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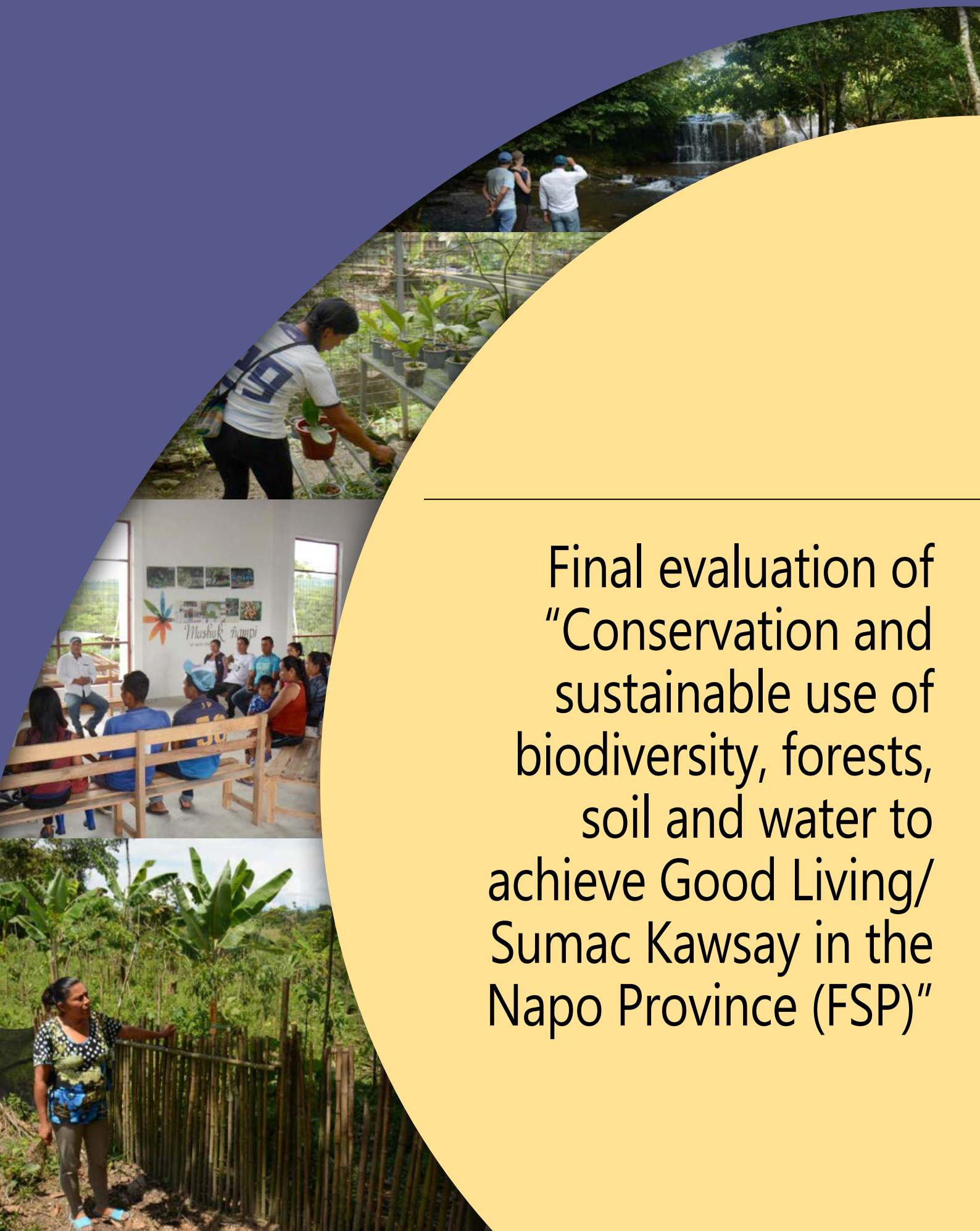

Final evaluation of "Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, forests, soil and water to achieve Good Living/ Sumac Kawsay in the Napo Province (FSP)"

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CODA	Organic Environmental Code
CPF	Country Programming Framework
CSL	Climate-smart Livestock Farming project
DAG	Decentralized Autonomous Government
ET	Evaluation team
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAO-EC	FAO Representation in Ecuador
FE	Final evaluation
FECD	Ecuadorian Trust Fund for Development Cooperation
FFF	Forest Farm Facility (project)
FODESNA	Sustainable Development Fund for the Napo Province
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German International Cooperation Agency)
ICAA	Initiative for the Conservation of the Andean Amazon
IKIAM	Amazon Regional University
LUDP	Land Use and Development Plan
MAE	Ministry of Environment of Ecuador
MAG	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MAGAP	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MTE	Mid-term evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPDAG	Decentralised Autonomous Government of the Napo Province
OED	FAO Office of Evaluation
PT	project team
RA	Rainforest Alliance
SFM	Sustainable forest management
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
ToC	Theory of change
ToR	Terms of Reference

Executive summary

Introduction

1. This document presents the findings and conclusions of the final evaluation (FE) of the project "Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, forests, soil and water to achieve Good Living/Sumac Kawsay in the Napo Province", an endeavour of the Decentralised Autonomous Government of the Napo Province (NPDAG) and the Ministry of Environment (MAE). Funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). This evaluation was conducted to report to the donor and to the national and provincial governments that are counterparts in the implementation. It also has a learning purpose, as it enables an assessment of the progress made towards achieving stated project objectives and outcomes up to the date of the evaluation mission. The evaluation examined the achievements, impacts, progress and difficulties that the project has faced in its implementation at a provincial, cantonal and parish level. It followed the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), adopted a consultative and transparent approach and was implemented in close collaboration with the FAO Representation in Ecuador and the project Steering Committee. The evaluation methodology consisted of the combination of methods and tools that gather the qualitative and quantitative information required to respond to the evaluation questions objectively and in an evidence-based manner.

Main findings

Relevance

Evaluation question 1: Are the project strategy and actions still appropriate for meeting the needs of all the stakeholders involved in matters of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including support for implementing policies and programmes by the Government of Ecuador, the GEF/GEF-5?

The relevance rating is highly satisfactory.

2. The objectives of the project and its implementation strategy are aligned with the national and local environmental policy priorities, and with the FAO and GEF priorities. The project meets the support needs of the Napo Province Government in matters regarding conservation, the sustainable use of biodiversity and the improvement of the livelihoods of rural inhabitants, and in the majority of cases, the project meets the demand of the indigenous and local communities that collaborate in its execution.

3. Several changes in the institutional and political context of the country have affected the implementation of the project. The main change was the reduction of public investment in the existing environmental incentives at the beginning of the implementation. A new situation that the project adapted to successfully. The change in environmental legislation also partly affected the execution of the project, and in particular the support to the legislation for forestry traceability.

Effectiveness and Impact

Evaluation question 2: What outcomes (both intended and unintended) had the project achieved by the time of the evaluation, and are they contributing to and/or positioned to contribute to the achievement of the project's environmental objectives and development objectives?

Evaluation question 6: What preliminary signs of impact, due to the project's contribution, can be identified in terms of the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable management of soil,

forests and water as well as access by the local population to goods and services (always within the framework of Sumac Kawsay)?

The total effectiveness rating is satisfactory.

4. In general, the project achieved its outputs and outcomes satisfactorily. It managed to provide adequate support to different productive and conservation activities in the Napo province. However, many outputs have not yet been implemented and, consequently, the project has contributed partially to the development objective: to improve the supply of goods and services from agriculture, forestry production and conservation. The project managed to have an initial impact on the conservation of forests and soil and on the restoration of several areas of the natural ecosystem in Napo, and because of this, it achieved its global environmental objective. In addition, it generated net gains (especially economically, but also socially) for several hundred families.

5. In component 1, the project was successful in achieving the first outcome: environmental governance in the province has improved as regards the strengthening of capacities and the tools available. The project increased staff and technical capacity in public institutions for the incorporation of strategies concerning the conservation and sustainable use of renewable natural resources in the participatory planning of the territory. However, the tools developed (Land Use and Development Plan [LUDP], inter-institutional cooperation strategy) have not been internalised or implemented. It also achieved outcome 1.2, supported improved use of the existing environmental incentives and has improved the effectiveness of such. Although there is little additional investment for the incentives, there has been substantial progress in establishing a new incentive for the sustainable development of the province (Sustainable Development Fund for the Napo Province [FODESNA]).

6. In component 2, the project managed to get cocoa, *naranjilla* and milk producers who collaborate with the project to incorporate good practices in natural resource management. This has led to improvements, particularly in cocoa production (outcome 2.1). The second outcome of this component was achieved because the project contributed to better forestry management, the reduction of deforestation and, consequently, CO_2 emissions. Although the sustainable forest management strategy developed by the project has not yet been implemented by the public stakeholders. The evaluation also found that although the communities entered into non-monetary and short-term conservation conventions with the Provincial Government, in several cases this commitment involves areas that were already conserved and do not have additionality.

7. The outcomes of the third component were successful as regards the biotrade initiatives involving vanilla and guayusa, in which the project has achieved a higher volume of production and sale. For different reasons, the initiatives with other products (orchids, fibre palm, sacha inchi) are emerging. With regard to tourism, the project supported several of the initiatives through limited activities but it is only evident that this support brought about a measurable and attributable effect in a few cases.

Efficiency

Evaluation question 3: Have the intervention methods, institutional structure and financial, technical and operational resources and procedures available helped or hindered the achievement of the project outcomes and objectives?

The total efficiency rating is satisfactory.

8. In general, the project was implemented and executed efficiently. The reason for the satisfactory generation of most of the outputs was the good management. The project has had a good level of cost-efficiency in relation to the amount of activities and outputs, and it has brought about some synergies that increased the scope of the project, such as with the universities. It worked on initiatives in place and, as a result, developed activities in areas that already had the support of other projects (current and/or past).

9. After some challenges in the initial six months of implementation, the project was managed efficiently and with adequate support from FAO. The level of co-financing mobilised was slightly less than that expected. The project implementation structure, with FAO managing the funds and executing the acquisitions, and the Decentralised Autonomous Government of the Napo Province (NPDAG) as the agency responsible for the implementation, contributed to efficient implementation. However, this was also one of the potential reasons why there was not more appropriation by the public entities because their role in the project implementation was less direct. This was also reflected in the governance of the project, which had some challenges: although it was efficient, it was not very inclusive. Primarily, the management committee, which was designed as a space for the management of the execution of the project, had low participation by its institutional members and stopped operating in the second half of the project. There was no effective communication with and within the provincial Decentralized Autonomous Government (DAG) due to the scarce communication, separate offices and little inclusion in the Management Committee.

Monitoring

Evaluation questions: Was a monitoring and evaluation plan containing baselines, indicators and SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely) goals with a focus on gender designed and implemented? Was risk management integrated into the project planning and implementation (including the effects of climate change)? To what extent did both support and promote an efficient implementation of the project?

The total monitoring and evaluation rating is satisfactory.

10. At the start of the project the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system was deficient because it did not have a detailed plan. Subsequently, after hiring someone to work on monitoring, the tracking of the activities and indicators was continuous and precise. The project also had good risk management: most of the risks were identified in time, were monitored, new mitigation activities were included during the execution of the project and this was adequately reported.

Involvement of the interested parties

Evaluation question 4a: What was the level and standard of involvement of the interested parties and the collaboration agreements of the project, in its design and during its implementation? Have other stakeholders been involved, such as civil society or the private sector, in the design or the implementation of the project, and how has this affected the project outcomes?

Question 4b: To what extent has the project, in its work with local communities/indigenous people, ensured their participation in the decision-making process (including in the implementation of activities)?

Evaluation question 4c: To what extent has the project addressed gender equality issues in its design and is it contributing to the empowerment of women, young people and other vulnerable groups?

The rating of the general quality of the involvement of interested parties is moderately satisfactory.

11. The project achieved satisfactory involvement of the local stakeholders (indigenous people, communities) but collaboration with local governments could have been more effective to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of the project. The implementation of the project activities was generally socialised and agreed upon with local beneficiaries and met the demand. The participation of indigenous communities, men, women, young and old people was achieved in the execution of the activities in components 2 and 3. The contribution made by the Kichwa promoters was an added value. During its implementation, effective collaboration was established with several projects by FAO and other agencies, some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and two universities.

12. The project achieved good communication with the direct stakeholders (beneficiary communities, and the technical personnel of the organisations working in the same field). The information platform supported by the project is of good quality (InfoNapo). The project did not have an effective communication strategy and as a result, it was much less well known among other communities, local authorities and the public in general.

13. The inclusion of gender in the project from its design phase was weak, because it did not develop a gender manual or strategy. There were a few indicators in relation to the minimal participation of women and better income for women. However, in practice, several aspects regarding gender equality, young people and other vulnerable groups have been included in the project activities. This was probably due to the experience and attitude of several more experienced members of the project team.

Sustainability

Evaluation question 4c: How sustainable are the outcomes achieved to date at an environmental, social, financial and institutional level?

The sustainability rating is moderately likely.

14. There are several institutional factors that offer likely sustainability to part of the outcomes. In particular, the large associations of products of sustainable management of natural resources have good installed capacity and can give sustainability to good practices and to value chains. Other productive activities have less developed productive systems and value chains. On the other hand, institutional sustainability by local governmental agencies is less likely: they do not have enough capacity to make the outcomes sustainable. In addition, the capacity created by the project dispersed and the inter-institutional model of collaboration for environmental governance and FODESNA are emerging.

15. There is a good social basis in most of the communities/associations and individual owners who participated in the project, for the collaboration and continuity of the activities and to maintain the outcomes. However, the different social stakeholders require external funds to maintain the outcomes. Fortunately, there are new already specified opportunities that can support these processes. For long-term financial sustainability, the establishment, capitalisation and good operation of FODESNA are critical.

Conclusions

16. The main conclusion of this evaluation is that the project is geared towards achieving its development objective (to improve the supply of goods and services from agriculture, forestry production and conservation), provided that it manages to effectively implement the instruments that are still not consolidated and that institutional sustainability is

ensured. It was effective in the generation of most of the outputs and outcomes, although for planning reasons, some outputs were generated late and consequently some outcomes are incomplete.

17. The project was efficiently managed both technically and administratively, thanks to a team with high professional standards, effective collaboration among personnel and with other entities, and good support for the implementing agency. The project had a few weaknesses from its design phase (lack of gender, communication and monitoring analyses and strategies) which affected the execution at the initial stage. Part of this was remedied in the second half of its implementation. Despite not having a gender strategy, thanks to the experience of the project team, the project accomplished equal participation in several activities, promoted specific opportunities for women and vulnerable groups and effectively applied some appropriate tools.

18. The project achieved good synergy with other similar projects, NGOs working in the area and local universities. Its appropriation by some of the local participants was high thanks to the good process of socialisation and prior consultation and because in many cases it directly fulfilled the demand at the time. The involvement of local governments could have been better. Collaboration between the project team (PT) and the NPDAG was not optimal, meaning that the appropriation of objectives and strategies was partial throughout most of its execution.

19. The sustainability of the project outcomes is moderately likely because the project was built upon existing activities and made the most of synergies with other stakeholders. In addition, there is a good level of appropriation by local participants and a commitment by the institutions to continue to promote the project strategies. Although there is still a shortage of technical and financial capacity among many of the participants and institutions, some initiatives are already self-sustainable and there is a high likelihood that other initiatives will continue to become stronger, just like other initiatives that are still emerging.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. To FAO Representation in Ecuador **(FAO-EC).** In order to have a realistic period of time to consolidate several outputs and therefore generate more solid outcomes, it is recommended that FAO consider extending the project by 6 months. Suggestions: Based on the proposed 2020 annual operating plan (AOP), the **PT** must develop a detailed plan of work for this 6-month period, ensuring not only the activities foreseen to generate the outputs before the finalisation, but also its form of funding and the personnel necessary.

Recommendation 2. To the NPDAG. Considering that the project does not have a future sustainability plan, it is recommended that the period of extension is also used to seek ongoing support for promising initiatives, and to continue with, replicate and scale up relevant activities for the sustainable development of the province.

Recommendation 3. To the project team. To achieve the most visibility at the end of the project and to make the project outputs, tools and lessons available for future users, it is recommended that the PT publish all of the reports, systematizations and protocols in a visible, easy-access and permanent location.

Recommendation 4. To ensure a more effective and efficient performance of a project financed by the GEF, it is suggested that **FAO and other GEF implementation and execution agencies** implementing similar projects in comparable contexts, always include a gender, participation and Free Prior and Informed Content (FPIC) (where relevant) analysis and strategy at the start of the design. Similarly, any project must have its own communication, knowledge management, monitoring and supervision as well as sustainability plan in the first year.

1. Introduction

1. This document presents the findings and conclusions of the final evaluation (FE) of the project "Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, forests, soil and water to achieve Good Living/Sumac Kawsay in the Napo Province" (GCP/ECU/082/GFF; hereinafter the Napo/Good Living project). The project began its implementation on 9 April 2015 and officially closed in December 2019. FAO is the GEF agency responsible for the supervision and provision of technical advice during the implementation of the project. In addition, it is responsible for the financial and operational execution of the project, including the hiring of the project team (PT), consultants and other acquisitions. The Decentralised Autonomous Government of the Napo Province (NPDAG) is the main project execution partner and the Ministry of Environment (MAE) is the main co-executing partner. Both execution partners are responsible for ensuring the coordination of the four project components, as well as coordination and collaboration with the DAGs, local community organisations and other partners. The project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) with co-funding (whether in cash or in kind) pledged initially by the project partners and other (public and private) national and international counterparts.

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

2. This FE was executed in the last semester of implementation of the project, as detailed in the project document (Prodoc; FAO and GEF 2014) and in conformity with the GEF requirements (Independent Evaluation Office, 2019). According to the Terms of Reference (ToR) of this evaluation (annex 1), in accordance with the Prodoc, the FE was completed for two purposes. On the one hand, the evaluation was conducted to report to the donor (GEF) and to the national and provincial governments that are counterparts in its execution. And on the other, this exercise was performed for the purpose of learning, as the process assessed the achievement of the objectives and outcomes proposed by the project to date, identified the impacts and measures to consolidate the sustainability of the outcomes and at the same time, recorded the main lessons learned.

3. The evaluation team (ET) prepared this report with all of the findings, lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations, in a clear and concise manner. After the introduction and methodology (Chapter 1), the background of the project in the context of the environment and development of the country, the logic of the project and the reconstructed theory of change (ToC) (Chapter 2) is detailed. The results of the evaluation are shown in Chapter 3, according to the criteria of belonging, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability as well as other factors that determine the achievement of the outcomes. The last chapters of the report detail the lessons (Chapter 4), conclusions (Chapter 5) and recommendations (Chapter 6). Lastly, the appendices and annexes provide information about the evaluation process, the methodology and the analysis performed to outline the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

1.2 Intended users

4. The intended users and uses of the evaluation include:

   i. The project team (PT) will use the findings and the lessons identified in the evaluation to present the sustainability options together with the executing governments and

the donor, as well as the path to follow. During the evaluation, in their interviews, members of the team were specifically asked about their suggestions regarding sustainability and the relationship with institutional partners.

ii. The MAE will use the outcomes of the evaluation and the conclusions to improve the scope of the outcomes after the completion of such. The MAE will also use this evaluation to provide information about similar projects, both by GEF and by other donors.

iii. The NPDAG and all of the municipal and parish governments involved will use the outcomes of the evaluation and the conclusions to make the actions sustainable, consolidate outcomes and search for the potential positive impact. The evaluation team (ET) selected current civil servants of the DAG and also from past administrations, to have an overview of the different positions on the sustainability of the outcomes.

iv. The (non-governmental) partners and the local beneficiary communities will also use the outcomes of the evaluation and the conclusions to improve the scope of the outcomes after the completion of such and to receive inputs to make the actions and benefits sustainable.

v. GEF (donor) will use, in consultation with FAO, the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation to contribute to strategic decision-making regarding the route to follow in future with new projects. In addition, the evaluation will serve as an input for future evaluations of the GEF interventions.

vi. The FAO Representation in Ecuador (FAO-EC) will consider the main outcomes of the evaluation for their future strategic planning and for the design of future proposals. Consequently, the ET consulted the PT (hired by FAO), coordinator and administrator of the GEF portfolio, as well as the representative and deputy representative, to insert this evaluation in the overall FAO strategy.

vii. Other donors and organisations interested in supporting projects regarding the integrated management of natural resources in Napo and in Ecuador in general, and consequently an effective distribution of the report is recommended.

1.3 Scope and objective of the evaluation

5. The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED), carried out a mid-term evaluation (MTE; FAO, 2018a) in October 2017. Consequently, the final evaluation mainly evaluated the project execution period from November 2017 to the date of the evaluation mission (September/October 2019), covering the activities in all the project components. Only where relevant for the performance of the activities or the achievement of the outcomes in the second half of the project, the design of the project and/or activities in the initial years was reviewed once again. Similarly, the MTE findings and conclusions were taken into consideration.

6. The evaluation examined the achievements, impacts, progress and difficulties that the project has faced in its implementation at a provincial, cantonal and parish level. With regard to the geographical coverage, the project sites that were visited in the Napo Province were identified in consultation with the FAO Representation in Ecuador (FAO-EC), the PT and the ET, according to the criteria included in the report on the preparation of this evaluation (annex 2) and they aimed to represent the whole area of implementation (Appendix 9).

7. The FE is led by an evaluation team of the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED). The evaluation adopted that mentioned in the project document as the main objective: "[...] to identify the impact the project has had, the sustainability of the project outcomes and the degree of achievement of the outcomes in the long term. To incorporate and extend the outputs and practices. The purpose of the FE was also to indicate future opportunities to expand the project in subsequent phases, to mainstream and expand its outputs and practices". In addition, other aspects mentioned in the project document are included in the specific objectives and evaluation questions (Appendix 7):

   i. to assess whether the intervention continues to be relevant in relation to the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries and objectives of the country, FAO and GEF;

   ii. to verify whether the MTE recommendations were implemented and assess the actions taken in this regard as well as the outcomes;

   iii. to evaluate the outcomes, their sustainability and in particular to what extent they contribute to achieving the project objectives. The FE will also include an analysis of the potential impacts if it is possible to measure them;

   iv. to identify the lessons learned and actions still needed for a possible monitoring phase that can scale up the outcomes achieved.

1.4 Methodology[1]

8. The evaluation followed the *United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (2006), adopted a consultative and transparent approach and was implemented in close collaboration with the FAO Representation in Ecuador and the project Steering Committee. The ET incorporated the criteria and requirements of GEF into the evaluation and provides an assessment of different aspects of the project and the financial data and co-funding data pursuant to the GEF formats and guides. It also used the policies, guides and frameworks of FAO and GEF for the gender analysis, evaluation of work with communities and of the development of capacities.

9. The evaluation methodology consisted of the combination of methods and tools that gather the qualitative and quantitative information required to respond to the evaluation questions objectively and in an evidence-based manner.

   i. *Review of documents*. The ET completed a review of a wide range of documents. On reviewing these documents, the evaluators associated each relevant document with specific evaluation questions (by coding documents) to then be able to process this information with all of the information for each question. The documents that were used for the necessary review and analysis during the mission and preparation of the FE and additional publications are presented in Appendix 6.

   ii. *Analysis of the indicators*. For the effectiveness criteria, a key part of gathering information was obtaining a general perspective of the current value of all of the indicators included in the framework of project outcomes, and validating these values. On the basis of the technical progress reports and conversations with members of the

[1] For the detailed description of the methodology, see the report on the preparation of this final evaluation in Annex 2.

PT and management and project Steering Committees, the ET compiled the progress made towards the indicators and included them in a table (Appendices 2 and 3). This progress was validated during the other steps in the completion of the evaluation (interviews, review of documents and field observations).

iii. *Interviews with several stakeholders*. The ET completed a series of semi-structured interviews with a representative number of stakeholders (identified in the preparation phase). This information validated the data gathered from the documentation reviewed and from the indicators and complemented them with the crucial perspective of the people who execute, collaborate with and benefit from the project. The people included in the Terms of Reference (ToR) were interviewed, and during the preparation of the mission, this list was complemented with other relevant people, identified during the evaluation mission itself. Special attention was paid so that the women, indigenous groups and other disadvantaged groups were appropriately consulted. The total list of people interviewed is shown in Appendix 5.

iv. *Field observations*. Several project progress and success indicators were validated by means of visits to the project implementation areas, with direct observations and with conversations with the local beneficiaries. The precise visit locations were selected in coordination with the project manager and FAO Ecuador during the preparation phase of this evaluation (see the report on the preparation for the criteria). The locations selected are included in the mission itinerary (Appendix 8).

v. *Preparation of findings and conclusions*. On the basis of the information gathered during the information-gathering phase and its initial processing, the ET identified the preliminary findings that were presented to the key project stakeholders, immediately after the field mission. Based on the feedback received, the ET defined the final objective and evidence-based findings. Using these findings and based on the professional experience of the ET, conclusions were identified that respond to the evaluation questions.

vi. As final elements of the evaluation, and making reference to the findings and conclusions, the ET identified a series of lessons and recommendations for the project execution and implementation agencies.

1.5 Limitations

10. The limitations of this evaluation were purely logistical: during a field mission it is not possible to visit all the work areas, speak to all the stakeholders and review all of the documentation. This limitation was mitigated by detailed preparation between the ET and FAO to ensure that the selected places to visit were a good representation of all of the locations where the project works and that the experiences to observe were the positive ones as well as those that posed challenges. Meetings were arranged with national stakeholders in Quito, but at a local level it was necessary to make a selection of DAGs and communities for logistical reasons. Lastly, the evaluation depended on the information (technical, administrative) provided by the different agencies and the statements of the people interviewed. There can always be a bias in these sources, mitigated by the ET through searching for alternative additional sources (literature, interviews with external stakeholders) and validation/triangulation of information.

2. Background and context of the project

11. Ecuador is one of the 17 most biodiverse countries in the world due to its wide variety of ecosystems and altitudes where around 15 percent of the planet's endemic species live. This biological diversity at country level is reflected in abundant agrobiodiversity, which is essential for food security and the economic development of rural and urban communities. The country is also characterised by its cultural and ethnic diversity with different ancestral practices and modes of management of the land, crops and wild resources. The Napo Province – the project intervention area – spans from the Andes Mountains to the beginning of the Amazon plains, it occupies the upper part of the Napo river system and is one of the richest and most diverse biodiversity hotspots in the world. The Napo Province has a population of just over 100 000 inhabitants, 56 percent of which are rural. It has high levels of poverty (77 percent) and extreme poverty (46 percent) and the agricultural and livestock activities as well as the extraction of timber are the only source of income in rural areas (FAO and GEF 2014).

12. However, silvopastoral agroforestry and timber extraction activities exert pressure on the natural resources in Napo and put the conservation of biodiversity as well as the functions of the ecosystems at risk due to (1) the selective and intensive harvesting of timber, (2) deforestation and (3) unsustainable productive practices and land degradation. It is estimated that 40-60 percent of the soil in the province is deteriorated, contributing to the extension of the agricultural border, the conversion of habitats and contamination due to excessive use of agro-chemicals, which affects the biodiversity. In addition, it is estimated that annually an average of 2 735 hectares/year is deforested (FAO 2018a), with most of this deforested area being used for agricultural purposes. The loss of wooded coverage results in the reduction of carbon reserves, the reduction of the provision of water for human consumption, agricultural and industrial production and the generation of energy, in addition to the reduction of the livelihoods of the local population.

13. The Napo/Good Living project focused on addressing long-term solutions for the productive sector, incorporating principles of social, economic and environmental sustainability in the productive systems, promoting value chains based on sustainable production, sustainable management of forests, promotion of biotrade and sustainable community tourism as new sources of income and incorporation of incentives for the conservation of biodiversity and food sovereignty. In this manner, it offered rural communities income opportunities, reducing poverty at a rural level, addressed the issue of the loss of biodiversity and the deterioration of soil, of the forests and water in the province and contributed towards gaining global environmental benefits.

14. During the design phase of the project, three obstacles were identified to addressing the main threats to environmental benefits and to appropriately implementing strategies for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable management of soil, of water and of forests. These are (1) institutional weakness at a local level, including a lack of inter-institutional coordination between levels of government, lack of capacities and training for Integrated Natural Resources Management (INRM) and access to incentives and incomplete information regarding biodiversity, (2) not very sustainable livestock and forestry production systems that exert pressure on the protected areas of the province, and (3) limited livelihoods for the local population creates pressure on natural resources.

15. The Napo/Good Living project had a duration of four years and was declared operational on 9 April 2015. After an extension agreed upon by the Steering Committee, the official closing is planned for December 2019. The total budget was USD 14 948 787, USD 2 628 283 of which was funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The remaining budget represents the co-financing (whether in cash or in kind) pledged by the project partners and other national counterparts. As the implementing agency, FAO is the agency responsible for the supervision and provision of technical advice during the implementation of the project while the Decentralised Autonomous Government of the Napo Province (NPDAG) is the main partner for the execution of the project and the Ministry of Environment of Ecuador (MAE) is the main co-executing partner. FAO manages the project under the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM), which means that all of the project funds are administered by FAO and the expenditures are made by application to the director of the project at the NPDAG. FAO hired the PT that reports to the project director.

16. The project had one **environmental objective** (to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, stop and reverse soil deterioration and deforestation, and improve the management of forests in the Napo Province) and one **development objective** (to increase and improve the provision of goods and services from agriculture, livestock farming and forestry production in a sustainable manner, through the strategic investment of public resources, participatory environmental governance, the implementation of mechanisms and incentives and biotrade, in the Napo Province), and it had four execution components and seven expected outcomes:

i. **Component 1:** Institutional strengthening to mainstream conservation strategies and sustainable use of renewable natural resources (RNR) in participatory land-use planning, based on an ecosystem approach.
   - **Outcome 1.1:** Participatory environmental governance in the Napo Province has improved.
   - **Outcome 1.2:** Investments in natural resource management increased.

ii. **Component 2:** Design and promotion of landscape and silvopastoral agroforestry production systems that include the sustainable management of water, soil, and forests, while improving local population livelihoods in the Napo Province.
   - **Outcome 2.1:** Production systems have added good practices in conservation and natural resource management at four priority sites in the Napo Province.
   - **Outcome 2.2:** Pressure on the forests of the Sumaco Biosphere Reserve was reduced through the implementation of a sustainable forest management (SFM) strategy.

iii. **Component 3:** Promotion of biotrade and community-based ecotourism as strategies for biodiversity conservation, sustainable management of natural resources, and improvement of livelihoods for local communities.
   - **Outcome 3.1:** Improved conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and livelihoods through the promotion of community-based ecotourism and biotrade.

iv. **Component 4:** Monitoring and evaluation, and information dissemination.
   - **Outcome 4.1:** project implementation based on "Results-Based Management" and the application of lessons learned and good practices in future interventions.

17. The project aims to change the current situation of insufficient institutional capacities, unsustainable agricultural and forestry productive practices and limited livelihoods of the

local population in the Napo Province, by promoting integrated natural resources management at province, municipality, parish, community and farm level.

2.1 Theory of change

18. On the basis of the project document, the evaluation team (ET) reconstructed a theory of change (ToC) that implicitly sustains the project. This ToC proposal was submitted to the executing partners and the project team for its validation and also, to develop capacities in the management of the ToC to design interventions. The full explanation of the ToC is included in the report on the preparation of this evaluation (Annex 1), its description is summarised here.

19. This project has two general objectives (one is environmental and the other is related to development). Part of the global environmental objective can be considered an impact, and the development objective can be considered a final outcome. The ET has reorganised the outcomes of the first three components[2] of the framework of project outcomes into direct outcomes and final outcomes by means of a causal relationship. The ET considered that the activities and outputs of 2.1 and 3.1 are associated and overall contribute to improving livelihoods based on the sustainable use of natural resources and biodiversity. In contrast, outcome 2.2 (sustainable forest management) places more emphasis on the conservation of forests and the reduction of deforestation. Consequently, the ET has included them in another path of change. Three paths of change have been identified:

    i. *Environmental governance (red arrows):* with planning and coordination instruments, environmental governance improves. An improvement in the effectiveness of environmental governance affects the reduction of deterioration and deforestation (impact). In addition, it contributes to the impact because it helps to improve the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources as well as the increase in the provision of biodiversity, agriculture and livestock goods and services. The situations in this path of change relate to the political will of effectively promoting environmental management, using public investments positively, continuity in policies and inter-institutional coordination.

    ii. *Agricultural production and sustainable use of biodiversity (blue arrows):* a series of project outputs focuses on sustainable livelihoods: agriculture, livestock, tourism and biotrade. In this way, it is ensured that the productive systems effectively include better environmental practices and that there are successful community-based ecotourism and biotrade initiatives. Overall, this contributes to better conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources. If this is achieved, it contributes to the increase in the provision of goods and services from biodiversity, agriculture and livestock and therefore to reducing environmental deterioration and deforestation. The situations in this path of change are linked to the will and capacity of the producers to collaborate with the project, effectively include improved practices and to be able to maintain them.

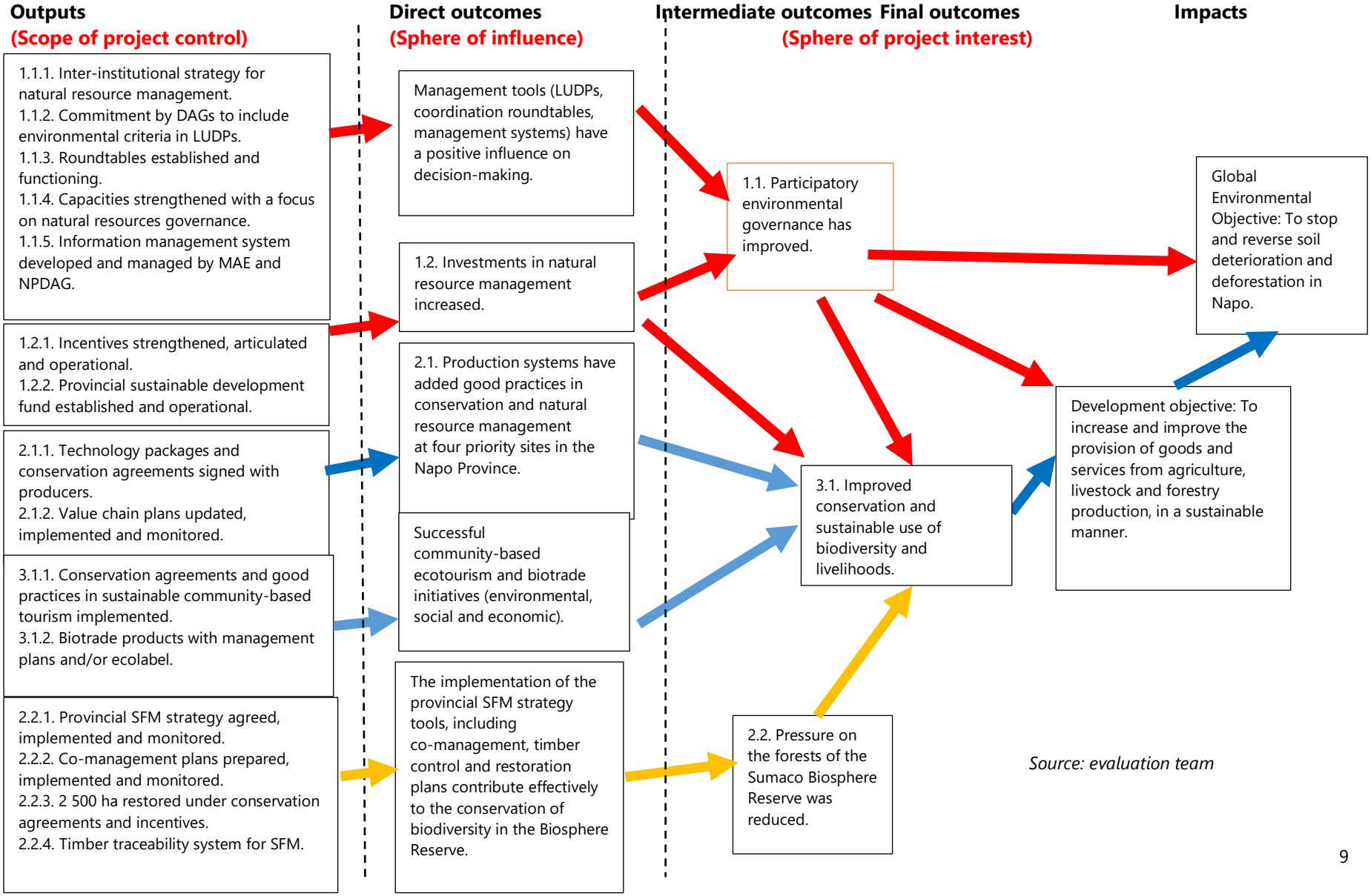
    iii. *Sustainable forest management (green arrows)* The activities and outputs for outcome 2.2 point directly towards stopping deforestation. If this is achieved and there are no other additional pressures, the intermediate outcome of reducing pressure on the

[2] Component 4 is for the management of the project and is not considered in the theory of change.

Biosphere Reserve forests is generated. The intermediate outcome contributes to the final outcome and to the project impact (similar to the other paths of change). The indicator of outcome 2.2 (reduction in the rate of deforestation) works effectively as an impact indicator. The situations linked with this path of change are associated with the political will to channel financial resources to support SFM and with the effective application of the national forestry control system.

Figure 1: Theory of change that implicitly sustains the project

This ToC was reconstructed by the ET with the information from the framework of project outcomes (black text). Other elements are suggested by the ET (red text) to connect the steps in the paths of change. The full text of outputs and outcomes is in the Prodoc.



Source: evaluation team

3. Evaluation questions: key findings

3.1 Relevance

The relevance rating is highly satisfactory.[3]

Evaluation question 1: Are the project strategy and actions still appropriate for meeting the needs of all the stakeholders involved in matters of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including support for implementing policies and programmes by the Government of Ecuador, the GEF/GEF-5 (BD2, LD-1, LD-3, SFM/REDD+-1) and FAO (in particular strategic objective 2)?

Finding 1. The objectives of the project and its implementation strategy are aligned with the national (National Development Plan, Organic Environmental Code) and local (provincial strategic plan) environmental policy priorities as well as with the support needs of the Napo Province Government in matters of conservation, the sustainable use of biodiversity and the improvement of the livelihoods of rural inhabitants.

20. According to the people interviewed who were involved in its design, the project was developed in direct collaboration with the Ministry of Environment of Ecuador (MAE) and the Decentralised Autonomous Government (DAG) of the Napo Province (NPDAG). The ET confirmed that the project, even in its title, directly fulfils articles 71-74 of the Political Constitution of Ecuador, which grants rights to nature and is considered a subject in law and promotes Good Living or *Sumak Kawsay* (Ecuadorian Constituent Assembly, 2008). The implementation of the project in a province, under the management of a provincial DAG, is also aligned with the constitution, which establishes the competences of the Central Government and the DAGs regarding environmental and natural resource management. This decentralisation of environmental responsibilities and competences is included in the Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization Organic Code (COOTAD; Presidency of the Republic, 2010). In addition, the main legal document for environmental management (Unified Text of Secondary Legislation of the Ministry of the Environment [TULAS]) acknowledges the role of the local governments (municipalities and provinces) in the management of protected areas and establishes special inter-institutional coordination and co-management provisions.[4] Lastly, the project is aligned with several objectives from the new Organic Environmental Code (CODA; paragraph 29), particularly objectives 1, 2, 6 and 9.[5]

21. The project has been aligned with the national development plan since its design phase (2013-2017 National Plan for Good Living). In particular with objectives 7, 8 and 10[6]. In

[3] For the rating of all of the criteria and a brief justification, refer to the table included in Appendix 1.
[4] In the final year of the project, the new Organic Environmental Code (CODA), which replaces the TULAS entered into effect with the presentation of its regulations (Presidency of the Republic, 2019).
[5] To conserve and use biodiversity sustainably; to maintain the structure, the composition and the operation of the ecosystems, in such a manner that guarantees its resilience capacity and the possibility to generate environmental goods and services; to regulate and encourage the participation of people, municipalities, communities and nationalities in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, as well as in the fair and equal distribution of the benefits from the use of genetic resources; to contribute to the socioeconomic development of the country and to the strengthening of the popular and solidarity-based economy, on the basis of the conservation and sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and by means of the promotion of biotrade initiatives.
[6] To guarantee the rights of nature and promote territorial and global environmental sustainability; To consolidate the social and solidarity-based economic system, in a sustainable manner; To promote the transformation of the productive matrix.

objective 7, policy 7.3 is particularly relevant for the project because it promotes the basis for the bio-undertakings. The new National Development Plan (SENPLADES, 2017) further includes the rights of nature (Objective 3) and the rights for all life (Axis 1 of the Plan). Policy 3.1[7] includes most of the project actions and Policy 3.5[8] refers to the topic of bioeconomy.

22. The ET confirms the alignment of the project with other national environmental strategies, policies and plans, as explained in the Prodoc, including the National Environmental Policy, the "Socio Bosque" Programme, the National Sustainable Development Strategy, the Sustainable Forest Management Participation Strategy and the National REDD+ Strategy and Policy, the National Biodiversity Strategy and the 2007-2016 Strategic Plan of the National System of Protected Areas of Ecuador [NSPA], the Biodiversity Strategy and Policy, the National Tourism Plan of Ecuador and the National Biotrade Programme.

23. Napo is a province with a lot of experience in environmental matters. It is a province that accommodates six areas of the NSPA and over 65 percent of the provincial territory is protected. Before beginning the Napo/Good Living project, the NPDAG and several municipalities have collaborated with different biodiversity conservation projects and thanks to this, they have developed several policies and strategies. Among these the Gran Sumaco programme by German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) (2000 decade) is mentioned, which among others supported the establishment of sector roundtables, for participatory governance in the province. The DAGs also participated in the (2007-2015) Initiative for the Conservation of the Andean Amazon funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and executed by a consortium of, among others, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Rainforest Alliance (RA) and EcoLex) and with the project "Strengthening of environmental governance in territorial planning in Napo (OT-NAPO)" of the Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN). With the support of the latter, the NPDAG and several municipalities and parishes already included several environmental and sustainable development elements in their development plan proposal. Thanks to the collaboration history with environmental initiatives and institutions, the NPDAG collaborated from the outset with the Napo/Good Living project. The project was compatible with the 2015-2018 Institutional Strategic Plan of the NPDAG (NPDAG, 2019a[9]). The ET confirms that stated in the Prodoc that the project is aligned with the Land Use and Development Plan (LUDP, 2015-2019) of the Napo Province, including its Productive Agenda and its Environmental Agenda, the Sumaco Biosphere Reserve Management Plan; and the management plans of the protected areas in the zone. In May 2019, new authorities entered the DAGs, including a new Prefect of the province. The project director prepared a document[10] for the incoming Prefect, clearly stating how the global environmental objective and the project development objective are aligned with the Prefect Work Plan.

[7] To conserve, recuperate and regulate the use of natural and social heritage [...] which guarantees and protects the rights of present and future generations.

[8] To promote the urban and rural economy, based on the sustainable use and sum of the value of renewable resources, promote joint social responsibility and the development of the bioeconomy.

[9] The first objective it includes is "To promote processes geared towards conserving ecosystems, endangered species and nationalities" with strategic actions "To support the initiatives for the conservation of ecosystems, endangered species and the recuperation of deteriorated areas of the Napo Province" and "To promote and support the development of programmes to provide training on environmental matters to the community and community leaders".

[10] Memorandum No. 001-2019-GEFN; 14 August 2019, Subject: Management report corresponding to July.

Finding 2. The project design is aligned with the FAO priorities (strategic objective 2, priority area 3 of the (2018-2021) Ecuador Country Programming Framework and the FAO Priorities Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean) and those of the GEF (GEF-5), BD-2, LD-1, LD-3 and SFM/REDD+-1.

24. The project is aligned with several GEF strategic objectives. The ET confirms that explained in the Prodoc regarding the contribution of the project to the focal areas of biodiversity, soil deterioration and sustainable forest management/REDD+ of the GEF in its Fifth Replenishment (GEF-5; GEF 2011); in particular:

    i. The project provided support in fulfilling objective BD-22,[11] particularly outcomes 2.1 and 2.2,[12] by means of support to environmental governance (component 1). In addition, the support to sustainable productive agricultural activities (component 2) and economic activities based on biodiversity (component 3) is aligned with objective BD-2.

    ii. The project development objective contributed directly to objectives LD1 and LD3[13] of the soil deterioration focal area and particularly to direct effect 1.3.[14] Outcome 1.2 of the project (increase in investment) contributes to direct effect 1.4 of LD-1[15]). The productive activities that support BD-2 also support direct effect 3.2 of LD3.[16]

    iii. By means of the forest management strategy (output 2.2.1) and also through the outcome of better environmental governance, the project contributed to the first objective SFM-REDD+ -1[17] and particularly to direct effects 1.1 and 1.2.[18]

    iv. Although it was not included in the justification of the project in the Prodoc, the project conservation outcomes, by means of the support provided to the co-management of territories and conservation agreements, contribute to objective BD-1[19] and the whole focus of the project (conservation, improvement of use of the land and restoration) contributes to SFM-REDD+-2.[20]

25. In accordance with the Prodoc, the project was designed in line with the (2014-2017) FAO Strategic Results Framework, and contributed specifically to outcomes OO1 and OO2[21] of

[11] To integrate the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the productive sectors and landscapes, whether terrestrial or marine.
[12] Increase in the terrestrial and marine landscapes arranged sustainably that integrate the conservation of biodiversity; Incorporation of measures to conserve and use biodiversity sustainably in the normative and regulatory frameworks.
[13] To maintain or improve the flow of agro-ecosystem services to sustain the livelihoods of local communities; To reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape.
[14] Sustained flow of services in the agricultural ecosystems.
[15] Investments in sustainable land management increased.
[16] Management practices integrated and adopted at landscape level by the local communities.
[17] Reduce pressures on forest resources and generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services.
[18] More favourable conditions in the forestry and other sectors; Application of good management practices in the existing forests.
[19] Increase the sustainability of the protected areas systems.
[20] Improve the conditions to reduce GHG emissions derived from deforestation and the deterioration of forests, and increase carbon sinks as a result of the activities concerning land use, changes in land use and forestry.
[21] The producers and managers of natural resources adopt practices that increase and improve the provision of goods and services in the agriculture sector, forestry production [...] in a sustainable manner; The Member States reinforce the governance [...] required to support producers in the transition to sustainable production systems in the agricultural sector.

strategic objective 2.[22] In the 2018-2021 Strategic Results Framework, this objective was formulated in a much shorter way but maintains the same content. The ET found that the project was also consistent with the FAO Regional Priorities for Latin America and the Caribbean,[23] aligning with one of the three priority areas (sustainable use of natural resources, adaptation to climate change and disaster risk management) and with the 2013-2017 Country Programming Framework (CPF) (FAO, 2013a) in its outcomes 4.1 and 4.2.[24] In the same vein, the project continues to be in line with the current (2018-2021) CPF, with achievements 2.1 and 3.1[25] (FAO, 2018b). According to the Prodoc, it is also aligned with outcome 4.4[26] of the 2013-2017 CPF, due to activity 2.2.4 (traceability) but this outcome is not included in the current CPF.

Finding 3. In the majority of cases, the project fulfils the demand of the indigenous and local communities that collaborate in its execution.

26. The Napo/Good Living project was implemented in ten communities (in addition to the process of preparation or updating of co-management plans in 30 communities), with nine associations of producers and with 44 individual owners (see paragraph 58). All the local stakeholders interviewed confirmed that they initially decided to collaborate with the project because the offer (whether in productive, conservation or restoration terms) met their demands. All of the communities mentioned that they were directly involved with the definition of the project activities in their territory and the majority stated that the project fulfilled their expectations. In only three cases, the informants stated that the project did not give them what they asked for *("we wanted a rustic construction but they gave us something modern"),* or that the project offered doing some activities and then did not carry them out ("*people wanted to take part but then it seemed there was no budget for it*") or that the project made a few decisions instead of listening to them ("*they are the ones who make the decisions - as they do in all the projects. Sometimes they take the larger ones into account and not the smaller ones*"). The ET found that the direct response to the demand, which is in itself positive, meant that in several cases the local participants (individual producers and communities) considered the project a source of material supplies more than processes and actions *("we asked for a water tank, a new bathroom and improved signage and they gave us almost everything*" or "*we realised we could produce better with an automatic sorter; we asked for it and the project gave us one*"*;* paragraph 91).

[22] Increase the provision of goods and services from agriculture, livestock farming, forestry production and fisheries in a sustainable manner.

[23] http://www.fao.org/americas/prioridades/es/

[24] Outcome 4.1: The areas, aimed at conservation and protection, increased in the national territory and Outcome 4.2: The legal and institutional mechanisms, which promote sustainable forest production management, conservation and protection have been strengthened to counteract processes that have an impact on natural heritage.

[25] Technical assistance for the development and implementation of policies, strategies, instruments and proposals to strengthen livestock, forestry and fishing activities, as well as rural development in the framework of the National Development Plan; Technical assistance for the design of policies and strategies for the management, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and biodiversity, incorporating climate change management and disaster and risk prevention, while taking into account multi-sectoral integration with a territorial and gender approach, and the application of principles and rights of indigenous communities and nationalities.

[26] The comprehensive national system for management, control and penalisation of illegal and legal trade of forestry resources and of biodiversity in the territory has been strengthened.

Finding 4. Several changes in the institutional and political context of the country have affected the implementation of the project. The main change was the reduction of public investment in the existing environmental incentives at the beginning of the implementation. A new situation that the project adapted to successfully. The change in environmental legislation also partly affected the execution of the project, and in particular the support to the legislation for forestry traceability.

27. During the project execution, the context underwent several changes, to a great extent related to the institutional and economic level. The main change, which affected the execution and scope of the project, was the economic recession in the country from 2015 related to the low prices of oil. This caused a reduction in the fiscal budget which, among others, led to a reduction in the MAE budget[27] and a lack of liquidity in the national environmental incentives, such as the "Socio Bosque" Programme, the National Forest Restoration Programme (NFRP) and the Reforestation for Commercial Uses programme. Consequently, although the general policies of the MAE did not change, the Ministry no longer had the financial capacity to incorporate new areas in "Socio Bosque" or to fulfil the initial commitments in the NFRP and in the Reforestation programme. The project aimed to collaborate with these initiatives, by means of technical assistance to strengthen them (activity 1.2.1). In activity 2.2.3 (restoration) it was foreseen that the costs regarding the consolidation and continuity of the areas restored in the project would be borne by the different environmental incentives. In addition, in the indicator of outcome 1.2, a 100 percent increase in investments was foreseen, mentioning the incentives as a baseline.

28. Given that the reduction in the public budget occurred at the start of the implementation, the project was able to adapt promptly. Support for the incentives focused on the correct use of funds in the existing contracts of the PSB instead of granting access to the public incentives to new beneficiaries (paragraph 34). The project restoration plans were designed so that the owners themselves could give continuity to conservation agreements and farm plans, and not depend on public restoration incentives (paragraph 44), and the increase in public investment centred on the Sustainable Development Fund for the Napo Province (FODESNA) and not on the existing incentives (paragraph 36).

29. During the project implementation, the Government of Ecuador decided to develop the CODA as a new Framework Law for environmental matters, replacing TULAS among others. This code was already formulated in 2017 but it only entered into effect in June 2019 with the approval of its regulation. Due to this legal void, working on a timber traceability system at local level was not effective (output 2.2.4). The project, in coordination with MAE, decided to change the scope of this activity and focused on supporting the same legislation at a national level.

3.2 Effectiveness

The effectiveness rating is satisfactory.

i. **The rating of component 1 is moderately satisfactory.**
ii. **The rating of component 2 is satisfactory.**
iii. **The rating of component 3 is satisfactory.**

[27] In the general state budget (www.finanzas.gob.ec), the MAE budget was USD 65 million in 2014, USD 80 million in 2015 and it reduced to USD 28 million in 2016. In 2017 and 2019, it continued to decrease to USD 26 million and USD 24 million respectively. The highest budget in 2018 (USD 58 million) was mainly to pay debts with beneficiaries generated in previous years, among others due to the "Socio Bosque" Programme.

Evaluation question 2: What outcomes (both intended and unintended) had the project achieved by the time of the evaluation, and are they contributing to and/or positioned to contribute to the achievement of the project's environmental objectives and development objectives?

Finding 5. The project managed most of its outputs in time and they were of good quality.

30. In Appendix 2, the ET presents an analysis of the generation of project outputs, validating the information reported by the project in its progress reports. The ET was able to check that the level of implementation of the activities is satisfactory for most of the outputs (1.1.3, 1.1.4, 1.2.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.4, 3.1.1, 3.1.2). The ET notes that it is not very likely that the project will comply with 100 percent of outputs 1.1.1, 1.2.2 and 2.2.1 in the time remaining of the project (see also paragraph 31, 33, 36 and 57). Making the most of the political moment where there is a change in authorities, in the case of output 1.1.2, the project will probably make substantial progress with regard to achieving commitments to incorporate the environmental criteria in the new LUDPs. However, it will not be possible to appreciate the final effect (LUDP) during the execution of the project.

Finding 6. Environmental governance in the province has improved with regard to the capacities strengthened and the tools available. The project increased personnel and technical capacity in public institutions for the incorporation of strategies concerning the conservation and sustainable use of renewable natural resources in the participatory planning of the territory. The tools developed (LUDP, inter-institutional cooperation strategy) have not been internalised or implemented (outcome 1.1).

31. Although to contribute to outcome 1.1 (to improve environmental governance), the project developed several instruments and capacities, the indicator for outcome 1.1 is only associated with the achievement of the LUDPs. This indicator has additionally been changed following the MTE (from "At least 6 LUDPs incorporate environmental thematic axes" to "At least 6 LUDPs have established a formal commitment to incorporate environmental thematic axes"). The project managed to improve participatory environmental governance through the process of definition and socialisation of the guidelines for the inclusion of the environmental theme in the LUDPs (with 17 stakeholders), in the Economic-Ecologic Zoning and in the process of validation of the comprehensive document for the updating of the Napo province LUDP (2019-2023; GADNP, 2019b). However, only one formal commitment has been achieved at province level which, although it provides instructions for the cantonal LUDPs, it does not ensure their inclusion in five LUDPs at municipal level, and as such this process will not be consolidated during the project. The ET found that although the civil servants and authorities of the DAGs who participated in the process of socialisation of the environmental guidelines were appropriately selected taking into consideration their likely continuity in the positions, they however no longer hold the same positions. During the interviews, it was noted that to update the LUDPs, the new managers had not received training on the environmental criteria (paragraph 30, 57; Appendix 3).

32. Environmental governance improved by means of other activities. According to the data of the project monitoring system (Open Foris[28]), a total of 132 civil servants and authorities from public institutions, including the municipal and parish DAGs, and particularly the

[28] Open Foris is an online tool, managed by FAO, to analyse the project indicators: http://www.openforis.org/

NPDAG, participated in the training courses with the backing of the universities Universidad Estatal Amazónica [Amazon State University] (UEA) and Universidad Regional Amazónica [Amazon Regional University] (IKIAM). In addition, the project trained 79 people in local information systems (LIS), 47 people in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and four specialists of the NPDAG in matters related to the information management system for the planning and management of natural resources, supported by the project and they are doing the transfer so that this system is managed by the NPDAG. This means that an extensive group of civil servants received training on key capacities for environmental management. Assuming that this training was effective (the ET did not know the outcomes of the entrance and exit tests to measure the effectiveness of the training activities), this contributes positively to environmental governance, despite the fact that people staying in these positions has been identified as a challenge (paragraph 31).

33. The project also supported the composition (2016) and operation of the Management Committee for Protected Areas and supported the effort led by the Climate-smart Livestock Farming project (CSL) to establish the Network of Livestock Farmers (2019). These initiatives also contribute to improving participatory environmental governance in the province. Although throughout the execution of the project inter-institutional management models have been analysed (particularly as regards the Sumaco Biosphere Reserve, associated with the Management Committee for Protected Areas and based on the initiatives prior to GIZ; Torres et al, 2014), the effective support for designing the inter-institutional strategy began in August 2019, with the commissioning of a consultation for this matter, and as such it will not be possible to implement it and monitor it in the time remaining of the project, as was promised (paragraph 66, Appendix 3).

Finding 7. The support for improved use of the existing environmental incentives has improved the effectiveness of such. Although there is little additional investment for the incentives, there has been substantial progress in establishing a new incentive for the sustainable development of the province (FODESNA; outcome 1.2).

34. The indicator for outcome 1.2 seeks a 100 percent increase in investments for the integrated management of the landscape in relation to the baseline (USD 952 000). The project managed to improve the use of the investment in incentives but the ET does not believe that it managed to double the investment into incentives. The project had to face the challenge of the national environmental incentives being left without funds (paragraph 27). The ET was able to check that, in response to this, the project did not seek more funds but focused on support to improve the existing environmental incentives to improve the effectiveness of its investments, such as the "Socio Bosque" Programme, the Amazon Productive Transformation Agenda, the National Restoration Plan, Reforestation for Commercial Uses and the NPDAG Directorate for Production, Irrigation and Drainage - Productive DAG. The latter is mainly the budget that the DAG gears towards the promotion of agriculture and livestock in general.

35. What the project has done appropriately is advise the restructuring of the Productivity Directorate of the NPDAG, which is the entity that manages the Productive DAG incentive, and supports an effective investment and monitoring of funds. These funds support several sustainable activities and provide support for general matters of production and irrigation and that is why it is not an incentive for the integrated management of the landscape, as the indicator states for this outcome. Although the project advised the DAG for the appropriate use of half of the budget (established at USD 1.4 million/year since 2015), the

ET did not believe that the USD 700 000/year that the PIR mentions can be considered an "additional incentive". The support for the Amazon Productive Transformation Agenda was effective in gearing its funds towards sustainable production practices, but its reporting on the total new incentives is not realistic (it was not included in the baseline and the whole investment is added instead of using the figure/year, Appendix 3).

36. The project has made substantial progress in the establishment of the new incentive - the Sustainable Development Fund in the Napo Province (FODESNA). The order for its creation is to be approved in the provincial council (October 2019) and there are commitments for its initial capital (from the NPDAG) and FAO piloting actions (for 2019). This piloting will not be possible in 2019, as was planned, for several reasons: the activity started late (2017) and some elements that are not under the control of the project[29] caused more delays.

Finding 8. Cocoa, *naranjilla* and milk producers who collaborate with the project have incorporated good natural resources practices that have achieved improvements in cocoa production. In cocoa and in *naranjilla*, there were improvements in the volume and economy of the value chain but little direct contribution was made to the conservation of the forests since these productive activities (outcome 2.1).

37. Outcome 2.1 had two indicators (a) Spatial coverage of integrated natural resources management practices in the landscape (goal: 1 720 ha with sustainable and culturally-sensitive intensification) and (b) Surface area of productive systems with higher vegetation coverage (goal: 1 764 ha of forest conserved by producers of *naranjilla*, cocoa and beef cattle by means of conservation agreements). These two indicators show that the project's logic of intervention is to improve the practice of the sustainable management of production areas and show that the producers contribute to the conservation of the forests by means of conservation agreements in their individual or communal land.

38. The project reported that it managed to exceed the first indicator, mainly by supporting organic certification and improving productive practices, achieving a total of 1 953 ha with 1 370 hectares. However, the information delivered to the ET shows that it only ensured the application of best practices in 173 hectares, with 174 people and it is assumed that the difference was the result of replicas, made and reported by third parties (associations of producers). In interviews with representatives of the cocoa associations, visits to *naranjilla* fields and conversations with the producers and DAG of the high region, the ET found that it is highly likely that the surface area of 173 hectares was effectively improved but there is no evidence to check the figure of 1 953 hectares (Appendix 3).

39. Regarding the second indicator, the project reports that it has made conservation agreements in four locations, for a total of almost 1 500 hectares (slightly less than the goal). The ET considers that this only partially contributes to the second indicator, in the cases of Santa Rica, Cuyuja and Wamani (Hatun Sumaco), which are producers and communities that the project worked with in the application of good agricultural practices. However, almost 1000 hectares between Akoki and Yanayacu do not contribute to this goal because they are cases of co-management (contributing to outcome 2.2) and a conservation agreement with a tourism association (outcome 3.1) and there is not as much

[29] As this is a consultation of around USD 100 000, the tender process was managed from Rome, which extended the consultation assignment periods. In addition, this was the first recruitment experience of this kind between the Provincial DAG and Corporación Financiera Nacional (CFN) (which, furthermore, entered into a restructuring process).

of a link with activities with *naranjilla* and cocoa. Although the project does not report the number of producers with agreements, it is evident that, in the three contracts validated, it has remained far from the goal (593) of the number of individual producers who sign the agreements (paragraph 52, Appendix 3).

40. During the field visits, the ET was able to check the technical assistance and good practices that have been applied to improve the production of cocoa, *naranjilla* and sustainable livestock by producers and associations such as Kallari, Wiñak, Tsatsayacu and Sacha Larán. The beneficiaries generally held a positive view and the ET observed improvements in the production as well as volume and income for the cocoa value chains. The three cocoa associations told ET that there had been a 10 to 20 percent increase in production and sales in recent years. Although not all of this increase is attributable to the Napo/Good Living project (there are other projects that support the associations), its leaders identified the positive impact of the planting (change in crowns, improved grafting) and processing techniques. The *naranjilla* production chain still has to be consolidated. The *naranjilla* value chain focuses on processing and selling pulp. Up until now this is emerging without a final output (own packaging) and independent transport. The producers mention that the project has helped with better practices but they also mentioned activities that did not work "*they came to recommend the INIAP fertiliser but we already knew that this did not work here. In fact, it did not work and we had to change to the recipe we already had*".

41. With regard to livestock farming, the project supported individual livestock farmers in the high region of the province (El Chaco and Quijos cantons). There was effective collaboration there with the CSL project, which supports the producers with livestock management while the Napo/Good Living project complemented it with the management of the farm, soil and forests (paragraph 85). With this, the project supported the environmental management of the livestock farmers, but an improvement in production or increase in the value chain cannot be attributed to it (Appendix 3).

Finding 9. Although the sustainable forest management strategy developed by the project has still not been implemented by the public stakeholders, the project did contribute to better forest management and to the reduction of deforestation and consequently, CO_2 emissions (Outcome 2.2).

42. Outcome 2.2 aims to reduce pressure on the Sumaco Biosphere Reserve forests by implementing a sustainable forest management (SFM) strategy. It has an indicator for reducing the rate of deforestation by means of SFM and conservation agreements[30] during the project. The goal of this indicator was established in the first year but adjusted on the suggestion of the MTE, taking into account certain confusion between the rates of deforestation in the periods 2000-2008 and 2008-2014, and between baseline and reference level. Lastly, a 15 percent reduction in the rate of deforestation was proposed, based on a historical reference level that reaches a simple average of 2 735 ha/year (FAO, 2018a). In relation to this, the outcome includes a second indicator concerning the number of tonnes of CO_2 eq emissions avoided by protecting the forests and through the reduction of deforestation (goal established after MTE of 1 689 959 tonnes CO_2eq) and number of tonnes of CO_2eq sequestrated by agroforestry systems and forestry restoration (59 709 tonnes CO_2 eq).

[30] Between producer on the one hand and the NPDAG on the other.

43. According to the project progress reports and using the MAE figure regarding deforestation, the project achieved the target of the first indicator of this outcome (the average deforestation between 2015 and 2018 was 2 288.5 ha, which implies a 16.4 percent reduction in deforestation) and consequently, avoided CO_2 eq emissions (817 096 tonnes of emissions were avoided in the four years of the project in the Napo Province). The ET considers that the provincial deforestation figure depends on many factors (conversion in agriculture, illegal logging, construction of infrastructure, natural factors) and the rate is difficult to associate with the project activities. However, it is evident that the different project outputs in co-management plans and conservation agreements have contributed to reducing deforestation (Appendix 3).

44. The project ToC considers that the pressure on the Sumaco Biosphere Reserve forests drops when a sustainable forest management strategy is implemented. Said strategy was designed by the project (June 2019) and informally accepted (there is no decree or agreement) but not implemented by the public stakeholders. According to the PT, the same project implements the strategy by means of its forestry actions. In fact, the project has managed to improve forest management by means of the co-management plans, particularly the support to the 30 communities and two second degree organisations that have developed or are developing their conservation area co-management plans, which are accepted and under implementation.

45. The project has reported 3 003 hectares under restoration measures, mainly due to natural regeneration (and as such it also achieved the second part of the indicator concerning CO_2 emissions). In the field, the ET found that this passive restoration model worked well and achieved its goal of restoration agreements, due to its low cost, little investment and easy monitoring. The active restoration did not work as well. The cost was greater and the beneficiaries interviewed reported a lot of mortality "*they brought us plants from another region, which of course did not survive. Later they came to see what had happened but once again planted the same plants - that also died*". The ET questioned the active restoration model that the project implemented, based on four species per zone. It does not seem that similar ecosystem, landscape or forestry restoration experiences and current approaches have been implemented (Mazón et al, 2017).

46. Lastly, an instrument for reducing the pressure on the forest was to improve the traceability of timber at a local level to control logging and illegal transport. However, the lack of legislation at a national level has meant it has not been possible to make progress with the local processes and as a result, in accordance with the MAE, the project focused on generating legal and technological instruments to make progress in the timber traceability system at a national level. Although this activity was effective, it did not directly support outcome 2.2. The ET found that the PROAmazonia programme expressed an interest in scaling up the local exercises that the project made progress with at provincial level (Appendix 2 and 3).

Finding 10. The vanilla and guayusa biotrade initiatives that collaborated with the project have achieved a higher volume of production and sales thanks to technical management and post-harvesting as well as strengthening of their value chain. For different reasons, the initiatives with other products (orchids, fibre palm, sacha inchi) are emerging (outcome 3.1).

47. Outcome 3.1 aimed for the improved conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and livelihoods through the promotion of tourism that also has a focus on five types of entrepreneurship with biotrade (vanilla, orchids, sacha inchi, fibre palm and guayusa).

The achievement of the indicator for this outcome (10 percent increase in the current average income of 200 producers [100 women]) was not reported because no data has been published and the socioeconomic study has not been completed yet.[31] On the basis of the project data reported on Open Foris and in the interviews, the ET was able to check some levels of additional income. These may be promising for vanilla and to a lesser extent for guayusa and sacha inchi, but it is not clear whether they will reach 10 percent. The Open Foris data regarding natural tourism also shows some increase but the additional income cannot be attributed to the project (paragraph 51). Naturally, there is potential to generate more income or better added value but during the project, it has not been possible to verify a positive balance yet.

48. The project did manage to contribute directly to the sustainable use and indirectly to the conservation of biodiversity through biotrade activities. The five initiatives supported, with management plans, studies for the development of products, training and access to markets, use products native to the Amazonian forests.[32] With the exception of sacha inchi and orchids, which are cultivated, they are sustainably harvested products, and as such the native forest is valued. Two of the five initiatives already have an effective chain (vanilla and guayusa) and the ET was able to verify the technical assistance from the project (labels for bottles of guayusa, MAE permits to sell vanilla for being a forest product) to promote them. These products were already being developed in the province with the support of other private projects and initiatives but thanks to the project they are achieving a higher volume of production and sales (particularly vanilla). The cultivation of sacha inchi achieves production and sales but, according to the PT, this is not being promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) (which, due to being an agricultural product, has to promote it) and it has a lot of competition in Peru and Colombia.

49. Taking into account the supporting studies (of the project and of the UEA) as well as the motivation of the beneficiaries interviewed, the ET considered the experiences with handicrafts and orchids promising but their production is still growing with low earnings and, as a result, it is not contributing to family incomes. The project identified that the long process to achieve the MAE permits for the collection and transportation of native vanilla, fibre and orchids, which is a key step for establishing a value chain, is an obstacle. This is worth highlighting, particularly considering that the MAE is the co-executor of the project. The project is also supporting the development of the Chakra label for these products and for cocoa and *naranjilla*, but it has not been consolidated or applied yet (Appendix 3).

50. The ET found that the success of some of the biotrade products supported by the project could pose the risk of promoting monocultures (taking into account that organic production does not necessarily mean that the product is compatible with forest conservation), and in this manner could contribute to deforestation and to the expansion of the agricultural border instead of conservation. The application of the Chakra label is a key mechanism of the project that can help to show consumers the added value of the products that follow the chakra system (an integral model that promotes biodiversity) and the protection of the forests (Appendix 3).

[31] According to the PT, this study began in October 2019 and the results are expected in January 2020.

[32] With the exception of orchids: although the objective was to use native species, harvested sustainably, obtaining a permit for collection and sale from MAE was difficult and as such they decided to use exotic species.

Finding 11. The project supported many community-based tourism initiatives through limited activities but it is only evident that this support brought about a measurable and attributable effect in a few cases. There is little connection of the tourism activities supported with value chains (outcome 3.1).

51. Outcome 3.1 also aims for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and livelihoods through the promotion of tourism. In this matter, the project provided one-off support with materials and supplies for tourism undertakings in seven communities and provided support to the process of obtaining the category of Community-based Tourism Centre (which was achieved for four tourism undertakings). The project activities had a weak connection with the value chain, with most of the support provided to the service provision areas and little support provided to the marketing/promotion, sales and after-sales activities. On reviewing the visitor data on Open Foris, the ET found an increase in visits in the undertakings that began their activity during the execution of the project (Amurun Pakcha, Santa Rita) but the initiatives that were already consolidated (e.g. Pacto Sumaco, Laguna Azul, Oyacachi) did not show an increase in visits. In addition, given that the support from the project was one-off, and other initiatives supported the tourism undertakings, it cannot be confirmed that the higher income due to tourism activities is attributable to the project (Appendix 3).

Finding 12. Several communities entered into non-monetary and short-term conservation conventions (2 years) with the Provincial Government, which confirms their will to conserve. In several cases, this commitment relates to areas that were already conserved and that do not have additionality (outcomes 2.1, 2.2, 3.1).

52. The project fulfilled its hectare goals under conservation agreements (indicator of outcome 3.1, but the activities in components 2.1 and 2.2 also contributed to this) mainly through tourism activity (Forest Conservation for Tourism Use Agreements). The experiences with non-monetary incentives (technical assistance and materials in exchange for conservation) between the communities or individual owners and the NPDAG. These are short-term agreements (2 years) without conditions for their subsequent use but they serve as a model for future cooperation in the longer term by means of FODESNA. Members of the PT have explained that they are thinking about creating longer-term agreements (10, 15 or 20 years) once FODESNA is in operation.

53. The ET noticed that the commitments in certain cases were not additional: it relates to areas that the communities were already dedicating to conservation. Although the project fulfilled the number of hectares, it did not fulfil the target regarding the number of producers who signed conservation agreements. Among other reasons, this was because three quarters of the whole surface area under agreements is in one single community (Oyacachi). The amount of agreements with cocoa producers is low, participants in component 2 (Appendix 3).

Finding 13. The situations identified in the theory of change of the project were partially fulfilled. This specifically affected the achievement of outcomes 1.1 and 1.2.

54. The situations included in the ToC for the path of change;[33] (particularly, continuity of the MAE and Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries (MAGAP) policy and of the availability of funds with regard to the implementation of incentives; and the

[33] For all situations, see Table 2 of the report on the preparation for this evaluation, Annex 2.

complementarity and synergy among the different stakeholders) were not fulfilled because there was a lack of coordination between agencies, lack of continuity of policies, and as a result, the decisions made did not necessarily support the sustainable management of natural resources. In addition, although there were enough instruments and a minimum availability of funds from the NPDAG for the actions, this was insufficient and as a result the instruments such as FODESNA and the inter-institutional strategy have not been implemented.

55. In path of change 2, many of the situations included in the ToC were fulfilled, among others the will of the communities, the size of the value chain of some products as well as sufficient technical supplies and as a result, most of the outcomes were achieved. Although the conservation agreements were not associated with financial incentives, this did not affect the achievement of these agreements. In path of change 3 of the ToC, the situations, and consequently the outcomes, were also generally fulfilled, although forestry business (SFM and national system market chain) is not working. This is why sustainable forest management is limited to conservation and does not include forestry business.

Finding 14. Although the project achieved adequate support for different conservation and productive activities in the Napo Province, many project outputs (plans, strategies, incentives) have still not been implemented and, as a result, the project has partially contributed to improving the provision of goods and services from agriculture (cocoa, *naranjilla*), from forestry production (vanilla, guayusa, restoration) and conservation (incentives, tourism; development objective).

56. The project has partially contributed to the development objective in relation to promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity due to improving the production and value chains of cocoa and *naranjilla* that are goods and services from agriculture (outcome 2.1.). The project has also made progress in forestry production through providing support to biotrade matters for vanilla and guayusa, restoration activities (passive more than active) and the signed restoration agreements (outcomes 2.2 and 3.1). The support provided to national and local incentives (outcome 1.2), the signing of conservation agreements and progress in tourism undertakings has also contributed to conservation matters in the province and therefore to improving the provision of goods and services.

57. In addition, the governance instruments, such as the Inter-institutional Strategy, the Forestry Management Strategy and FODESNA are well directed, but have not been implemented. Although the LUDP at a provincial level of the previous administration has been improved and there is a commitment to include environmental sustainability standards in the next LUDPs, these are not yet developed and the project has no control over their development at provincial level, and much less at municipal level (paragraph 31). Because of this, the improvement in environmental governance has to be consolidated to maintain the positive outcomes achieved until now. In addition, several outputs are still emerging: the ET also noted little improvement in matters of sustainable livestock farming and the production of orchids, sacha inchi and palm handicrafts (paragraph 41, 48).

3.3 Efficiency

The efficiency rating is divided into three:

i. Rating of the general quality of the adaptive management and implementation (implementation agency) is satisfactory.

ii. **Rating of the quality of the execution (execution agencies) is satisfactory**.
iii. **Rating of the efficiency (including the cost-effectiveness ratio and punctuality) is moderately satisfactory**.

Evaluation question 3: Have the intervention methods, institutional structure and financial, technical and operational resources and procedures available helped or hindered the achievement of the project outcomes and objectives?

Finding 15. The project design included a strategy with a lot of diverse but interconnected activities, which has resulted in a presence throughout the province and many beneficiaries; has also resulted in allocation and sustainability challenges. The project worked on initiatives in place and, as a result, developed activities in areas that already had the support of other projects (current and/or past).

58. The project design included the implementation of actions in the five cantons of Napo, in parishes as varied as Oyacachi in the high mountain region to Chontapunta in the humid tropic and with a wide range of activities including fibre palm handicrafts to improving livestock management. As a result of this extensive geographical and thematic approach, it managed to collaborate with 36 institutions (DAGs and other public institutions, social organisations), it trained over 1 000 people, collaborated on productive activities with almost 200 people, initiated biotrade activities with over 600 members of associations and almost 700 people worked on restoration and co-management plans. Although it is probable that there may be some duplication between these figures, it is evident that there is a high number of direct beneficiaries in the different project activities, throughout the province.

59. Although in many locations where the project was implemented, a combination of actions was applied (e.g. co-management plan with the productive project), for strategic reasons, the full range of activities were not applied in any location. For example, the project only worked on livestock management in the cantons of El Chaco and Quijos and the co-management plans were only applied in the canton of Archidona. This implementation strategy is justifiable from the perspective of effectiveness (focus the actions where they may be more relevant) and efficiency (use the resources in a better way). On the other hand, the result was a geographically diverse project, and in various locations, the processes and outputs remained unfinished (e.g. tourism in Runashito, value chain of *naranjilla* in Sumaco and guayusa drink in Rukallacta (paragraph 40, 48 and 51). The project's design therefore meant that it served a much greater area and population than with a possible alternative strategy (e.g. applying all the activities in a few sites), but with the risk of a certain dispersion of actions and lack of completion of outputs.

60. The project design involved working on initiatives that had the greatest possibilities of moving forward. This meant that the project ended up supporting initiatives in areas that already had the support of other projects at the time and/or across the years, as is the case of tourism in Pacto Sumaco and of cocoa with Kallari and in Santa Rita, and not areas or communities that have not received support and could therefore have more needs. This focus contributes to the effectiveness and sustainability but means that the allocation of the outcomes may be a challenge and that the most marginalised communities are not being included.

Finding 16. The design did not have some key elements (communication strategy and gender analysis and strategy) and consequently, these elements were not well internalised in the execution of the project.

61. Although section 4.7 of the Prodoc shows the project communication actions, relevance and approach, the framework of outcomes only includes one output (4.1.4) related to this topic and another related to the systematisation of activities (4.1.3). The same is true for the matter of gender: whereas section 5.1 of the Prodoc (social sustainability) explains the actions for mainstreaming gender in the project, in the framework of outcomes it is only included in one indicator in relation to increasing the incomes of women and it did not include transformational gender elements (paragraph 101). This resulted in the project not developing a communication strategy or a gender strategy applied from the start and did not manage to internalise these aspects from the outset (paragraph 96).

Finding 17. The project has had a good level of cost-efficiency in relation to the amount of activities, outputs and outcomes, considering the size of the budget and it has brought about some synergies that increased the scope of the project, such as with the universities.

62. The ET found that the project in general had a positive cost-benefit balance (outputs and outcomes achieved vs. investment in human and financial resources). The benefit is relatively high, considering that the effectiveness of the project (achievement of outputs, outcomes and objective) was rated as satisfactory, particularly taking into account that it had an extensive thematic range, covering the whole province, in which the project indicators were achieved. The cost was relatively low, considering a duration of (ultimately) four and a half years and a modest budget (less than USD 3 million of the GEF budget) in comparison with other large-scale GEF projects, which combine actions in the field with support for policies and governance[34]).

Finding 18. Many outputs have been generated on time and are of good quality due to good project management: there were well qualified technical personnel, with the inclusion of local capacity, good coordination between members of the team and alignment of implementation strategies. Other outputs were generated late because the activities had a delayed start or had to be different to that planned.

63. The efficacy section shows that the project achieved most of the outputs in time and they were evaluated as being of good quality. The ET identified that the reasons behind the efficient generation of outputs was good project management by the project team (PT). The PT was made up of people with sufficient training and several years of professional experience in the topic under their responsibility in the project. Both the technical chief and the administrative assistant, who managed the project in the last three years, had experience in managing FAO projects and understood their procedures in detail. With the exception of these people and two experts, all of the PT was made up of people from the region and they had experience in the province (or in other Amazonian provinces) with similar projects, in the public or private sector, related to similar topics to those of the project. Several members of the PT came from the parishes where the project was being implemented, belong to the ethnic group and speak the main language of the area (Kichwa). The correct training of the PT in combination with their local experience and the

[34] For example: other large-scale national projects in Ecuador in GEF5 had a higher budget: 4731 (Landscapes and Wildlife): USD 4.45 million; 4770 (Marine and Coastal project): USD 4.26 million; 4775 (Climate-smart Livestock Farming): USD 3.86 million, 5534 (Amphibians and Genetic Resources): USD 2.73 million.

fact they were inhabitants of the province ensured and contributed towards efficient technical management and fluid collaboration with the producers, associations and participating communities.[35]

64. The PT met every first Tuesday of the month to plan the activities for the whole month and monitor their progress. According to the members, this was key for the efficiency of the activities. The PT members told the ET that there was good collaboration between colleagues, and exemplified this with a series of statements about good collegiality. This helped with the collaboration and the adjustment of activities to achieve greater efficiency. The PT hired by the project was relatively large (in the third year it amounted to 18 people) but could have been a factor in ensuring the activities were well accompanied. With the exception of some more distant communities, all of the producers and communities participating stated that they received a support or supervision visit at least twice per month. They generally classified it as "*good*" and "*more than other projects that have collaborated with us*".

65. The fact that the activities generally fulfilled the direct demand of the communities is another factor that helped to generate many of the outputs efficiently (paragraph 26, 90, 91) because it resulted in active and ongoing collaboration of the producers and communities in the project activities.

66. Some project outputs were generated with a delay, particularly in component 1 but also in component 2 and 3 (paragraph 30). Planning was the main reason behind this delay: for example, the development of FODESNA and the Inter-institutional Strategy, foreseen for the first year, began only in the second and fourth year. Consequently, in accordance with the responsible consultants interviewed, the FODESNA process was delayed by more than was anticipated because it did not depend 100 percent on the project but on the response of the institutions. According to the PT members, one reason for this may have been that in its day-to-day, the project, to begin with, prioritised the field activities (selection of locations, consultations with participants, training, acquisitions of supplies) and as a result, might have overlooked the planning of topics relating to governance. On the other hand, the ET found that certain local activities began late and were not fully completed. This is the case of some of the value chain and biotrade activities: although the MTE found that there were plans and the capacity was available, the specific development of the initiatives (fruit pulp processing, development of fibre handicrafts, preparation of Guayusa drink) only began in the second half of 2018.

67. Some outputs were adjusted and generated differently, which contributed to delays. This was the case of the LUDPs (originally designed to be prepared during the previous administration of the DAG, (paragraph 31) and restoration (instead of aligning with the NFRP, it was going to be included in the farm plans) paragraph 28, Appendix 2).

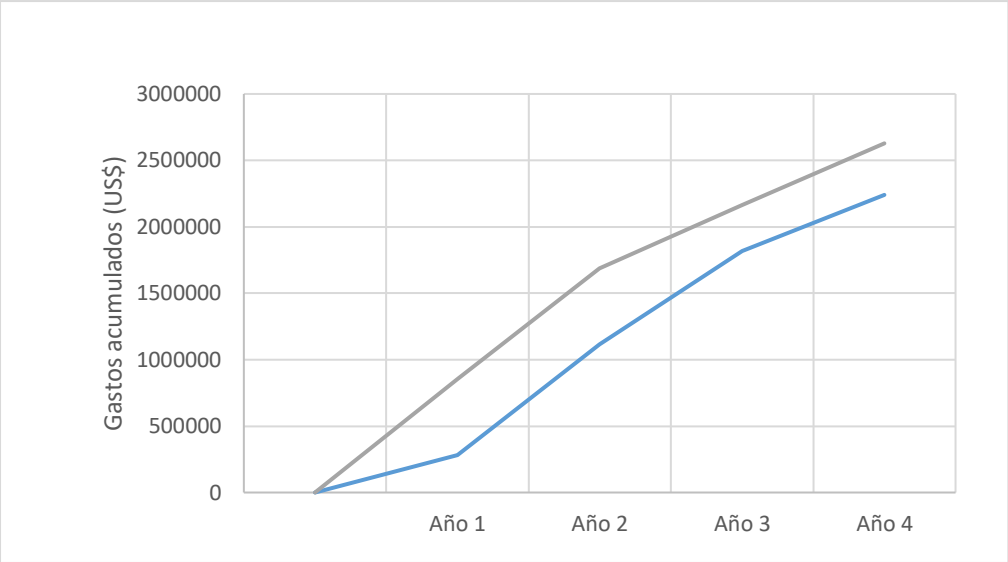
Finding 19. After some challenges in the initial six months of implementation, the project was managed efficiently and with adequate support from FAO. The administrative

[35] The ET found that among the project team there was one person who was also the president of one of the cocoa associations. On the one hand, this is positive because it involves a direct connection between the project and a member association, and a good chance that the support from the project is well received. On the other hand, it may be a case of conflict of interest given that, as president of the association, they have a personal interest in the project investing in support for their association over others.

management was in order, although perceived as slow by some stakeholders/participants in the execution.

68. In the first half of the year, the project had several delays in its execution that were analysed in detail in the MTE. Since February 2016, with the hiring of the technical chief and the current administrative assistant, both with experience in GEF projects, the execution of the project improved: the vacant positions in the PT were selected, more efficient collaboration methods were agreed upon with the NPDAG and collaboration agreements were established with other organisations. Although the implementation sped up, it did not recuperate the time lost in the first year and in the end, this was the justification for extending the project until December 2019. The rate of expenses of the project is in line with the rate of implementation - by June 2016, only almost USD 280 000 had been spent of a planned total of USD 850 000. In the following years there was an expense in accordance with the AOP. In June 2019, the accumulated cost resulted in a balance of almost USD 390 000 (15 percent of the total; Figure 2). On 21 October 2019, the project balance reduced to USD 193 000, in addition to USD 157 000 of strong commitments, reaching an execution percentage of 86.7 percent. After the field mission for this FE, the PT submitted an AOP for 2020 to the management committee, taking into account an extension of the project until 2020.[36]

Figure 2: Accumulated costs of the project, from April 2015 to June 2019



Source: project team

69. The financial administration of the project was generally in order and transparent. The expenses were programmed in the annual operating plan. To make an expenditure, the project technical chief had to ask the project Director who gave their approval. Based on this approval, FAO Ecuador, which manages the funds makes the disbursement or acquisitions fulfilling the rules of the institution. Although this procedure was considered slow (from the application and preparation of the expense to the acquisition) by many of the stakeholders interviewed (for example, some consultants or associations that have received supplies for productive, biotrade or tourism projects), with the exception of two,

[36] According to the information delivered to the PT, this was approved by the management committee in its meeting on 5 November 2019.

nobody else considered this a reason to cause significant delays in their activities. Equally, in general, those interviewed believed that the delay in the acquisition process was "*normal, in comparison with other agencies*". The ET did not receive any sign of substantial delays or lack of transparency in the acquisition processes and as a result, did not consider it necessary to ask for specific FAO examples to illustrate the process.

70. During the project, FAO made some substantial adjustments to the budget. In total, approximately USD 420 000 (15 percent of the total budget) was reallocated among items. Among the components, this involved a transaction of approx. USD 200 000 more for component 1 and less for 2, and USD 100 000 more for component 4 and almost USD 100 000 more for operating expenses (not allocated to component). The difference between the components was justified due to the higher investment required in the support to FODESNA and to the inter-institutional management model. The ET found that this reallocation was adequately justified and claimed but encountered several deficiencies in the recording of the decision and of the reallocation expenses.[37]

71. Members of the PT felt they received good administrative and technical support from FAO. The FAO portfolio coordinator offered continuous support, which was facilitated by the relative proximity of the project area to the capital of the country: for example, the technical chief worked on coordination activities at the FAO headquarters in Quito every Monday. The administrative assistant and several expert technicians also regularly visited the office in Quito to discuss technical matters with FAO colleagues or with personnel working on other projects. The annual supervision visits to the regional office were relevant and considered beneficial by the PT. The ET highlights the way in which FAO managed the situation during the low performance in the first year of the project, with direct responsibility taken by the coordinator of the GEF portfolio at FAO.

Finding 20. The project governance was efficient but not very inclusive: the Steering Committee made the basic decisions (approval of plans and reports). The Management Committee did not operate as a space for the management of the execution of the project and stopped operating in the second half of the project.

[37] Pursuant to the proposal submitted to the Steering Committee of January 2017, the justification for these changes was (i) for many professional services, there was a better offer of natural persons than of companies and as a result, the 'contracts' expense was reallocated to 'consultants', (ii) the 'travel' expense was reduced and 'non-consumable goods' was increased to purchase vehicles and motorcycles, and for their operating expenses, (iii) another reallocation was for 'training' which turned out to be more affordable than initially expected, and these funds were also used to increase the number of consultants that provide direct technical support, (iv) the expenses reserved for the Operations Officer were reallocated to 'consultants' to hire the administrative assistant. According to the information provided by FAO, this reallocation was submitted to the 4th meeting of the Steering Committee (January 2017). However, the supporting document officially archived is dated after April 2017. On the other hand, the reallocations (for example, the purchase of vehicles) were already made in the first year of the project, and appear in the project Start-up Report (8 December 2015). There is another document that was submitted to the ET in October 2018 with more reallocations but there is no record of another reallocation approval in the minutes of the Steering Committee. The transfer of travel expenses to non-consumable equipment implies that there is now a high capital of equipment in the project (mainly vehicles and motorcycles) without there being any formal agreement with the public agencies regarding their use at the end of the project. The operating costs for the maintenance of vehicles and other minor costs was managed outside of the components, making it impossible to allocate the expense per component. It is not clear whether the reallocation of funds was reported to FAO-GEF. The ET asked FAO-EC for full clarification regarding all of these queries but has not received a response.

72. Based on the minutes of the Steering Committee and Management Committee meetings as well as the interviews with several of its members, the ET found that although useful to inform members and for the general project management decisions, the daily decisions were made by the director and the project technical chief. The Steering Committee met once per year, five times in total and the prefect of the Napo Province, the provincial director of MAE and the FAO representative were always in attendance. Depending on the agenda, other people from the institutions participated to inform the Committee. According to the agendas and minutes reviewed, the Committee mainly focused on reviewing the project progress and approving the Annual Operating Plan. In addition, they agreed upon some adjustments in the execution of the project, for example in the hiring of additional personnel, the inclusion of strategic partners or approaches of certain activities (e.g. FODESNA). The minutes are summarised (fewer than two pages), include agreements and resolutions and do not reflect the conversations. The minutes do not state whether discussions were held during the meetings regarding the budget or the PT's performance. There is no mention of the problems at the start of the project, or the change in technical chief, or the administration's response to the MTE. According to the members of the Steering Committee, the meetings were friendly, effective and the decisions were made unanimously.

73. In its design, the project management committee played a fundamental role in the execution of the project. It is composed of the Environment, Planning and Socioeconomic Development Departments of the NPDAG, the Head of Natural Heritage of the MAE of the Provincial Department of Napo, the head of the forestry area of the MAE Provincial Department of Napo and the National Director of the project from the NPDAG. The GIZ representation in the province was also invited. The Prodoc (section 4.3.2) explains that this Committee must lead the project and be responsible for the outcomes, use of funds, planning of the activities and supervise the actions of the project team. It must also be responsible for the daily management of the risks, as well as the effective implementation of the mitigation measures. According to the planning, meetings were held at least every two months. In practice, this Committee met once in 2015, three times in 2016, twice in 2017, once in 2018 and one last time, on 5 November 2019 (eight times in total). The minutes of these meetings reviewed by the ET are detailed and reflect the conversations. They confirm that the meetings were primarily to socialise outputs and review plans. According to the participants interviewed, they were informative but did not fulfil the objective of directing the project. Participation was variable (there was no continuity in the representation of the departments of the NPDAG or of GIZ) and the frequency of the meetings decreased in the second half of the project.

Finding 21. Mainly due to the lower availability of public funds since 2015 and the lack of contribution of Coca-Codo-Sinclair, the level of co-funding mobilised was a little lower than expected.

74. According to the last projectt implementation review (PIR), until 30 June 2019, a total of USD 8.4 million has been mobilised of an overall USD 12.4 million confirmed at the start of the project (Appendix 4).[38] The main differences were the contributions from MAE (that

[38] With the exception of MAE, all of the funds promised initially or during the execution were supported by co-funding letters from agencies that offered this co-funding, or by conventions for the execution of activities where the counterpart from the beneficiary was assessed. According to FAO-EC, there is a letter of confirmation of co-funding with MAE but despite several requests, it has not been provided to the ET.

until now contributed with less than half of the amount pledged) and from the public company Coca-Codo-Sinclair (which contributed only USD 20 000 of the USD 2 million pledged). The lowest contribution of the MAE, as in several of the other public agencies (including the NPDAG and DAG Tena) resulted from the lower availability of public funds and as such their contribution to incentives such as "Socio Bosque" DAG or productive DAG were lower. The great reduction in the contribution made by Coca-Codo-Sinclair was due to problems with the management of this company (Casey and Krauss, 2018; Miranda, 2019) and to the project's decision to not arrange co-management activities in the Cascada protected forest. To date, the project has not received the letters of confirmation of co-funding and there is no evidence of whether the funds were mobilised or not. The lower contribution made by the central government and by Coca-Codo-Sinclair was highlighted by the MTE. Although after the MTE, the project managed to consolidate some new sources of co-funding, these did not compensate for the difference.

Finding 22. The project implementation structure, with FAO managing the funds and executing the acquisitions, the NPDAG being the agency responsible for the execution and the MAE playing a limited role in its execution, contributed to efficient execution. It was also a possible cause for lower appropriation by the public entities.

75. FAO manages the project under the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM), which means that although the NPDAG is the executing agency and the entity that directs the project, FAO manages the funds, makes the expenditures and hires the PT personnel, consultants and makes other acquisitions. According to the people interviewed who were involved in the project development, it was originally planned that the NPDAG was going to manage the GEF funds directly, as an Operative Partner of FAO. However, FAO performed an analysis of the fiduciary capacities of the NPDAG which resulted in a high demand for an Operative Partners Implementation Modality and the prefect asked FAO to take care of this arrangement directly[39]. Although the MAE is mentioned as a co-executing agency, its role in the implementation was limited to its participation in the Steering and Management Committees and to direct collaboration with some activities (e.g. preparation of co-management plans, forestry traceability and the development of the inter-institutional management model).

76. According to members of the PT, of FAO and of NPDAG, this implementation model contributed to efficient management of the funds. It is assumed that, due to hiring directly from FAO, the acquisitions were faster because certain review, decision and control steps were omitted. According to the respective evaluation reports, in other FAO GEF projects in Ecuador, which were executed based on the OPIM,[40] these additional administrative steps were associated with efficiency challenges. According to different people associated with the NPDAG, the fact that the local government is an executing agency, but does not manage the funds or hire the project personnel is a factor in lower motivation for its collaboration (paragraph 77). As a NPDAG civil servant explained, "*Why sit down to discuss the management of a project when you have no influence over its funds?*". Representatives of the Parish DAGs also mentioned that they did not feel as much a part of this project as

[39] This request was made by means of written notice from the Prefect to the FAO-EC Representative, on 8 January 2014. The ET asked FAO for a copy of the analysis of fiduciary capacities but it has been submitted.
[40] GEF ID 4770 (Marine and coastal project) and 3266 (Management of Chimborazo's Natural Resources).

they did with other projects, which channelled their support funds to field practices (in part) through the Parish DAG.[41]

Finding 23: Although the project was endorsed by the Provincial DAG and this was the main partner in its implementation, communication was not effective with and within the Provincial DAG due to a lack of communication, separate offices and little effective inclusion in the Management Committee.

77. The ET encountered several indications that the collaboration between the NPDAG, as the project's executing agency, and the PT, responsible for direct management, was not optimal. Among other reasons, fluid communication between the project and the NPDAG was affected by the change in project headquarters, after one year. In addition, the project Director, who is the point of contact between the project and the NPDAG was located in the project office instead of in the NPDAG and several of the people interviewed said that they did not use enough mechanisms to be able to actively involve the prefect in the first three and a half years of the project. The official justification for this change was that the PT was growing and the office space that the NPDAG provided at its headquarters was not large enough. However, NPDAG personnel said that having the PT at its facilities helped the PT remain in constant contact with all of the NPDAG team, which enhanced interaction.

78. Other reasons for a less fluid collaboration, expressed during the interviews with personnel of the PT and of the NPDAG were "*the project wanted to leave the DAG because if it didn't, the DAG would use the project personnel for other, unrelated, activities*" and "*the fact that the DAG did not manage the project funds, caused the directors to lose interest in collaborating with the project as they had no influence over the expenditure*". Naturally, the ET could not corroborate these subjective statements but did note that the presence of the DAG directors in the Management Committee meetings and the frequency of such decreased and they lost their space in the decision-making process. In addition, it found that some important tasks, such as the development of the FODESNA has had greater political focus with the new prefect in the last year of the project.

3.4 Monitoring

The monitoring and evaluation rating is satisfactory.

i. **The rating of the M&E design at the start of the project is satisfactory**.
ii. **Rating of the M&E implementation plan: 'moderately satisfactory.**

Evaluation questions: Was a monitoring and evaluation plan containing baselines, indicators and SMART goals with a focus on gender designed and implemented? Was risk management integrated into the project planning and implementation (including the effects of climate change)? To what extent did both support and promote an efficient implementation of the project?

Finding 24. Although at the start of the project, the M&E system was deficient, after hiring someone to work on monitoring, the tracking of the activities and indicators was continuous and precise. Use of the Open Foris system for monitoring of the project and for the DAG initiatives themselves was innovative. The technical report was complete and on time (Outcome 4.1).

[41] GEF ID 4731 (Landscapes and Wildlife project).

79. The Prodoc adequately included elements for a monitoring and evaluation system. The framework of outcomes had detailed indicators for the objective and the outcomes, which in general fulfil the SMART criteria, and these were accompanied by a baseline,[42] goals for figures for halfway through and at the end (in some cases) of the project, including progress per year were planned. The outputs were formulated as indicators, which made it possible to plan and monitor their progress. Some outputs had additional indicators. The framework of outcomes also included the GEF focal area indicators that it contributes to (biodiversity, soil deterioration and SFM-REDD+), and proposes the baseline and levels the tracking tools (TT) aspire to. The Prodoc submitted the indications for monitoring these indicators and preparing the reports. The mid-term evaluation was completed in October 2017 and this final evaluation was completed in September-October 2019, which aligns with the planning, considering a closing in December 2019.

80. The implementation of monitoring was not good at the start. The original plan included the preparation and validation of a detailed monitoring plan,[43] but this never materialised. The PT followed the general plan included in the Prodoc and established several tools to monitor activities and outputs, in the spreadsheets reviewed during the monthly meetings, which, in practice, helped to offer monitoring, between the members of the team but it was insufficient for the systematic recording and distribution of the monitoring information. As a result, the MTE found that the monitoring and evaluation system was not entirely operative, and this made it difficult to obtain reliable and relevant information about the partial progress of the project. The MTE rated the implementation of the plan as moderately unsatisfactory.

81. In response to the MTE, the project decided to hire a civil servant to work on monitoring, to finish the plan and to use the Open Foris system,[44] which is an online tool for analysing the project indicators with a high level of detail. This made the implementation of the system more effective and more detailed. Other members of the PT mentioned the efficiency of having someone responsible for the monitoring who, additionally, did field visits to validate the data of the indicators and shared them with the team. An aspect lacking in the M&E system was detailed data at a socioeconomic level. The project does not have data to show the impact of its actions on the livelihoods of its beneficiaries. At the end of the project, a consultation was commissioned which, according to information provided by the technical chief, will submit its results in January 2020.

82. The ET found that use of the Open Foris system helped to obtain data from several indicators (participation in productive activities, conservation and training, increase in value chains, etc.) at a detailed level that gives clear visibility to the project's impact. The participatory management, not only with PT but also with the NPDAG civil servants, was useful to show the stakeholders the impact of their activities. Civil servants from this latter agency were satisfied with this transparent system although they did find that its operation was technically complicated and they continue to require assistance.

[42] In few cases, the baseline of an indicator involved a specific analysis (rate of deforestation, average income) and was established in the first year of execution of the project.
[43] FAO 2014; Prodoc, work plan (p 116) includes an activity for the first quarter "Preparation and validation of the M&E plan". AOP 2016, includes the activity "4.1.1.3.3. Design and validate the monitoring and technical assistance system."
[44] http://www.openforis.org/

83. The ET found that the report was adequate and relatively well executed. The half-yearly reports [project progress report (PPR)] and the annual reports [project implementation review (PIR)] were delivered on time, were complete and offered detailed information about the progress of the indicators. They also included financial information and adjustments made in the technical and financial implementation. The necessary information was fed into the TT halfway through. The ET found that there were certain inconsistencies in the data of the different TT, among others related to the definition of the project areas. For example, the TT of BD mentions the 47 911 hectares directly included in the project (part II, 1), but does not mention the figure for the indirectly included territory, which, in the opinion of the ET must be the whole of the Napo province. In the same TT, it considers the whole expanse of the protected areas within the project area (part II, 2). In the same vein, it presents the whole extension of the "Socio Bosque" programme (over 50,563 hectares) as "beneficiaries of payments for environmental services within the project area (part II, 3). That of SFM-REDD+ does not mention the carbon baseline although it was already calculated and could have been updated in the medium term. The project has still not presented the TT data for the end of the project.

Finding 25. The project had good risk management: most of the risks were identified in time, were monitored, new mitigation activities were included during the execution of the project and this was adequately reported.

84. The risk analysis and the mitigation measures, included in the Prodoc, were comprehensive and adequate. They were adequately monitored and reported in the PIR and PPR. After the MTE, the decision was made to perform a more in-depth monitoring of the risks, and priority was given to management strategies and operative activities linked to the matrix of risks including the analysis of the management of risks in monthly meeting and planning meetings and in the supervision committees. Although the periodic reports did not include new risks they did continuously report the progress of the mitigation activities and included new activities. The rating of the variability of the level of risk was adequate. For example, the risk of changes in the policy of the MAE and of the MAGAP regarding the implementation of the conservation incentives, was initially considered low, but the financial crisis increased the level of risk and new mitigation actions were included.

3.5 Involvement of the interested parties

The rating of the general quality of the involvement of interested parties is moderately satisfactory.

Evaluation question 4a: What was the level and standard of involvement of the interested parties and the collaboration agreements of the project, in its design and during its implementation? Have other stakeholders been involved, such as civil society or the private sector, in the design or the implementation of the project, and how has this affected the project outcomes?

Finding 26. During its implementation, effective collaboration was established with several projects by FAO and other agencies, some NGOs and two universities. Although not all of the potential partners were collaborated with, the collaboration with others was an important factor in achieving the outcomes.

85. During the execution of the Napo/Good Living project, there were several other projects in execution (in the Amazon and in other areas of the country) with which the project could have collaborated and therefore increase their efficiency and effectiveness. According to

the Prodoc, the project planned to collaborate with the GEF's Small Grants Programme,[45] the FAO/GEF project "Climate-smart Livestock Farming" (CSL),[46] and the UNDP/GEF project Landscapes and Wildlife.[47] Of these, the ET noted a very close and effective collaboration with the CSL project. In fact, there was a joint implementation agreement regarding livestock farming in the high region of Napo (El Chaco and Quijos), where the CSL project supported the livestock management practices and the Napo/Good Living project complemented this with the management and restoration of soil and vegetation. In this way, the two projects were able to increase the number of beneficiaries and improved hectares. The fact that the two projects were executed practically in parallel, and were implemented by FAO, facilitated coordination.

86. Apart from the positive experience with the CSL project, the ET did not observe indications of collaborations with other GEF projects. For example, the Landscapes and Wildlife project (UNDP/GEF) collaborated with many of the same participants (producers and parishes) in the high region, with similar activities (including livestock management and conservation) but there was very little contact. There were other GEF products in progress that were not mentioned in the Prodoc but did have complementarity with the Napo/Good Living project. One is the project regarding the Financial Sustainability of the NSPA (UNDP/GEF[48]), which was executed until the end of 2016 and would provide important lessons for component 1 of the project. The second is the ECOANDES project (UNO-Environment/GEF[49]) which, although not executed in the Amazon, performed important research on restoration practices and their role in the carbon sequestration. With the latter, some contact was made between technicians but with the first project, there was no contact or collaboration. During the implementation period, another GEF project began with direct influence on Napo (Adaptation to the impact of Climate Change on Water Resources[50]) but until now there has been no direct communication.

87. The project did collaborate to varying degrees with other projects (not funded by the GEF). For example, there is direct collaboration with the Forest Farm Facility (FFF of FAO, the IUCN and the IIED[51]). In several communities, where the project initiated *naranjilla*, cocoa and biotrade sustainable practices, the FFF now funds monitoring or consolidation activities (paragraph 109). It also has very close collaboration with the GIZ initiatives (initially its programme ProCamBio), and implements its lessons in the management of agriculture, agroforestry and community-based tourism. In addition, several experiences and lessons from GIZ's extensive background in the area were not pursued. One example is the multi-sectoral roundtables on tourism, cocoa, *naranjilla* and forestry, which the GIZ had implemented that it inherited from the Gran Sumaco project, and which were coordinated by the NPDAG (Torres et al, 2014). The Napo/Good Living project concluded that they were not active and created new ones although the forests and protected areas matter could have made the most of the existence of previous inter-institutional spaces (paragraph 44). Lastly, another initiative with which the Napo/Good Living project is searching for the manner of collaboration is PROAmazonia (GCF/GEF/UNDP[52]) This programme has been in execution since the end of 2017 and in theory could continue with several actions and

[45] GEF ID 4375.
[46] GEF ID 4775.
[47] GEF ID 4731.
[48] GEF ID 3829.
[49] GEF ID 4774.
[50] GEF ID 5384.
[51] http://www.fao.org/forest-farm-facility/es/
[52] GEF ID 9055).

consolidate and scale up project outcomes in the future (paragraph 109). At the moment there is a specific collaboration agreement with the LUDPs and support for forestry traceability (paragraph 46).

88. People interviewed during the design of the project stated that, initially, it was foreseen that in the implementation there would be direct collaboration with a series of NGOs that were working for conservation and sustainable development in the Napo province, including Ecociencia, Ecolex, and CONDESAN. However, after the institutional consultations, the main partners (MAE and NPDAG) decided to execute it through the NPDAG and consider only strategic partners that contribute with co-funding. Because of this, the project mentioned that it has strategic partners such as GIZ, TNC, RA and the Initiative for the Conservation of the Andean Amazon (ICAA) Support Unit. It also reached a collaboration agreement with the Public Company that manages the hydroelectric project COCASINCLAIR EP. Collaboration was minimal with the ICAA project and its partners (TNC, RA), particularly because ICAA finished when Napo/Good Living was just starting. Collaboration was also minimal in practice with COCASINCLAIR (paragraph 74).

89. Aside from the complementarity of projects (paragraph 87), the Napo/Good Living project collaborated a lot with GIZ as an institution, and invited it to form part of the Management Committee. Together, they formed and are calling on a group of numerous stakeholders for the promotion of fine or flavour cocoa (Chakra group) in which, according to GIZ representatives, the project is a key stakeholder for the development and promotion of the Chakra label and inter-institutional collaboration is a fundamental strategy to achieve its eventual success (paragraph 50). In this group, the project also collaborates effectively with the Maquita foundation and the Ecuadorian Trust Fund for Development Cooperation (FECD). Both organisations support local activities with sustainable producers (incl. cocoa, guayusa, tourism) and the project seeks to coordinate the activities with them to sustain itself in future. Another important factor that contributes to the success of the project almost without additional cost was the collaboration with the two universities IKIAM and the Universidad Estatal Amazónica. These helped with studies on conservation and restoration as well as on support for the activities to train the civil servants of the institutions and with the biotrade actions (Appendix 2) which increased the quality of these outputs and the number of people who benefited.

Evaluation question 4b: To what extent has the project, in its work with local communities/indigenous people, ensured their participation in the decision-making process (including in the implementation of activities)?

Finding 27: The implementation of the project activities was generally socialised and agreed upon with local beneficiaries and met the demand. This has resulted in a good level of participation in the activities and of adoption of the outputs. In response to the local demand, in many cases, the project delivered materials and supplies that resulted in a certain degree of dependence on external donors instead of stimulating self-management

90. The ET noted the communities' interest in the project's activities and outputs. The project provided support to several processes that were already implemented by the communities such as tourism, crops such as *naranjilla*, cocoa, guayusa, vanilla and agricultural practices, activities of interest to the communities and associations. It also offered support by negotiating with the communities, who only in a few cases said that the work did not fulfil what they had requested (paragraph 26). In the field, the ET found that thanks to the fact

that the activities were aligned with the communities' interests, there was active participation in the execution of such, as in the case of the demonstration plots of cocoa (Kallari), agroforestry (naranjilla, Hatun Sumaco) and tourism (Pacto Sumaco construction cooperatives).

91. In some cases, the ET noted a certain level of dependence, particularly in the communities and with the associations that received support from development projects for several years. The ET observed cases in which it was not necessary to deliver supplies or equipment for the undertakings when the business was already profitable of its own accord. A clear example was found in the visit to a cocoa and guayusa processing plant. The project donated a cocoa sorter machine to this company, at a cost of a few thousand dollars, despite this association having a turnover of several hundred thousand dollars (paragraph 26). A client abroad contributed other supplies (drier and guayusa transporter) to the same processing plant but did so on the basis of a loan, repayable against the delivery of the product. The ET noted that the association appreciated the donation from the Napo/Good Living project but the drier matter was self-managed and formed an integral part of the business model. In addition, the seven cases of support for tourism included the delivery of materials and constructions (bathroom, signage, water systems, etc.) while there was still no business plan, forecast of visits, etc. The indications that show that this resulted in a certain degree of dependence were that some members of these communities mentioned that they had to wait for another project to be able to continue with certain activities, such as for example fixing a roof or completing a construction. In addition, members of agricultural associations visited mentioned that their organic certification was at risk "*because the projects that support us are ending*".

Finding 28. The project achieved the participation of indigenous communities, men, women, young and old people was achieved in the execution of the activities in components 2 and 3. The processes, for example, for the preparation of co-management plans, were generally participatory, inclusive and not rushed. The contribution of the Kichwa promoters was an added value in relation to the understanding of the cultural context and the connection between the communities and the project.

92. Due to working with indigenous people, the Napo/Good Living project has the obligation to address the topic of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), national and international legislation (United Nations, 2008) and FAO. The systematisation of the project's FPIC processes (Albán, 2019), in addition to the ET's interviews and field visits, show that the project's processes observed the times required by the communities to be able to discuss how to participate in the project, in their assemblies. Although there was no FPIC strategy, in the interviews with local participants, the project's activities - even in the design phase - were agreed upon with the local beneficiaries, by means of the technical roundtables that were operating in the province. The systematisation of the FPIC processes shows the respect and support for these processes and serves as important input in the methodologies, lessons and recommendations for other projects in the matter of FPIC. This document explains that with the participatory communities, the PT performed a new phase of socialisation of the project, particularly considering that several years had passed since the design phase (which was 2011-2013). According to the systematisation and as confirmed by participants interviewed by the ET, the process was not rushed, it observed the FPIC processes, included men, women, young and old people. The ET found that the technical team and consultants respected the culture and practices of the Kichwa and Kiju nationalities, as they respected the time that the processes take and did not rush them. The

systematisation of the FPIC processes and the interviews show that the Kichwa promoters (paragraph 63) facilitated the intercultural relations, in particular, the joint communication and planning between the project, communities, agendas and methodologies took place in a culturally sensitive way.

Finding 29. In component 1 (governance), the inclusion of local governmental agencies was limited. This inclusion could have been more effective to increase the project's effectiveness and sustainability.

93. The ET noticed that the local DAGs interviewed, particularly at parish level, mentioned that the project had reached the communities directly and had not involved the municipal and parish DAGs since the start of the project. According to the PT, this was done for greater efficiency. However, as a result these DAGs believe that this decision created an image of them having a lack of leadership over their grassroots populations (paragraph 26) and can also lead to sustainability problems because the DAGs are not monitoring activities and are not up-to-date with the project outcomes (paragraph 108). They mentioned examples from other GEF projects that agreed upon relevant activities (particularly with regard to the matter of agricultural production and the management of water, which are under the authority of the municipalities and parishes) with the local DAGs and that there was a co-investment or even a channelling of the project funds by means of the DAG, and the DAG continued with the investment after concluding the project (UNDP, 2019).

Finding 30. The project is well known among the beneficiary communities, and among the technical personnel of the organizations that work in the same area, but it is much less well known among other communities, local authorities and the public in general. The distribution of its outputs and the dissemination of its outcomes was not led by an effective communication strategy. The project developed a good quality information platform (InfoNapo), which is now on the NPDAG website.

94. In the field, the ET found that among the project stakeholders (MAE, NPDAG, parish and municipal DAGs, beneficiary communities), the project is well known given that it is generating good quality processes, outputs and outcomes, in line with the province's needs. Representatives of other initiatives in the province, interviewed during the evaluation mentioned, for example, that they knew the environmental criteria for the LUDPs developed by the project and that they are useful to them for their large-scale processes. It was also common to hear about the work of the Napo/Good Living project for the promotion of the Chakra label and support to biotrade initiatives. The ET also found that the beneficiary communities were able to differentiate between support from the Napo/Good Living project and other cooperators and in general had a very positive opinion of the work performed.

95. The project's website, InfoNapo, is of good quality, with a visible link on the home page of the NPDAG website. It includes information in relation to the activities developed and some tools and methodologies under the different project components. The website has the potential to distribute information about the Napo/Good Living project, but it has to be populated with all of the project information, particularly the systematisations of experiences to socialise successful methodologies, lessons and recommendations for other projects working in similar areas.

96. The ET found that the general public is not very aware of the project. The MTE reported that there was no communication strategy and as a result the project developed one by

means of a consultation but not all of the elements were executed. It was only in the last year that the project promoted communication matters, such as videos and articles. This enabled certain aspects of the project to be reported to a wider public but they were not directed, for example, to possible users of ecotourism or biotrade chains. Other tools, such as the guidelines to incorporate environmental criteria in the LUDPs are not easy to find for the people responsible for working on these matters (representatives of the DAGs and consultants providing support in these processes)[53]. Aside from infonapo.org, the project did not use other means of communication for knowledge management matters, such as social media for example. The MTE report is only available on the FAO OED's website but this and other progress reports are not available on other websites, not even on infonapo.org. Consequently, the project did not fulfil the dissemination commitment included in the Prodoc.[54]

Evaluation question 4c: To what extent has the project addressed gender equality issues in its design and is it contributing to the empowerment of women, young people and other vulnerable groups?

Finding 31. Neither the project or FAO Ecuador have developed a gender manual or strategy despite this being planned in the Prodoc and recalled in the mid-term evaluation. There are a few indicators in relation to the minimal participation of women and improved income for women.

97. Gender equality and equity is a right reflected in national and international legislation[55], as well as in the 2019 Napo Province Women's Agenda. FAO has strong gender commitments by means of the United Nations System and the FAO Gender Equality Policy. Despite these commitments, the project did not have a clear gender strategy (or a gender analysis to guide a strategy; paragraph 61) from its design phase. The MTE noticed the need to strengthen this matter and recommended that FAO-Ecuador prepare a manual that situate the global policies on gender and indigenous peoples, within the Ecuadorian context. However, this never materialised.

98. The few gender indicators promote matters regarding the participation of women (although not equal to men, but of at least 30 percent) and regarding better income for women. Several PT members saw the need to involve women because the project was working on matters that are under their responsibility or under shared responsibility with men in the communities. Many of the activities performed by the project (*naranjilla*, cocoa, vanilla, guayusa) relate to products from the farm, which facilitates the participation of women (as the management of the farm is one of their main responsibilities) and of the young people in the family.

Finding 32. Most likely due to the experience and attitude of several more experienced members of the project team, several aspects regarding gender equality, young people and other vulnerable groups, have been included in the project activities.

[53] For example: on infonapo.org, in LUDP, the guidelines and benefits are mentioned but the document and how to apply these guidelines are hidden in downloads under a different name ('orientation guide').
[54] Section 4.7: communication and visibility: "the project will ensure the mechanisms to give the maximum distribution to the documentation generated by the project, and in particular the Final Report, the technical reports and the mid-term and final evaluations".
[55] 2008 Constitution Ecuador, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

99. The ET found that several members of the technical team, with experience of working on previous initiatives, have knowledge of the gender approach and incorporated several tools into their activities to promote the participation of women. For example, the project used letters of invitation to participate in training on the sole condition that there were at least two male and two female representatives. The result of this gender sensitivity by the team was reflected in some outputs, for example, the co-management plans were prepared on the basis of a gender diagnosis and the orientation guide to incorporate environmental matters in the LUDPs included a gender approach. The participation of women in training regarding biotrade matters was also promoted, and gender topics were included in the training sessions, which led to the acquisition of more knowledge.

100. In the last year of the project, the team also hired a social and gender expert to systematise the gender topics. Although this did not help to mainstream the matter of gender in the project, systematisation did manage to identify tools, positive approaches, methodologies and lessons that act as an example for other projects. The fact that the same consultant that did the systematisation system also prepared the systematisation of the FPIC (paragraph 92) and the systematisation of the project in general, helped to harmonise the relevant gender information across the three processes.

Finding 33. The project has not managed, or reported transformational gender outcomes. On the other hand, there is no evidence that it has had negative effects.

101. The Prodoc mentions that the project was going to contribute to transformational gender outcomes, such as the promotion of the participation of women in planning and decision-making at a provincial, municipal, community and family level. However, this was not included in the planning (framework of outcomes and work plan). Due to this shortcoming in the planning, transformational gender strategies were not worked on during the implementation of the project, no data has been reported in this sense and there is no evidence of changes in gender relations, such as, for example, greater participation in leadership spaces and in decision-making. During the interviews and field visits, the ET found that women generally participated in accordance with the roles and responsibilities they traditionally have, in the production area of the chain, and not as much in the transformation and sale of the products, and this did not change during the execution of the project.

102. The project did not support specific incentives for women, although they were set forth in the Prodoc (section 5.1), and until now the inter-institutional report-writing process does not specifically include a gender approach although it was also set forth in the Prodoc. On the other hand, the ET did not find evidence of negative effects on gender ratios as a result of the project's actions.

3.6 Sustainability

The sustainability rating is moderately likely.

Evaluation question 4c: How sustainable are the outcomes achieved to date at an environmental, social, financial and institutional level?

Finding 34. In particular, the large associations of products of sustainable management of natural resources (cocoa, guayusa, *naranjilla*, vanilla) have good installed capacity and can give sustainability to the good practices and value chains. Other productive activities have a less developed productive system and value chain (institutional sustainability/organisation).

103. One of the most critical elements for the sustainability of the outcomes of a project is if the practices promoted among the local participants (producers, associations, communities) will continue to consolidate themselves of their own accord, without the intervention or support from third parties. For this, it is essential that the activities are profitable and attractive enough and it is important to assess whether the local participants have enough capacity installed to lead and sustain the processes. The ET believes that the large associations of products resulting from the sustainable management of natural resources – for example, Kallari, Wiñak and Tsatsayacu – have the required technical capacity and connection to the market to continue to operate after the project (paragraph 40). Aside from the support of the project, these are associations that have received and will continue to receive support from other initiatives. The same can be said of tourism in Oyacachi: for decades it has received support in the construction of infrastructure and training on business management and community organisation which has led to it receiving tens of thousands of tourists each year, turning it into a promising undertaking. According to the ET, the Sacha Laran association (*naranjilla*) could be close to reaching this point of institutional/organisational sustainability as well, but it is not quite there yet as it continues to depend on direct support from the project for access to the market and to develop the product.

104. The outcomes achieved with other productive practices, value chains and biotrade initiatives are less sustainable. Almost all of the tourism practices, with the exception of Oyacachi and to a lesser extent Alukus (Laguna Azul), are not very organised and have not managed to connect with the market, beyond some initial contact, and they receive fewer than 1500 visits per year (paragraph 51, Appendix 2 and 3). According to the PT, this is partly an effect of the lack of institutional coordination and strategies regarding tourism in the province. The bio-undertakings, with the exception of vanilla and to a lesser extent guayusa, are still emerging in their development and although promising, they would not have autonomy without more detailed studies and assistance for marketing.

Finding 35. Local governmental agencies have a commitment to their decision-makers but do not have enough capacity to make the outcomes sustainable. The capacity created by the project dispersed and the inter-institutional model of collaboration for environmental governance and FODESNA are emerging (institutional sustainability/appropriation of decision-makers).

105. The main governmental agencies that are participating in the project have shown their commitment to making the outcomes sustainable. In direct team and FAO meetings, the prefect and al of the mayors who took office in May 2019, expressed their desire to continue to support good agricultural practices, forest management and restoration/conservation. Although its participation throughout the execution could have been better (paragraph 76, 77), the NPDAG established several outcomes: there is a signed commitment to include the environmental and climate guidelines developed by the project in the new LUDPs, there is a notable effort to breathe life into FODESNA, the InfoNapo website was included in the NPDAG website and a specific effort has been made to promote NapuMarka and develop the Chakra label. In terms of cantons and parishes, the appropriation is less evident but according to the statements made by three civil servants interviewed, there are informal commitments to include environmental criteria (in the LUDP, to support producers directly and promote tourist destinations).

106. The institutional commitment is not the barrier to the continuity of the activities and the consolidation of outcomes, it is the existing capacity. Although the project has trained several carefully selected civil servants, particularly from the NPDAG, these civil servants

changed duties and the capacity dispersed. One key example is the case of the director and three civil servants who worked in the planning department and who have all the capacity to include environmental criteria in the new LUDPs, and of these only one person remains in the department. The others left the NPDAG or are working in other divisions. This weakens the commitment of the DAGs to include environmental criteria in the new LUDPs. There are other tools that were transferred to the NPDAG (GIS, InfoNapo, Open Foris) and there are trained people, but these systems require investment, development and technical assistance (paragraph 81). Only one person with a low budget makes this continuity vulnerable. Lastly, several instruments that are key to provide institutional and financial capacity so that the DAGs can fulfil their commitments, such as FODESNA or the inter-institutional model, have only just started and need more time to become consolidated.

Finding 36. There is a good social basis (in terms of interest, basic capacities and organisation) in most of the communities/associations and individual owners who participated in the project, for the collaboration and continuity of the activities and to maintain the outcomes. (social sustainability/appropriation by beneficiaries and organisation)

107. Throughout the project, it was evident that there was active and interested participation by men and women. Even in the few cases where the project did not directly respond to the demand of the community, there was good participation in the field, planning and training activities (paragraph 90). This social basis and will to collaborate is a key ingredient in continuing the activities and maintaining the outcomes. Another important ingredient for this motivation is the expectation the communities have for new projects: many of the communities and producers interviewed during the evaluation knew that there are other projects underway and hope to be able to continue receiving assistance from Maquita, FECD, GIZ and/or FFF (paragraph 108).

Finding 37. With the exception of the large associations of products of sustainable management of natural resources, all of the stakeholders (governmental institutions, communities, NGOs) require external funds to sustain outcomes. However, there are many new and already specified opportunities that can support these processes. For long-term financial sustainability, the establishment, capitalisation and good operation of FODESNA are critical.

108. Practically all of the stakeholders continue to depend on external funds to perform positive environmental management. With the exception of some large associations (paragraph 103) the local participants (communities, individual producers) require assistance over a longer time and that is why they depend on external funds. The organisations that offer this support (in the case of this project: GIZ, Maquita, FECD) generally operate with international cooperation funds. The DAGs, although they are committed to and want to provide sustainability, have limited resources[56] and a limited budget. The State budget geared towards environmental matters is decreasing (paragraph 27) and this directly affects the MAE budget, including the management of protected areas and support to the provincial departments.

[56] For example, the 2019 budget for the province has a limit of USD 36 million but USD 24 million is geared towards roadways. Environment and planning departments have a budget of half a million dollars, which is less than the project's annual budget. The productive department has more (USD 2.3 million); an amount that is not only geared towards agricultural matters (Source: 2019 NPDAG AOP).

109. Although dependence on external funds leads us to believe that financial sustainability is low, the fact that there is a new generation of projects with new funds helps to improve this sustainability. For the next few years, there are several initiatives that will gear their funds towards many of the project activities, this includes projects already underway (FFF, cocoa, CSL, AICCA) and new projects (GEF Sustainable Landscapes in the Amazon,[57] Amazon 2.0). Each of these initiatives could make part of the project outcomes sustainable. Due to its size and geographical scale, the initiative that can give the most chances of sustainability is PROAmazonia: it works with many of the same approaches as Napo/Good Living, but on another scale and with more funds. To ensure the maximum use of these financial opportunities for sustainability, a plan geared towards sustainability is needed, detailing opportunities, responsible parties, budget and actions.

110. Although international cooperation funds for new projects provided short-term financial sustainability, for the long-term ones (over five or ten years) ongoing maintenance is required of the good agricultural practices, forest management, the development of value chains, assistance to the rural population and monitoring of all the actions. To this end, the development of the FODESNA is key.

3.7 Impact

Evaluation question 6: What preliminary signs of impact, due to the project's contribution, can be identified in terms of the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable management of soil, forests and water as well as access by the local population to goods and services (always within the framework of Sumac Kawsay)?

Finding 38. The project managed to have an initial impact on the conservation of forests and soil and on the restoration of several areas of the natural ecosystem in Napo (global environmental objective).

111. During its implementation, the project has already achieved a certain level of measurable impact on the conservation of natural ecosystems. The impact was formulated in the reconstructed theory of change as "To stop and reverse soil deterioration and deforestation in Napo" (environmental objective). The Prodoc does not show direct indicators for this objective but uses the set of indicators of the outcomes. Interpreting these, the ET found that the achievement of the first indicator of outcome 2.2 (Percentage reduction of deforestation rate, (paragraph 43) shows that there is a specific impact achieved by means of this project in terms of reducing deforestation. Although it is not possible to establish the direct contribution of the project to the reduction in the rate at provincial level, the indicators of outcome 2.1[58]) of outcome 3.1[59] show a specific contribution to the conservation of forests and soil and the restoration of several thousand hectares in the province.

112. Taking into account the outcomes that contributed to the impact, this has been generated mainly through the path of change of sustainable production and of sustainable forest management of the theory of change (paragraph 19). The path of change of environmental governance may have supported other paths, but it is evident that the impact mainly occurred by means of local actions.

[57] GEF ID 10198.

[58] Spatial coverage of integrated natural resources management practices in the landscape and Surface area of productive systems with higher vegetation coverage.

[59] 1 000 hectares of conserved forests.

Finding 39. The project generated net gains (especially economically, but also socially) for several hundred families.

113. A specific impact on the wellbeing of the people is reflected by the second indicator of outcome 3.1 (increase in the current average salary of producers who work in community-based tourism and in sustainable biotrade, Appendix 2). The progress report for this outcome by the PT (PPR 2019) implies that there is indeed an additional income, although the ET finds that it has not yet been possible to corroborate this data (paragraph 48, Appendix 3). A biotrade product that offers positive performance is vanilla, which has generated 25,000 dollars in sales for the Kallari Association. Visits to the ecotourism undertakings have not increased considerably. However, the ET has seen clear indications that thanks to the project, cocoa and, to a lesser extent, *naranjilla* production and chains have improved (outcome 2.1). This income is evident but was not accounted for by the project. A specific socioeconomic study is expected to show this impact.

114. It is even more difficult to show the social benefit in terms of health, equity, education, security, etc. The ET identified individual examples of this impact, such as the aforementioned possibility of young people as tour guides or women as artisans. In addition, the good examples of the participation of women in the project activities, including training and implementation of good practices socially benefits this group. However, no transformational changes have been recorded with regard to social relations or decision-making systems.

4. Lessons learned

115. The design, implementation and management of the project have provided a series of lessons that may be useful for other current and future projects. Based on the evaluation findings, the ET has identified the following lessons learned during the design, implementation and management of the project:

Lesson learned 1: Given that the project was designed at a time when the political and economic situation was good, it accepted substantial financial and institutional commitments from the national and local government and from public companies. However, in an economically vulnerable country such as Ecuador, this situation could change and the commitment may not be fulfilled, resulting in a possible decrease in co-funding and in collaboration (findings 7, 21). This can be mitigated with a thorough risk management plan, relevant and transparent adaptive management as well as close accompaniment of the change process that values the capacity created in the institution during the prior administration (finding 25).

Lesson learned 2: The approach of working with participants who already have experience collaborating with other initiatives or organisations, ensured greater effectiveness and sustainability but all of a sudden, the communities that required the most support were neglected (finding 15).

Lesson learned 3: In this project, collaboration with local universities was an important added value to the project because it gave a professional dimension to the certifications of training and studies on forest management or biotrade. In addition, due to having found a mutual strategic interest, it was possible to do so without additional cost to the project or to the universities (finding 17).

Lesson learned 4: Of the practices applied in the field, the project generated several lessons about their effectiveness, for example:

i. In this project, passive restoration (spontaneous regeneration) was a more effective strategy (more surface area, less costly, more successful in terms of performance and easier to monitor) than active restoration (finding 9).

ii. The application of protocols for practices, validated in other areas, do not necessarily work in all cases. These "recipes" (for example, for fertilisers or species for restoration) must be validated and enriched with the experience of the owners (findings 8, 9).

iii. Personnel from the area, who additionally share the culture and the language of the participants gave local credibility to the project and helped with the appropriation of good practices by the producers (findings 18, 28).

Lesson learned 6: Prioritising a group of actions during the implementation of a project, at the cost of another group, leads challenges in the generation of outputs and negatively affects the achievement or consolidation of the outcomes (example: outcomes 1.1 and 1.2 of this project, findings 5, 18)

Lesson learned 7: A change in authorities is not a risk for a project: these changes are normal in democratic companies and must be considered as opportunities. For example, the current project had the excellent opportunity of developing planning tools with an administration and of being able to assist the new administration in implementing them. However, it saw it as a risk that it had to mitigate instead of an opportunity to make the most of (finding 6, 35).

Lesson learned 8: For local actions, close to the mission of local authorities, these authorities should be included in the development and implementation of these actions. This possibly causes the action to be less efficient but achieves greater appropriation and greater opportunity for continuity and co-funding. In addition, there will be a lower risk of the installed capacity dispersing with the change in civil servants (finding 6, 29, 35).

5. Conclusions and recommendations

116. On the basis of the findings, the ET drew the following conclusions from this evaluation:

Relevance

Conclusion 1. The Napo/Good Living project is highly relevant to the global and national environmental problem, and it is aligned with the national and local environmental and social problems (findings 1, 2, 3). The relevance was high as it focused on a subnational jurisdiction and as such it was possible to respond directly to the demand of the provincial government and to the majority of the beneficiaries (findings 1, 2, 3, 27). In addition, the project responded adequately to changes in the context, by means of a change in the approach of some activities without deviating from the focus of the outcomes (finding 4).

Effectiveness

Conclusion 2. The project was effective at generating most of the outputs and outcomes, although for planning reasons, some outputs were generated late and as such are still emerging, which affected the scope of the outcomes (findings 5, 19). The project is geared towards achieving its development objective (to improve the supply of goods and services from agriculture, forestry production and conservation), provided that it manages to effectively implement the instruments that are still not consolidated and that institutional sustainability is ensured (findings 14, 35, 37). The following details the specific conclusions regarding the most relevant actions:

i. The project managed to improve environmental governance in the province with regard to the strengthened capacities and the tools available but some have not been consolidated yet (finding 6).

ii. The project improved the use of existing environmental incentives (Socio Bosque) and redirected the use of others (ATPA, Productive DAG) and created a new one (FODESNA) although the latter is still not operating yet. It is not possible to confirm whether the total investments in the integrated management of the landscape increased to the level planned (finding 7).

iii. Thanks to the project, families of producers have included sustainable water, soil and forest management practices in cocoa, *naranjilla* and livestock production landscapes and systems. In some cases, it was also accompanied by agreements for the conservation of areas under incentives (findings 8, 12).

iv. Thanks to the plans for the co-management of forests with communities as well as restoration and conservation agreements, the project managed to contribute to reducing pressure on forests in the Napo Province (findings 9, 12).

v. Four of the biotrade initiatives promote conservation and the sustainable use of (agro)biodiversity in the farm system. Some are promising for improving livelihoods although until now only vanilla and guayusa have a developed value chain. The contribution made by the community-based tourism initiatives supported by the project to conservation and to improving livelihoods was limited because it was disperse and did not add a lot (findings 10, 11).

vi. By means of the promotion of conservation agreements between NPDAG and the individual communities and producers, the project managed to contribute to conservation and increase short-term vegetation coverage, in almost 7,000 hectares. These agreements were signed mainly in association with tourism initiatives and not so much with productive initiatives (finding 12).

Efficiency

Conclusion 3. The project was efficiently managed both technically and administratively, thanks to a work team with high professional standards, effective collaboration among personnel and with other entities, and good support from the implementing agency. The management model, with FAO managing funds to support executing agencies, helped the high efficiency, although it could have caused lower appropriation by the local governments (findings 17, 19, 22, 23, 26). The project mobilised less co-funding than initially planned because fewer public funds were available and the agreement with the hydroelectric company was not fulfilled (finding 22).

Conclusion 4. Not having a gender analysis and strategy, or a communication and monitoring strategy from the start of the project affected the internalisation of these elements during its execution, which was remedied in the case of communication and monitoring in the second half of the project (findings 16, 23). In the second half of its implementation, the project implemented monitoring and evaluation and risk management well (findings 24, 25).

Involvement of the interested parties

Conclusion 5. The project managed the effective inclusion of the different interested parties in the project. The synergy with other similar projects, NGO working in the area and local universities contributed to the effectiveness of the project and increases the probability of the sustainability of the outcomes (findings 26, 37). The project satisfactorily involved local participants (communities, individual producers and associations) in the design, execution and monitoring of the activities. Its appropriation by some of the local participants was high thanks to the good process of socialisation and prior consultation and because, in many cases, it directly fulfilled the demand at the time (findings 27, 28).

Conclusion 6. Although the Provincial DAG was the main executing agency, collaboration between the PT and the NPDAG was not optimal, meaning that the appropriation of objectives and strategies was partial throughout most of its execution (findings 23, 30).

Conclusion 7. Despite not having a gender strategy, thanks to the experience of the PT, the project accomplished equal participation in several activities, promoted specific opportunities for women and vulnerable groups, and effectively applied some appropriate tools (findings 31, 32).

Sustainability

Conclusion 8. The sustainability of the project outcomes is moderately likely because the project was built upon existing activities and made the most of synergies with other stakeholders. In addition, there is a good level of appropriation by local participants and a commitment by the institutions to continue to promote the project strategies. Although there is still a shortage of technical and financial capacity among many of the participants and institutions, some initiatives are already self-sustainable and there is a high likelihood that other initiatives will continue to become stronger, just like other initiatives that are still emerging (findings 26, 34, 35, 36, 37).

Impact

Conclusion 9. The project is geared towards achieving a positive impact on the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources and potentially towards generating additional income for the rural population (findings 38, 39).

5.1 Recommendations

Recommendation 1 *(based on conclusion 2)***. To FAO-EC.** In order to have a realistic period of time to consolidate several outputs and therefore generate more solid outcomes, it is recommended that FAO consider extending the project by six months. This is needed mainly to capitalise and make the FODESNA operational (at pilot level), not only for effectiveness reasons but also because the contract conditions with the consultant oblige FAO to seek this extension. If the extension is provided, this period can be used to consolidate other products and to ensure assistance with the formulation of the LUDPs, the inter-institutional model and the consolidation of the value chains and the biotrade initiatives. It is important that all of the project partners do not consider the extension as a closing phase, characterised by the finalisation of contracts and saying goodbye to colleagues, but as a phase of consolidation of outcomes; the most important semester of the project to ensure its success. To achieve this, the following suggestions are proposed:

i. Based on the proposed 2020 AOP, the **PT** must develop a detailed plan of work for this six-month period, ensuring not only the activities foreseen to generate the outputs before the finalisation, but also its form of funding and the personnel necessary.

ii. **FAO-EC** must ensure the allocation of sufficient resources (financial and human) for effective generation of the incomplete outputs.

iii. The **NPDAG**, supported by the PT must ensure that, with the support of the project, the finalisation and implementation of the LUDP can be achieved and there is direct and ongoing monitoring of the development and implementation of the LUDPs of the municipalities and parishes, incorporating environmental criteria.

iv. The **NPDAG** must achieve the legal and operational establishment of the FODESNA (including the human team and infrastructure) before the end of 2019, and channel the fund available for its initial capitalisation. FAO-EC must use the fund available for the piloting with the support of the PT and the consultant company, develop an initial work plan, begin the piloting and the capitalisation strategy.

v. The **PT** must finalise the inter-institutional model proposal and the **NPDAG** must implement and actively monitor this model.

vi. By the end of 2019, the **PT** must develop a sustainability plan specific to the actions of components 2 and 3 that are on the right track (value chain for *naranjilla*, initiatives with fibre, orchids, Chakra label), but certain actions are needed to make them self-sufficient or so they can be continued by other stakeholders.

Recommendation 2 *(based on conclusion 8)*. **To the NPDAG.** Considering that the project does not have a future sustainability plan, it is recommended that the period of extension is also used to seek ongoing support for promising initiatives, and to continue with, replicate and scale up relevant activities for the sustainable development of the province. To this end, it is suggested that:

i. By the end of January 2020, the **NPDAG**, with support from the PT, develop a specific sustainability plan that identifies these actions and outputs that require continuity or scaling up, specify responsible parties, budgets and dates for each of the actions necessary. It should also identify other initiatives and stakeholders including the MAE and other DAGs, NGOs and projects such as PROAmazonia, FFF, etc.) that can assist with these actions in the future.

ii. During the extension period, the **NPDAG,** with the support of the PT, must hold discussions to identify these initiatives and stakeholders with the aim of reaching specific assistance agreements.

Recommendation 3 *(based on conclusions 2 and 4)***. To the project team.** To achieve the most visibility at the end of the project and to make the project outputs, tools and lessons available for future users, it is recommended that the PT publish all of the reports, systematisations and protocols in a visible, easy-access and permanent location. To this end, it is suggested that:

i. The **PT** ensure the fulfilment of all of the communication and systematisation outputs, contracted by the end of 2019.

ii. The **PT** in accordance with the NPDAG, make the inclusion of the project outputs visible on the NPDAG website, train the personnel in charge and report their location via other media (radio, television, newspapers, direct meetings).

iii. The **NPDAG** must ensure the maintenance of this information and its permanent availability in the long term. This involves, among others, the permanent dedication of a webmaster, trained by the project.

iv. The **PT** must run a communication campaign geared towards the final stakeholders in the sustainable agriculture, biotrade and tourism value chains, to increase the chances of success of the initiatives supported by the project. This could include the promotion to a specific group of consumers of the tourism undertakings, sustainable products and raising awareness of the added value of the Chakra label.

Recommendation 4 *(based on conclusions 1, 3, 6 and 7)***.** To ensure a more effective and efficient performance of a project financed by the GEF, it is suggested that **FAO and other GEF implementation and execution agencies** implementing similar projects in comparable contexts:

i. To facilitate the monitoring of co-funding and the analysis of its relevance and additionality, the letters of confirmation of co-funding or of collaboration, the partner institutions of the project must not limit themselves to the full financial contribution but must always specify the specific destination of these amounts and the non-monetary institutional commitment (personnel, information, actions). At the end of the project, the certifications of the realisation of this co-funding and collaboration, must also have the same level of detail.

ii. To ensure the inclusion of the equality principles and also seek transformational outcomes in this field, it is necessary to always include a gender analysis and strategy, participation and FPIC (where relevant) at the start of the design of the project to be able to incorporate objectives, indicators and gender and equality strategies from the design phase and therefore promote these topics in all of the activities in a far-reaching manner and make them effective from the first day of implementation. The implementing agencies such as FAO have extensive international expertise in the topic that has to be mobilised to this end during the design of the project.

iii. Similar to the gender and equality strategy, any project must have its own communication, knowledge management, monitoring and supervision as well as sustainability plan in the first year. Although almost all GEF projects aim to do this, the implementing agencies must ensure that it is effectively fulfilled in the first year.

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