collaborated in some field based activities in demonstration models and provided information for studies, and in monitoring. In addition, during the last years of the project implementation, there was a good communication and joint decision-making platform with CONANP. Nevertheless, these agencies assumed no responsibility for the project; their participation in strategic meetings was delegated to lower level functionaries, there was a weak coordination with national authorities, and there was little claimed or assumed leadership for any of the project activities or follow up (paragraph 80 and 81). Other partners were progressively included in the project and their role was positive in terms of provided information and technical support (paragraph 82). However, the evaluator found no assumed responsibility for the project among any other institution than WWF and UNEP. This finding is based on interviews with representatives from governmental and non-governmental agencies at State level and based on the observation that hardly any agency other than the PCU and WWF communicated on the project results.

How and how well did the project stimulate country ownership of project outputs and outcomes?

118. At the level of individual outputs and outcomes, the project managed to stimulate considerable ownership by local stakeholders (individual land owners, communities, governmental agencies). It managed to provide information and train agencies in monitoring of ES (paragraphs 52 to 54), to integrate ES tools and approaches in support programs in the region (paragraph 57) and to install a series of successful demonstration models with local communities (paragraph 60). Although the sustainability of these outcomes is still a challenge; the involved stakeholders value these results, and have shown willingness to continue.

The rating for the criterion 'country ownership and driven-ness' is 'moderately satisfactory'.

Financial planning and management: How well are standards (clarity, transparency, audit etc.) of financial and operational (staff recruitment, evaluation, secondary conditions) planning, management and reporting applied, to ensure that sufficient and timely financial resources were available to the project and its partners?

To what extent have other administrative processes such as recruitment of staff, procurement of goods and services (including consultants), preparation and negotiation of cooperation agreements etc. influenced project performance?

³⁸ See inception report, stakeholder participation

Have there been any irregularities in procurement, use of financial resources and human resource management that impacted project performance?

119. Financial planning was done relatively well and no irregularities have been found in procurement. The budget was too detailed, associated to the over-detailed level of output planning that later had to be adjusted. Nevertheless, the total budget was enough and the general budget categories proved to be relatively well-planned (paragraphs 100 and 101). Financial management during implementation was efficient and correct. Formal deliverables (financial progress reports and audit reports) were correct, were all submitted timely, and audits did not include major negative remarks. The evaluator interviewed NPC, WWF Mexico's office manager and UNEP's task manager independently to validate the administrative processes, its monitoring, and control; finding it thorough and correct. As explained during MTR, the project was executed in Mexico by a US based organization (WWF Mexico is a program office of WWF USA) with GEF funding. This caused that operational procedures had to comply with UN, Mexican and USA standards, which caused some initial delay and complications in sub-contacting³⁹. However, according to the involved staff at WWF, later on in the project this situation improved and actually contributed to transparency and correct administration.

120. As far as the evaluator could perceive, good standards of operational planning and management were applied. Staff and consultants were selected, where possible, through transparent competitive processes, although in practice, poor availability of service providers made a competitive process obsolete and consultancies were appointed directly. The technical group of WWF and CONANP normally took decisions on staff to be hired and subcontracts to be awarded. According to interviewed stakeholder organizations: planning of the project activities was not participatory beyond this technical group; PSC only approved general work plans and budget not being involved in other administrative decisions (paragraph 106). Interviewed subcontractors confirmed the good practice in financial and operational management, planning and reporting.

Financial planning and management: to what extent has co-financing materialized as expected at project approval?

What resources has the project leveraged since inception and how have these resources contributed to the project's ultimate objective.

121. The evaluator was provided with an overview of co-financing until 30th of June 2015, showing a total of additional resources (co-financing and leveraged funding) of more than 46M US\$, or three times the amount planned. The high total amount and the fact that all originally committing agencies contributed more than planned, allows the evaluator to commend the project for a highly successful co-funding performance (Appendix 4). However, the reporting of this co-financing by the contributing agencies to the project was irregular in format, frequency and detail, and the subsequent administration of this co-financing in the project was unclear, especially because the largest sum was assigned to an inappropriate budget line of 'reporting costs'. This makes it impossible to evaluate the pertinence of reported co-financing, its exact contribution to particular components and to distinguish from co-financing (resources committed to the project itself at the time of approval) and leveraged funding (additional resources that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project).

122. Among WWF, CONAFOR and CONANP, the three agencies that originally committed 9.8M US\$ co-financing, a total of 22.6M US\$ additional resources materialized. WWF originally planned to contribute with US\$ 100,000 in kind co-financing, mostly to support project management and communications. In practice, they provided US\$ 150,000 of which US\$ 100,000 was for cash contribution for equipment, support for specific studies (INVEST tool and Traffic training) and co-financing for the resin project (through Carlos Slim foundation). CONANP's contribution, originally planned as 888k US\$, has grown to almost 1.5M US\$, which are funds for local consultancies, support to local activities (tourism, monitoring) and materials. CONAFOR's committed co-financing was 8.8M US\$, of which 6.7M US\$ was planned for support to demonstration models (component 3), and other important contributions to equipment and training (component 1). In the end their contribution to the project was reported as 20.9M US\$ (in which the contributions of 2015 are not included). Although this amount was higher than originally planned, how this money contributed to the project could not be assessed. A large amount (15.9M US\$) was accounted to the budget line "reporting costs". According to the project administration, the reports of CONAFOR on co-financing included all funds CONAFOR granted to different stakeholders in the Mixteca area, from different programs to a wide range of stakeholders. The project administration decided what programs were mostly related to the project and reported them as co-financing. This includes: reforestation, restoration, production of plants, maintenance of existing plantations, equipment to combat forest fires, training, and several other activities. Considering the inconsistent administration of these funds, the concrete contribution of all these funds to project outcomes is not clear.

³⁹ MTR report, efficiency section

123. Leveraged funding, considered the resources contributed by other agencies and committed during project execution, add up to 23.7M US\$. SAGARPA contributed with a total of 4M US\$ for productive projects (goat keeping, soil conservation, water management), accounted as "reporting costs" (support programs under component 2). CONAGUA contributed with 11.8 M US\$, mostly for integrated watershed management programs in the region (all reported under 'reporting costs' and considered component 2). SEMARNAT contributed with 1.6M US\$ of which 385k US\$ was for support to demonstration models (soil conservation projects; component 3) and the rest leveraged for other support programs (component 2). SEDESOL contributed with 4.3M US\$, of which most went to equipment for demonstration models (biogasifiers and fuelwood efficient stoves, among others; component 3) and 1.5M US\$ to support programs (sustainable family agriculture). CDI contributed 448k US\$, distributed among equipment, direct support to demonstration models and support programs (component 2). Finally, the State Government, through IEEDS and the State Secretary for Agriculture and Fisheries, contributed with 1.4M US\$ distributed evenly between direct support to demonstration models (component 3), and support programs (component 2). All these resources together (considered leveraged funding) add up to 23.7M US\$. In addition, the project management provided the evaluator with a list of other contributions from several agencies that were not yet precisely valued. This included resin studies from the company ALEn del Norte, contributions to field studies and monitoring systems from the Chapingo University, National University, Colegio de Posgraduados and support to nurseries from municipalities of Tezoatlán and Cacoloxtpec municipalities.

The rating for the criterion 'financial planning and management' is 'satisfactory'.

Supervision, guidance and technical backstopping: How adequate were project supervision plans, inputs and processes?

How well did the different guidance and backstopping bodies (WWF, UNEP) play their role and how well did the guidance and backstopping mechanisms work? What were the strengths in guidance and backstopping and what were the limiting factors?

124. Within the project; the supervision, guidance and backstopping were provided by different persons and institutional bodies. The PCU staff was supervised by the NPC which was supervised by the EA. Overall project performance was supervised by PSC. UNEP provided administrative guidance. All supervising bodies also provided technical backstopping. All these supervision and backstopping roles were clearly laid out in the ProDoc and the implementation agreement between WWF and UNEP. No formal project supervision plan has been used. Especially the PCU, NPC and UNEP task manager established a close working relationship, contact was direct, effective and transparent (paragraphs 107, 108 and 113) and a need for a formal plan was not felt. Institutional supervision and backup from WWF and UNEP was also adequate (paragraphs 109 and 113). PSC guidance role was made less important because of its (opportune) extension with other agencies and increasing role as discussion platform (paragraph 106).

125. The strengths in overall guidance and backstopping were the locally renowned expertise of NPC and his direct, transparent involvement with all project activities, creating a pleasant working atmosphere among the PCU. Also, the direct and continuous support from the task manager and administrative assistance from the ROLAC office in Panama should be highlighted. WWF's institutional backstopping (both from Mexico City as globally) added value to the project. UNEP's Mexico office also added value to the national outreach of the project, which might be especially important to generate more sustainability. Beyond the Mexico City and Panama GEF unit, there was little technical backstopping from UNEP and little added value was provided according to their institutional mission (e.g. ecosystem approach, green economy, contact with other GEF projects). No additional specific technical support, through UNEP thematic experts, was provided directly to the project PCU.

The rating for the criterion 'supervision, guidance and technical backstopping' is 'satisfactory'

Monitoring and evaluation: Was the M&E system operational and facilitated timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period? Were the results used to improve project performance and to adapt to changing needs?

126. The design of the M&E plan was evaluated during inception and considered satisfactory⁴⁰. Some observations were made about the formulation of the outcomes and outputs and the appropriateness of the indicators for several outcomes. Also, baseline information for several indicators was not available at project start but had to be provided during the project implementation. Base-line information on indicators was produced effectively during the project

⁴⁰ See inception report, quality of project design

implementation. However, both observations did affect project monitoring. In the end, no updated information over baseline was systematically measured to report project performance towards objective and goal. For instance, there is no information provided on remaining area per natural ecosystem or populations of characteristic species (indicators for project objective). Performance indicators of outcomes and outputs were adequately reported upon during project execution.

127. The M&E plan was implemented through timely, detailed and correct annual project reports and Progress Implementation Review (PIR) reports with well-justified ratings. Information provided by the M&E system was one of the ingredients to adapt the implementation of activities. The PIR were used to present and report on these changes. The MTR was executed later than planned (early 2014 instead of mid 2013). Its findings were presented to PSC who agreed on a management response to several of the recommendations. However, possibly because of the late implementation in which MTR was presented, several of these agreements were not followed up (paragraph 112). GEF tracking tools were duly completed at mid term. Information for tracking tools at project completion has not been submitted yet.

The overall rating for the criterion 'monitoring and evaluation' is 'satisfactory'

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. CONCLUSIONS

128. The project was highly relevant and consistent with environmental and social issues at regional, national and international level. It supports biodiversity conservation in the Mixteca, which is part of the most biodiverse State of Mexico (Oaxaca). This is also a region that is highly vulnerable for erosion and land degradation leading to widespread deforestation and associated with extreme poverty. Because of the urgent need for conservation and rural development, the project approach to include the ecosystem approach in development programs is highly relevant in this area (paragraphs 35 - 37).

129. Project outcomes have been well achieved; the project generated much valuable information and tools that were made available to stakeholders in the region to assess, value and monitor BD and ES (component 1). Several governmental agencies have integrated ES tools and approaches into their support programs for the Mixteca region (comp. 2). Capacities were created among land users in dozens of rural communities, in order to apply ES considerations in productive activities securing the supply of key ES. Supported livelihoods, and habitat connectivity for globally significant BD was increased through voluntary conservation areas and corridor planning (comp. 3). Finally, the project results were widely and effectively disseminated although few synergies with other terrestrial ecosystem management projects were established (comp. 4) (Paragraphs 52 - 71).

130. The project did well in achieving mostly high-quality outputs (*e.g.* information and tools on ES, dissemination products), and, in quantities attaining higher indicator values than planned (*e.g.* number of demonstration models and land area brought under conservation schemes). The project did well in achieving outputs, many of these of high quality and in quantities attaining higher indicator values than planned. However, the project delivered many outputs quite differently than planned, because of flaws in the project design (too many, redundant, poorly formulated outputs, with unclear contribution to outcomes). As a result of initial lessons learned from the implementation; activities and outputs were adapted opportunely. The fact that outcomes were satisfactory achieved, showed that this has been done adequately (paragraphs 44 - 49).

131. Stakeholders were appropriately involved in producing the programmed outputs. All relevant governmental agencies provided information, were trained on the use of ES and BD tools, and supported to include these in their programs and plans. Two dozen partner organizations collaborated with project activities such as studies, communication events or demonstration models. Local land users and communities lead the development of demonstration models. The degree of community driven-ness of the field-based activities was a mix between activities promoted by the project and activities that were a response to the communities' demands (paragraphs 50, 51, 82, 114, 115, 116).

132. Institutional stakeholders' participation in the project execution was broad, appropriate and crucial to generate the outcomes. Governmental agencies from sectors other than the environment and not directly involved in the design of the project, have shown openness to and have effectively included ES and BD approaches and tools into their plans and programs. During the implementation of the project, the amount of partners increased progressively and the project's convening power was high enough to involve academic institutions, NGO's and local authorities (paragraphs 82, 93, 114, 115, 116).

133. The project objective has been partly achieved. Although the project managed to integrate ES and BD considerations in planning and support programs of governmental agencies, the implementation of most of these considerations is still partial and *ad hoc* and BD and ES considerations cannot yet be considered mainstreamed (paragraph 74).

134. Even though the project objective is partially achieved, the project is contributing to the overall goal of ecosystem and biodiversity conservation. The project achieved a certain level of positive impact on ecosystem conservation through direct conservation of areas, establishment of corridors, sustainable forest management and demonstration models to conserve soils and water and to improve the use of biodiversity. (paragraphs 72 and 75).

135. The project generated concrete local impact on the environment and on local livelihoods. Several outputs together cover a large portion of the entire Oaxacan Mixteca. Demonstration models are based on changed behavior of land users and several have shown good potential to be maintained and expanded in the future (paragraphs 65, 66 and 72).

136. Political and institutional sustainability of the project outcomes is low and constitutes the major barrier to achieve long-term and large-scale impact, because it does not ensure maintaining the achieved (imminent) integration and the of ES and BD considerations within planning and programs of public agencies (paragraphs 85, 88 and 89). Reasons for this low political and institutional sustainability are mostly beyond the control of the project management:

- The lack of ownership by the main national stakeholders, which is insufficient to allow for the project results to be sustained. Although they did provide adequate financial and technical support, the main governmental agencies have not shown leadership in project implementation. Although awareness has been created among technical staff and decision makers, staff turn-over is high and policies tend to change with new administration (paragraphs 80, 81 and 85).
- Non-functioning inter-institutional coordination to align social, environmental and development policies and promote intersectoral mainstreaming of ES and BD approaches. An inter-institutional working group was never functional because of a lack of leadership of one single agency and a lack of high level decision, lack of institutional support from federal agencies and turnover of staff at all levels (paragraphs 90 and 91).

137. The project did not include a strong gender approach; although it did pay attention to gender aspects, there was no vision on how to promote a better gender equity in field practices, community governance, or power relations (paragraphs 40 and 86).

138. The Mixteca Project has become a reference point for biological and geographical information on the Mixteca region. Dissemination has been broad and effective and contributed to higher awareness in the region for BD and ES approaches (paragraphs 69, 70 and 74).

139. The overall project management was outstanding. The project management unit, the project coordinator and the executing agency performed well and were a key factor for the achievement of outputs and outcomes. The project was executed efficiently in terms of time and costs. Adaptive management was applied appropriately, especially considering the weak aspects of project design and the suboptimal coordination among the involved governmental organizations (paragraphs 103 and 105 to 109).

140. In absence of an inter-institutional working group, the Project Steering Committee was converted adequately into a broad platform to provide information to main stakeholders and allow for an inter-institutional space for the analysis of project results and debate about the options to create impact. Participation gradually increased from the original project partners to a broad group of stakeholders. As a result of this, the PSC was less effective as a supervision body for the project (paragraphs 92 and 106).

141. The project had an outstanding performance in materializing co-financing and leverage additional financial resources. According to data made available for the terminal evaluation, the reported amount of co-financing (22.6 M US\$) was more than double the amount originally committed (9.8M US\$). In addition, an amount of 23.7M US\$ was leveraged funding for support programs in the region. Although general financial management of the project was correct and transparent, the administration of additional funds was unclear making it impossible to confirm the amount and destination of the reported additional resources (paragraphs 121 to 123).

Overall ratings table

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
A. Strategic relevance	Project consistent with subnational, national and international priorities. Well aligned with GEF and UNEP strategies and objectives.	Highly Satisfactory
B. Achievement of outputs	Outputs of good quality and a quantity higher than targeted. Due to poor design of outputs, several changes in relation to planning.	Satisfactory
C. Effectiveness: Attainment of project objectives and results		Satisfactory
1. Achievement of direct outcomes	All but one (4.2) have been very well achieved, complying indicators	Highly Satisfactory
2. Likelihood of impact	Local impact (environment and livelihoods) already achieved, long-term and large-scale less likely, due to institutional and political unsustainability	Moderately Satisfactory

3. Achievement of project goal and planned objectives	Project objective partly achieved (mainstreaming not yet in place); contribution to overall goal already underway, but more sustainability required	Moderately Satisfactory
D. Sustainability and replication		Moderately Likely
1. Financial	Some GAP and GNRMP will be sustained without external funding, others do. Informal alternatives for formal inter-institutional collaboration also need future funding.	Moderately Likely
2. Socio-political	Changes of institutional leadership and the variable level ownership of the national and regional stakeholders threaten sustenance of results. Ownership of main governmental agencies is low; other stakeholders have diverse level of ownership; ownership of local stakeholders higher.	Moderately Likely
3. Institutional framework	Institutional frameworks (IWG) is not functioning. Informal networks might form an alternative, but require development.	Moderately Unlikely
4. Environmental	Mostly positive environmental impact	Highly Likely
5. Catalytic role and replication	Local replication and catalytic role recognized, little upscaling and replication to other areas, relatively low synergy with other initiatives.	Moderately Satisfactory
E. Efficiency	Execution different from original design, but mostly appropriate adaptive management. Good cost-effective and timely operation.	Satisfactory
F. Factors affecting project performance		
1. Preparation and readiness	Design with many good and some weak points. Project was ready to start at day 1.	Satisfactory
2. Project implementation and management (a) including the functioning of working groups (b)	Very good project implementation and management (IA, EA, PCU, NPC) but poor working groups. Because of the very different ratings within this criterion, the sub-criterion "working groups" was rated separately.	a: Highly Satisfactory b: Unsatisfactory
3. Stakeholder participation, cooperation and partnerships	Good participation by project partners and beneficiaries in generation of outputs. Good mapping of stakeholders from start. partnerships progressively increasing (bilaterally)	Satisfactory
4. Country ownership and driven-ness	Poor ownership by main governmental agencies in spite of good participation. Good ownership by local stakeholders	Moderately Satisfactory
5. Financial planning and management	Good administrative management and very good co-financing results	Satisfactory
6. Supervision, guidance and technical backstopping	Supervision and backstopping evaluated positively by both parts (supervisor and supervised)	Satisfactory
7. Monitoring and evaluation		Satisfactory
a. M&E Design	Good (see inception report)	Satisfactory
b. Budgeting and funding for M&E activities	Enough	Satisfactory
c. M&E Plan Implementation	With exception of late execution of MTR (and impossibility of following up recommendations) all other elements timely and good quality	Satisfactory
Overall project rating		Satisfactory

B. LESSONS LEARNED⁴¹

142. Even though a project focuses on a limited area of influence (in this case, a portion of a State), there are still many national-level policies, legislation and regulations that need to be influenced to create positive impact in the project area (paragraphs 69, 73, 74, 79, 82).

143. When at the level of project outputs concrete and positive impacts on the environment and livelihoods are attained, the project's contribution to overall goal (biodiversity conservation) can be underway although the direct project objective is only partly achieved (paragraph 72 and 75).

144. The non-functioning of the inter-institutional working group, in spite of being established by the State Governor, shows that not even the highest-level policy decisions guarantee follow-up and enforcement of these decisions (paragraph 91).

145. A Project Steering Committee can constitute an adequate *de facto* inter-institutional platform in case other platforms are dysfunctional; with the risk of having the core roles of the PSC (operational supervision) erode (paragraph 106).

146. When out of efficiency considerations the project management unit leads the implementation of all project components and other partner organizations (in this case CONANP and CONAFOR) have no role in implementation, there is a danger that the sustainability of the results becomes dependent on personal or individual institutional commitments (paragraphs 107 to 110).

147. When an environmental conservation project targets a broad group of stakeholders, including many institutions from sectors others than the environment, it is difficult to achieve immediate participation from all stakeholders. A well-executed stakeholder mapping during project design including an analysis of their expectation and potential role, forms a good basis to progressively (rather than immediately) include stakeholders during project implementation (paragraphs 35, 104, 114 and 115).

148. Replication capacity and the catalytic role of the project were positively influenced by: (i) good information dissemination, (ii) successful demonstration models, (iii) well-trained local promoters and, (iv) well-informed local staff with good local relationships (paragraph 97).

149. Institutional changes should be included as a risk factor in the project design and appropriate mitigation strategies should be defined beforehand as a key element of adaptive management (paragraphs 41 and 42).

150. A trade off exists between academic quality (rigor) of studies done to generate knowledge and the usefulness of their results to inform local stakeholders who will use that knowledge in the end (paragraph 44).

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

151. *To the main governmental project partners (CONANP, CONAFOR):* Considering the crucial importance of an inter-institutional coordination platform to consolidate project results and achieve long-term impact, efforts to establish such a mechanism should continue. To achieve this, a lead agency should take the initiative to convene the group, organize meetings and ensure dealing with priority themes related to the project results. Considering the institutional setting of the project CONANP is the best-positioned agency to take up this role (paragraphs 80, 81, 91 and 136).

152. *To UNEP and WWF:* Most outcomes have been achieved, but the project objective was not completely achieved and, although the project contributed partially to the overall goal, its institutional sustainability is a major issue (paragraphs 129, 133, 134, 136). UNEP and WWF, both with national offices in Mexico and main responsible agencies for the project, are well positioned to provide a follow-up of the positive outcomes. It is recommended that they develop specific activities for 2016, including:

- (a) Support of the continuation of (any kind of) inter-institutional platform.
- (b) To continue the lobby for mainstreaming BD and ES in institutional policies at federal level.
- (c) Development of projects that provide space for replication and up scaling, and support follow-up of Mixteca project results.
- (d) Communicate project results and lessons learned of the present project.

⁴¹ These lessons from the current evaluation are in addition to the lessons learned described in the MTR report and in the specific study on lessons learned in GEF Mixteca (Torres Valencia, M.A. 2015. Las Lecciones aprendidas del proyecto GEF Mixteca)

153. *To all project partners:* While the creation of an inter-institutional platform among governmental agencies faces challenges to be installed, there are informal networks that are apt to, at least temporally, provide spaces for collaboration to promote the continuation of project results. Especially the Oaxaca Council for Community Development is an adequate platform to pursue this goal. Project partners are recommended to actively participate in this council and stimulate sustainability of project results in a collective and collaborative manner (paragraph 92).

154. *To WWF:* The good institutional and personal performance of WWF and its staff in the project execution created high visibility of WWF in the region, as well as a responsibility and expectation towards ensuring the care for the project legacy. In its future institutional plans for Oaxaca, WWF should consider this responsibility and find ways to support permanence of Mixteca project's results, including its support to local organizations and informal networks (paragraphs 59 and 110).

155. *To WWF:* A locally renowned team of professionals, mostly from the Mixteca region implemented the Mixteca project and attained a wealth of experience and skills applicable to conservation and development issues in the region. WWF should apply a succession plan to ensure this expertise continues to contribute to the main environmental challenges of the region (paragraphs 83, 107, 108 and 139).

156. *To WWF and project partners:* The project has successfully supported a large series of demonstration models. Several of which are not yet consolidated enough. After project closure, project partners that had direct interaction with these groups (particularly CONANP and WWF) must ensure provision of continued external support in order to avoid a fading away of their incipient experience and enthusiasm (paragraphs 65 and 73).

157. *To UNEP:* The project contributed to aspects of green economy promotion and TEEB principles. However, its approach and impact has been local. It is therefore recommended that lessons learned from this local experience should continue to form an important input into the national Green Economy strategy, currently promoted by UNEP. To actively promote this kind of uptake of good practice at larger scales, UNEP should continue and intensify lobby with federal agencies to communicate on Mixteca project results, stimulate positive decisions at federal level to promote institutional uptake of ES approaches, and effectively communicate the project results to other similar initiatives at national and international level. UNEP should also find ways in order to improve active collaboration of similar UNEP efforts in different countries and stimulate vertical cooperation within the agency (*e.i.* support from global programs to national representations and locally implemented projects). (Paragraph 71, 113 and 125).

APPENDIX 1. BIOSKETCH OF EVALUATOR

Robert Hofstede is an accomplished conservation program evaluator based in Quito, Ecuador. He is well acquainted with civil society organizations in Latin America, especially regarding conservation, protected areas management, forestry, climate change and integrated land management. He brings subject matter expertise in a variety of fields, including payment for environmental services, large-scale planning and knowledge dissemination. He has worked extensively as a consultant for several international organizations on sustainable development, environmental management, and climate change; focusing on project and program development and evaluation and environmental studies.

During his professional career, Mr. Hofstede directed the South America regional program for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which provided him with experience at the continent and global level in program development and assessment, policy advocacy and high-level diplomacy. He also worked in international management positions at CONDESAN (CGIAR) and developed an international research and training program at the University of Amsterdam. Trained as a tropical ecologist, his academic background includes many aspects of agronomy, forestry and geography.

APPENDIX 2. LIST OF CONSULTED DOCUMENTS⁴²

UNEP and GEF strategy documents

- GEF. 2007. Biodiversity focal area strategy and strategic programming for gef-4
- UNEP. 2013. Biennial Programme of Work and budget for 2014–2015

Project document and implementation agreements

- Project Document "Integrating tradeoffs between supply of ecosystem services and land use options into poverty alleviation efforts and development planning in Mixteca"; Incl appendices (2010)
- Request for CEO endorsement of Mixteca project (2010)
- PRC review sheet for Mixteca project (2010)
- Project Cooperation Agreement for Mixteca project (2010)

Project administration and progress reports:

- Tinney Rivera. A. 2014. Mid term review report for the Mixteca project
- MTR Tracking Tool BD2 (May 2014)
- UNEP-WWF Half Yearly Progress Reports for Mixteca project (5 in total; 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014)
- UNEP-WWF GEF PIR for Mixteca project (4 in total; Fiscal Years 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015)
- Cofinancing report as annex to PIR FY2015 (September 2010 - August 2015)
- Quarterly expenditure statements (16 in total; from march 2011 - December 2014)
- Minutes of PSC meetings (6 in total; April 2011, February 2012, January 2013, March 2013, May 2014 and March 2015)
- BDO. Financial Statements, Supplemental Material, Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards and Independent Auditors' Reports Required by Government Auditing Standards and OMB. (3 in total; years ending 30 June 2011/2010, 2012/2011, 2013/2012)

Products of Mixteca project; delivered to the evaluator in digital format (25 Sept 2015)

- Basic project documents (7 publications on the project in general, ecosystem services, public policies and demonstration models, lessons learned)
- Software manuals (2, SWAT and APEX)
- Examples of territorial planning processes (5; High watershed of Mixteco river, watershed of Mixteco river, Regional Committee for Natural Resources Huajuapán, Santa María Yucuhiti and San Pablo Nopala)
- Specific studies (33 reports in 14 themes; fuelwood, climate change adaptation, fauna monitoring, solid waste, agriculture and animal husbandry, water, ethnobiology, carbon sequestration, soils and water, flora and ecological flows, ecosystem goods and services and marketing)
- Good Agricultural Practice tools (3; goats, pine resin, coffee)
- Dissemination documents (5, on nurseries, milpa, flora, fauna, and carnivores)
- Various printed material (26 leaflets, posters, manuals)

⁴² In addition to the documents cited in footnotes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF INTERVIEWED PEOPLE

WWF:

Jorge Rickards	Conservation director Mexico
Hector Maciel	Financial officer Mexico
Gustavo Sanchez	National Project Coordinator
Bernardo García	Project staff
Rocio Heredia	Project staff
Enrique Montes	Project staff
Eloy Fernandez	Project staff
Samuel Caudillo	Project staff
Lorena Cruz	Project staff
Yuki Hueda	Project staff
Leticia Sánchez	Project staff
Carlos Solanes	Project staff
Martha Alvarado	Project staff

UNEP

Robert Erath	Project Task Manager
Dolores Barrientos Alemán	UNEP Mexico representative officer
Dorothe Georg	UNEP project officer, Mexico

CONANP

Pavel Palacios	Director Sierra Juárez and Mixteca
Eugenio Padilla	Manager monitoring
Mahoma Zuñiga	Regional officer, Mixteca

Project partners

Helena Iturribarría Rojas	IEEDS, Directora
Paulina Hernández	SECTUR, Strategic Projects Department
David Domingo Rafael Pérez	SERMARNAT, Subdelegate for Environmental Management, Oaxaca
José Luis Santiago	SAGARPA, Subdelegate for planning and rural development, Oaxaca
Antonio Fourzan	SEGARPA, State Evaluation Coordinator, Oaxaca
Carlos René Estrella	CONAFOR, Gerente Oaxaca
Miguel Soto	CONAFOR, subgerente de producción y productividad, Oaxaca
Javier Baquera	COPLADE, Regional Operations Coordinator
Norma Guadalupe Cruz Ríos	COPLADE, coordinadora regional
Edgar Sanchez Cuevas	COPLADE, Coordinador regional
Santiago Chang	COPLADE, Consultor
Mario Martínez	Colegio de Posgraduados
Jesús León	CEDICAM
Arturo Galindo	CDI, Director Tlaxiaco
Veronica Romero	CDI

Community members

Ubaldo Rivero López	Teotongo
Mauro	Teotongo

Grupo de guías turísticas	Guadalupe Cuauhtepc
Guillermo Flores	Guadalupe Cuauhtepc
Miguel Peralta	Guadalupe Cuauhtepc, Presidente del Comisariado
Luis Pérez	Santa Maria Tiltepec, Presidente del Comisariado
Iván Ramírez	Santa Maria Tiltepec
Esteban Santiago	Santa Maria Tiltepec
Isidra Santiago	Santa Maria Tiltepec,Miembro del Comisariado
Christian Rojas	Santa Maria Tiltepec
Roberto Cristobal López	San Andres Lagunas, Guías turísticas
Samuel Peralta	San Andres Lagunas, Guías turísticas
Javier Morales	San Pedro Nopala, viverista
Efrain Cruz	San Pedro Nopala, viverista
Zenón López	San Pedro Nopala, Presidente Municipal
Noe López Cruz	San Martin Huamelulpan
Adolfo Mejía	Santa Maria del Rosario
Felipe Cortez	Santa Maria Coquila, Tesorero del Comisariado
Tomás Coronel	Santa Maria Coquila, Miembro del Comisariado
Artemio Teobaldo Ortíz	Caballo Rucio
Demetrio Garcia	Caballo Rucio
Lauro Mauro Ortíz	Caballo Rucio
Froilan Castro	Miramar
Pablo Artemio Garces	Miramar
Doroteo García	Miramar
Timoteo García	Miramar

Appendix 4. PROJECT FINANCING

(All figures in US\$, as of 30 June 2015⁴³)

GEF CONTRIBUTION

Category	Original budget	Cumulative expenditures	Unspent balance
PERSONNEL	2,458,300	2,201,417	256,883
SUB-CONTRACTS	2,170,000	2,088,478	81,522
TRAINING	454,050	293,145	160,905
EQUIPMENT	195,500	194,268	1,232
MISCELLANEOUS (incl audit)	622,150	357,238	264,912
<i>SUBTOTAL</i>	<i>5,900,000</i>	<i>5,134,546</i>	<i>765,454</i>
UNEP PARTICIPATION COSTS	590,000	538,471	51,529
GRAND TOTAL	6,490,000	5,673,017	816,983

CO-FINANCING

	<i>Comitted</i>	Realized						
		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	<i>TOTAL</i>
WWF	100,000	19,666	23,227				106,794	149,687
CONAFOR	8,800,000	4,206,339	2,055,167	4,048,576	8,785,992	1,866,650		20,962,723
CONANP	888,530	208,145	468,926	282,900	227,983	164,065	172,324	1,524,344
CONAGUA			836,213	567,238	2,637,080	7,799,472		11,840,003
SEDESOL		2,578,712	166,120	693,387	889,918			4,328,136
SAGARPA		389,450		142,375	3,538,310			4,070,135
SEMARNAT			911,311	451,290	261,467			1,624,068
CDI			106,517	341,287				447,804
State Government				1,414,349				1,414,349
TOTAL	978,8530	7,402,312	4,567,481	7,941,402	16,340,750	9,830,187	279,119	46,361,250

⁴³ Data provided by CI Mexico office

Appendix 5. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE TERMINAL EVALUATION

Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP project: “Integrating trade-offs between supply of ecosystem services and land use options into poverty alleviation efforts and development planning in Mixteca”

I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1. Project General Information

Table 1. Project summary

GEF project ID:	3813	IMIS ID:	GFL/2328-2740-4B64
Sub-programme:	Ecosystems management, Environmental Governance	UNEP approval date:	September 2009
Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity	GEF Strategic Priority/Objective:	BD2 & BD-SP4-Policy
Implementing Agency	UNEP	Project Type:	Full Size Project(FSP)
Executing Agencies	CONANP, CONAFOR, WWF	Country	Mexico
UNEP approval date:	October 28, 2010		
Expected Start Date:	November 2010*	Actual start date:	December 2010
Planned completion date:	October 2015*	Actual completion date:	December 2015
Planned project budget at approval:	US\$ 15,688,530	GEF Allocation:	US\$ 5,900,000
PPG GEF cost*:	US\$100,000	PPG co-financing*:	US\$231,726
Expected MSP/FSP co-financing:	US\$ 9,788,530	Secured MSP/FSP co-financing as of 30 June 2015:	
First Disbursement:	US\$ 50,000 (22/12/09)	Date of first disbursement*:	December 27, 2010
Disbursement as of 30 June 2014*:	US\$3,679,131.46	Date of financial closure*:	
No. of revisions:	2	Date of last revision:	October 2013
Date of last Steering Committee meeting:	May 20, 2014	Date of financial closure:	
Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	July 2015	Mid-term review/ evaluation (actual date):	April 2015

*Project Document

2. Project rationale

1. The Mixtecan area of Oaxaca (Mexico) is noted for its impressive mix of tropical and temperate montane pineoak and cloud forests which host a wide variety of floristic heterogeneity in different areas throughout the region. Mixteca ecosystems are of global importance for their unique ecosystemic richness, significant biological integrity and important degree of endemism. In all, there are more than 2,703 species of flora and fauna with another estimated 15-20% of floral species still uncollected. The Audubon Society classifies Oaxaca as the richest state in Mexico for birds. There may be 123 species of mammals (10 endemics; nine endangered), 31 species of amphibians (two endemics; one endangered), 74 species of reptiles (seven endemics; seven endangered), 508 species of birds (four endemics; two endangered) and 14 fish species (nine endemic; four protected by Mexican laws).

2. Regrettably, the Mixteca ecosystem, containing globally significant biodiversity finds itself under severe pressure from productive activities that overexploit the ecosystem services it provides. Its biodiversity is being increasingly threatened by species and genetic loss due to habitat and ecosystem destruction and land degradation.

3. Effective action that would ensure biodiversity conservation is not forthcoming; this is because of a set of barriers that include among others: (i) inadequate knowledge related to the management and provision of ecosystem services (ES); (ii) a lack of coherence and integrality of support programs and planning towards biodiversity benefits; and (iii) the limited capacity to upscale interventions for optimizing impact at the landscape level. National authorities are trying to provide solutions for the socio-economic aspects that address national and local priority issues, such as poverty alleviation and food security; however, if existing land use planning and support programs continue their

present course, the focus will continue to be on issues such as poverty alleviation and food security, while biodiversity degradation will be allowed to persist.

4. Mexico signed the Convention on Biological Diversity on 13 June 1992 and ratified it on 11 March 1993. National agencies requested UNEP's technical support in achieving a more effective implementation of the conservation objectives set forth in Mexico's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. In particular, they asked for technical support to avert the threats confronting biodiversity conservation in the Mixteca region of Oaxaca. The fundamental rationale is that a significant improvement of ecosystem integrity and resilience can be reached through implementing ecosystem management techniques based on the assessment of ecosystem services.

5. The project is aligned with Mexico's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in its four strategic lines: (a) protection and conservation, through the fostering of consolidated *in situ* protection and conservation initiatives and intensifying the actions aimed at rescuing, rehabilitating and recovering ecosystems, communities and species; (b) valuation of biodiversity, reclaiming its value and cultural importance in scientific, social and economic terms; (c) knowledge and information management on ecosystems, species and varieties through the rescuing of traditional knowledge, support to assessments and research and the implementation of dissemination activities, promoting public awareness and comprehension of biodiversity importance; and (d) diversification of biodiversity utilization through the review of present use and fostering sustainable uses of biodiversity.

6. Through the project, UNEP intends to assist Mexico in developing the necessary ecosystem services assessment tools to integrate the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into key productive sectors of the economy, while seeking the maintenance of the ecosystem goods and services that biodiversity provides to society. In parallel, the project strives for active stakeholder involvement and policy support for conservation of forest areas, as well as reforestation and regeneration of vegetative cover to bring about the benefits of improved biodiversity in surrounding ecosystems at the landscape level. This will be further facilitated by the application of federal support programs delivered at state and local levels, which will by means of the GEF increment include a variety of practical incentives to secure biodiversity conservation goals. Hence it is intended that the delivery of global environmental benefits will be primarily derived from significant conservation, rehabilitation and increased connectivity of habitat for globally significant biodiversity in key areas of the Mixteca.

7. The four zones that comprise the project's intervention area cover approximately one third of the Oaxacan Mixteca and comprise an irregular, mountainous terrain covering 567,308 hectares, 41 municipalities and 98 micro-watersheds. These areas were chosen as representative of biodiversity hotspots that interconnect with already established protected areas and thereby could provide biological corridors connecting different ecosystems. The four zones with their respective surface areas are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Project Intervention Area

	Name of intervention area	Sub-region	Surface area in hectares
1.	Huajuapán de León-Tonala	Lower Mixteca	233,771
2.	Sierra Sur-Juxtlahuaca	Upper Mixteca	125,677
3.	Tlaxiaco	Upper Mixteca	117,342
4.	Cerros Negro Yucaño	Upper Mixteca	90,518
	Total		567,308

3. Project objectives and components

8. The project is closely aligned and integrated within UNEP's broader Ecosystem Management Program (EMP). Ecosystem Management stands among the Strategic Priority Thematic Areas in the Program of Work under UNEP's Medium Term Strategy 2010-2013. UNEP's EMP includes a wide range of issues, some of which are addressed through this project, such as i.e.: the promotion of knowledge about the interdependence of ecological operational tools and livelihoods; use of methodologies of working models for use by policy-makers to analyze ecosystem services and their trade-offs with development policies and resource allocations; defining convincing economic values of ecosystem services and, in particular, of the regulating and cultural services which could be used to evaluate the trade-offs with conventional development strategies; and periodic assessments of the status of ecosystem services to monitor and track changes in those services and their impacts on human well-being.

9. This project also complies with Strategic Programme 4 (SP4) of Strategic Objective 2 (SO2) within the GEF focal area of Biodiversity. Through the project, UNEP is assisting Mexico in developing the necessary ecosystem services assessment tools to integrate the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into key productive sectors of the economy while seeking the maintenance of the ecosystem goods and services that biodiversity provides to society.

10. The **primary goal** to which the project will contribute is the conservation of globally important ecosystems and species within the Mixteca region of Oaxaca, including a large number of endemic and migratory species. This is to be achieved through rescuing traditional knowledge and bringing it together with innovative, state of the art technology in assessment, resulting in good practices in biodiversity conservation, natural resource management and agriculture. At the same time, this will contribute to improving the livelihoods of local and indigenous communities.

11. 88. The **objective** of this project is ***to mainstream biodiversity conservation into natural resource use and development planning in the Mixteca Region of Oaxaca integrating ecosystem services (ES) tools and sustainable livelihood options***. This includes integrating innovative methodologies and tools for assessing and valuing ecosystem services and incorporating these values into policy instruments used in decision-making by government and stakeholders.

12. The project intends to bring long term ecosystem integrity, stability and resilience into the food production equation by promoting science – policy integration, towards good practices in agriculture and natural resource management. It demonstrates how ecosystem management techniques could bring about improved water and soil conditions, and improved agricultural productivity in the form of higher efficiencies and yields. Productive activity will in turn be concentrated in the most suitable areas, thereby decreasing habitat disruption and encroachment on fragile and biologically significant ecosystems. In this way the project also intends to achieve global environmental benefits in the form of biodiversity conservation.

13. The project was organized around the following components:

- Compoment 1: Strengthening the knowledge base on Ecosystem Approach for biodiversity conservation. The objective of this component is to build upon the existing assessment and monitoring of natural resources, with the GEF increment ensuring that state of the art technology is applied so that the most relevant aspects for biodiversity conservation are considered.
- Compoment 2: Supporting biodiversity-friendly policy and program development for land use planning and resource use. The main objective of this component is to support the science –policy interface that is required to assist authorities at state and local level to integrate key findings regarding ecosystem services and biodiversity of component one into land use planning and social support development programs
- Compoment 3: Piloting biodiversity friendly programs on the ground. The objective of this component is to set integral natural resources use protocols and models for reduced environmental deterioration and to promote the conservation of nature.
- Compoment 4: Outreach and dissemination. The objective of this component is the systematization and dissemination of lessons learned from the operation of the project, as a means to increase impact at the level of the Mixteca region.

14. Table 3 below presents a summary of the main outputs and ensuing outcomes delivered by the project, by component:

Table 3: Project Logical Framework

Expected Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Component 1. Strengthening the knowledge base on Ecosystem Approach for biodiversity conservation			
Outcome 1.1: Stakeholders and decision makers at state and local level have increased access to Ecosystem Services tools applicable to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use	<p>Number of targeted ES tools in support of biodiversity conservation available</p> <p>Number of Government officials and stakeholders trained in the use of ES tools for biodiversity conservation</p>	<p>Manual distribution log</p> <p>Manual and materials opinion survey</p> <p>Distribution progress reports</p> <p>Distribution and discussion meeting workshops reports</p>	Stakeholders and decision-makers are receptive to incorporating ES tools in land use and development planning.
Outputs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Start-up manual on ES tools and methodologies for decision-makers at the state and local level. Educational materials for methodologies and tools that are adapted to the Oaxacan Mixteca regarding: (1) assessing, (2) valuing ecosystem and (3) monitoring ecosystem services. Supportive audio-visual training materials on ES 80 Trained state and local officials in the project intervention area on the application of ES methodologies and tools. Revised start-up manual on ES and supportive educational materials for use in project replication that takes into account project developments, findings and results 			
Outcome 1.2: Natural Resources, ecosystem services and biodiversity in the project intervention area are assessed, valued and monitored using the new ES tools and knowledge provided through the project	<p>Application of project products for assessing and valuing ecosystem services (emphasizing areas of outcome 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3)</p> <p>Number of applications of the project's GIS on the intervention area's ecosystem services and biodiversity (emphasizing areas under component 3)</p>	<p>GIS and data base</p> <p>Use GIS and data base Manual</p> <p>Technical documents and reports</p> <p>Meeting agreement records of COPLADE's regional inter-institutional working group.</p> <p>Meeting agreement records of Tlaxiaco, Huajuapán, and Mixtec River Committees, meetings agreements records</p> <p>Project progress reports</p> <p>Mid-term evaluation and terminal evaluation report</p>	<p>For effective monitoring of project implementation solid baseline information is needed.</p> <p>Relevant institutions are committed to incorporating the assessment, valuation and monitoring of ES tools and knowledge into their work programs.</p> <p>Institutions are willing to share information on their activities and investments, as well as relevant basic information.</p>
Outputs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive data and information on ES in the Oaxacan Mixteca region and in particular in the project intervention area. Detailed studies by ecosystem and priority watersheds assessing and valuing ecosystem services in the Oaxacan Mixteca and in particular in the project intervention area. Geographic information system on the project area and the region's biodiversity and ecosystem services to support relevant decision-making and investments in the region. <p>On-going programs to assess value and monitor ecosystem services in the Oaxacan Mixteca and in particular in the project intervention area.</p>			
Component 2. Supporting biodiversity-friendly policy and program development for land use planning and resource use			
Outcome 2.1: Biodiversity and ES considerations are integrated into state and federal support programs and land	Agreements of the inter-institutional group meetings	Meeting agreement records of COPLADE's regional inter-institutional working group.	Political good will of relevant federal and state organizations to integrate ES considerations into

Expected Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
use planning	<p>Agreements of the CCRM and the CRRNS for Tlaxiaco and Huajuapán in support of project implementation</p> <p>Community level planning includes ES and BD aspects</p> <p>Local application of federal and state supported programs including land use plans for the Mixteca region of Oaxaca, that mainstream ES and biodiversity conservation</p>	<p>Meeting agreement records of Tlaxiaco, Huajuapán, and Mixtec River Committees</p> <p>Municipal development plans</p> <p>Land use plans</p> <p>Municipal council and Community and/or Ejido Assembly minutes</p> <p>Mid-term evaluation and terminal evaluation reports</p>	<p>support programs and land use planning.</p> <p>SAGARPA and SEDER with CONANP reach an agreement for identifying good agricultural practices.</p> <p>Willingness of relevant federal and state organizations to utilize environmental, biodiversity and ES indicators for assessing agricultural projects in the project's four intervention areas, particularly as they relate to GAP and good practices for natural resource management</p> <p>Interest on the part of local authorities and communities to integrate ES considerations into their work</p>
Outputs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional inter-institutional working group to support the integration of biodiversity and ES considerations in state and federal support programs and land use planning in the project's intervention area. 2. Integrating the outcomes of the on-going programs assessing, valuing and monitoring ecosystem services from 1.2 into development policy-making and planning in the Oaxacan Mixteca. 3. Mainstreaming of biodiversity, including ES tools and options into federal and state support programs and land use plans in the Oaxacan Mixteca. 4. Baseline data for the development of comprehensive land use plans applicable to the project intervention area including status assessment of local indigenous knowledge. 5. Environmentally sound land use plans for sustainable development in the project's intervention area, taking into account the outputs provided by the on-going programs assessing, valuing and monitoring ecosystem services under 1.2. 6. Revised existing land use plans or being developed in the Oaxacan Mixteca to include ecosystem services considerations, taking into account outputs provided by the on-going programs assessing, valuing and monitoring ecosystem services under 1.2. 7. Pilot system of compensation for ecosystem integrity provided by local communities, farmers and other stakeholders. 8. ES indicators for assessing the agricultural projects of SAGARPA and SEDER in the project's intervention area, particularly as they relate to GAP and good practices for natural resource management. 			
Component 3. Piloting biodiversity friendly programs on the ground			
Outcome 3.1: Local stakeholders apply the ecosystem approach for planning and implementation of productive activities and biodiversity conservation	<p>Number of trained producers that apply the ecosystem approach in planning and implementing productive activities and in biodiversity conservation</p> <p>Surface area of lands applying integrated land use planning of good practices in agriculture and natural resource management</p> <p>Application of productive protocols based on models from 1.2 for rural development based on the ES approach and good practices in agriculture</p>	<p>Lists of training assistance.</p> <p>Verification by project staff recorded in planning and follow up field logs and local initiative reports</p> <p>List of participants in the watersheds models for rural development</p> <p>Acceptance letters by local stakeholders of the value of utilizing the ecosystem approach</p> <p>Meeting agreement participating communities</p>	<p>State and local authorities and local organizations are open to receiving capacity building in the integration of the ecosystem approach for planning and implementation of productive activities and biodiversity conservation.</p> <p>Receptivity of private sector actors to establishing and promoting alternative tourism</p> <p>Certification by CONANP</p> <p>Local communities and federal, state and local authorities can agree to work together in the</p>

Expected Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
	<p>and natural resource management</p> <p>Number of projects resulting from support to rural community planning processes</p> <p>Number of local tourism strategic routes, tour operators and hotel operators promoting alternative tourism.</p> <p>Number of persons trained, certified and hired as local ecotourism guides</p> <p>Products with potential for marketing strategy of conservation goods and services</p>	<p>records</p> <p>Meeting agreement records of Tlaxiaco, Huajuapán, and Mixtec River Committees, meetings agreements records</p> <p>SAGARPA, SEDER, and CONANP to provide verification</p> <p>Verification by SECTUR of integration of alternative tourism into state and local plans and strategies</p> <p>Mid-term evaluation and terminal evaluation report</p>	<p>establishment and implementation of the pilot demonstration projects</p>
Outputs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Start-up manual for local stakeholders in the project intervention area on the ecosystem approach for planning and implementing productive activities and biodiversity conservation. 2. Educational materials in each of the following areas that are adapted to the Oaxacan Mixteca: (1) good agricultural practices (GAP) and (2) good practices in natural resource management. 3. Educational materials on the sustainable use of biodiversity, based on the ethno-biological experiences of the local people. 4. Educational materials on the importance of preventing the illegal collection and use of wild biota. 5. Supportive audio-visual training materials on GAP and good practices in natural resource management. 6. Revised start-up manual and supportive educational materials on the ecosystem approach for planning and implementing productive activities and biodiversity conservation for local stakeholders that take into account project developments, findings and results, for use in project replication. 7. Cooperative agreements with rural community planning processes, particularly within the regional natural resources committees and in priority communities in the project's intervention area, for promoting the integration of biodiversity conservation, ES considerations and sustainable management of agriculture and natural resources. 8. Agreements on priority actions, programs and projects requiring the ecosystem approach through participatory rural community planning exercises. 9. Strategy for mainstreaming alternative tourism based on biodiversity, natural attractions and agro-ecosystems in state and local tourism programs. 10. Alternative tourism strategy for the project's intervention area based on biological diversity, natural attractions and agroecosystems. 11. Trained and certified ecotourism guides for the Oaxacan Mixteca. 12. Ten micro-watersheds that can serve as models for rural development based on the ES approach and good practices in agriculture and natural resource management. 13. Trained local stakeholders, particularly farmers and local communities, at the 10 pilot demonstration projects in the intervention area on the application of the ecosystem approach for planning and implementing productive activities, natural resource management and biodiversity conservation. 14. Technical assistance to producers for the marketing of goods and services that are the product of GAP and GNRMP, including lama-bordo techniques, exploring opportunities for participating in related certification programs. 			
Outcome 3.2: The supply of key Ecosystem Services is secured, improving ecosystem resilience and leading to improved livelihoods	<p>Surface area of degraded lands and ecosystems that have been rehabilitated or are in process of rehabilitation</p> <p>Surface area of increase in natural vegetation cover, which reflects an improvement in the provision of ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration, availability of water, soil rehabilitation and biodiversity conservation</p>	<p>Participant list with reforested and rehabilitated areas.</p> <p>Meeting agreement participating communities records</p> <p>Acceptance letters by local stakeholders</p> <p>Lists of training assistance</p> <p>Technical documents and reports lama-bordo</p>	<p>Communities agree to utilize <i>lama-bordo</i> management systems</p>

Expected Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
	<p>Use of fuelwood efficient stoves</p> <p>Use of lama-bordo agricultural terraces for cultivating native plants such as maize, chile, squash, amaranth, and cacti, among others</p> <p>Surface area covered by rehabilitated lama-bordos</p> <p>Comparative quantitative and qualitative data on soil quality within and outside lama-bordo agricultural terraces</p>	<p>system</p> <p>Technical evaluation of fuelwood efficient stoves</p> <p>Project progress reports</p> <p>Mid-term evaluation and terminal evaluation report</p>	
Outputs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Degraded lands reforested Degraded lands and ecosystems rehabilitated or in the process of rehabilitation in project intervention areas. Knowledge and information on lama-bordo agricultural systems for soil conservation, improved productivity and the cultivation of native plants traditionally used that contribute to improved family nutrition. Knowledge and information on cultivation of traditionally used native plants that contribute to improved family nutrition particularly through the use of lama-bordo agricultural systems. 5 pilot demonstration projects for (1) rehabilitating lama-bordo systems, (2) testing, monitoring and demonstrating the use of lama-bordo production techniques and their compatibility with sustaining ecosystem services and (3) training local producers in the restoration of lama-bordo terraces and in the application of lama-bordo agricultural practices, including the use of traditional native crops. Trained local producers in the use of lama-bordo techniques. Utilization of fuelwood efficient stoves in ten communities, including the establishment of fuelwood plantations based on native species. 			
Outcome 3.3: Improved land use planning and management practices lead to increased habitat connectivity for globally significant biodiversity within the project intervention area as assessed and monitored under outcome 1.2	<p>Advancement in the processes for the establishment of voluntary reserves and related management plans</p> <p>Advancement in the processes for the establishment of biological corridors, and their management plans, connecting protected areas</p> <p>Number of persons trained for implementation of management plans for AVDCs and biological corridors</p>	<p>Technical documents and reports for potential community conservation and biological corridors</p> <p>Communities agreement for AVDCs</p> <p>CONANP' AVDCs certification process files</p> <p>Management Plans Technical documents</p> <p>Management Plans communities accepted letter</p> <p>GIS and data base</p>	<p>Local communities are open to the possibility of establishing voluntary Community Areas for Conservation and biological corridors.</p>
Outputs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identification in consultation with priority communities potential Community Conservation Areas that could be certified as Areas Voluntarily Destined for Conservation (AVDCs); Identification in consultation with priority communities of areas for the establishment of biological corridors connecting protected areas with well preserved forests; Application of environmentally sound land use plans developed under project component 2 in the establishment of AVDCs and biological corridors. Network of certified Areas Voluntarily Destined for Conservation. Biological corridors connecting protected areas with well preserved forests. Certification process for establishing AVDCs. Certification process for producers within biological corridors applying the ES approach. Management plans for AVDCs. 			

Expected Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
9. Management plans for biological corridors. 10. Trained local stakeholders participating in the implementation of management plans for AVDCs and biological corridors			
Component 4. Outreach and dissemination			
Outcome 4.1: Project findings, tools and methodologies made available to state and federal decision makers as well as the public, and relevant interest groups	Public and private sector organizations at the state, federal and local levels have been provided with information materials and tool kits on project findings, tools and methodologies	Records of dissemination of project findings, tools and methodologies Press conferences, press releases, publication launches and other public events for disseminating project findings and information Training workshops and activities on project findings, tools and methodologies with state and federal organizations and stakeholders Mid-term evaluation and terminal evaluation report	State and federal decision makers and stakeholders outside the State of Oaxaca are open to learn about project findings, tools and methodologies.
Outputs: 1. Systematization of methodologies and tools developed by the project, as well as results and findings. 2. Outreach and dissemination strategy for upscaling of project impact based on the systematization of project tools, methodologies, results and findings. 3. Information materials on project findings, tools and methodologies for (1) state and federal decision-makers, (2) stakeholders and (3) the public. 4. Educational and public awareness materials on the provision of ecosystem services to productive sectors in the Mixteco language. 5. Tool kit for the application of ES tools and methodologies for decision-makers at the state and federal levels. 6. Tool kit in Spanish and the Mixteco language on ES tools and methodologies and good practices in agriculture and natural resource management for use by local communities.			
Outcome 4.2: Coordination and cooperation established with UNEP Ecosystem Management Program (EMP)	Dynamics of consultations between the project and UNEP EMP Exchanges with UNEP EMP on the Project outreach and dissemination strategy	Mid-term evaluation and terminal evaluation report	A positive climate exists for exchanging knowledge and experience between the project and UNEP EMP.
Outputs: 1. Consultations and coordination with UNEP EMP in the development and implementation of an outreach and dissemination strategy based on the systematization of project tools, methodologies, results and findings. 2. Project findings, results and products made available for the knowledge base of UNEP's Ecosystem Management Program			

4. *Executing Arrangements*

15. UNEP is the GEF **Implementing Agency** for this project following a request by the Government of Mexico through the National Commission of Protected Natural Areas (CONANP). The project **Executing Partners** are CONANP, the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). CONANP and CONAFOR are the main institutional representatives of national ownership of the project and their tasks involved technical aspects as well as the mainstreaming of biodiversity at policy level. WWF-Mexico was charged with project administration through its national and local offices in Mexico City and Oaxaca respectively, while also contributing to technical aspects in the field. The conceptualization of this project was the product of the collective efforts of CONANP, CONAFOR and WWF-Mexico who, with the support of UNEP, committed themselves to the mainstreaming of the ecosystem approach in social and economic support programs in the Oaxacan Mixteca, to the benefit of biodiversity conservation.

16. The **Lead Division** for the implementation of this project was UNEP's Division for Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI) is the focal point for the coordination of the Ecosystem Management Programme. UNEP's EMP includes a wide range of interventions with different emphases, including i.a. Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES), mainstreaming for policy support, ES assessment-valuation-monitoring, as well as other tier/component or combination thereof, all slated to provide critical feedback to the EMP.

17. The project had a **Project Steering Committee** (PSC) consisting of CONANP, CONAFOR and WWF-Mexico as executing partners, and UNEP as GEF implementing agency. CONANP and CONAFOR as executing partners and WWF-Mexico as national executing agency have spearheaded the development of the project and, as members of the Steering Committee, have played a lead role in implementing and monitoring the project and maintaining its strategic focus. Presided by UNEP, the PSC was responsible for providing guidance to the execution of project activities, including reviewing and advising on the main outputs of the FSP, ensuring that the Government's environmental policy is fully reflected in the project, ensuring effective communication and decision-making, and assisting with mobilization of expertise as needed for proper execution of project outputs. Other responsibilities of the PSC included: oversight of project implementation, monitoring of project progress, strategic and policy guidance, reviewing and approval of annual work plans and budgets.

18. WWF-Mexico as the project **National Executing Agency** (NEA) was responsible for implementing the project in accordance with the components outlined in the project document. The NEA also convened the Project Steering Committee and, in consultation with CONANP, appointed a **National Project Coordinator** (NPC). In conjunction with the NPC, WWF-Mexico in consultation with CONANP established reporting guidelines for all partners and specialists and ensured that they submitted quality reports. The NEA and NPC also collaborated to prepare semi-annual progress reports, quarterly financial reports and annual summary progress reports for UNEP. The NPC was responsible for coordinating, managing and monitoring the implementation of the project, consultants, subcontractors and implementing partners. The NPC also coordinated the preparation of the project outputs, management of project finances, overall resource allocation, and, where relevant, submission of proposals for budget revisions to the PSC and UNEP.

19. The project also established a regional **Inter-institutional Working Group** to support the integration of biodiversity and ES considerations in state and federal support programs, and land use planning in the project's intervention area. In addition, for the pilot demonstration projects, activities were facilitated through Project Site Teams (PSTs) to ensure broad involvement of local communities and key stakeholders, proper planning, and broader consultations with a wide range of agencies, NGOs and key private sector groups, such as farmers, forest owners and hotel and tour operators.

20. The establishment of a **Project Stakeholder Advisory Committee** (PSAC) provided a platform for broader on-going consultations with a wide range of local community representatives, civic groups and private sector representatives on project implementation.

21. **Other actors** in project implementation included: the Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food

(SAGARPA), the Secretariat of Rural Development (SEDER), the Secretariat of Social Development (SEDESOL), the Secretariat of Tourism (SECTUR), the Secretariat of Government (SEGOB), the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI) and the National Biodiversity Commission (CONABIO). Key state and local actors included the State Committee for Development Planning (COPLADE), municipalities in the project's intervention area and academic and research institutions such as the Technological University of the Mixteca (UTM), as well as civic groups, including the Committee of the Rio Mixteco Watershed, the Regional Natural Resources Committee of the Central Zone of Huajuapán de León (CORRENAC) and Regional Natural Resources Committee of the Mixteca Tlaxiaco-Putla-Juxtlahuaca, A.C., migrant organizations, women's organizations and private sector groups.

5. Project Cost and Financing

22. The incremental cost necessary to achieve the Project objective and the corresponding global benefits is **US\$15,688,530** of which **US\$ 5,900,000** (38%) constitute the sum requested to the GEF. Co-financing amounts to **US\$ 9,788,530** (62%). A summary of the GEF budget by outcome is shown in the following table:

Table 4: Project Budget by Components and Outcomes

Components/Outcomes	GEF	Co-finance
Component 1		
Outcome 1.1: Stakeholders and decision makers at state and local level have increased access to Ecosystem Services tools applicable to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use	524,000	714,000
Outcome 1.2: Natural Resources, ecosystem services and biodiversity in the project intervention area are assessed, valued and monitored using the new ES tools and knowledge provided through the project	776,000	-
<i>Component 1 total</i>	<i>1,300,000</i>	<i>714,000</i>
Component 2		
Outcome 2.1: Biodiversity and ES considerations are integrated into state and federal support programs and land use planning	1,100,000	506,000
<i>Component 2 total</i>	<i>1,100,000</i>	<i>506,000</i>
Component 3		
Outcome 3.1: Local stakeholders apply the ecosystem approach for planning and implementation of productive activities and biodiversity conservation	805,066	2,710,234
Outcome 3.2: The supply of key Ecosystem Services is secured, improving ecosystem resilience and leading to improved livelihoods	419,917	1,653,450
Outcome 3.3: Improved land use planning and management practices lead to increased habitat connectivity for globally significant biodiversity within the project intervention area as assessed and monitored under outcome 1.2	695,017	1,786,131
<i>Component 3 total</i>	<i>1,920,000</i>	<i>6,149,815</i>
Component 4		
Outcome 4.1: Project findings, tools and methodologies made available to state and federal decision makers as well as the public, and relevant interest groups	860,000	805,750
Outcome 4.2: Coordination and cooperation established with synergic initiatives and other projects	-	37,500
<i>Component 4 total</i>	<i>860,000</i>	<i>843,250</i>

Components/Outcomes	GEF	Co-finance
Component 1		
Monitoring and Evaluation	130,000	550,000
Project Management	590,000	1,025,465
Grand Total	5,900,000	9,788,530

6. *Implementation Issues*⁴⁴

23. The project underwent a mid-term review (MTR) that was concluded in May 2014. While the project's timeframe was considered by the MTR as too short to measure impact at the ecosystem or species level, it nevertheless demonstrated that it was progressing toward its objective in an effective manner.

24. The project was initially affected by several delays in the first half of implementation. Planning and implementation were hampered by discrepancies between the available budget and the logical framework. Consequently, initial consultancies were slow at starting and providing key outputs, such as baseline information. The project consequently underwent a major budget revision and adjustment, including amendments to the Logical Framework, that would enable it to recuperate and progress toward its objective in a more cost-effective and cost-efficient manner.

25. Contractual procedures were also time-consuming and put at risk losing the candidate to more timely opportunities, as well as affecting season-dependent activities in the field. In particular, the difficulties encountered in engaging local universities was of particular concern, as these were logical partners for continuity of several of the project's activities, including replication and monitoring. It is hoped that the upcoming independence of WWF-Mexico will help to eventually overcome the legal barriers encountered in contracting institutions.

26. The project's geographical scope is very large, and so there was a strong focus on positioning the project well within the communities. There were numerous project activities in different locations, which presented challenges in terms of providing technical support and follow-up. The project therefore did a prioritization of project areas, based on a combination of which communities requested support (showed genuine interest and commitment) and which ones WWF identified as important with regards to ecosystem services.

27. Other implementation challenges included internal changes within CONANP and WWF in the first year of implementation, as well as the elections in Mexico and the ensuing changes in project partners. The elections and changes in government also had some impact on the project. With each change in administration at the municipal level, there is oftentimes a complete replacement with little to no transition to handover experiences, priorities, ideas, projects, etc. This could have been disastrous for the project. In response to this, however, the project engaged each new administration to explain the relevance of the project to the stability of the communities, and is in the process of elaborating a Manual that describes how to engage each community, and the processes by which they can access support from the various institutions that work in the region.

28. Administrative and operational constraints were challenging as well, in terms of compliance with the requirements of both WWF and UNEP, as well as both U.S. and Mexican fiscal rules that made implementation cumbersome at times. The UNEP Task manager provided support to the review and revision of the budget to try to mitigate some of the difficulties encountered during implementation.

⁴⁴ Extracted from the Mid-term review report dated May 2014

II. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EVALUATION

1. *Objective and Scope of the Evaluation*

29. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy⁴⁵ and the UNEP Programme Manual⁴⁶, the Terminal Evaluation is undertaken at completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, GEF, CONANP, CONAFOR, and WWF. Therefore, the evaluation will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation [especially for the second phase of the project, if applicable].

30. It will focus on the following sets of **key questions**, based on the project's intended outcomes, which may be expanded by the consultants as deemed appropriate:

- (a) To what degree have the project products (e.g. ES tool kits, studies, methodologies, etc.) been accessible to decision makers and other relevant interest groups, and what effect has this had on the appraisal of ecosystem services and biodiversity in the project intervention areas?
- (b) Has the project been successful in influencing government agencies to mainstream biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services into policy, regulatory frameworks, federal/state supported programs, land use plans and community based work programmes?
- (c) Did the project succeed in effectively building local capacity in applying ecosystem approaches and good practice in productive activities (e.g. agriculture, tourism), and has this resulted in a marked improvement in the assessment, valuation, and monitoring of ecosystem services in the intervention areas?
- (d) Through its activities related to securing key ecosystem services and improving ecosystem resilience, to what extent have the rehabilitation initiatives begun to translate into improved local livelihoods in the intervention areas? Is there evidence of direct impacts arising from improved living conditions at the local level?
- (e) To what degree of success was the project able to establish synergies with other terrestrial ecosystem management projects in the LAC region and has this resulted in opportunities for increased cooperation and coordination between similar interventions?
- (f) How effectively and efficiently was the overall project planned, coordinated and monitored? What was the performance of the UNEP division and partners involved in the project?

2. *Overall Approach and Methods*

31. The Terminal Evaluation of the Project will be conducted by an independent consultant under the overall responsibility and management of the UNEP Evaluation Office in consultation with the UNEP Task Manager and the Sub-programme Coordinators of the UNEP Ecosystem Management Sub-programmes.

32. It will be an in-depth evaluation using a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the evaluation process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods will be used to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the consultant maintains close communication with the project team

⁴⁵ <http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPEvaluationPolicy/tabid/3050/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

⁴⁶ http://www.unep.org/QAS/Documents/UNEP_Programme_Manual_May_2013.pdf

and promotes information exchange throughout the evaluation implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholders') ownership of the evaluation findings.

33. The findings of the evaluation will be based on the following:

(a) **A desk review of:**

- Relevant background documentation, inter alia UNEP Medium-term Strategy (MTS) 2010-13 and relevant Programmes of Work (2010-11 and 2012-2013), relevant policies and legislation, including project background information available on publications and websites;
- Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;
- Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence etc.;
- Project outputs: e.g. SLM database, studies, policy briefs and papers, SLM methodologies and guidelines,
- Mid-term review of the project
- Evaluations/reviews of similar projects

(b) **Interviews (individual or in group) with:**

- UNEP Task Manager
- Project management team
- UNEP Fund Management Officer;
- Project partners, including GEF, CONANP, CONAFOR, and WWF Mexico;
- Relevant resource persons;
-

(c) **Surveys:** the data collection may entail the use of questionnaires or online surveys;

(d) **Field visits** to selected project sites; and

(e) **Other data collection tools** as will be deemed appropriate.

3. Key Evaluation principles

34. Evaluation findings and judgements should be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the evaluation report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) to the extent possible, and when verification was not possible, the single source will be mentioned. Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

35. The evaluation will assess the project with respect to **a minimum set of evaluation criteria** grouped in six categories: (1) Strategic Relevance; (2) Attainment of objectives and planned result, which comprises the assessment of outputs achieved, effectiveness and likelihood of impact; (3) Sustainability and replication; (4) Efficiency; (5) Factors and processes affecting project performance, including preparation and readiness, implementation and management, stakeholder participation and public awareness, country ownership and driven-ness, financial planning and management, UNEP supervision and backstopping, and project monitoring and evaluation; and (6) Complementarity with the UNEP strategies and programmes. The evaluation consultants can propose other evaluation criteria as deemed appropriate.

36. **Ratings.** All evaluation criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Annex 3 provides guidance on how the different criteria should be rated and how ratings should be aggregated for the different evaluation criterion categories.

37. **Baselines and counterfactuals.** In attempting to attribute any outcomes and impacts to the project intervention, the evaluators should consider the difference between *what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project*. This implies that there should be consideration of the baseline conditions, trends and counterfactuals in relation to the intended project outcomes and impacts. It also

means that there should be plausible evidence to attribute such outcomes and impacts to the actions of the project. Sometimes, adequate information on baseline conditions, trends or counterfactuals is lacking. In such cases this should be clearly highlighted by the evaluators, along with any simplifying assumptions that were taken to enable the evaluator to make informed judgements about project performance.

38. **The “Why?” Question.** As this is a terminal evaluation and a follow-up project is likely [or similar interventions are envisaged for the future], particular attention should be given to learning from the experience. Therefore, the “Why?” question should be at the front of the consultants’ minds all through the evaluation exercise. This means that the consultants need to go beyond the assessment of “what” the project performance was, and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of “why” the performance was as it was, i.e. of processes affecting attainment of project results (criteria under category F – see below). This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project. In fact, the usefulness of the evaluation will be determined to a large extent by the capacity of the consultants to explain “why things happened” as they happened and are likely to evolve in this or that direction, which goes well beyond the mere review of “where things stand” at the time of evaluation.

39. A key aim of the evaluation is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and key project stakeholders. The consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the evaluation process and in the communication of evaluation findings and key lessons.

40. **Communicating evaluation results.** Once the consultant(s) has obtained evaluation findings, lessons and results, the Evaluation Office will share the findings and lessons with the key stakeholders. Evaluation results should be communicated to the key stakeholders in a brief and concise manner that encapsulates the evaluation exercise in its entirety. There may, however, be several intended audiences, each with different interests and preferences regarding the report. The Evaluation Manager will plan with the consultant(s) which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key evaluation findings and lessons to them. This may include some or all of the following; a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of an evaluation brief or interactive presentation.

4. *Evaluation criteria*

A. *Strategic relevance*

41. The evaluation will assess, in retrospect, whether the project’s objectives and implementation strategies were consistent with global, regional and national environmental issues and needs.

42. The evaluation will assess whether the project was in-line with the GEF Biodiversity focal area’s strategic priorities and operational programme BD-SP4-Policy.

43. The evaluation will also assess the project’s relevance in relation to UNEP’s mandate and its alignment with UNEP’s policies and strategies at the time of project approval. UNEP’s Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP’s programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP’s thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes [known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs)] of the Sub-Programmes. The evaluation will assess whether the project makes a tangible/plausible contribution to any of the EAs specified in the Mid-term Review Report (May 2014). The magnitude and extent of any contributions and the causal linkages should be fully described.

The evaluation should assess the project’s alignment / compliance with UNEP’s policies and strategies. The evaluation should provide a brief narrative of the following:

1. *Alignment with the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP)*⁴⁷. The outcomes and achievements of the project should be briefly discussed in relation to the objectives of the UNEP BSP.

⁴⁷ <http://www.unep.org/GC/GC23/documents/GC23-6-add-1.pdf>

2. *Gender balance.* Ascertain to what extent project design, implementation and monitoring have taken into consideration: (i) possible gender inequalities in access to and the control over natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of women and children to environmental degradation or disasters; and (iii) the role of women in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation. Are the project intended results contributing to the realization of international GE (Gender Equality) norms and agreements as reflected in the UNEP Gender Policy and Strategy, as well as to regional, national and local strategies to advance HR & GE?
3. *Human rights based approach (HRBA) and inclusion of indigenous peoples issues, needs and concerns.* Ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on HRBA. Ascertain if the project is in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and pursued the concept of free, prior and informed consent.
4. *South-South Cooperation.* This is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge between developing countries. Briefly describe any aspects of the project that could be considered as examples of South-South Cooperation.

44. Based on an analysis of project stakeholders, the evaluation should assess the relevance of the project intervention to key stakeholder groups.

B. Achievement of Outputs

45. The evaluation will assess, for each component, the project's success in producing the programmed outputs and milestones as presented in Table 3 above, both in quantity and quality, as well as their usefulness and timeliness.

46. Briefly explain the reasons behind the success (or failure) of the project in producing its different outputs and meeting expected quality standards, cross-referencing as needed to more detailed explanations provided under Section F (which covers the processes affecting attainment of project results). Were key stakeholders appropriately involved in producing the programmed outputs?

C. Effectiveness: Attainment of Objectives and Planned Results

47. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the project's objectives were effectively achieved or are expected to be achieved.

48. The **Theory of Change** (ToC) of a project depicts the causal pathways from project outputs (goods and services delivered by the project) through outcomes (changes resulting from the use made by key stakeholders of project outputs) towards impact (long term changes in environmental benefits and living conditions). The ToC will also depict any intermediate changes required between project outcomes and impact, called 'intermediate states'. The ToC further defines the external factors that influence change along the major pathways; i.e. factors that affect whether one result can lead to the next. These external factors are either drivers (when the project has a certain level of control) or assumptions (when the project has no control). The ToC also clearly identifies the main stakeholders involved in the change processes.

49. The evaluation will reconstruct the ToC of the project based on a review of project documentation and stakeholder interviews. The evaluator will be expected to discuss the reconstructed TOC with the stakeholders during evaluation missions and/or interviews in order to ascertain the causal pathways identified and the validity of impact drivers and assumptions described in the TOC. This exercise will also enable the consultant to address some of the key evaluation questions and make adjustments to the TOC as appropriate (the ToC of the intervention may have been modified / adapted from the original design during project implementation).

50. The assessment of effectiveness will be structured in three sub-sections:

- (a) Evaluation of the **achievement of outcomes as defined in the reconstructed ToC**. These are the first-level outcomes expected to be achieved as an immediate result of project outputs. For this project, the main question will be to what extent the project has contributed to: (i)

Strengthening the knowledge base on Ecosystem Approach for biodiversity conservation; (ii) Supporting biodiversity-friendly policy and program development for land use planning and resource use; (iii) Piloting biodiversity friendly programs on the ground; and (iv) Outreach and dissemination of methodologies and tools developed by the project, as well as results and findings. Additional questions would be to what extent the project contributed to the mainstreaming of ecosystem services (ES) tools and sustainable livelihood options in national development planning in the Mixteca Region.

- (b) Assessment of the **likelihood of impact** using a Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI) approach⁴⁸. The evaluation will assess to what extent the project has to date contributed, and is likely in the future to further contribute, to [intermediate states], and the likelihood that those changes in turn to lead to positive changes in the natural resource base, benefits derived from the environment and human well-being.
- (c) Evaluation of the **achievement of the formal project overall objective, overall purpose, goals and component outcomes** using the project's own results statements as presented in the Project Document⁴⁹. This sub-section will refer back where applicable to the preceding sub-sections (a) and (b) to avoid repetition in the report. To measure achievement, the evaluation will use as much as appropriate the indicators for achievement proposed in the Logical Framework (Logframe) of the project, adding other relevant indicators as appropriate. Briefly explain what factors affected the project's success in achieving its objectives, cross-referencing as needed to more detailed explanations provided under Section F. Most commonly, the overall objective is a higher level result to which the project is intended to contribute. The section will describe the actual or likely **contribution** of the project to the objective.
- (d) The evaluation should, where possible, disaggregate outcomes and impacts for the key project stakeholders. It should also assess the extent to which Human Rights (HR) and Gender Equality (GE) were integrated in the Theory of Change and results framework of the intervention.

D. Sustainability and replication

51. Sustainability is understood as the probability of continued long-term project-derived results and impacts after the external project funding and assistance ends. The evaluation will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the persistence of benefits. Some of these factors might be direct results of the project while others will include contextual circumstances or developments that are not under control of the project but that may condition the sustainability of benefits. The evaluation should ascertain to what extent follow-up work has been initiated and how project results will be sustained and enhanced over time. The reconstructed ToC will assist in the evaluation of sustainability, as the drivers and assumptions required to achieve higher-level results are often similar to the factors affecting sustainability of these changes.

52. Four aspects of sustainability will be addressed:

- (a) *Socio-political sustainability.* Are there any social or political factors that may influence positively or negatively the sustenance of project results and progress towards impacts? Is the level of ownership by the main stakeholders sufficient to allow for the project results to be sustained? Are there sufficient government and other key stakeholder awareness, interests, commitment and incentives to integrate Biodiversity and ES considerations into national programs and land use planning? Did the project conduct 'succession planning' and implement this during the life of the project? Was capacity building conducted for key stakeholders? Did the intervention activities aim to promote (and did they promote) positive sustainable changes in attitudes, behaviours and power relations between the different stakeholders? To what extent

⁴⁸ Guidance material on Theory of Change and the ROtI approach is available from the Evaluation Office.

⁴⁹ Or any subsequent **formally approved** revision of the project document or logical framework.

has the integration of HR and GE led to an increase in the likelihood of sustainability of project results?

- (b) *Financial resources.* To what extent are the continuation of project results and the eventual impact of the project dependent on financial resources? What is the likelihood that adequate financial resources⁵⁰ will be or will become available to use capacities built by the project? Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project results and onward progress towards impact?
- (c) *Institutional framework.* To what extent is the sustenance of the results and onward progress towards impact dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance? How robust are the institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. required to sustaining project results and to lead those to impact on human behaviour and environmental resources, goods or services?
- (d) *Environmental sustainability.* Are there any environmental factors, positive or negative, that can influence the future flow of project benefits? Are there any project outputs or higher level results that are likely to affect the environment, which, in turn, might affect sustainability of project benefits? Are there any foreseeable negative environmental impacts that may occur as the project results are being up-scaled?

53. **Catalytic role and replication.** The *catalytic role* of UNEP interventions is embodied in their approach of supporting the creation of an enabling environment and of investing in pilot activities which are innovative and showing how new approaches can work. UNEP also aims to support activities that upscale new approaches to a national, regional or global level, with a view to achieve sustainable global environmental benefits. The evaluation will assess the catalytic role played by this project, namely to what extent the project has:

- (a) *catalyzed behavioural changes* in terms of use and application, by the relevant stakeholders, of capacities developed;
- (b) provided *incentives* (social, economic, market based, competencies etc.) to contribute to catalyzing changes in stakeholder behaviour;
- (c) contributed to *institutional changes*, for instance institutional uptake of project-demonstrated technologies, practices or management approaches;
- (d) contributed to *policy changes* (on paper and in implementation of policy);
- (e) contributed to sustained follow-on financing (*catalytic financing*) from Governments, private sector, donors etc.;
- (f) created opportunities for particular individuals or institutions ("*champions*") to catalyze change (without which the project would not have achieved all of its results).

54. *Replication* is defined as lessons and experiences coming out of the project that are replicated (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in different geographic areas) or scaled up (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in the same geographic area but on a much larger scale and funded by other sources). The evaluation will assess the approach adopted by the project to promote replication effects and determine to what extent actual replication has already occurred, or is likely to occur in the near future. What are the factors that may influence replication and scaling up of project experiences and lessons?

E. Efficiency

55. The evaluation will assess the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution. It will describe any cost- or time-saving measures put in place in attempting to bring the project as far as possible in achieving its results within its (severely constrained) secured budget and (extended) time. It will also analyse

⁵⁰ Those resources can be from multiple sources, such as the national budget, public and private sectors, development assistance etc.

how delays, if any, have affected project execution, costs and effectiveness. Wherever possible, costs and time over results ratios of the project will be compared with that of other similar interventions.

56. The evaluation will give special attention to efforts by the project teams to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency. For instance, . For instance, the evaluation will consider how well other information sources (on regional environmental status and trends, and on the costs and benefits of different policy options) have been tapped, and how the project ensured the complementarity of its process and products to other assessment processes and information sources, to avoid duplication of efforts. Was there sufficient information about the capacity of collaborating institutions and experts, to limit and target training and technical support to what was really needed? Did the project avoid duplication of activities at the national level, through participation of relevant stakeholders?

F. Factors and processes affecting project performance

57. **Preparation and readiness.** This criterion focusses on the quality of project design and preparation. Were project stakeholders⁵¹ adequately identified and were they sufficiently involved in project development and ground truthing e.g. of proposed timeframe and budget? Were the project's objectives and components clear, practicable and feasible within its timeframe? Were the capacities of executing agencies properly considered when the project was designed? Was the project document clear and realistic to enable effective and efficient implementation? Were the partnership arrangements properly identified and the roles and responsibilities negotiated prior to project implementation? Were counterpart resources (funding, staff, and facilities) and enabling legislation assured? Were adequate project management arrangements in place? Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated in the project design? What factors influenced the quality-at-entry of the project design, choice of partners, allocation of financial resources etc.? Were any design weaknesses mentioned in the Project Review Committee minutes at the time of project approval adequately addressed?

58. **Project implementation and management.** This includes an analysis of implementation approaches used by the project, its management framework, the project's adaptation to changing conditions and responses to changing risks, including environmental and social safeguard issues (adaptive management), the performance of the implementation arrangements and partnerships, relevance of changes in project design, and overall performance of project management. The evaluation will:

- (a) Ascertain to what extent the project implementation mechanisms outlined in the project document have been followed and were effective in delivering project milestones, outputs and outcomes. Were pertinent adaptations made to the approaches originally proposed?
- (b) Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of project management and how well the management was able to adapt to changes during the life of the project.
- (c) Assess the role and performance of the teams and working groups established and the project execution arrangements at all levels.
- (d) Assess the extent to which project management responded to direction and guidance provided by the UNEP Task Manager and the Project Steering Committee.
- (e) Identify operational and political / institutional problems and constraints that influenced the effective implementation of the project, and how the project tried to overcome these problems.

59. **Stakeholder participation, cooperation and partnerships.** The Evaluation will assess the effectiveness of mechanisms for information sharing and cooperation with other UNEP projects and programmes, external stakeholders and partners. The term stakeholder should be considered in the broadest sense, encompassing both project partners and target users (such as land owners, agrarian representatives, municipal authorities; civil associations, regional committees, work groups, etc.) of project

⁵¹ Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, institutions, or other bodies that have an interest or 'stake' in the outcome of the project. The term also applies to those potentially adversely affected by the project.

products. The TOC and stakeholder analysis should assist the evaluators in identifying the key stakeholders and their respective roles, capabilities and motivations in each step of the causal pathways from activities to achievement of outputs, outcomes and intermediate states towards impact. The assessment will look at three related and often overlapping processes: (1) information dissemination to and between stakeholders, (2) consultation with and between stakeholders, and (3) active engagement of stakeholders in project decision making and activities. The evaluation will specifically assess:

- (a) The approach(es) and mechanisms used to identify and engage stakeholders (within and outside UNEP) in project design and at critical stages of project implementation. What were the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches with respect to the project's objectives and the stakeholders' motivations and capacities?
- (b) How was the overall collaboration between different functional units of UNEP involved in the project? What coordination mechanisms were in place? Were the incentives for internal collaboration in UNEP adequate?
- (c) Was the level of involvement of the Regional, Liaison and Out-posted Offices in project design, planning, decision-making and implementation of activities appropriate?
- (d) Has the project made full use of opportunities for collaboration with other projects and programmes including opportunities not mentioned in the Project Document⁵²? Have complementarities been sought, synergies been optimized and duplications avoided?
- (e) What was the achieved degree and effectiveness of collaboration and interactions between the various project partners and stakeholders during design and implementation of the project? This should be disaggregated for the main stakeholder groups identified in the inception report.
- (f) To what extent has the project been able to take up opportunities for joint activities, pooling of resources and mutual learning with other organizations and networks? In particular, how useful are partnership mechanisms and initiatives such as the Inter-institutional Working Group (GTI) at the state level to build stronger coherence and collaboration between participating institutions?
- (g) How did the relationship between the project and the collaborating partners (institutions and individual experts) develop? Which benefits stemmed from their involvement for project performance, for UNEP and for the stakeholders and partners themselves? Do the results of the project (strategic programmes and plans, monitoring and management systems, sub-regional agreements etc.) promote participation of stakeholders, including users, in environmental decision making?

60. **Communication and public awareness.** The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of any public awareness activities that were undertaken during the course of implementation of the project to communicate the project's objective, progress, outcomes and lessons. This should be disaggregated for the main stakeholder groups identified in the inception report. Did the project identify and make use of existing communication channels and networks used by key stakeholders? Did the project provide feedback channels?

61. **Country ownership and driven-ness.** The evaluation will assess the degree and effectiveness of involvement of government / public sector agencies in the project, in particular those involved in project execution and those participating in project Steering Committee, partnership arrangements, and the Inter-institutional Working Group:

- (a) To what extent have Governments assumed responsibility for the project and provided adequate support to project execution, including the degree of cooperation received from the various public institutions involved in the project?

⁵² [If the ProDoc mentions any opportunities for collaboration with other projects and programmes, present these here in the footnote]

- (b) How and how well did the project stimulate country ownership of project outputs and outcomes?
- (c) [Any other project-specific questions]

62. **Financial planning and management.** Evaluation of financial planning requires assessment of the quality and effectiveness of financial planning and control of financial resources throughout the project's lifetime. The assessment will look at actual project costs by activities compared to budget (variances), financial management (including disbursement issues), and co-financing. The evaluation will:

- (a) Verify the application of proper standards (clarity, transparency, audit etc.) and timeliness of financial planning, management and reporting to ensure that sufficient and timely financial resources were available to the project and its partners;
- (b) Assess other administrative processes such as recruitment of staff, procurement of goods and services (including consultants), preparation and negotiation of cooperation agreements etc. to the extent that these might have influenced project performance;
- (c) Present the extent to which co-financing has materialized as expected at project approval (see Table 1). Report country co-financing to the project overall, and to support project activities at the national level in particular. The evaluation will provide a breakdown of final actual costs and co-financing for the different project components (see tables in Annex 4).
- (d) Describe the resources the project has leveraged since inception and indicate how these resources are contributing to the project's ultimate objective. Leveraged resources are additional resources—beyond those committed to the project itself at the time of approval—that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project. Leveraged resources can be financial or in-kind and they may be from other donors, NGO's, foundations, governments, communities or the private sector.

63. Analyse the effects on project performance of any irregularities in procurement, use of financial resources and human resource management, and the measures taken UNEP to prevent such irregularities in the future. Determine whether the measures taken were adequate.

64. **Supervision, guidance and technical backstopping.** The purpose of supervision is to verify the quality and timeliness of project execution in terms of finances, administration and achievement of outputs and outcomes, in order to identify and recommend ways to deal with problems which arise during project execution. Such problems may be related to project management but may also involve technical/institutional substantive issues in which UNEP has a major contribution to make.

65. The evaluators should assess the effectiveness of supervision, guidance and technical support provided by the different supervising/supporting bodies including:

- (a) The adequacy of project supervision plans, inputs and processes;
- (b) The realism and candour of project reporting and the emphasis given to outcome monitoring (results-based project management);
- (c) How well did the different guidance and backstopping bodies play their role and how well did the guidance and backstopping mechanisms work? What were the strengths in guidance and backstopping and what were the limiting factors?

66. **Monitoring and evaluation.** The evaluation will include an assessment of the quality, application and effectiveness of project monitoring and evaluation plans and tools, including an assessment of risk management based on the assumptions and risks identified in the project document. The evaluation will assess how information generated by the M&E system during project implementation was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensuring sustainability. M&E is assessed on three levels:

- (a) *M&E Design.* The evaluators should use the following questions to help assess the M&E design aspects:

- Arrangements for monitoring: Did the project have a sound M&E plan to monitor results and track progress towards achieving project objectives? Have the responsibilities for M&E activities been clearly defined? Were the data sources and data collection instruments appropriate? Was the time frame for various M&E activities specified? Was the frequency of various monitoring activities specified and adequate?
 - How well was the project logical framework (original and possible updates) designed as a planning and monitoring instrument?
 - SMART-ness of indicators: Are there specific indicators in the logframe for each of the project objectives? Are the indicators measurable, attainable (realistic) and relevant to the objectives? Are the indicators time-bound?
 - Adequacy of baseline information: To what extent has baseline information on performance indicators been collected and presented in a clear manner? Was the methodology for the baseline data collection explicit and reliable? For instance, was there adequate baseline information on pre-existing accessible information on global and regional environmental status and trends, and on the costs and benefits of different policy options for the different target audiences? Was there sufficient information about the assessment capacity of collaborating institutions and experts etc. to determine their training and technical support needs?
 - To what extent did the project engage key stakeholders in the design and implementation of monitoring? Which stakeholders (from groups identified in the inception report) were involved? If any stakeholders were excluded, what was the reason for this?
 - Arrangements for evaluation: Have specific targets been specified for project outputs? Has the desired level of achievement been specified for all indicators of objectives and outcomes? Were there adequate provisions in the legal instruments binding project partners to fully collaborate in evaluations?
 - Budgeting and funding for M&E activities: Determine whether support for M&E was budgeted adequately and was funded in a timely fashion during implementation.
- (b) *M&E Plan Implementation.* The evaluation will verify that:
- the M&E system was operational and facilitated timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period;
 - PIR reports were prepared (the realism of the Task Manager's assessments will be reviewed)
 - Half-yearly Progress & Financial Reports were complete and accurate;
 - the information provided by the M&E system was used during the project to improve project performance and to adapt to changing needs.

G. The Consultant

67. For this evaluation, the evaluation team will consist of one independent Consultant. Details about the specific roles and responsibilities of the consultant are presented in Annex 1 of these TORs. The following expertise and experience is required:

- Postgraduate qualification in environmental sciences or related field.
- Broad understanding and experience with projects in the context of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services, sustainable livelihoods, agriculture and natural resource management, development planning, policy and regulatory frameworks;
- Extensive evaluation experience, including of large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach;
- Knowledge of the UN system (previous consultancy work with UNEP is desirable);
- Minimum of 15 years of professional experience;
- Fluency in both written and oral English⁵³, as well as Spanish.⁵⁴

⁵³ Evaluation reports will be submitted in English

68. The Consultant will coordinate data collection and analysis, and the preparation of the main report for the evaluation. S/He will ensure that all evaluation criteria and questions are adequately covered.

69. By undersigning the service contract with UNEP/UNON, the consultant certifies that s/he has not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, s/he will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project's executing or implementing units.

H. Evaluation Deliverables and Review Procedures

Inception Report

70. The evaluation consultant will prepare an **inception report** (see Annex 2(a) of TORs for guidelines on the Inception Report outline) containing: a thorough review of the project context and project design quality, a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, the evaluation framework, and a tentative evaluation schedule.

71. It is expected that a large portion of the desk review will be conducted during the inception phase. It will be important to acquire a good understanding of the project context, design and process at this stage. The review of design quality will cover the following aspects (see Annex 7 for the detailed project design assessment matrix):

- Strategic relevance of the project
- Preparation and readiness;
- Financial planning;
- M&E design;
- Complementarity with UNEP strategies and programmes;
- Sustainability considerations and measures planned to promote replication and up-scaling.

72. The inception report will present a draft, desk-based **reconstructed Theory of Change** of the project. It is vital to reconstruct the ToC *before* most of the data collection (review of progress reports, in-depth interviews, surveys etc.) is done, because the ToC will define which direct outcomes, drivers and assumptions of the project need to be assessed and measured – based on which indicators – to allow adequate data collection for the evaluation of project effectiveness, likelihood of impact and sustainability.

73. The inception report will also include a **stakeholder analysis** identifying key stakeholders, networks and channels of communication. This information should be gathered from the Project document and discussion with the project team. (see Annex 9)

74. The **evaluation framework** will present in further detail the overall evaluation approach. It will specify for each evaluation question under the various criteria what the respective indicators and data sources will be. The evaluation framework should summarize the information available from project documentation against each of the main evaluation parameters. Any gaps in information should be identified and methods for additional data collection, verification and analysis should be specified. Evaluations/reviews of other large assessments can provide ideas about the most appropriate evaluation methods to be used.

75. Effective **communication strategies** help stakeholders understand the results and use the information for organisational learning and improvement. While the evaluation is expected to result in a comprehensive document, content is not always best shared in a long and detailed report; this is best presented in a synthesised form using any of a variety of creative and innovative methods. The evaluator is encouraged to make use of multimedia formats in the gathering of information eg. video, photos, sound

⁵⁴ The evaluation reports shall be presented in English however the national language of the country being evaluated may be used for stakeholder consultations and surveys as necessary.

recordings. Together with the full report, the evaluator will be expected to produce a **2-page summary of key findings and lessons** (please refer to annex 10).

76. The inception report will also present a **tentative schedule** for the overall evaluation process, including a draft programme for the country visit and tentative list of people/institutions to be interviewed.

77. The inception report will be submitted for review and approval by the Evaluation Office before the any further data collection and analysis is undertaken.

78. **[Optional]** When data collection and analysis has almost been completed, the evaluation team will prepare a short note on preliminary findings and recommendations for discussion with the project team and the Evaluation Reference Group. The purpose of the note is to allow the evaluation team to receive guidance on the relevance and validity of the main findings emerging from the evaluation.

Preparation of the main report

79. The main evaluation report should be brief (around 50 pages – excluding the executive summary and annexes), to the point and written in plain English. The report will follow the annotated Table of Contents outlined in Annex 2. It must explain the purpose of the evaluation, exactly what was evaluated and the methods used (with their limitations). The report will present evidence-based and balanced findings, consequent conclusions, lessons and recommendations, which will be cross-referenced to each other. The report should be presented in a way that makes the information accessible and comprehensible. Any dissident views in response to evaluation findings will be appended in footnote or annex as appropriate. To avoid repetitions in the report, the authors will use numbered paragraphs and make cross-references where possible.

Review of the draft evaluation report

80. The evaluation consultant will submit a **“zero draft”**⁵⁵ to the UNEP EO and revise the draft following the comments and suggestions made by the EO. Once a draft of adequate quality has been accepted, the EO will share it with the Task Manager as a **“first draft”** report, who will alert the EO in case the report would contain any blatant factual errors. The Evaluation Office will then forward the first draft report to the executing agencies, project stakeholders and project partners in the six pilot countries, for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions. It is also very important that stakeholders provide feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Comments would be expected within two weeks after the draft report has been shared. Any comments or responses to the draft report will be sent to the UNEP EO for collation. The EO will provide the comments to the evaluation consultant for consideration in preparing the final draft report, along with its own views.

81. The evaluation consultant will submit the **“final draft”** report no later than 2 weeks after reception of stakeholder comments. The consultant will prepare a **response to comments**, listing those comments not or only partially accepted by them that could therefore not or only partially be accommodated in the final report. They will explain why those comments have not or only partially been accepted, providing evidence as required. This response to comments will be shared by the EO with the interested stakeholders to ensure full transparency.

82. **Submission of the final evaluation report.** The **final report** shall be submitted by Email to the Head of the Evaluation Office. The Evaluation Office will finalize the report and share it with the interested Divisions and Sub-programme Coordinators in UNEP. The final evaluation report will be published on the UNEP Evaluation Office web-site www.unep.org/eou.

⁵⁵ This refers to the earliest, completed main report that will be submitted by the consultant(s) for review by the EO before transitioning to a ‘first draft’ that meets an acceptable standard and that can be circulated for external review.

83. As per usual practice, the UNEP EO will prepare a **quality assessment** of the zero draft and final draft report, which is a tool for providing structured feedback to the evaluation consultant. The quality of the report will be assessed and rated against the criteria specified in Annex 3.

84. The UNEP Evaluation Office will assess the ratings in the final evaluation report based on a careful review of the evidence collated by the evaluation consultant and the internal consistency of the report. Where there are differences of opinion between the evaluator and UNEP Evaluation Office on project ratings, both viewpoints will be clearly presented in the final report. The UNEP Evaluation Office ratings will be considered the final ratings for the project.

85. At the end of the evaluation process, the Evaluation Office will prepare a Recommendations Implementation Plan in the format of a table to be completed and updated at regular intervals by the Task Manager. After reception of the Recommendations Implementation Plan, the Task Manager is expected to complete it and return it to the EO within one month. (S)he is expected to update the plan every six month until the end of the tracking period. As this is a Terminal Evaluation, the tracking period for implementation of recommendations will be 18 months, unless it is agreed to make this period shorter or longer as required for realistic implementation of all evaluation recommendations. Tracking points will be every six months after completion of the implementation plan.

I. Schedule of the evaluation

86. Table 7 below presents the tentative schedule for the evaluation.

Table 7. Tentative schedule for the evaluation

Milestone	Tentative timelines
Consultant recruitment and contracting process	July 2015
Inception and Kick off meetings	August 2015
Final Inception Report	August 2015
Evaluation Missions	September 2015
Telephone interviews, surveys etc.	September 2015
'Zero' draft report	October 2015
First Draft Report shared with UNEP Project Manager	October 2015
[Revised] First Draft Report shared with project team	November 2015
Draft Report shared with external stakeholders	November 2015
Final Report and 2-page summary of key findings and lessons	November - December 2015

Annex 1. Consultant-specific Terms of Reference

The Consultant

The consultant will be hired for approximately 40 days spread over period of approximately five months (late July – early November 2015). S/he will be responsible for overall management of the evaluation, in close consultation with the UNEP Evaluation Office, and timely delivery of its outputs as described in the overall TORs of the evaluation. S/he will lead the evaluation design, data collection and analysis, and report-writing. More specifically:

Manage the inception phase of the evaluation, including:

- conduct a preliminary desk review and introductory interviews with project staff;
- draft the reconstructed Theory of Change of the project;
- prepare the evaluation framework;
- develop the desk review and interview protocols;
- draft the survey protocols (partner survey and user survey);
- plan the evaluation schedule;
- distribute tasks and responsibilities among the evaluation team members; and
- prepare the inception report, including comments received from the Evaluation Office and Evaluation Advisory Panel.

Coordination of the data collection and analysis phase of the evaluation, including:

- conduct further desk review and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders of the project;
- information gathering and analysis; and

Coordination of the reporting phase, including:

- liaise with the Evaluation Office on comments received and ensure that comments are taken into account during finalization of the main report; and
- prepare a Response to Comments annex for the main report, listing those comments not accepted by the evaluation team and indicating the reason for their rejection.

Managing internal and external relations including:

- maintain a positive relationship with evaluation stakeholders, ensuring that the evaluation process is as participatory as possible but at the same time maintains its independence; and
- communicate in a timely manner with the Evaluation Office on any issues requiring its attention and intervention.

The consultant shall have had no prior involvement in the formulation or implementation of the Project and will be independent from the participating institutions. S/he will sign the Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

The consultant will be selected and recruited by the UNEP Evaluation Office through an individual consultancy contract.

Key selection criteria

- ✓ Postgraduate qualification in environmental sciences or related field.
- ✓ Broad understanding and experience with projects in the context of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services, sustainable livelihoods, agriculture and natural resource management, development planning, policy and regulatory frameworks;
- ✓ Extensive evaluation experience, including of large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach;
- ✓ Knowledge of the UN system (previous consultancy work with UNEP is desirable);

- ✓ Minimum of 15 years of professional experience;
- ✓ Fluency in both written and oral English, as well as Spanish.

The fee of the Team Leader will be agreed on a deliverable basis and paid upon acceptance of expected key deliverables by the UNEP Evaluation Office.

Deliverables

- Inception report
- Draft main report incorporating Evaluation Office and Evaluation Advisory Panel comments as required
- Final main report incorporating comments received from evaluation stakeholders as appropriate, including a “response to comments” annex
- 2 page summary of key findings and lessons learned summarising project findings (see template in Annex 10.)

Schedule of Payment

Deliverables	Percentage payment
Signature of contract	Travel expenses
Inception report	30% of fees
Submission and approval of the first draft evaluation report (for stakeholder review)	40% of fees
Submission and approval of the final evaluation report and a 2-page summary of key findings and lessons	30% of fees

Contractual arrangements

87. The consultant will be hired under an individual Special Service Agreement (SSA). There are two options for contract and payment: lumpsum or “fees only”.

- **Lumpsum:** The contract covers both fees and expenses such as travel, per diem (DSA) and incidental expenses which are estimated in advance. The consultant will receive an initial payment covering estimated expenses upon signature of the contract.
- **Fee only:** The contract stipulates consultant fees only. Air tickets will be purchased by UNEP and 75% of the DSA for each authorised travel mission will be paid up front. Local in-country travel and communication costs will be reimbursed on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion.

88. By undersigning the Special Services Agreement with UNEP/UNON, the consultant certifies that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, they will not have any future interests (within the six months following completion of the contract) with the project’s executing or implementing units.

89. The consultant may be with access to UNEP’s Programme Information Management System (PIMS) and if such access is granted, the consultant agree not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the evaluation report.

90. *In case the consultant is not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these TORs, and in line with the expected quality standards by the UNEP Evaluation Office, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Director of the Evaluation Office until the consultant have improved the deliverables to meet UNEP’s quality standards.*

91. If the consultant fails to submit a satisfactory final product to UNEP in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, the Evaluation Office reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultant' fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by the Evaluation Office to bring the report up to standard.

Annex 2. Annotated Table of Contents of the main evaluation deliverables

A. INCEPTION REPORT

Section	Notes	Data Sources	Max. number of pages
1. Introduction	Brief introduction to the project and evaluation.		1
2. Project background	Summarise the project context and rationale. How has the context of the project changed since project design?	Background information on context	3
Stakeholder analysis	See notes in annex 9	Project document Project preparation phase. TM/PM	1
3. Review of project design	Summary of project design strengths and weaknesses. Complete the Template for assessment of the quality of project design (Annex 5 of the Terms of Reference).	Project document and revisions, MTE/MTR if any.	2 + completed matrix provided in annex of the inception report
4. Reconstructed Theory of Change	The Theory of Change should be reconstructed, based on project documentation. It should be presented with one or more diagrams and explained with a narrative.	Project document narrative, logical framework and budget tables. Other project related documents.	2 pages of narrative + diagram(s)
5. Evaluation framework	The evaluation framework will contain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed evaluation questions (including new questions raised by review of project design and ToC analysis) and indicators Data Sources It will be presented as a matrix, showing questions, indicators and data sources.	Review of all project documents.	5
Learning, Communication and outreach	Description of the approach and methods that the consultant will use to promote reflection and learning through the evaluation process.	Review of project documents, stakeholder analysis, discussions with the Evaluation Manager, Task Manager and Project Coordinator	1
6. Evaluation schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised timeline for the overall evaluation (dates of travel and key evaluation milestones) Tentative programme for the country visit 	Discussion with project team on logistics.	2
7. Distribution of responsibilities among within the evaluation team	Distribution of roles and responsibilities among evaluation consultant (may be expanded in Annex)		1
6. Annexes	A- Completed matrix of the overall quality of project design B- List of individuals and documents consulted for the inception report C- List of documents and individuals to be consulted during the main evaluation phase		

B. MAIN REPORT

Project Identification Table	An updated version of the Table 1 (page 1) of these TORs
Executive Summary	Overview of the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. It should encapsulate the essence of the information contained in the report to facilitate dissemination and distillation of lessons. The main points for each evaluation parameter should be presented here (with a summary ratings table), as well as the most important lessons and recommendations. Maximum 4 pages.
I. Introduction	<p>A very brief introduction, mentioning the name of evaluation and project, project duration, cost, implementing partners and objectives of the evaluation.</p> <p>Objectives, approach and limitations of the evaluation</p>
II. The Project	
A. Context	<p>Overview of the broader institutional and country context, in relation to the project's objectives, including changes during project implementation. Factors to address include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complexity of the project implication arrangements (no. of partners/components, geographical scope, ambitiousness of objective) • The proportion of the Project Managers and FMO's time/workplan available to the project • The ease or difficulty of the project's external operating environment (climate, infrastructure, political/economic stability, socio-cultural factors) • Perceived capacity/expertise of executing partners
B. Objectives and components	
C. Target areas/groups	
D. Milestones/key dates in project design and implementation	
E. Implementation arrangements	
F. Project financing	Estimated costs and funding sources
G. Project partners	
H. Changes in design during implementation	
I. Reconstructed Theory of Change of the project	
III. Evaluation Findings	
A. Strategic relevance	<p>This chapter is organized according to the evaluation criteria presented in section II.4 of the TORs and provides factual evidence relevant to the questions asked and sound analysis and interpretations of such evidence. This is the main substantive section of the report. Ratings are provided at the end of the assessment of each evaluation criterion.</p>
B. Achievement of outputs	
C. Effectiveness: Attainment of project objectives and results	
i. Direct outcomes from reconstructed TOC	
ii. Likelihood of impact using ROtI and based on reconstructed TOC	
iii. Achievement of project goal and planned objectives	
D. Sustainability and replication	
E. Efficiency	
F. Factors affecting performance	
IV. Conclusions and Recommendations	
A. Conclusions	<p>This section should summarize the main conclusions of the evaluation, told in a logical sequence from cause to effect. It is suggested to start with the positive achievements and a short explanation why these could be achieved, and, then, to present the less successful aspects of the project with a short explanation why. The conclusions section should end with the overall assessment of the project. Avoid presenting an "executive summary"-style conclusions section. Conclusions should be cross-referenced to the main text of the</p>

	report (using the paragraph numbering). The overall ratings table should be inserted here (see Annex 3).
B. Lessons Learned	Lessons learned should be anchored in the conclusions of the evaluation. In fact, no lessons should appear which are not based upon an explicit finding of the evaluation. Lessons learned are rooted in real project experiences, i.e. based on good practices and successes which could be replicated or derived from problems encountered and mistakes made which should be avoided in the future. Lessons learned must have the potential for wider application and use. Lessons should briefly describe the context from which they are derived and specify the contexts in which they may be useful.
C. Recommendations	As for the lessons learned, all recommendations should be anchored in the conclusions of the report, with proper cross-referencing. Recommendations are actionable proposals on how to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results. They should be feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities), specific in terms of who would do what and when, and set a measurable performance target. In some cases, it might be useful to propose options, and briefly analyse the pros and cons of each option. It is suggested, for each recommendation, to first briefly summarize the finding it is based upon with cross-reference to the section in the main report where the finding is elaborated in more detail. The recommendation is then stated after this summary of the finding. Recommendations should be SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Result-oriented and Time-bound
Annexes	These may include additional material deemed relevant by the evaluator but must include: 1. Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the evaluators 2. Evaluation TORs (without annexes) 3. Evaluation program, containing the names of locations visited and the names (or functions) and <u>contacts (Email)</u> of people met 4. Bibliography 5. Summary co-finance information and a statement of project expenditure by activity (See annex 4 of these TORs) 6. Evaluation findings and lessons. A short and simple presentation of evaluation findings and lessons ensures that information is easily accessible to a wide range of audiences. (Use the 2-page template provided in Annex ?) 7. Any other communication and outreach tools used to disseminate results (e.g. power point presentations, charts, graphs, videos, case studies, etc.) 6. Brief CVs of the consultant

Important note on report formatting and layout

Reports should be submitted in Microsoft Word .doc or .docx format. Use of Styles (Headings etc.), page numbering and numbered paragraphs is compulsory from the very first draft report submitted. Consultant should make sure to gather media evidence, especially photographs, during the assignment and insert a sample in the final report in the appropriate sections. All media collected during the assignment shall become property of the UNEP Evaluation Office; which shall ensure that the authors are recognised as copyright owners. The consultant grants permission to the UNEP Evaluation Office to reproduce the photographs in any size or quantity for use in official publications. The consultant shall seek permission before taking any photographs in which persons are recognisable and to inform them that the photographs may be used in UNEP official publications.

Examples of UNEP Terminal Evaluation Reports are available at www.unep.org/eou.

Annex 3. Evaluation Ratings

The evaluation will provide individual ratings for the evaluation criteria described in section II.4 of these TORs.

Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability is rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU).

In the conclusions section of the report, ratings will be presented together in a table, with a brief justification cross-referenced to the findings in the main body of the report.

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
A. Strategic relevance		HS → HU
B. Achievement of outputs		HS → HU
C. Effectiveness: Attainment of project objectives and results		HS → HU
1. Achievement of direct outcomes		HS → HU
2. Likelihood of impact		HS → HU
3. Achievement of project goal and planned objectives		HS → HU
D. Sustainability and replication		HL → HU
1. Financial		HL → HU
2. Socio-political		HL → HU
3. Institutional framework		HL → HU
4. Environmental		HL → HU
5. Catalytic role and replication		HS → HU
E. Efficiency		HS → HU
F. Factors affecting project performance		
1. Preparation and readiness		HS → HU
2. Project implementation and management		HS → HU
3. Stakeholders participation and public awareness		HS → HU
4. Country ownership and driven-ness		HS → HU
5. Financial planning and management		HS → HU
6. UNEP supervision and backstopping		HS → HU
7. Monitoring and evaluation		HS → HU
a. M&E Design		HS → HU
b. Budgeting and funding for M&E activities		HS → HU
c. M&E pPlan Implementation		HS → HU
Overall project rating		HS → HU

Rating for effectiveness: Attainment of project objectives and results. An aggregated rating will be provided for the achievement of direct outcomes as determined in the reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, the likelihood of impact and the achievement of the formal project goal and objectives. This aggregated rating is not a simple average of the separate ratings given to the evaluation sub-criteria, but an overall judgement of project effectiveness by the consultant.

Ratings on sustainability. All the dimensions of sustainability are deemed critical. Therefore, the overall rating for sustainability will be the lowest rating on the separate dimensions.

Ratings on Financial planning and management: An aggregated rating will be provided based on an average of the various component ratings listed in the table below. Please include this table as an annex in the main report:

GEF projects

Financial management components	Rating	Evidence/ Comments
---------------------------------	--------	--------------------

Attention paid to compliance with procurement rules and regulations			HS:HU	
Contact/communication between the PM & FMO			HS:HU	
PM & FMO knowledge of the project financials			HS:HU	
FMO responsiveness to financial requests			HS:HU	
PM & FMO responsiveness to addressing and resolving financial issues			HS:HU	
Were the following documents provided to the evaluator:				
A.	An up to date co-financing table	Y/N		
B.	A summary report on the projects financial management and expenditures during the life of the project - to date	Y/N		
C.	A summary of financial revisions made to the project and their purpose	Y/N		
D.	Copies of any completed audits	Y/N		
Availability of project financial reports and audits			HS:HU	
Timeliness of project financial reports and audits			HS:HU	
Quality of project financial reports and audits			HS:HU	
FMO knowledge of partner financial requirements and procedures			HS:HU	
Overall rating				

Ratings of monitoring and evaluation. The M&E system will be rated on M&E design, M&E plan implementation, and budgeting and funding for M&E activities (the latter sub-criterion is covered in the main report under M&E design). M&E plan implementation will be considered critical for the overall assessment of the M&E system. Thus, the overall rating for M&E will not be higher than the rating on M&E plan implementation.

Overall project rating. The overall project rating should consider parameters 'A-E' as being the most important with 'C' and 'D' in particular being very important.

Annex 4. Project costs and co-financing tables

Project Costs

Component/sub-component/output	Estimated cost at design	Actual Cost	Expenditure ratio (actual/planned)

Co-financing

Co financing (Type/Source)	UNEP own Financing (US\$1,000)		Government (US\$1,000)		Other* (US\$1,000)		Total (US\$1,000)		Total Disbursed (US\$1,000)
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
- Grants									
- Loans									
- Credits									
- Equity investments									
- In-kind support									
- Other (*)									
-									
-									
<u>Totals</u>									

* This refers to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries.

Annex 5. Quality Assessment of the Evaluation Report

Evaluation Title:

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All UNEP evaluations are subject to a quality assessment by the Evaluation Office. The quality assessment is used as a tool for providing structured feedback to the evaluation consultant.

The quality of both the draft and final evaluation report is assessed and rated against the following criteria:

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Draft Report Rating	Final Report Rating
Substantive report quality criteria			
A. Quality of the Executive Summary: Does the executive summary present the main findings of the report for each evaluation criterion and a good summary of recommendations and lessons learned? (Executive Summary not required for zero draft)	Draft report: Final report:		
B. Project context and project description: Does the report present an up-to-date description of the socio-economic, political, institutional and environmental context of the project, including the issues that the project is trying to address, their root causes and consequences on the environment and human well-being? Are any changes since the time of project design highlighted? Is all essential information about the project clearly presented in the report (objectives, target groups, institutional arrangements, budget, changes in design since approval etc.)?	Draft report: Final report:		
C. Strategic relevance: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of strategic relevance of the intervention in terms of relevance of the project to global, regional and national environmental issues and needs, and UNEP strategies and programmes?	Draft report: Final report:		
D. Achievement of outputs: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of outputs delivered by the intervention (including their quality)?	Draft report: Final report:		
E. Presentation of Theory of Change: Is the Theory of Change of the intervention clearly presented? Are causal pathways logical and complete (including drivers, assumptions and key actors)?	Draft report: Final report:		
F. Effectiveness - Attainment of project objectives and results: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the achievement of the relevant outcomes and project objectives?	Draft report: Final report:		
G. Sustainability and replication: Does the report present a well-reasoned and evidence-based assessment of sustainability of outcomes and replication / catalytic effects?	Draft report: Final report:		
H. Efficiency: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of efficiency? Does the report present any comparison with similar interventions?	Draft report: Final report:		
I. Factors affecting project performance: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of all factors affecting project performance? In particular, does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used; and an assessment of the quality of the project M&E system and its use for project management?	Draft report: Final report:		
J. Quality of the conclusions: Do the conclusions highlight the main strengths and weaknesses of the project, and connect those in a	Draft report:		

compelling story line?	Final report:		
K. Quality and utility of the recommendations: Are recommendations based on explicit evaluation findings? Do recommendations specify the actions necessary to correct existing conditions or improve operations ('who?' 'what?' 'where?' 'when?'). Can they be implemented?	Draft report: Final report:		
L. Quality and utility of the lessons: Are lessons based on explicit evaluation findings? Do they suggest prescriptive action? Do they specify in which contexts they are applicable?	Draft report: Final report:		
Report structure quality criteria			
M. Structure and clarity of the report: Does the report structure follow EO guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included?	Draft report: Final report:		
N. Evaluation methods and information sources: Are evaluation methods and information sources clearly described? Are data collection methods, the triangulation / verification approach, details of stakeholder consultations provided? Are the limitations of evaluation methods and information sources described?	Draft report: Final report:		
O. Quality of writing: Was the report well written? (clear English language and grammar)	Draft report: Final report:		
P. Report formatting: Does the report follow EO guidelines using headings, numbered paragraphs etc.	Draft report: Final report:		
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING			

The quality of the evaluation process is assessed at the end of the evaluation and rated against the following criteria:

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Rating
Evaluation process quality criteria		
Q. Preparation: Was the evaluation budget agreed and approved by the EO? Was inception report delivered and approved prior to commencing any travel?		
R. Timeliness: Was a TE initiated within the period of six months before or after project completion? Was an MTE initiated within a six month period prior to the project's mid-point? Were all deadlines set in the ToR respected?		
S. Project's support: Did the project make available all required documents? Was adequate support provided to the evaluator(s) in planning and conducting evaluation missions?		
T. Recommendations: Was an implementation plan for the evaluation recommendations prepared? Was the implementation plan adequately communicated to the project?		
U. Quality assurance: Was the evaluation peer-reviewed? Was the quality of the draft report checked by the evaluation manager and peer reviewer prior to dissemination to stakeholders for comments? Did EO complete an assessment of the quality of the final report?		
V. Transparency: Were the draft ToR and evaluation report circulated to all key stakeholders for comments? Was the draft evaluation report sent directly to EO? Were all comments to the draft evaluation report sent directly to the EO and did EO share all comments with the commentators? Did the evaluator(s) prepare a response to all comments?		
W. Participatory approach: Was close communication to the EO and project maintained throughout the evaluation? Were evaluation findings, lessons and recommendations adequately communicated?		

X. Independence: Was the final selection of the evaluator(s) made by EO? Were possible conflicts of interest of the selected evaluator(s) appraised?		
OVERALL PROCESS RATING		

Rating system for quality of evaluation reports

A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1

The overall quality of the evaluation report is calculated by taking the mean score of all rated quality criteria.

Annex 6. Documentation list for the evaluation to be provided by the UNEP Task Manager

- Project design documents
- Project supervision plan, with associated budget
- Correspondence related to project
- Supervision mission reports
- Steering Committee meeting documents, including agendas, meeting minutes, and any summary reports
- Project progress reports, including financial reports submitted
- Project Implementation Reports (PIRs)
- Management memos related to project
- Other documentation of supervision feedback on project outputs and processes (e.g. comments on draft progress reports, etc.).
- Project revision and extension documentation
- Project Final Report (draft if final version not available)
- Specific project outputs: guidelines, manuals, training tools, software, websites, press communiques, posters, videos and other advertisement materials etc.
- Any other relevant document deemed useful for the evaluation

Annex 7. Template for the assessment of the quality of project design

General guidelines: The original project document, the TOC-D, and the RTOC-D are key sources of information for completing this assessment.

1. Project Document

	Project preparation and readiness		Addressed by PRC	Evaluation Comments	Rating
1	Does the project document provide a description of stakeholder consultation during project design process?				
2	Does the project document entail a clear stakeholder analysis? Are stakeholder needs and priorities clearly explained?				
3	Does the project document entail a clear situation analysis?				
4	Does the project document entail a clear problem analysis?				
5	Does the project document entail a clear gender analysis?				
	Relevance		Addressed by PRC	Evaluation Comments	Rating
6	Is the project document clear in terms of relevance to:	i) Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National environmental issues and needs?			
7		ii) UNEP mandate			
8		iii) the relevant GEF focal areas, strategic priorities and operational programme(s)? (if appropriate)			
9		iv) Stakeholder priorities and needs?			
10	Is the project document clear in terms of relevance to cross-cutting issues	i) Gender equity			
11		ii) South-South Cooperation			
12		iii) Bali Strategic Plan			
	Intended Results and Causality		Addressed by PRC		
13	Are the outcomes realistic?				
14	Are the causal pathways from project outputs [goods and services] through outcomes [changes in stakeholder behaviour] towards impacts clearly and convincingly described? Is there a clearly presented Theory of Change or intervention logic for the project?				
15	Is the timeframe realistic? What is the likelihood that the anticipated project outcomes can be achieved within the stated duration of the project?				
16	Are activities appropriate to produce outputs?				
17	Are activities appropriate to drive change along the intended causal pathway(s)?				
18	Are impact drivers and assumptions clearly described for each key causal pathway?				
19	Are the roles of key actors and stakeholders clearly described for each key causal pathway?				
20	Is the ToC-D terminology (<i>result levels, drivers, assumptions etc.</i>) consistent with UNEP definitions (<i>Programme Manual</i>)				
	Efficiency		Addressed by PRC		
21	Does the project intend to make use of / build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency?				
	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic effects		Addressed by PRC		
22	Does the project design present a strategy / approach to sustaining outcomes / benefits?				

23	Does the design identify social or political factors that may influence positively or negatively the sustenance of project results and progress towards impacts?			
24	Does the design foresee sufficient activities to promote government and stakeholder awareness, interests, commitment and incentives to execute, enforce and pursue the programmes, plans, agreements, monitoring systems etc. prepared and agreed upon under the project?			
25	If funding is required to sustain project outcomes and benefits, does the design propose adequate measures / mechanisms to secure this funding?			
26	Are financial risks adequately identified and does the project describe a clear strategy on how to mitigate the risks (in terms of project's sustainability)			
27	Does the project design adequately describe the institutional frameworks, governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. required to sustain project results?			
28	Does the project design identify environmental factors, positive or negative, that can influence the future flow of project benefits? Are there any project outputs or higher level results that are likely to affect the environment, which, in turn, might affect sustainability of project benefits?			
29	Does the project design foresee adequate measures to promote replication and up-scaling / does the project have a clear strategy to promote replication and up-scaling?			
30	Are the planned activities likely to generate the level of ownership by the main national and regional stakeholders necessary to allow for the project results to be sustained?			
	Learning, Communication and outreach	Addressed by PRC		
	Has the project identified appropriate methods for communication with key stakeholders during the project life?			
	Are plans in place for dissemination of results and lesson sharing.			
	Do learning, communication and outreach plans build on analysis of existing communication channels and networks used by key stakeholders ?			
	Risk identification and Social Safeguards	Addressed by PRC		
31	Are all assumptions identified in the ToC presented as risks in the risk management table? Are risks appropriately identified in both, ToC and the risk table?			
32	Is the risk management strategy appropriate?			
33	Are potentially negative environmental, economic and social impacts of projects identified?			
34	Does the project have adequate mechanisms to reduce its negative environmental foot-print?			
	Have risks and assumptions been discussed with key stakeholders?			
	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	Addressed by PRC		
35	Is the project governance model comprehensive, clear and appropriate? (<i>Steering Committee, partner consultations etc. </i>)			
36	Are supervision / oversight arrangements clear and appropriate?			
	Management, Execution and Partnership Arrangements	Addressed by PRC		
37	Have the capacities of partners been adequately assessed?			
38	Are the execution arrangements clear and are roles and responsibilities within UNEP clearly defined?			
39	Are the roles and responsibilities of external partners properly specified?			
	Financial Planning / budgeting	Addressed by PRC		

40	Are there any obvious deficiencies in the budgets / financial planning? <i>(coherence of the budget, do figures add up etc.)</i>				
	Has budget been reviewed and agreed to be realistic with key project stakeholders?				
41	Is the resource utilization cost effective?				
42	How realistic is the resource mobilization strategy?				
43	Are the financial and administrative arrangements including flows of funds clearly described?				
	Monitoring		Addressed by PRC		
44	Does the logical framework	• capture the key elements of the Theory of Change for the project?	-		
		• have 'SMART' indicators for outcomes and objectives?	-		
		• have appropriate 'means of verification'?	-		
45	Are the milestones appropriate and sufficient to track progress and foster management towards outputs and outcomes?				
46	Is there baseline information in relation to key performance indicators?				
47	How well has the method for the baseline data collection been explained?				
48	Has the desired level of achievement (targets) been specified for indicators of outputs and outcomes?				
49	How well are the performance targets justified for outputs and outcomes?				
50	Has a budget been allocated for monitoring project progress in implementation against outputs and outcomes?				
51	Does the project have a clear knowledge management approach?				
	Have mechanisms for involving key project stakeholder groups in monitoring activities been clearly articulated?				
	Evaluation		Addressed by PRC		
52	Is there an adequate plan for evaluation?				
53	Has the time frame for evaluation activities been specified?				
54	Is there an explicit budget provision for mid-term review and terminal evaluation?				
55	Is the budget sufficient?				

2. Project alignment with the SP PoW

		Addressed by PRC	Evaluation Comments	Rating
1	Does the project form a coherent part of the programme framework?			
2	Is the relevance of the project in terms of SP higher level results clearly described?			
3	How well have linkages with other projects in the same Programme Framework been described?			
4	Where linkages with other SPs are mentioned, are they well-articulated?			
5	If the project is a pilot, is it clear why the pilot is relevant to higher level SP results?			
6	Are the designed activities relevant in terms of contributing / producing the identified PoW Output(s)? <i>(Based on project design only)</i>			

7	Are output indicators appropriate to measure contribution to / delivery of the PoW Output(s)?			
8	What is the likelihood that the project's contribution towards PoW output(s) will be achieved within the duration of the PoW? (<i>consider also funding, timing, staffing etc.</i>)			
9	Are the intended results likely to contribute to the stated EA? (<i>Based on design only</i>)			
10	Is the pathway from project outputs to EA contribution clearly described?			
11	Are the indicators appropriate to measure contribution to EA?			
12	What is the likelihood that the project's contribution towards the EA will be achieved within the duration of the PoW? (<i>Consider also funding, timing, staffing etc.</i>)			
13	Do project milestones track progress to PoW output and all the way to the EA?			

3. Project approval process (specific to the project under review)

		Evaluation Comments
1	What were the main issues raised by PRC that were addressed?	
2	What were the main issues raised by PRC that were not addressed?	
3	Were there any major issues not flagged by PRC?	

Annex 8. Introduction to Theory of Change / Impact pathways, the ROTI Method and the ROTI Results Score sheet (old version – A new version is under development)

Terminal evaluations of projects are conducted at, or shortly after, project completion. At this stage it is normally possible to assess the achievement of the project's outputs. However, the possibilities for evaluation of the project's outcomes are often more limited and the feasibility of assessing project **impacts** at this time is usually severely constrained. Full impacts often accrue only after considerable time-lags, and it is common for there to be a lack of long-term baseline and monitoring information to aid their evaluation. Consequently, substantial resources are often needed to support the extensive primary field data collection required for assessing impact and there are concomitant practical difficulties because project resources are seldom available to support the assessment of such impacts when they have accrued – often several years after completion of activities and closure of the project.

Despite these difficulties, it is possible to enhance the scope and depth of information available from Terminal Evaluations on the achievement of results through rigorous review of project progress along the pathways from outcome to impact. Such reviews identify the sequence of conditions and factors deemed necessary for project outcomes to yield impact and assess the current status of and future prospects for results. In evaluation literature these relationships can be variously described as 'Theories of Change', Impact 'Pathways', 'Results Chains', 'Intervention logic', and 'Causal Pathways' (to name only some!).

Theory of Change (ToC) / impact pathways

Figure 1 shows a generic impact pathway which links the standard elements of project logical frameworks in a graphical representation of causal linkages. When specified with more detail, for example including the key users of outputs, the processes (the arrows) that lead to outcomes and with details of performance indicators, analysis of impact pathways can be invaluable as a tool for both project planning and evaluation.

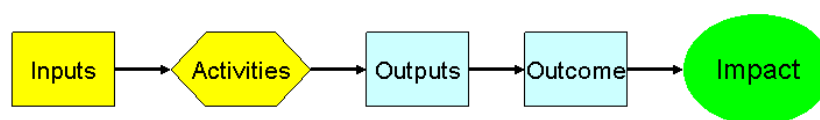


Figure 1. A generic results chain, which can also be termed an 'Impact Pathway' or Theory of Change.

The pathways summarise casual relationships and help identify or clarify the assumptions in the intervention logic of the project. For example, in the Figure 2 below the eventual impact depends upon the behaviour of the farmers in using the new agricultural techniques they have learnt from the training. The project design for the intervention might be based on the upper pathway assuming that the farmers can now meet their needs from more efficient management of a given area therefore reducing the need for an expansion of cultivated area and ultimately reducing pressure on nearby forest habitat, whereas the evidence gathered in the evaluation may in some locations follow the lower of the two pathways; the improved farming methods offer the possibility for increased profits and create an incentive for farmers to cultivate more land resulting in clearance or degradation of the nearby forest habitat.

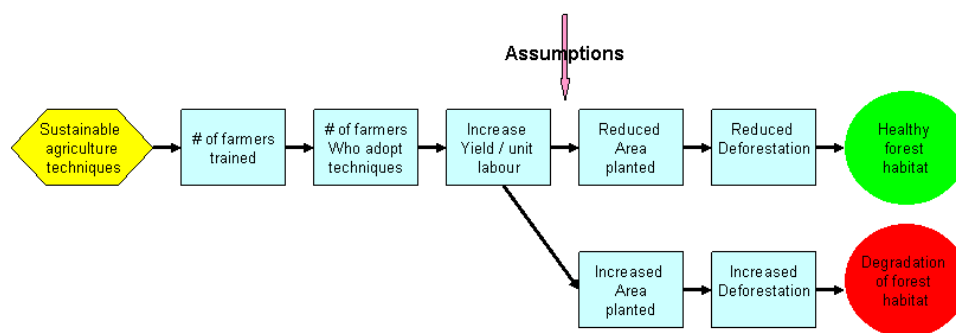


Figure 2. An impact pathway / TOC for a training intervention intended to aid forest conservation.

The GEF Evaluation Office has recently developed an approach to assess the **likelihood of impact** that builds on the concepts of Theory of Change / causal chains / impact pathways. The method is known as Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI)⁵⁶ and has three distinct stages:

- a) Identifying the project's intended impacts
- b) Review of the project's logical framework
- c) Analysis and modelling of the project's outcomes-impact pathways: reconstruction of the project's Theory of Change

The **identification of the projects intended impacts** should be possible from the 'objectives' statements specified in the official project document. The second stage is to **review the project's logical framework** to assess whether the design of the project is consistent with, and appropriate for, the delivery of the intended impact. The method requires verification of the causal logic between the different hierarchical levels of the logical framework moving 'backwards' from impacts through outcomes to the outputs; the activities level is not formally considered in the ROtI method⁵⁷. The aim of this stage is to develop an understanding of the causal logic of the project intervention and to identify the key 'impact pathways'. In reality such processes are often complex: they might involve multiple actors and decision-processes and are subject to time-lags, meaning that project impact often accrues long after the completion of project activities.

The third stage involves analysis of the 'impact pathways' that link project outcomes to impacts. The pathways are analysed in terms of the '**assumptions**' and '**drivers**' that underpin the processes involved in the transformation of outputs to outcomes to impacts via **intermediate states** (see Figure 3). **Project outcomes** are the direct intended results stemming from the outputs, and they are likely to occur either towards the end of the project or in the short term following project completion. **Intermediate states** are the transitional conditions between the project's direct outcomes and the intended impact. They are necessary changes expected to occur as a result of the project outcomes that are expected, in turn, to result into impact. There may be more than one intermediate state between the immediate project outcome and the eventual impact. When mapping outcomes and intermediate states it's important to include reference to the stakeholders who will action or be effected by the change.

Drivers are defined as the significant, external factors that if present are expected to contribute to the realization of the intended impacts and **can be influenced** by the project / project partners & stakeholders. **Assumptions** are the significant external factors that if present are expected to contribute to the realization of the intended impacts but are largely **beyond the control of the project** / project partners & stakeholders. The drivers and assumptions are considered when assessing the likelihood of impact, sustainability and replication potential of the project.

Since project logical frameworks do not often provide comprehensive information on the processes by which project outputs yield outcomes and eventually lead, via 'intermediate states' to impacts, the impact pathways need to be carefully examined and the following questions addressed:

- Are there other causal pathways that would stem from the use of project outputs by other potential user groups?
- Is (each) impact pathway complete? Are there any missing intermediate states between project outcomes and impacts?
- Have the key drivers and assumptions been identified for each 'step' in the impact pathway.

⁵⁶ GEF Evaluation Office (2009). ROtI: Review of Outcomes to Impacts Practitioners Handbook. http://www.gefweb.org/uploadedFiles/Evaluation_Office/OPS4/Roti%20Practitioners%20Handbook%2015%20June%202009.pdf

⁵⁷ Evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources to generate outputs is already a major focus within UNEP Terminal Evaluations.

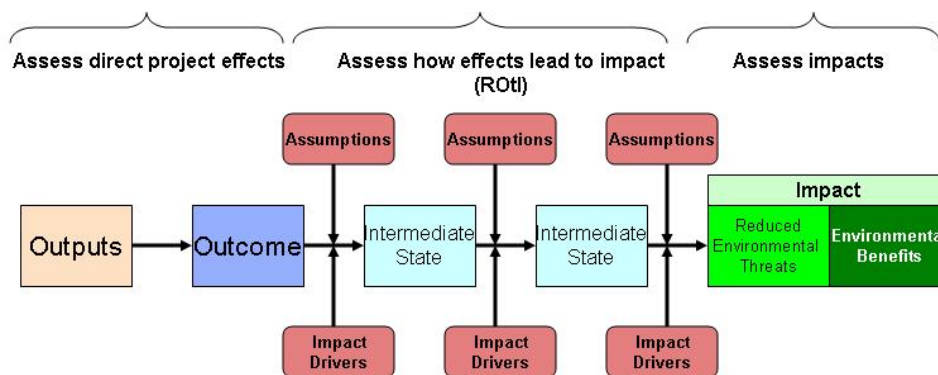


Figure 3. A schematic 'impact pathway' showing intermediate states, assumptions and impact drivers⁵⁸ (adapted from GEF EO 2009)

In ideal circumstances, the Theory of Change of the project is reconstructed by means of a group exercise, involving key project stakeholders. The evaluators then facilitate a collective discussion to develop a visual model of the impact pathways using cards and arrows taped on a wall. The component elements (outputs, outcomes, intermediate states, drivers, assumptions, intended impacts etc.) of the impact pathways are written on individual cards and arranged and discussed as a group activity. Figure 4 below shows the suggested sequence of the group discussions needed to develop the ToC for the project.

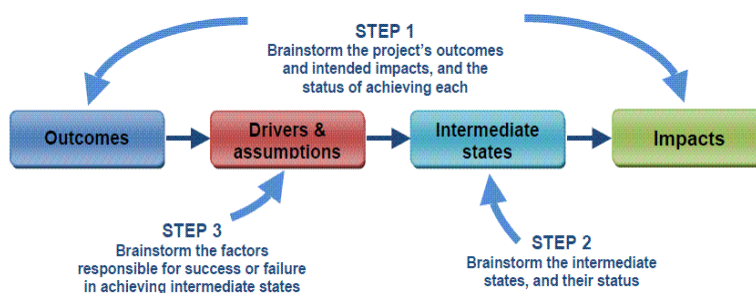


Figure 4. Suggested sequencing of group discussions (from GEF EO 2009)

In practice, there is seldom an opportunity for the evaluator to organise such a group exercise during the inception phase of the evaluation. The reconstruction of the project's Theory of Change can then be done in two stages. The evaluator first does a desk-based identification of the project's impact pathways, specifying the drivers and assumptions, during the inception phase of the evaluation, and then, during the main evaluation phase, (s)he discusses this understanding of the project logic during group discussions or the individual interviews with key project stakeholders.

Once the Theory of Change for the project is reconstructed, the evaluator can assess the design of the project intervention and collate evidence that will inform judgments on the extent and effectiveness of implementation, through the evaluation process. Performance judgments are made always noting that project contexts can change and that adaptive management is required during project implementation.

The Review of Outcomes towards Impact (ROtI) method requires ratings for outcomes achieved by the project and the progress made towards the 'intermediate states' at the time of the evaluation. According to the GEF guidance on the method; *"The rating system is intended to recognize project preparation and conceptualization that considers its own assumptions, and that seeks to remove barriers to future scaling up and out. Projects that are a part of a long-term process need not at all be "penalized" for not achieving impacts in the lifetime of the project: the system recognizes projects' forward thinking to eventual impacts, even if those impacts are eventually achieved by other partners and stakeholders, albeit with achievements based on present day, present project building blocks."* For example, a project receiving an "AA" rating appears likely to deliver impacts, while for a project receiving a "DD" this would be very

⁵⁸ The GEF frequently uses the term "impact drivers" to indicate drivers needed for outcomes to lead to impact. However, in UNEP it is preferred to use the more general term "drivers" because such external factors might also affect change processes occurring between outputs and outcomes.

unlikely, due to low achievement in outcomes and the limited likelihood of achieving the intermediate states needed for eventual impact (see Table 1).

Table 1. Rating scale for outcomes and progress towards ‘intermediate states’

Outcome Rating	Rating on progress toward Intermediate States
D: The project’s intended outcomes were not delivered	D: No measures taken to move towards intermediate states.
C: The project’s intended outcomes were delivered, but were not designed to feed into a continuing process after project funding	C: The measures designed to move towards intermediate states have started, but have not produced results.
B: The project’s intended outcomes were delivered, and were designed to feed into a continuing process, but with no prior allocation of responsibilities after project funding	B: The measures designed to move towards intermediate states have started and have produced results, which give no indication that they can progress towards the intended long term impact.
A: The project’s intended outcomes were delivered, and were designed to feed into a continuing process, with specific allocation of responsibilities after project funding.	A: The measures designed to move towards intermediate states have started and have produced results, which clearly indicate that they can progress towards the intended long term impact.

Thus a project will end up with a two letter rating e.g. AB, CD, BB etc. In addition the rating is given a ‘+’ notation if there is evidence of impacts accruing within the life of the project. The possible rating permutations are then translated onto the usual six point rating scale used in all UNEP project evaluations in the following way.

Table 2. Shows how the ratings for ‘achievement of outcomes’ and ‘progress towards intermediate states translate to ratings for the ‘Overall likelihood of impact achievement’ on a six point scale.

Highly Likely	Likely	Moderately Likely	Moderately Unlikely	Unlikely	Highly Unlikely
AA AB BA CA BB+ CB+ DA+ DB+	BB CB DA DB AC+ BC+	AC BC CC+ DC+	CC DC AD+ BD+	AD BD CD+ DD+	CD DD

In addition, projects that achieve documented changes in environmental status during the project’s lifetime receive a positive impact rating, indicated by a “+”. The overall likelihood of achieving impacts is shown in Table 11 below (a + score above moves the double letter rating up one space in the 6-point scale).

The ROTI method provides a basis for comparisons across projects through application of a rating system that can indicate the expected impact. However it should be noted that whilst this will provide a relative scoring for all projects assessed, it does not imply that the results from projects can necessarily be aggregated. Nevertheless, since the approach yields greater clarity in the ‘results metrics’ for a project, opportunities where aggregation of project results might be possible can more readily be identified.

Results rating of project entitled:							
Outputs	Outcomes	Rating (D – A)	Intermediate states	Rating (D – A)	Impact (GEBs)	Rating (+)	Overall
1.	1.		1.		1.		
2.	2.		2.		2.		
3.	3.		3.		3.		

	Rating justification:		Rating justification:		Rating justification:		

Scoring Guidelines

The achievement of **Outputs** is largely assumed. Outputs are such concrete things as training courses held, numbers of persons trained, studies conducted, networks established, websites developed, and many others. Outputs reflect where and for what project funds were used. These were not rated: projects generally succeed in spending their funding.

Outcomes, on the other hand, are the first level of intended results stemming from the outputs. Not so much the number of persons trained; but how many persons who then demonstrated that they have gained the intended knowledge or skills. Not a study conducted; but one that could change the evolution or development of the project. Not so much a network of NGOs established; but that the network showed potential for functioning as intended. A sound outcome might be genuinely improved strategic planning in SLM stemming from workshops, training courses, and networking.

Examples

Funds were spent, outputs were produced, but nothing in terms of outcomes was achieved. People attended training courses but there is no evidence of increased capacity. A website was developed, but no one used it. (Score – D)

Outcomes achieved but are dead ends; no forward linkages to intermediate states in the future. People attended training courses, increased their capacities, but all left for other jobs shortly after; or were not given opportunities to apply their new skills. A website was developed and was used, but achieved little or nothing of what was intended because users had no resources or incentives to apply the tools and methods proposed on the website in their job. (Score – C)

Outcomes plus implicit linkages forward. Outcomes achieved and have *implicit forward linkages* to intermediate states and impacts. Collaboration as evidenced by meetings and decisions made among a loose network is documented that should lead to better planning. Improved capacity is in place and should lead to desired intermediate outcomes. Providing implicit linkages to intermediate states is probably the most common case when outcomes have been achieved. (Score - B)

Outcomes plus explicit linkages forward. Outcomes have *definite and explicit forward linkages* to intermediate states and impacts. An alternative energy project may result in solar panels installed that reduced reliance on local wood fuels, with the outcome quantified in terms of reduced C emissions. Explicit forward linkages are easy to recognize in being concrete, but are relatively uncommon. (Score A)

Intermediate states:

The **intermediate states** indicate achievements that lead to Global Environmental Benefits, especially if the potential for scaling up is established.

“Outcomes” scored C or D. If the outcomes above scored C or D, there is no need to continue forward to score intermediate states given that achievement of such is then not possible.

In spite of outcomes and implicit linkages, and follow-up actions, the project dead-ends. Although outcomes achieved have *implicit forward linkages* to intermediate states and impacts, the project dead-ends. Outcomes turn out to be insufficient to move the project towards intermediate states and to the eventual achievement of GEBs. Collaboration as evidenced by meetings and among participants in a network never progresses further. The implicit linkage based on follow-up never materializes. Although outcomes involve, for example, further participation and discussion, such actions do not take the project forward towards intended intermediate impacts. People have fun getting together and talking more, but nothing, based on the implicit forwards linkages, actually eventuates. (Score = D)

The measures designed to move towards intermediate states have started, but have not produced result, barriers and/or unmet assumptions may still exist. In spite of sound outputs and in spite of explicit forward linkages, there is limited possibility of intermediate state achievement due to barriers not removed or unmet assumptions. This may be the fate of several policy related, capacity building, and networking projects: people work together, but fail to develop a way forward towards concrete results, or fail to successfully address inherent barriers. The project may increase ground cover and or carbon stocks, may reduce grazing or GHG emissions; and may have project level recommendations regarding scaling up; but barrier removal or the addressing of fatal assumptions means that scaling up remains limited and unlikely to be achieved at larger scales. Barriers can be policy and institutional limitations; (mis-) assumptions may have to do with markets or public – private sector relationships. (Score = C)

Barriers and assumptions are successfully addressed. Intermediate state(s) planned or conceived have feasible direct and explicit forward linkages to impact achievement; barriers and assumptions are successfully addressed.

The project achieves measurable intermediate impacts, and works to scale up and out, but falls well short of scaling up to global levels such that achievement of GEBs still lies in doubt. **(Score = B)**

Scaling up and out over time is possible. Measurable intermediate state impacts achieved, scaling up to global levels and the achievement of GEBs appears to be well in reach over time. **(Score = A)**

Impact: Actual changes in environmental status

“Intermediate states” scored B to A.

Measurable impacts achieved at a globally significant level within the project life-span. . (Score = ‘+’)

Annex 9 Stakeholder Analysis for the Evaluation Inception Report.

The evaluator should request the project team to provide a list of key stakeholders, and evidence of stakeholder mapping and analysis. If the project is unable to provide this, or if the evaluation team feels the information provided is not complete, the evaluation team should develop the stakeholder map based on evidence provided in the project document (and using methods described in the programme manual or other stakeholder mapping techniques of their choice).

The purpose of stakeholder analysis in the preparation of the evaluation inception report is:

1. To understand which individuals or groups are likely to have been affected by, or to have affected the activities of the project.
2. To ensure that the evaluation methodology includes mechanisms for the participation of key stakeholder groups in the process.
3. To enable the evaluation to identify and make use of key channels of communication between the project and its stakeholders (and between the stakeholders themselves).

In the **review of Project design** the evaluator should assess whether the project address the following issues (as specified by UNEP's Quality Assessment Section⁵⁹):

- Have all **stakeholders**⁶⁰ who are affected by or who could affect (positively or negatively) the project been identified and explained in the stakeholder analysis?
- Did the main stakeholders participate in the design stages of the project and did their involvement influence the project design?
- Are the economic, social and environmental impacts to the key stakeholders identified, with particular reference to the most **vulnerable groups**⁶¹?
- Have the specific roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders been documented in relation to project delivery and effectiveness?
- For projects operating at country level, are the stakeholder roles country specific? Is there a lead national or regional partner for each country/region involved in the project?

In the **review of project outputs and outcomes**, the evaluation should consider:

Were outputs accessible to all the relevant stakeholder groups?

Have desired outcomes and impacts occurred amongst all stakeholder groups (and if not, consider why this might be).

Have there been any unanticipated outcomes or impacts with particular reference to the most vulnerable groups.

In the **review of factors affecting performance** the evaluation should consider:

- Participation of key stakeholders
- What were the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders and how did their performance affect the achievement of project outputs and outcomes.

⁵⁹ See The Quality Assessment Section's Matrix for Project Review. Information on stakeholder analysis can also be found in UNEP's programme manual.

⁶⁰ Stakeholders can be governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, including business and industry. Project beneficiaries are often representatives of Civil Society and within UNEP defined as the belonging to the nine Major Groups as defined in the Agenda 21: Business and Industries, Children & Youth, Farmers, Indigenous People and their communities, Local Authorities, NGO's, the Scientific & Technological Community, Women, Workers and Trade Unions.

⁶¹ Vulnerable groups such as: women, children, youth, elderly people, indigenous peoples, local communities, persons with disabilities and below poverty line

Annex 10: Template for 2-page bulletin summarising project results and key lessons

The lessons derived from the evaluation of projects comprise one of the most important outcomes of the entire evaluation exercise. Even where high quality lessons are developed, they are seldom communicated effectively to their intended audiences. In order to aid their dissemination and communication to both external and internal audiences, the Evaluation Office has developed a bulletin that presents an abridged version of the key project results and lessons within a 2-page write up. The recommended structure for preparing a summary that will be used for the bulletin is presented below to serve as a guideline:

[Enter Project Title]

Results and Lessons Learned (Sub-title)

About the Project (approx. 150 words)

- Main objective
- Implementation dates
- Lead division and Sub-programme
- Region and Countries
- Budget
- Date of Evaluation
- Add link to project document on our website/repository.

Relevance (approx. 100 words)

- Summarise key project relevance to global/regional/national issues.

Performance (approx. 150 words)

- Summarise project's overall performance in achieving outcomes and progress towards impact (results).

Factors Effecting Performance (approx. 100 words)

- Highlight the key factors (design-related, process-related, external factors, etc.) that affected overall performance.

Key Lessons Learned (approx. 150 words)

- Highlight the most pertinent lessons emerging from the evaluation.

Appendix 6. INCEPTION REPORT

Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project

“Integrating trade-offs between supply of ecosystem services and land use options into poverty alleviation efforts and development planning in Mixteca”

Robert Hofstede

September 2015

1. Introduction

1. This document presents the inception report for the Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the UNEP/GEF project "Integrating trade-offs between supply of ecosystem services and land use options into poverty alleviation efforts and development planning in Mixteca" (hereafter called "Mixteca project") containing a thorough review of the project context, project design quality, a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, the evaluation framework and a tentative evaluation schedule.

2. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy⁶² and the UNEP Programme Manual⁶³, the Terminal Evaluation is undertaken at completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, GEF, CONANP, CONAFOR, and WWF. Therefore, the evaluation will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation [especially for the second phase of the project, if applicable].

3. The **objective** of the project is to mainstream biodiversity conservation into natural resource use and development planning in the Mixteca Region of Oaxaca integrating ecosystem services (ES) tools and sustainable livelihood options. The project objective intended to contribute to the conservation of globally important ecosystems and species within the Mixteca region of Oaxaca, including a large number of endemic and migratory species.

4. The project includes eight **outcomes**, organized in four project **components**. Component 1, Outcome 1.1: Stakeholders and decision makers at state and local level have increased access to Ecosystem Services tools applicable to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use; Outcome 1.2: Natural Resources, ecosystem services and biodiversity in the project intervention area are assessed, valued and monitored using the new ES tools and knowledge provided through the project. Component 2, outcome 2.1: Biodiversity and ES considerations are integrated into state and federal support programs and land use planning. Component 3, outcome 3.1: Local stakeholders apply the ecosystem approach for planning and implementation of productive activities and biodiversity conservation; Outcome 3.2: The supply of key Ecosystem Services is secured, improving ecosystem resilience and leading to improved livelihoods; Outcome 3.3: Improved land use planning and management practices lead to increased habitat connectivity for globally significant biodiversity within the project intervention area as assessed and monitored under outcome 1.2; Component 4, Outcome 4.1: Project findings, tools and methodologies made available to state and federal decision makers as well as the public, and relevant interest groups; Outcome 4.2: Coordination and cooperation established with UNEP Ecosystem Management Program (EMP).

5. The project intends to bring long term ecosystem integrity, stability and resilience into the food production equation by promoting science – policy integration, towards good practices in agriculture and natural resource management. It demonstrates how ecosystem management techniques could bring about improved water and soil conditions, and improved agricultural productivity in the form of higher efficiencies

⁶² <http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPEvaluationPolicy/tabid/3050/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

⁶³ http://www.unep.org/QAS/Documents/UNEP_Programme_Manual_May_2013.pdf

and yields. Productive activity will in turn be concentrated in the most suitable areas, thereby decreasing habitat disruption and encroachment on fragile and biologically significant ecosystems. In this way the project also intends to achieve global environmental benefits in the form of biodiversity conservation.

2. Project background

6. The Oaxacan Mixteca is composed of three major geographic areas: the high Mixteca, lower Mixteca and the coast, each with its physical and social characteristics that make it an important region of high biological and cultural diversity. The four zones that comprise the project's intervention area cover approximately one third of the Oaxacan Mixteca and comprise an irregular, mountainous terrain covering 567,308 hectares, 41 municipalities and 98 micro-watersheds. These areas were chosen as representative of biodiversity hotspots that interconnect with already established protected areas and thereby could provide biological corridors connecting different ecosystems

7. Mixteca ecosystems are of global importance for their unique ecosystemic richness, significant biological integrity and important degree of endemism. The Mixtecan area of Oaxaca is noted for its impressive mix of tropical and temperate montane pine-oak and cloud forests. This area of relatively low (300 - 700 mm) and seasonally concentrated rainfall is rich in biodiversity, and harbors many unique, endemic and threatened species.

8. The low, highly seasonal rainfall and soils with a lack of crucial nutrients, make agriculture in this region challenging. Moreover, in spite of its rich cultural history and diversity, the Oaxacan Mixteca traditionally suffers from many socio-economic challenges: difficult physical accessibility, low degree of technical and financial support and general marginalization of public services. Traditional agriculture, which was relatively stable, is increasingly abandoned because of lack of access to water and fertile soils, monocrops are introduced with worse environmental impact resulting in erosion and land degradation and encroachment through slash and burn into natural forest. Food security is low and overall, the Oaxacan Mixteca is now considered one of the poorest regions of the country. The high rate of poverty pushed Mixteca inhabitants, particularly men, out of the region to work in other agricultural regions, in cities or abroad, leaving the family plots to women and elders, with little capacity to apply good agricultural practice.

9. Because of the dramatic interaction of environmental (low precipitation, poor soils) and social challenges (poverty, migration), biodiversity in the region is being increasingly threatened by habitat and ecosystem destruction and land degradation by an array of low-productivity farming activities. These include deforestation through slash and burn agricultural techniques and for energy needs; cattle and goat rearing with a pasture pressure that can reach 4-5 times the sustainable rate; and an annual migration of more than 100,000 animals, largely goats. Land degradation has reached disastrous levels after years of deforestation, overgrazing and agricultural expansion which means that subsistence food production of basic staple crops generally falls far short of household food requirements.

10. National authorities are already addressing priority social issues such as poverty alleviation and food security. However, biodiversity (BD) conservation and ecosystem (ES) considerations are not yet an integral part of their programmes due to inadequate science base to support knowledge of the role it plays in maintaining and sustaining ecosystem services, including food production. This is to be achieved through rescuing traditional knowledge and bringing it together with innovative, state of the art technology in assessment, resulting in good practices in biodiversity conservation, natural resource management and agriculture. This will contribute to improving the livelihoods of local and indigenous communities, as main beneficiaries of the project.

11. **Root causes** for this are complex and relate to factors affecting decision-making on land use. According to the project document, root causes are of physical origin and socio-economic origin. The first are related to the low soil fertility and the high vulnerability of soils to disturbance. Socio-economic root causes are related to the loss of traditional lifestyles (including traditional land use practices) of the indigenous population, generalized poverty and outmigration. Loss of traditional knowledge and practice

seemed to have caused more soil degradation and forest loss (because of encroaching agriculture), while poverty and migration is causing lack of labor and adequate knowledge to apply good agricultural practice.

12. **Barriers** that impede effective biodiversity conservation efforts in the region are linked to institutional deficiencies: (i) A limited level of ongoing assessments and monitoring of natural resources, (ii) A lack of technical background and specialized knowledge needed to bring long term ecosystem stability into the food production equation (iii) A lack of land use plans that take into account ecosystem services. (iv) A lack of inter-institutional coordination needed to oversee the many state and federal support programs (v) A lack of focused education and capacity building efforts among indigenous groups to create sustainable food production activities (vi) A limited capacity within CONANP to upscale pilot interventions in priority areas to harness potential investments for impact at the wider landscape level, and (vii) Poor marketability and profitability of agricultural crops produced, thanks to the paucity of farmer associations.

13. The project rationale focuses on the mentioned barriers, particularly through creating monitoring systems, creating capacity among local farmers and institutions, including BD and ES in land use plans, promoting and expanding good practice and strengthening institutional frameworks

14. The project **context has slightly changed** in a few aspects, principally related to the institutional setting. There have been governmental changes at all levels. This has resulted in the changes in policies (and sometimes even in name) of several institutes that are important project partners. It has particularly affected the participation of several agencies in the State Committee for Development Planning. It also was one of the main reasons why there has been only one meeting of the inter-institutional working group. However, according to MTR, the project has maintained its course despite the election process and the ensuing changes in institutional partners and stakeholders.

15. The migration crisis in meso america has deepened during recent years; Oaxaca and neighbouring states being the centre of the problem in Mexico. This situation, for which the relation with land use and environment has been well explained in the ProDoc, is increasingly stressing the socio-cultural conditions of the project area.

16. In Mexico as a whole, there is ongoing interest in financial incentive mechanisms for ES and BD friendly land use has increased, especially thanks to the global attention to carbon mitigation. The government supported ES mechanisms are strengthened and new initiatives provide additional opportunities.

Stakeholder analysis

17. The Project Document (ProDoc) of the Mixteca project includes a clear stakeholder analysis, which provides the reader with a good overview of different social groups and institutions that would have been affected by activities of the project and how these participate and/or benefit from the project.

18. The target area of this project, the Oaxacan Mixteca, is one of Mexico's poorest region. Of its nearly 700,000 inhabitants, 68% live in rural areas. Inhabitants are mostly indigenous peoples, principally Mixtecas. However, at least six other different ethnic groups are present. The rural population of the intervention area (approx. one third of the entire Oaxacan Mixteca) are the primary beneficiaries of the project because these are assisted in rehabilitation of traditional land and water management techniques, trained in good agricultural practice and restauration of degraded lands and alternative income sources such as tourism. They will also benefit directly from the maintained ecosystem services originating from a better overall environmental situation. Rural population from other rural areas, in similar conditions, can profit from the good examples and knowledge exchange with the project area. Finally, the wider Oaxacan population will profit from a better environmental management for good water management, maintained production and higher landscape attractiveness.

19. Participation of different stakeholder groups in the project execution is explained in the section on implementation arrangements of the ProDoc. The support of the project to the direct beneficiaries is provided mostly through farmers cooperatives; many of which are being stimulated with project support,

although the project originally did not include a specific strategy to select communities or cooperatives to be included in project implementation.

20. According to the ProDoc, all identified stakeholders were involved in the project design, which was indispensable in taking into account the concerns and needs of project partners and beneficiaries. The involvement of partners and stakeholders, including local communities, indigenous peoples and women, is assured through the Project Steering Committee, its Advisory Panels and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee as part of project implementation arrangements. The Project Steering Committee will monitor and assess project implementation and, as required, will propose the necessary revisions, modifications and adjustments needed to correct any negative impacts that may emerge.

21. CONANP and CONAFOR as executing partners and WWF-Mexico as national executing agency have spearheaded the development of the project and, as members of the Steering Committee, will play the lead role in implementing and monitoring the project and maintaining its strategic focus.

22. As a region characterized by above average poverty levels, the Oaxacan Mixteca receives an array of social support programs intended to improve household income and living standards. There are more than 14 state and federal secretariats providing different types of assistance to the population, including farming subsidies, social sector programs and temporary employment schemes. This GEF project will facilitate synergy between the numerous government organizations already working in the Oaxacan Mixteca to enable them to establish agreements to avoid duplication of activities and to streamline their resource allocations towards communities, traditional collectives (*ejidos*) and small scale private land owners that have a positive attitude towards conservation and management of their natural resources, ecosystems and biodiversity. This synergy would be achieved by establishing the Inter-Institutional Working Group (IWG) to provide continuity and strengthen the government's Regional Planning Support Group in its initiatives in the Mixteca Priority Region. In addition, for the pilot demonstration projects, activities will be facilitated through Project Site Teams (PSTs) to ensure broad involvement of local communities and key stakeholders, proper planning, and broader consultations with a wide range of agencies, NGOs and key private sector groups, such as farmers, forest owners and hotel and tour operators.

23. Finally, the establishment of a Project Stakeholder Advisory Committee (PSAC) will provide a platform for broader on-going consultations with a wide range of local community representatives, civic groups and private sector representatives on project implementation.

24. While the project design identified clearly the different stakeholder groups at institutional level, including their interest in the project, the role of most partners (both governmental agencies, producer groups, civil society organizations, private sector) through the different committees (IWG, PST, PSAC) in the project is not further specified.

25. The present terminal evaluation recognizes the different groups of stakeholders and will place specific attention to (a) the benefits received by the main target groups (b) the level of participation by the different agencies associated to the region's environment and development and (c) the communication between project, its stakeholders (participating in implementation) and beneficiaries.

3. Review of project design

26. The project was well designed, presents a clear logic from activities to outputs and outcomes to objectives and goals, and is accompanied by clearly stated situation analysis, stakeholder analysis, risk analysis, M&E plan and implementation arrangements (see Project Document). This provides a solid basis for project implementation and achievement of intended results. The design is realistic, efficient and provides enough opportunity for stakeholder involvement. Some information gathered during PPG stage has been well incorporated and clearly strengthened the project design.

27. The results framework is clear and detailed, includes SMART indicators, target values and means of verification. Several baseline data were not available at the start of the project, but methods to gather this information are presented. Outcomes are ambitious but realistic, and the realistic target level of the project

objective creates a high feasibility for the project. Here it should be noted that the project objective is very similar to outcome 2.1 and even partly the same indicators are used.

28. The results framework includes many and diverse outputs, and their formulation is not always consistent: some are proper outputs (concrete products), others formulated as activities ("training", "rehabilitation"), while others seem outcomes ("pilot cases established"). Although there was no Theory of Change presented at the stage of project development, the evaluator could reconstruct the ToC and find most necessary elements in the project document. While reconstructing the Theory of Change, it was found that several outcomes were serial (one transitioning into another) and were (partly) reformulated as intermediate states. In spite of this challenge, the three major impact pathways (landscape connectivity, policy support and ES management and rehabilitation) could be reconstructed, in accordance to the project rationale presented in ProDoc (paragraph 81 and 82). A minor impact pathway was identified for dissemination, because of the prominent position this component has in project results framework. And although its focus is relevant, it is challenging to include it clearly in an impact pathway but rather contributes to all.

29. The evaluator made an assessment of the **Quality of Design**, including detailed responses to most of the questions in the GEF template (see Annex 1: assessment of Quality of Project Design). Overall, the quality of design was considered satisfactory, with several strengths and some minor weak points.

30. Overall **strengths** of project design are the background and situation analysis, stakeholder analysis, efficiency and overall implementation arrangements, dissemination and outreach strategies and project funding; all these were rated as highly satisfactory. The background and situation analysis, as well as the stakeholder analysis, all greatly benefiting from PPG inputs, provide a detailed description of the context, adequate partners and most likely beneficiaries of the project. It forms a good statement for the project's relevance and a clear introduction to the problem analysis. Thanks to the stakeholder analysis and participatory character of project formulation, the implementation arrangement with a core group of agencies in SC but several bodies of participation and consultation, seems an adequate way to combine efficiency with broad stakeholder participation. Nevertheless, on first sight the implementation arrangements lack concrete roles of the participating agencies and selection of beneficiary groups, especially at the level of activities.

31. The focus of the project to build upon existing structures and programmes particularly in outcome 2.1 and 3.3) creates a high (potential) efficiency. Dissemination of project results among project stakeholders and externally, inclusion of lessons learned from within and outside the project, are strong aspects, although the relevant outcomes (4.1 and 4.2) are not straightforwardly connectable to project objectives (see below). The project-funding scheme, with enough budget, all co-funding fully secured before start and new sources identified, is also positive.

32. The project design has a few **weak aspects**, particularly gender, assumptions and risks and the definition and detail of some indicators. Gender aspects are hardly managed in the ProDoc and no specific gender approach is included in project design in spite of some clear opportunities to do so, considering the context. Aspects of migration, food security and traditional knowledge typically have strong gender aspects.

33. The risk assessment (Section 3.5, ProDoc) is short but adequate; they include environmental aspects, consistency of policies, market fluctuations, social aspects etc. However, most of these risks are not included as assumptions in the project logic. The assumptions that were included (see paragraph 115), all refer to the willingness of stakeholders; most of which participate as project executors or beneficiaries and therefore, their willingness is at least partly within control of the project. Among the risks, there is no risk included about long term financial sustainability, this is particularly relevant because the project aims at including BD and ES considerations in existing programs and plans, which will only work if these are sustained long term.

34. The indicators are generally well defined and 'SMART', but there is a lack of baseline data for some of these. Although the ProDoc states "50% of data is available", most base line information is absolute ("there is none") or subjective and most quantitative baseline data were expected to become available during yr 1

of implementation. Also, there are no livelihood indicators to measure outcome 3.2 and project objective. Indicators for project objective are more adequate for overall goal.

4. Reconstructed Theory of Change

35. Based on the project documentation, the evaluator reconstructed the Theory of Change, that implicitly underlays the project. This reconstruction was done using the GEF Evaluation Office's approach to assess the likelihood of impact that builds on the concepts of Theory of Change / causal chains / impact pathways. The method is known as **Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI)**. To do so, the evaluator identified the project's intended impacts (project objective, strategic objective and GEB), reviewed the project's logical framework (outputs to outcomes and objectives, including stated assumptions) and analyzed and modeled the project's outcomes-impact pathways.

36. In this reconstructed theory of change (see diagram below), effort is placed on identifying **impact pathways**, implying the transformation of the activities that generate outputs (light brown boxes), to outcomes (blue) and impacts (green). Because the project presents a long list of outputs, the consultant decided to rather present one single box of general activities for each outcome in the diagram. Project outcomes are the intended results stemming from these activities/outputs. In the strict sense, intermediate states are the transitional stages between direct project outcomes and the impact. However, in the present exercise, this had to be applied flexibly because some existing outcomes were redefined as intermediate states where these were logical result stemming from other outcomes. Also, the consultant identified other intermediate states, as transitional states between activities/outputs and outcomes.

37. To identify likelihood of desired impact, the assumptions and drivers that underpin the transformation from outputs to outcomes over intermediate states to objectives, should be analyzed. Drivers are the significant external factors that if present are expected to contribute to the realization of the intended impacts and can be influenced by the project partners; assumptions are those external factors largely beyond the control of the project. For the present exercise most assumptions and drivers were taken from the project Logical Framework (purple), complemented with some identified by the consultant (light purple). The consultant tried to differentiate between drivers (marked with D) and assumptions (A). At interception stage, it is assumed that all direct stakeholders can be influenced, so openness for receiving training or including tools and concepts into plans is considered a driver; the same holds for the quality and availability of information and monitoring systems.

38. Based on the logical framework, the ROtI exercise linked project activities and the generated outputs to the project outcomes via intermediate states to project objective. The consultant identified four impact pathways, reclassified four existing outcomes as (partial) intermediate states, and identified four other intermediate states.

39. **Final impact - GEB:** From project objective to strategic objective and GEB. This pathway is the end-portion of all following pathways and describes how the project objective (Mainstream biodiversity conservation into natural resource use and development planning in the Mixteca Region of Oaxaca integrating ecosystem services (ES) tools and sustainable livelihood options) contributes to the strategic objective (To conserve globally important ecosystems and species within the Mixteca region of Oaxaca). To attain this transformation, it is assumed that overall government support for unsustainable land use and production practices is decreasing and that the policies and plans that include BD conservation are effectively implemented, sustained over time and monitored

40. **Impact pathway 1 - Landscape connectivity:** from outcome 1.1 (now considered an intermediate state) to project objective via outcome 3.3 (partly considered intermediate state). The outcome on increased access to ES tools (outcome 1.2) is considered an intermediate state that transitions to project outcome 1.2 (resources, ES and BD are assessed, valued and monitored), assuming there is a solid baseline information available. To generate impact at the landscape level, this increased knowledge and monitoring should result in a functioning monitoring system at landscape level, which is assumed to identify landscape connectivity. The next state is as much an intermediate state (resulting from the generated knowledge and

monitoring) as a direct outcome, resulting from activities to actively create biological corridors through the identification, establishment and good management of Areas Voluntarily Destined for Conservation (AVDC). Here, it is assumed that the local communities are open to establish AVDC.

41. **Impact pathway 2 - Policy support:** from outcome 1.1 (now considered an intermediate state) to project objective via outcome 2.1 (partly considered intermediate status). The outcome on increased access to ES tools (outcome 1.2) is considered an intermediate state that transitions to project outcome 1.2 (resources, ES and BD are assessed, valued and monitored), assuming there is a solid baseline information available. This is a key outcome to generate that BD and ES considerations are integrated into state and federal support programs, assuming that stakeholder and decision makers are receptive to incorporation of BD and ES tools. This intermediate state is a key step to reach the program objective, assuming policies and plans are effectively implemented, sustained over time and monitored. Because there are several additional project activities and outcomes to attain the integration of BD and ES into plans and programs, Outcome 2.1 can as well be considered a direct project outcome.

42. **Impact pathway 3 - Ecosystem management and rehabilitation:** from outcome 3.1 to project objective. To attain the application of ecosystem approach for planning and implementation of productive activities by local stakeholders (outcome 3.1), the project included many different activities and outputs, some of which contribute directly to this outcome (training to producers, planning tools, alternative tourism). This includes the stated driver of certification of tourism activities by CONANP. Other groups of activities contribute more indirectly to this outcome, through intermediate states of the establishment of ten watersheds as models for rural development and improved market access for BD friendly products. These assume that potential markets exist and that better market access is an effective incentive for local stakeholders to apply good practice. Outcome 3.1 transitions to intermediate state of secured supply of key ES, improved ecosystem resilience and improved livelihoods (originally Outcome 3.2). Additional activities that lead to this intermediate state are reforestation and rehabilitation of degraded lands, rehabilitation of traditional land management techniques (*Lama Bordo*) and fuelwood efficiency and plantation, creating an intermediate state of five demonstration sites where good practice is demonstrated. When the promoted good practice in rehabilitation and land use actually improve BD and ES, the contribution to the project objective is ensured.

43. **Impact pathway 4 - Dissemination:** from outcome 4.1 to project objective via Impact Pathways 2 and 3. Outcome 4.1 generates availability of project findings, tools and methodologies to state and federal decision makers and the general public. This is a subsidiary outcome for several other outcomes and, assuming that stakeholders are open to receive training and learn about project findings, it supports other impact pathways to attain project objective. Similarly, outcome 4.2 (coordination and cooperation with synergic initiatives and other projects) supports the project objective directly.

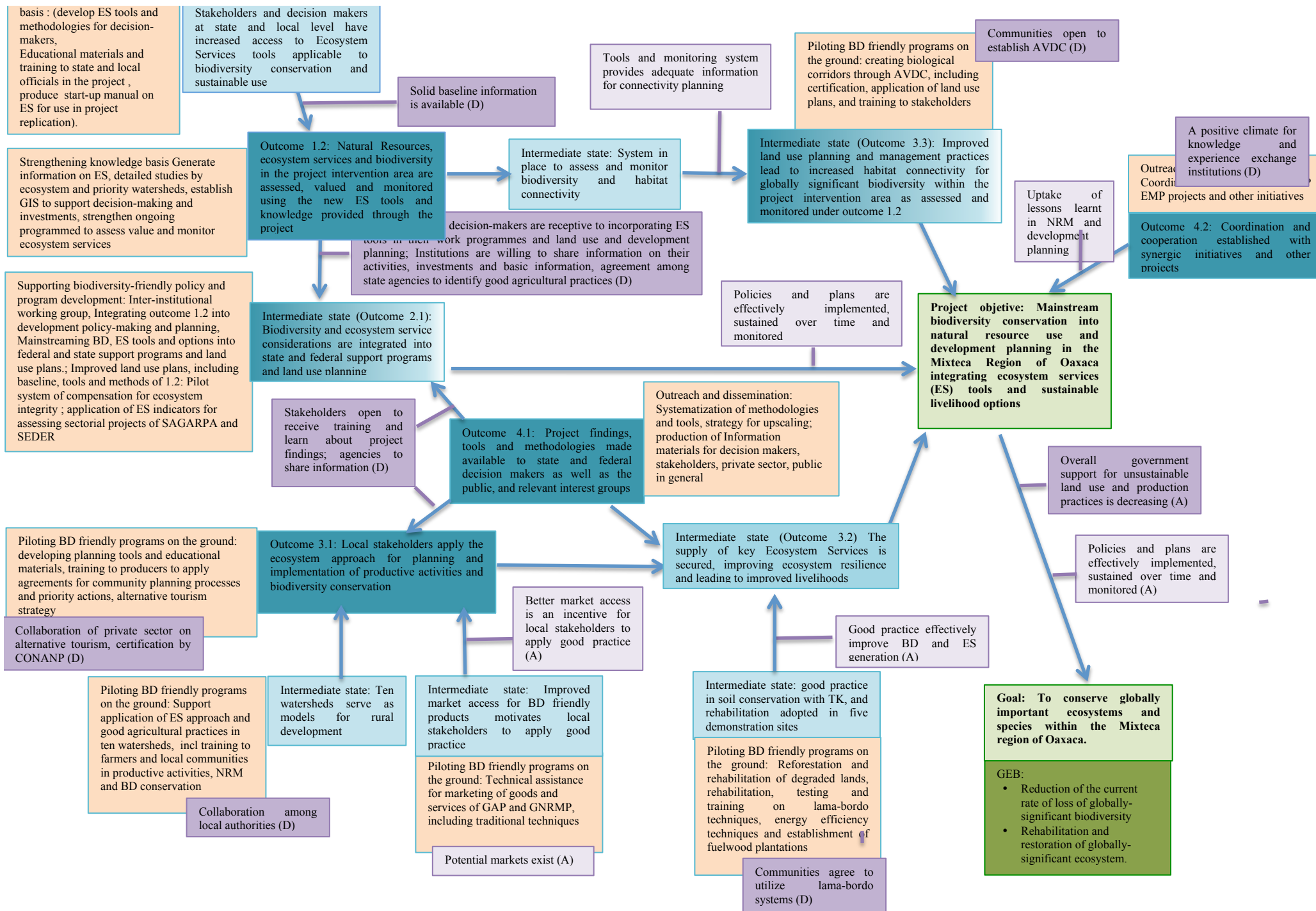


Figure 1. Reconstructed Theory of Change

5. Evaluation framework

44. Below, the evaluation framework is presented, in a matrix of detailed evaluation questions, indicators and sources of verification. In general, the questions are distilled from the ToR for this evaluation and arranged around the evaluation criteria. The main evaluation questions of the ToR are included under effectiveness. The evaluator included additional questions, specifically under the criteria for effectiveness (to reflect the reconstructed ToC and intermediate states) and efficiency. Several other evaluation questions from the ToR were adapted to the specific context of the project. Some questions/criteria of the ToR were not included in the evaluation matrix, because they have been responded during the current evaluation inception (e.g. M&E design, preparation & readiness; findings during inception will be verified during evaluation), imply redundancy (e.g. communication and public awareness, which is a specific project outcome and will be responded by project effectiveness; catalytic role and replication, most of which is covered by questions under sustainability and replication) or will have to be responded by the evaluator taking into consideration the evaluation process (e.g. M&E, GEF tracking tools). Where possible, indicators from the project results framework were included and where these were not available, the evaluator proposed new indicators.

45. All evaluation indicators will be analyzed using the project's own reporting mechanism, using as much as possible quantitative and qualitative data, validated through revision of documents and products and through interviews with project staff, partners, beneficiaries and key stakeholders. In several cases, the rather subjective "perception" will have to be used as an indicator, for instance for the adequacy of project management, available resources, backstopping by UNEP etc. The evaluator will use semi-structured interviews around these questions through a wide representation of project staff, partners, and stakeholders. Findings (especially on perceptions) will be cross-checked during different interviews and with available evidence.

EVALUATION CRITERIA	EVALUATION INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION
Strategic relevance		
Were the objectives and implementation strategies consistent with: i) global, regional and national environmental issues and needs; ii) expectations and needs of key stakeholder groups; iii) the UNEP mandate and policies at the time of design and implementation; iv) GEF Biodiversity focal area's strategic priorities and operational programme BD-SP4-Policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of alignment with (contribution of results to) sub-regional environmental issues, UNEP mandate and policies at the time of design and implementation; and the GEF BD-PO 2 and SP4 (GEF IV) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparison of project document and annual reports and policy and strategy papers of local-regional agencies, GEF and UNEP Interviews with UNEP staff, project staff and governmental agencies Recalling Quality of Project Design evaluation
Did the (political, environmental, social, institutional) context change during project implementation and how did the project adapt to this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reported adaptive management measures in response to changes in context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project progress reports/PIR Interviews with project staff and key stakeholders
Achievement of outputs		
How successful was the project in producing the programmed outputs, both in quantity and quality, as well as their usefulness and timeliness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Output level indicators of Results Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project progress reports/PIR Tangible products (publications, studies, etc.) Interviews with program staff, partner organizations in implementation, project beneficiaries
Were key stakeholders appropriately involved in producing the programmed outputs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stated contribution of stakeholders in achievement of outputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citation of stakeholders' roles in tangible products (publications, studies, etc.) Interviews with partners in

		implementation and project beneficiaries
Effectiveness: attainment of objectives and planned results		
To what degree have the project products (e.g. ES tool kits, studies, methodologies, etc.) been accessible to decision makers and other relevant interest groups, and what effect has this had on the appraisal of ecosystem services and biodiversity in the project intervention areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators of outcome 1.1 and 1.2 (see results framework) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Means of verification outcome 1.1 and 1.2 (see results framework) Project management information system Interviews with project beneficiaries
Is the established BD and ES monitoring process functioning effectively, with key stakeholders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of monitoring activities, diversity of issues, data management and publications Participation of key monitoring institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project progress reports/PIR Reports on monitoring Interviews with monitoring institutions
Has the project been successful in influencing government agencies to mainstream biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services into policy, regulatory frameworks, federal/state supported programs, land use plans and community based work programmes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators of outcome 2.1 (see results framework) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Means of verification outcome 2.1 (see results framework) Annual project implementation reports Interviews with policy and regulatory agencies and organizations that manage programs for rural development in the area Interview with UNEP Mexico office Field visits to pilot implementation cases, interviews with communities/ejido members
Are policies and plans effectively implemented, sustained over time and monitored?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations of project are actually included in policies and plans Number of new policies, plans and programs that include BD and ES considerations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation on policies and plans of governmental institutions Interviews with WSC and governmental institutions and support agencies Project implementation reports
Did the project succeed in effectively building local capacity in applying ecosystem approaches and good practice in productive activities (e.g. agriculture, tourism), and has this resulted in a marked improvement in the assessment, valuation, and monitoring of ecosystem services in the intervention areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators of outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 (see results framework) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Means of verification outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 (see results framework) Interviews with regional and local representatives of governmental agencies, particularly SAGARPA, SEDER, CONANP and SECTUR Field visits to demonstration projects, interviews with local stakeholders involved with these projects and the direct beneficiaries
Through its activities related to securing key ecosystem services and improving ecosystem resilience, to what extent have the rehabilitation initiatives began to translate into improved local livelihoods in the intervention areas? Is there evidence of direct impacts arising from improved living conditions at the local level?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local beneficiaries of the outputs that contribute to outcome 3.2 (<i>lama-bordo</i> techniques, rehabilitation of degraded lands, fuelwood projects) perceive improvement of their living conditions (income, food security) and are able to provide clear examples for this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visits to demonstration projects, interviews with local stakeholders involved with these projects and the direct beneficiaries
To what extent have improved land use planning and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators of outcome 3.3 (see results framework) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Means of verification outcome 3.3 (see results framework)

practices lead to increased habitat connectivity for globally significant biodiversity within the project intervention area as assessed and monitored under outcome 1.2?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visits
To what extent have the project findings, tools and methodologies been made available to state and federal decision makers as well as the public, and relevant interest groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators of outcome 4.1 (see results framework) Quantity and quality of distribution of knowledge products (data, publications, workshops) to public in general 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Means of verification outcome 4.1 (see results framework) Communication products Random interviews with audience indirectly related to project UNEP Mexico interview
To what degree of success was the project able to establish synergies with other terrestrial ecosystem management projects in the LAC region and has this resulted in opportunities for increased cooperation and coordination between similar interventions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators of outcome 4.2 (see results framework) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Means of verification outcome 4.2. (see results framework) Interviews with key stakeholders (partner organizations, other projects) Project products (publications, data) that show collaboration/complementation with other initiatives
To what extent did the project contribute to the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation into natural resource use and development planning in the Mixteca Region of Oaxaca integrating ecosystem services (ES) tools and sustainable livelihood options?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 4 of project outcome (see results framework); similar to indicator for outcome 2.1. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Means of verification for indicator 4 of project outcome (see results framework)
To what degree has the project contributed to the conservation globally important ecosystems and species within the Mixteca region of Oaxaca?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators 1, 2 and 3 of Project Objective (see results framework) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Means of verification for indicators 1,2 and 3 of project outcome (see results framework)
Did the main project assumptions hold?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of compliance of assumptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project progress reports/PIR Interviews with project staff, key stakeholders Analysis of ROtI vs. project results
Sustainability and replication		
Are there any social or political factors that may influence positively or negatively the sustenance of project results and progress towards impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key factors positively or negatively impacted project results (in relation to stated assumptions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with project staff, key stakeholders Project progress reports/PIR Revision of literature on context
Is the level of ownership by the main national and regional stakeholders sufficient to allow for the project results to be sustained?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main national and regional stakeholders participate actively in implementation and replication of project activities and results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with key stakeholders Documentation of project activity implementation Documentation on activities of key stakeholders
Are there sufficient government and other key stakeholder awareness, interests, commitment and incentives to integrate Biodiversity and ES considerations into national programs and land use planning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and content of inter-institutional agreements to execute and enforce programs, plans and other project results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Execution and collaboration agreements Interviews with key stakeholders
Did the project conduct 'succession planning' and implement this during the life of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Succession planning reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with project staff, UNEP project manager P Project progress reports/PIR

Was sustainability improved through stakeholder strengthening? (Was capacity building conducted for key stakeholders? Did the intervention activities promoted positive sustainable changes in attitudes, behaviours and power relations between the different stakeholders? To what extent has the integration of HR and GE led to an increase in the likelihood of sustainability of project results?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local stakeholders (local governmental agencies, rural support programs, organizations of beneficiaries, etc) perceive better capacities to sustain project results, through understanding, improved plans and strengthened power positions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder interviews
To what extent are the continuation of project results and the eventual impact of the project dependent on (continued) financial resources? What is the likelihood that adequate financial resources will be or will become available to continue implementation the programs, plans, agreements, monitoring systems etc. prepared and agreed upon under the project? Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project results and onward progress towards impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimations on financial requirements Estimations of future budget of key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies on financial sustainability Documented estimations of future budget Interviews with project staff and key stakeholders
To what extent is the sustenance of the results and onward progress towards impact dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key institutional frameworks that may positively or negatively influence project results (in relation to stated assumptions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of existing institutional framework Interviews with project staff and key stakeholders
How robust are the institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. required to sustaining project results and to lead those to impact on human behaviour and environmental resources, goods or services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of commitment, proved by formal agreements, included recommendations, declarations, of key stakeholders in governance structures that sustain project results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview with key stakeholders Documentation (agreements, declarations, meeting minutes) of governance systems
Are lessons and experiences coming out of the project replicated or scaled up? What are the factors that may influence replication and scaling up of project experiences and lessons?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented examples of replication or up-scaling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with stakeholders at other levels or scales Interviews with project staff Reports and publications by other institutions
Catalytic role		
To what extent the project has created opportunities for particular individuals or institutions ("champions") to catalyse change (without which the project would not have achieved all of its results)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of identified follow up initiatives by partner organizations or individuals to replicate lessons from project Degree of participation of new relevant institutional stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview with project staff and key stakeholders Leveraged co-financing
Efficiency		
Did the project build adequately (create complementariness) on existing institutions, lessons of other initiatives, data sources, partnerships with third parties and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of inclusion of preexisting initiatives and institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document Interviews with key stakeholders (preexisting initiatives and institutions) Evaluation of project design

projects?		
How was the operational execution vs. original planning (time wise)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of compliance with project planning / annual plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project progress reports/PIR • Interviews with project staff
How was the operational execution vs. original planning (budget wise)? Was the project implemented cost-effective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of compliance with project financial planning / annual plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project financial reports • Interviews with project staff
If present, what have been the main reasons for delay/changes in implementation? Have these affected project execution, costs and effectiveness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of reasons, validated by project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with project staff
Was adaptive management applied adequately? Were any cost- or time-saving measures put in place in attempting to bring the project as far as possible in achieving its results within its secured budget and time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures taken to improve project implementation based on project monitoring and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project progress and implementation reports • MTR report and management response • Interview with project staff and UNEP task manager
Factors and processes affecting project performance		
<i>Project implementation and management</i>		
To what extent have the project implementation mechanisms outlined in the project document been followed and were effective in delivering project milestones, outputs and outcomes? Were pertinent adaptations made to the approaches originally proposed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of implementation of mechanisms outlined in project document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with project staff and partners • MTE report • Project progress reports/PIR
Was the project management (NEA, NPC) adequate, effective and efficient? (skills, leadership, coordination, adaptive capacity)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of satisfaction (among partners and project staff) of overall management by NEA and NPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with project staff (NEA, NPC and consultants) and partner organizations
Did project management respond to direction and guidance provided by the UNEP Task Manager and the Project Steering Committee?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of functioning of PSC • Level of participation of project partners in project design and actual inclusion in project implementation arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting minutes • Interviews with PSC members • Interviews with key stakeholders
How was the performance of the different working groups established in the project? (IWG, PST, PSAC)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of functioning of working groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting minutes • Interviews with group members
Where there any operational and political / institutional problems and constraints that influenced the effective implementation of the project, and how did the project tried to overcome these problems?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of identified problems/constraints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting minutes • Interviews with PSC and working group members
<i>Stakeholder participation, cooperation and partnerships</i>		
How was the overall collaboration between different functional units of UNEP involved in the project? What coordination mechanisms were in place? Were the incentives for internal collaboration in UNEP adequate? Was the level of involvement of the Regional, Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived level of collaboration and coordination within UNEP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with UNEP Project Manager, national and regional staff • Interviews with PSC members and NPC

and Out-posted Offices in project design, planning, decision-making and implementation of activities appropriate?		
What was the achieved degree and effectiveness of collaboration and interactions between the various project partners and stakeholders during design and implementation of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of participation of project partners in project design and actual inclusion in project implementation arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project progress reports/PIR • Interviews with key stakeholders
How did the relationship between the project and the collaborating partners (institutions and individual experts) develop? Which benefits stemmed from their involvement for project performance, for UNEP and for the stakeholders and partners themselves?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived satisfaction of main partners of collaboration in project, including institutional benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with key stakeholders
<i>Country ownership and driven-ness.</i>		
In how far have the national partners assumed responsibility for the project and provided adequate support to project execution, including the degree of cooperation received from the various public institutions involved in the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsement of project by governmental agencies • Provision of counterpart funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with national partners, UNEP and project staff • Project progress reports/PIR • Documented endorsements and co-financing
How and how well did the project stimulate country ownership of project outputs and outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of ownership by national and local agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSC meeting minutes • Interviews with PSC members and other key stakeholders at national and local government level
<i>Financial planning and management</i>		
How well are standards (clarity, transparency, audit etc.) of financial and operational (staff recruitment, evaluation, secondary conditions) planning, management and reporting applied, to ensure that sufficient and timely financial resources were available to the project and its partners?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of standards for financial and operative management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with administrative staff • Financial reports and audit reports
To what extent have other administrative processes such as recruitment of staff, procurement of goods and services (including consultants), preparation and negotiation of cooperation agreements etc. influenced project performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of management efficiency by project partners and project staff/consultants • Number of cases where processes influenced project performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews of project partners and project staff/consultants • Project progress reports/PIR /financial reports/consultant contracts and report
To what extent co-financing has materialized as expected at project approval?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of co-financing, related to original planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial reports of project • Interviews with project administrative staff and UNEP task manager
What resources has the project leveraged since inception and how have these resources contributed to the project's ultimate objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of other leveraged resources by project partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial reports (incl co financing reports) • Reports of other organizations • Interviews with project partners

		and other institutions
Have there been any irregularities in procurement, use of financial resources and human resource management that impacted project performance? In that case, what measures have been taken by UNEP to prevent such irregularities in the future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of cases of irregularities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with project staff and UNEP PM • Financial and audit reports
<i>Supervision, guidance and technical backstopping.</i>		
How adequate were project supervision plans, inputs and processes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree to which plans were followed up by project management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with project staff • Project progress reports/PIR
How well did the different guidance and backstopping bodies (WWF, UNEP) play their role and how well did the guidance and backstopping mechanisms work? What were the strengths in guidance and backstopping and what were the limiting factors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of effectiveness • Documented backstopping activities by WWF/UNEP to project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with WWF and UNEP staff and project director • Documented support (audits, communication, reports on visits, etc.) • Meeting minutes • Interviews with program staff and partners
<i>Monitoring and evaluation implementation</i>		
Was the M&E system operational and facilitated timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period? Were the results used to improve project performance and to adapt to changing needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of implementation of M&E system (execution of activities) • Changes in project implementation as result of MTE or other supervision visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with key stakeholders • Project implementation reports • Management response to MTE
Were PIR reports, half-yearly Progress & Financial Reports complete and accurate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of completeness of reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project progress reports/PIR

Learning, Communication and outreach

This terminal evaluation has two goals, and part of the second is to promote learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, GEF, CONANP, CONAFOR, and WWF. The consultant interprets this vision as an invitation for participatory evaluation process, in which these main stakeholders, but also others, will be informed and where possible involved in all stages of the evaluation process. Stakeholders (project implementers, partners and beneficiaries) will be not only considered as sources of information for this evaluation, but also as part of the target audience. Before the evaluation, the consultant will explain the details and the scope of the evaluation to an inception meeting with the project team and with the PSC. Immediately after fieldwork, a presentation will be held to main stakeholders in Oaxaca presenting initial results. During interviews, rather than a straightforward question-and-answer (structured interviews), the consultant will engage in more open semi-structured conversations, in which initial findings can be validated and discussed with interviewed persons. This guarantees a more interactive process through which the interviewed persons have more opportunities to be informed about the evaluation. Also, the consultant hopes the revision process of the draft final report is also seen as an opportunity to share further information and clarify conclusions and recommendations where this might be needed. Whilst formal elements, to meet accountability requirements, include a full-fledged evaluation report, the consultant will ensure an accessibly written executive summary, to be used for wider public. Apart from this, the consultant is open to provide further explanations or presentations if so desired, after the final report has been approved by UNEP.

6. Evaluation schedule

46. The evaluation time frame, which was tentatively presented in the ToR for this evaluation, is now adapted to the final dates agreed for the field visit (last week of September). If comments are received in time, the final report will be ready by October 31.

Activity	Date (s)
Start of the evaluation	15 August 2015
Introduction meeting (telephone)	20 August 2015
Inception report	8 September 2015
Comments from Evaluation Office	15 September 2015
Field visits	20-28 September 2015
Zero Draft report	12 October 2015
Comments from UNEP	19 October 2015
First draft report	26 October 2015
Comments from stakeholders	9 November 2015
Final report	16 November 2015

47. The tentative program for the country visit (to be agreed upon with project staff) is as follows

Activity	Date (s)
Consultant travel to Oaxaca	20 September 2015
Inception meeting with NPC and UNEP PM	21 September 2015
PSC meeting	21 September 2015
Bilateral meeting with PSC members	21 September 2015
Field visits to project sites, interviews with beneficiaries and local stakeholders in Mixteca region	22-24 September 2015
Return to Oaxaca, additional meetings with project stakeholders, partners, staff, consultants	24/25 September
Round-up meeting and debriefing to project staff and main partners	25 September 2015
Consultant travel from Oaxaca to Mexico DF	27 September 2015
Meetings with CONANP, WWF, UNEP Mexico DF	28 September 2015
Consultant travel back to Ecuador	29 September 2015

7. Distribution of responsibilities among within the evaluation team

48. Since this is an evaluation conducted by one single person, there is no distribution of responsibilities. Tasks of the evaluator, UNEP and Project staff are adequately included in the ToR for this evaluation.

Annex A: Assessment of the Quality of Project Design

4. Project Document

	Project preparation and readiness		Addressed by PRC	Reference to ProDoc	Evaluation Comments	Rating S
1	Does the project document provide a description of stakeholder consultation during project design process?		x	Section 5	Yes, according to ProDoc a wide range of stakeholders were involved in the project design, PSC members were most active	S
2	Does the project document entail a clear stakeholder analysis? Are stakeholder needs and priorities clearly explained?		x	Section 2.5 and Appendix 16	Yes a detailed stakeholder analysis is provided, including their relevance to the project. Analysis concentrates at institutional level, less so on individual land users	S
3	Does the project document entail a clear situation analysis?			Section 2	Yes. Complete and detailed with all required elements	HS
4	Does the project document entail a clear problem analysis?			Section 2.3	Yes, Complete and detailed. Interpretation of root causes can be debated because of their complex interrelation	S
5	Does the project document entail a clear gender analysis?				No. Only marginal mention to gender issues are made; no analysis is included	U
	Relevance		Addressed by PRC	Reference to ProDoc	Evaluation Comments	Rating S
6	Is the project document clear in terms of relevance to:	ii) Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National environmental issues and needs?	x	Sections 2.2, 2.4 and 3.6	Yes, global and national environmental issues are addressed (not extensively); sub-regional and regional needs (in the sense of Latin America or Mesoamerica) not specifically addressed	MS
7		ii) UNEP mandate	x	Paragraph 140-141	Yes; clear reference to UNEP mandate and core competences, as well as linkage to other UNEP programmes	HS
8		iii) the relevant GEF focal areas, strategic priorities and operational programme(s)? (if appropriate)	x	Section 3.7, Appendix 15	Yes, but scantily (1 single paragraph in ProDoc and another in CEO request), and more detail in Tracking Tool. Only refers to SP4 of BD SO2 while it also contributes to others (SP5, BD SO1, SFM)	MS
9		iv) Stakeholder priorities and needs?	x	Section 2.5, Table 3	Yes, clear reference of stakeholder interest in project and how this is included in design	HS
10	Is the project document clear in terms of relevance to cross-cutting issues	iv) Gender equity	x		No	U
11		v) South-South Cooperation		Outcome 4.2	Yes. A specific outcome and set of activities have been defined for collaboration with similar initiatives, including UNEP's global Ecosystem Management Program (EMP)	HS
12		vi) Bali Strategic Plan			No. Although apparently most strategic considerations of BSP are met, there is no specific mention	MS
	Intended Results and Causality		Addressed by PRC	Reference to ProDoc	Evaluation Comments	S

13	Are the outcomes realistic?	x		Yes, although the outcomes are ambitious (especially 3.2 and 3.3) and these seem to be a large step from output to outcome, including some strong risks and assumptions; only partially addressed in the logframe	S
14	Are the causal pathways from project outputs [goods and services] through outcomes [changes in stakeholder behaviour] towards impacts clearly and convincingly described? Is there a clearly presented Theory of Change or intervention logic for the project?	x	Section 3.1, paragraph 81 and 82	There is no TOC presented (no requirement at ProDoc presentation). The ROTI to reconstruct a ToC showed that identifying causal pathways is challenging, because of many and diverse outputs leading to the outcomes, and many outcomes are depending on others. However, before the project description as such (in LogFrame logic) the ProDoc has a consistency and clear rationale, which is practically a ToC summary	S
15	Is the timeframe realistic? What is the likelihood that the anticipated project outcomes can be achieved within the stated duration of the project?	x		yes, 5 years is well planned considering the ambitious level of the outcomes but well prepared project and good institutional agreements	S
16	Are activities appropriate to produce outputs?		Sector 3.3, appendix 5	Yes. The description of project components and results in the ProDoc offers a presentation of general activities per outcome. In appendix 5 (time frame) a more detailed list is presented. On the other hand, the outputs are described in detail, but some of these as real outputs (products) other as activities (rehabilitation, testing and training) and others almost as outcomes (Ten micro-watersheds as models for development) and it is not always clear what activities are required for which output.	MS
17	Are activities appropriate to drive change along the intended causal pathway(s)?		Sector 3.3	Yes; although not related to causal pathways (which were not defined in ProDoc)	S
18	Are impact drivers and assumptions clearly described for each key causal pathway?		Section 3.4 and Appendix 4	Partly. Assumptions are mostly related to the willingness of stakeholders. Most of these are projects partners or project beneficiaries and their willingness is, as least partly, under the projects' control. On the other hand, during ROTI exercise, several other assumptions were identified, related to project results (continuity, quality).	MS
19	Are the roles of key actors and stakeholders clearly described for each key causal pathway?	x	Section 4	In spite of good stakeholder identification and an overall description of stakeholder participation in project implementation, there is no description of stakeholders role per component, or responsibility for /output/activity	MS

20	Is the ToC-D and/or logical framework terminology (<i>result levels, drivers, assumptions etc.</i>) consistent with UNEP definitions (<i>Programme Manual</i>)		Appendix4	ToC was not defined in ProDoc.. In Logframe, Objective formulation was good, outcome as well, although there is apparent overlap between outcome 2.1 and project objective., Output formulation is variable (see question 14 above)	MS
	Efficiency	Addres sed by PRC	Reference to ProDoc	Evaluation Comments	HS
21	Does the project intend to make use of / build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency?	x	Section 2.7, Outcome 4.2, Outcome 2.1, paragraph 119	Yes. Apart from a detailed presentation on how the project complements and coordinates with other projects (setion 2.7), the project defined a specific outcome for collaboration with similar initiatives. In addition, one of the projects outcomes is to include BD and ES consideration into existing programmes at state level, all well described . Finally, the project builds on national initiatives, gathered in Special Concurrent Program for Rural Sustainable Development (paragraph 119)	HS
	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic effects	Addres sed by PRC	Reference to ProDoc	Evaluation Comments	S
22	Does the project design present a strategy / approach to sustaining outcomes / benefits?		Section 3.8	Yes. A specific section describes the sustainability aspects.	S
23	Does the design identify social or political factors that may influence positively or negatively the sustenance of project results and progress towards impacts?	x	Sections 3.5 an 3.11	A short but correct risk analysis and mitigation strategy is included in the project description. Social safeguards are described in section 3.11.	S
24	Does the design foresee sufficient activities to promote government and stakeholder awareness, interests, commitment and incentives to execute, enforce and pursue the programmes, plans, agreements, monitoring systems etc. prepared and agreed upon under the project?		Outcomes 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1 and 4.2	Yes. Apart from several outcomes that are directly related to create commitments and pursue plans and programs (2.1, 3.1 and 3.3), others are related to creating awareness and knowledge (1.1, 4.1 and 4.2)	HS
25	If funding is required to sustain project outcomes and benefits, does the design propose adequate measures / mechanisms to secure this funding?			Partly. rAlthough some outcomes and benefits need funding to be sustained, this is not external funding but existing incentives or sustained market access. A weak point might be the focus of outcome 2.1, which implies supporting existing programmes but not considering the financial sustainability of these programmes.	MS
26	Are financial risks adequately identified and does the project describe a clear strategy on how to mitigate the risks (in terms of project's sustainability)	x	Section 3.8	No. The risk analysis does not include financial risks. There might be one crucial risk, which is the long term sustention of support programmes that are meant to be strengthened in outcome 2.1	MU
27	Does the project design adequately describe the institutional frameworks, governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. required to	x	Section 4	Yes. During project design, implementation arrangement and institutional context of outcomes adequately addresses embedding	HS

	sustain project results?			in the future	
28	Does the project design identify environmental factors, positive or negative, that can influence the future flow of project benefits? Are there any project outputs or higher level results that are likely to affect the environment, which, in turn, might affect sustainability of project benefits?	x	Section 3.8	Yes. Environmental factors are included in risk analysis and mitigation	S
29	Does the project design foresee adequate measures to promote replication and up-scaling / does the project have a clear strategy to promote replication and up-scaling?		Section 3.9, Outcome 4.2	Yes. Adequate section on replication plus a specific outcome	S
30	Are the planned activities likely to generate the level of ownership by the main national and regional stakeholders necessary to allow for the project results to be sustained?			Yes. Although project focuses at local/subnational level, the main participating governmental stakeholders are key federal agencies in the environmental sector	S
	Learning, Communication and outreach	Addres sed by PRC	Reference to ProDoc	Evaluation Comments	HS
	Has the project identified appropriate methods for communication with key stakeholders during the project life?	x	Sector 3.10	Yes; section con communication describes dissemination of results to beneficiaries but also to project partners	HS
	Are plans in place for dissemination of results and lesson sharing.		Sector 3.10 and component 2	Apart from the overall strategy, a specific component focuses on dissemination and lessons sharing	HS
	Do learning, communication and outreach plans build on analysis of existing communication channels and networks used by key stakeholders ?	x	Section 2.5	Partly. With exception of UNEP program relationships. Furthermore, little presence of networks for communication in the area. Those that are, are mentioned in stakeholder analysis	S
	Risk identification and Social Safeguards	Addres sed by PRC	Reference to ProDoc	Evaluation Comments	MS
31	Are all assumptions identified in the ToC and/or logical framework presented as risks in the risk management table? Are risks appropriately identified in both, ToC and the risk table?	x	Section 3.5, Appendix 4)	No. All assumptions included in logframe (Annex 4) and in assumptions section are summarized in one single risk (Varying project ownership among local stakeholder communities.) Identified risks in analysis are taken into account in project description	U
32	Is the risk management strategy appropriate?	x	Section 3.5	Yes. Several of these risks are adequate have been taken up to the reconstructed ToC.	S
33	Are potentially negative environmental, economic and social impacts of projects identified?	x	Section 3.11	Adequate presentation of social and environmental safeguards	S
34	Does the project have adequate mechanisms to reduce its negative environmental foot-print?	x	N/R	N/R	
	Have risks and assumptions been discussed with key stakeholders?			Based on the consulted information (ProDoc, PPG documents, RPC) this can not be confirmed	
	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	Addres sed by PRC	Reference to ProDoc	Evaluation Comments	S

35	Is the project governance model comprehensive, clear and appropriate? <i>(Steering Committee, partner consultations etc.)</i>			Sections 4 and 5	Yes. Clear and small steering committee and in addition, several technical committees for stakeholder involvement	S
36	Are supervision / oversight arrangements clear and appropriate?			Section 4	Yes. Clearly described, short supervision lines; appropriate oversight for SC	S
	Management, Execution and Partnership Arrangements		Addressed by PRC	Reference to ProDoc	Evaluation Comments	S
37	Have the capacities of partners been adequately assessed?		x	Section 4	Yes	S
38	Are the execution arrangements clear and are roles and responsibilities within UNEP clearly defined?			Section 4	Yes	S
39	Are the roles and responsibilities of external partners properly specified?		x	Section 4, section 5	Yes, especially considering the wide group of external partners (other programs, state support agencies, etc) to be addressed	S
	Financial Planning / budgeting		Addressed by PRC	Reference to ProDoc	Evaluation Comments	S
40	Are there any obvious deficiencies in the budgets / financial planning? <i>(coherence of the budget, do figures add up etc.)</i>		x	Section 7	No	S
	Has budget been reviewed and agreed to be realistic with key project stakeholders?			Section 7	Although the ProDoc does not specify this, given it is mentioned that the conceptualization is a joint effort and that all key stakeholders pledged important co-funding, it can be assumed they have been participating	S
41	Is the resource utilization cost effective?			Appendix 1	Yes	S
42	How realistic is the resource mobilization strategy?		x	Section 7.2	Highly realistic. Stated co-financing includes only fully confirmed commitments at the time of proposal submission.	HS
43	Are the financial and administrative arrangements including flows of funds clearly described?				ProDoc (incl. appendices) does not present these aspects. This detail is provided in the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA)	MS
	Monitoring		Addressed by PRC	Reference to ProDoc	Evaluation Comments	MS
44	Does the logical framework	• capture the key elements of the Theory of Change or the intervention logic for the project?	-	Appendix 4	Yes	S
		• have 'SMART' indicators for outcomes and objectives?	x	Appendix 4	Partly. No livelihood indicators in outcome 3.2 and project objective; indicators 1,2,3 of project objective are more appropriate for overall goal; indicator 4 doubles outcome 2.1	MS
		• have appropriate 'means of verification'?		Appendix 4	yes	S
45	Are the milestones appropriate and sufficient to track progress and foster			Appendix 4 & 6	Yes. Milestones have not been presented, but mid-term targets for	S

	management towards outputs and outcomes?			indicators. Moreover, clear presentation of outputs/delivery date	
46	Is there baseline information in relation to key performance indicators?		Section 6, Appendix 4	No. Although the ProDoc states "50% of data is available", most base line information is absolute ("there is none") or subjective (".. not sufficiently appraised"). And where baseline data are needed, these were planned to be provided during yr 1.	MU
47	How well has the method for the baseline data collection been explained?		Paragraph 160	Short explanation, although much of these is complemented by a good context and stakeholder analysis	MS
48	Has the desired level of achievement (targets) been specified for indicators of outputs and outcomes?		Appendix 4	Yes	S
49	How well are the performance targets justified for outputs and outcomes?		Appendix 4	Reasonably. Targets are realistic considering intervention area and population, and performance targets are well costed	S
50	Has a budget been allocated for monitoring project progress in implementation against outputs and outcomes?		Appendix 7	Yes	S
51	Does the project have a clear knowledge management approach?			Partly. There is a clear focus on knowledge generation (component 1) and dissemination (comp 4) but there is no concrete knowledge management in terms of planned administration of data, publications etc	MS
	Have mechanisms for involving key project stakeholder groups in monitoring activities been clearly articulated?		Appendix 7	yes	S
	Evaluation	Addressed by PRC	Reference to ProDoc	Evaluation Comments	S
52	Is there an adequate plan for evaluation?	x	Section 6, appendix 9	yes	S
53	Has the time frame for evaluation activities been specified?	x	Section 6, Appendix 8	yes	S
54	Is there an explicit budget provision for mid-term review and terminal evaluation?		Appendix 1	yes	S
55	Is the budget sufficient?			Apparently, it is	S

5. Project alignment with the SP PoW

		Addressed by PRC	Reference to ProDoc	Evaluation Comments	Rating S
1	Does the project form a coherent part of the programme framework?	x		Yes. Fully aligned with BD SO2, SP4 but (although not mentioned in ProDoc) also contributes to SP5, BD1 and SFM	S
2	Is the relevance of the project in terms of SP higher level results clearly described?	x		YES. Although the ProDoc does not mention SP4 results, the formulation of project objective is fully in	S

				line wiht SP4 outcome	
3	How well have linkages with other projects in the same Programme Framework been described?	x	Section 2.7	Well	S
4	Where linkages with other SPs are mentioned, are they well-articulated?			N/R	
5	If the project is a pilot, is it clear why the pilot is relevant to higher level SP results?			N/R	
6	Are the designed activities relevant in terms of contributing / producing the identified PoW Output(s)? <i>(Based on project design only)</i>	x		Yes, particularly output 1,2 and 4 of AE(a) and 1,2 3 aof EA(c)	S
7	Are output indicators appropriate to measure contribution to / delivery of the PoW Output(s)?	x		ProDoc does not identify output indicators but outcome indicators. Several of these are adequate to measure contribution to PoW outpus	S
8	What is the likelihood that the project's contribution towards PoW output(s) will be achieved within the duration of the PoW? <i>(consider also funding, timing, staffing etc.)</i>			High because several outcomes are fully in line with PoW outputs	S
9	Are the intended results likely to contribute to the stated EA? <i>(Based on design only)</i>			Yes, Particularly EA(a) and EA(c)	S
10	Is the pathway from project outputs to EA contribution clearly described?			Project objective is written fully in line with EA(a) and (c) so project logic describes this contribution	S
11	Are the indicators appropriate to measure contribution to EA?			Yes	S
12	What is the likelihood that the project's contribution towards the EA will be achieved within the duration of the PoW? <i>(Consider also funding, timing, staffing etc.)</i>			High, particularly EA(a)	S
13	Do project milestones track progress to PoW output and all the way to the EA?			Yes	S

6. Project approval process (specific to the project under review)

		Evaluation Comments
1	What were the main issues raised by PRC that were addressed?	UNEP Comparative advantage, indicator formulation, Institutional arrangements, M&E table, social safeguards re: voluntary reserves, WWF Cofinancing
2	What were the main issues raised by PRC that were not addressed?	Gender
3	Were there any major issues not flagged by PRC?	Livelihoods indicators, specific roles of institution in implementation (responsibilities of partners for activities/outputs), Lacking inclusion of risks in logframe (assumptions only partly reflect risks)

Annex B: Documents consulted for this inception report

GEF. 2007. BIODIVERSITY FOCAL AREA STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC PROGRAMMING FOR GEF-4
Tinney Rivera. Mid term review report (April 2014) for Mixteca project
UNEP. 2010. Project Document "Integrating tradeoffs between supply of ecosystem services and land use options into poverty alleviation efforts and development planning in Mixteca"; Incl appendices
UNEP. 2010. Request for CEO endorsement of Mixteca project
UNEP. 2010. PRC review sheet for Mixteca project
UNEP. 2013. Biennial Programme of Work and budget for 2014–2015
UNEP. 2015. Terms of Reference for the terminal evaluation of the project ""Integrating tradeoffs between supply of ecosystem services and land use options into poverty alleviation efforts and development planning in Mixteca "
UNEP-WWF 2010. Project Cooperation Agreement for Mixteca project
UNEP-WWF Half Yearly Progress Report October 2010 - January 2011 for Mixteca project
UNEP-WWF GEF PIR Fiscal Years 2012, 2013, 2014 for Mixteca project

Annex C: List of documents and individuals to be consulted during the main evaluation phase

The evaluator will consult the following additional documents (generic)

- Project design documents
- Project supervision plan, with associated budget
- Correspondence related to project
- Supervision mission reports
- Steering Committee meeting documents, including agendas, meeting minutes, and any summary reports
- Project progress reports, including financial reports submitted
- Cash advance requests documenting disbursements
- Annual Project Implementation Reports (PIRs)
- Management memos related to project
- Other documentation of supervision feedback on project outputs and processes (e.g. comments on draft progress reports, etc.).
- Project revision and extension documentation
- Updated implementation plan for the recommendations of the Mid-Term Evaluation
- Project Terminal Report (draft, if final version not available)
- GEF and UNEP strategic papers related to programmatic areas of the project
- National and regional policy documents, related to the project
- GEF Tracking Tool for the relevant focal area
- Products produced by the project
- Products (publications, brochures) related to project activities, produced by third parties

The evaluator hopes to be able to interview the following persons:

- UNEP task manager and country staff
- Current and past project staff (WWF, consultants)
- Representatives of project partners (CONANP, CONAFOR); including persons that participate in PSC.
- (Planned) IWG members y Stakeholder Advisory Committee (Conagua, CEA, SEMARNAT SEDER, SAGARPA, SEDESOR, CONAZA, CONAZA, IEEO, CDI, SRA, INAH, INEGI, SECTUR)
- Selection of representatives of external partners (Universities, Research Institutions, NGO)
- Local municipalities
- Community Based Organizations (producer organizations, farmers organizations, indigenous organizations)
- Individual land users, beneficiaries of project activities.